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THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM

HISTORY OF THE INDOCHINA INCIDENT

1940 – 1954

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

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AUTHORITY

This volume has been prepared by historians in the Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat in accordance with professional standards of historiography. Inasmuch as the content of the volume has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is to be construed as descriptive only and not as constituting the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

J. K. BRATTON
Brigadier General, USA
Secretary, JCS

FOREWORD

This study is essentially a reproduction of an earlier study prepared by the Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, entitled "History of the Indochina Incident" and completed on 1 February 1955. In light of current developments in Southeast Asia the subject matter in this study has assumed a timeliness and significance that warrants reissue.

No attempt has been made to bring the study up to date by addition of new material or through any historical reevaluation. Although the conclusions have been rewritten and condensed, no attempt has been made to alter their substance. Some minor editorial and stylistic modifications have been introduced but, in the main, the study conforms to earlier rules of editorial style, format, and JCS usage.

E. H. GIUSTI
Chief, Historical Division
Joint Secretariat, JCS

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This work was a collaborative effort by the Historical Section, Joint Chiefs of Staff, under the direction of Colonel Joseph Dasher, USAF, Executive. The Historical Section consists of the following members, all of whom contributed to the completion of this project: Military Historians - Major Norman E. Cawse-Morgon, USAF, Major William P. Moody, USAF, Captain Ernest Giusti, USMCR, Captain Wilber W. Hoare, USA, Lieutenant(jg) Norman B. Ferris, USNR, and Second Lieutenant Robert M. Utley, USA; Civilian Historians - Mr. Vernon E. Davis and Mr. Samuel A. Tucker; Research Assistants - Mr. Paul K. Wood and Mr. Eugene A. Green; Publications Editor - Miss Julia A. Coppa; Clerical Assistants - Mrs. Pauline S. Butler, Mrs. Janet W. Ball, and Mrs. Celia G. Crown.

1 February 1955

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INTRODUCTION

The directive furnishing the authority for this study specifies that it should be "a history of the Indochina incident from the beginning."* The Historical Section took this to mean a full survey that would place Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Conference in a proper historical context.

It was soon noted that the events of the 1950's occurred in an atmosphere charged with acrimony and distrust, in which the motivation of Frenchmen and Indochinese natives sprang as often from passion as from reason. The search for the origin of the emotional attitudes that alone can explain some of the turns in the story led ever backward, until the Section members became convinced that the "beginning" could not be set later than the 1860's, the date of the coming of the French to Indochina. Nevertheless, developments during the nineteenth and early twentieth Century have been treated very briefly.

Investigation also revealed that the beginning of United States involvement in the affairs of Indochina went back farther than had been suspected. Although tenuous at times, the current of American interest in the area runs continuously from the spring of 1940. Moreover, some French accusations of American responsibility for the final outcome in Indochina are based upon shadowy episodes in these earlier days. Hence the account had to deal with a considerable time period. To keep the work within manageable lengths it was necessary to omit many interesting and often illuminating details that were not felt pertinent to the central theme.

The history divides roughly into two parts. The first six chapters provide an explanation of political conditions in Indochina on which any full understanding of the events of the later period must be based. The story of direct U.S. involvement begins with Chapter VII.

*Memo, Exec JCS HS, "History of the 'Indochina Incident,'" 26 Aug 54, confirming telephone instructions by RAdm G. W. Anderson, USN, Executive to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF FRENCH RULE IN INDOCHINA

Many factors have contributed to the present-day situation in Indochina but, almost without exception, they can be traced back to three fundamental causes: the abuses of the French regime, inflamed Indochinese nationalism, and France's ill-conceived attempt after World War II to reassert the hegemony she had enjoyed in that part of the world since the 1860's.

Her dominion had been won by force, and the threat of force. Viet Nam had once been a single, sovereign Annamese state under its own Emperor. Beginning with Cochinchina, which she turned into a colony, France gradually extended her sway over the rest of the country, and reduced the other two Kys of Annam and Tonkin to the status of protectorates. During the same period, Cambodia was drawn into the French sphere and, by the end of the century, Laos had been added to what was now known as the Indochinese Union. By 1938, less than 40,000 Frenchmen were dominating 24 million subjects, in a land approximately one-third larger than France itself.

Economic and Sociological Aspects of French Rule

Indochina proved to be a rich prize. In the 1930's it was the world's third largest exporter of rice. The country also produced rubber, timber, fish, corn, pepper, cattle, coal, iron, tin, zinc, chrome, phosphates, manganese, tungsten, and bauxite. Industrial development, however, was deliberately kept on a low level to avoid competition with French manufactures. Indochina served French purposes better as a source of raw materials and as a market for French goods.[1]

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1. Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (1954), p. 15.

French investors and French capital held an especially favored position in the economic life of the country. Land could be purchased only by Frenchmen, or by companies with a majority of French stockholders. Over the years, French metropolitan economic interests received strong governmental support in the form of subsidies, bounties, favorable tariff rates, and state orders. France supplied 53 percent of Indochina's imports, and took 50 percent of her exports. An important factor in French dominance of foreign trade was the policy of carrying on free trade with Indochina, while levying on foreign imports into the colony virtually the same tariffs as on imports into France itself.[2] By 1938, foreign investments in Indochina totaled $384 million, of which more than 95 percent were in French hands.[3]

French economic and political control of the country, following physical occupation, was reinforced by the breakdown of the old Vietnamese social and legal structures. The ancient localism gave way before the pressure of foreign administrative, economic, and public-works systems. Gradually, the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the villages were whittled away. The French made use of the traditional monarchy only to discredit it. They took away its power and put their authority behind venal mandarins and "cais," native foremen on the plantations, in the mines, and in industries.[4]

The alliance of opportunistic mandarin and French bureaucrat produced a state of affairs strikingly similar to conditions in eighteenth-century France that led to the French Revolution. With the passage of time, the number and size of large estates increased and peasant ownership of the land became more and more precarious. The estates were generally acquired by usury, which abounded. Local Chinese and Indians joined the wealthy Vietnamese in battening on the poverty of their countrymen. Eventually, the holdings of this privileged group fell, in turn, into the hands of the all-powerful Bank of Indochina. This

2. Lawrence K. Rosinger, "France and the Future of Indochina," Foreign Policy Reports, 15 May 45, p. 55.
3. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 14.
4. Ibid., p. 67.

economically unhealthy trend was hastened and abetted by the peasants' traditional practice of dividing the land among the children of the family. In overcrowded Tonkin, 62 percent of the peasants owned less than nine-tenths of an acre apiece, and 30 percent owned less than four-tenths. The situation was much the same in Annam. In Cochinchina, the center of French economic activity, conditions were even worse. Landlords normally collected more from usury than from rents. Usury, combined with the French practice of granting extensive concessions in undeveloped land to French companies and rich Vietnamese, led to the rise of an absentee landlord class. The estates were worked by tenant farmers and landless agricultural laborers. Between 60 and 80 percent of all Cochinchinese farmland was tilled by sharecroppers, who generally had to give far more than half their harvest to the landlord, partly as rent, partly as usurious interest.5

As the peasant gradually and reluctantly surrendered the land, he fell prey to other abuses that lowered his standard of living and social status, and heightened his discontent. The labor needs of French planters in south Indochina and of French colonists in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides led to the transportation of thousands of northern Indochinese from their homes to lives of drudgery in alien surroundings. Native agents of southern planters signed penniless Tonkinese and northern Annamese to three-year contracts. Conditions did not match the rosy picture painted by the agents: the laborers were shipped south under armed guard; on the plantations they worked ten hours a day at extremely unhealthy tasks; malaria and beriberi were widespread; in 1927 the death rate on the plantations was four to five times higher than in the rest of Cochinchina. Virginia Thompson said of the native foreman:

> . . . He collects a commission from each meagre salary, he forces the coolie to borrow money from him at fantastically high rates, and he realizes a profit on food and even medical supplies. The worker is a serf to

5. Ibid., p. 66.

> this petty creditor and overlord, who in addition often subjects him to unfair and brutal treatment. . . . Coolies are punished by fines and blows; their correspondence is brutally censored; they are cut off from their families and communes. Misery and brutality lead to wholesale desertions and suicides.[6]

Conditions in the Islands were no better. Ironically, the abuses there were exposed by a French colonist, the Marquis de Montpezat, whose important interests in Tonkin were being threatened by the increasing drain of laborers to the Islands.

> . . . He showed up this twentieth-century business as a scandal slave trade, and the patriotic motives evoked by its sponsors as nothing more than plain profiteering. The powerful Societe des Phosphates de l'Oceanie used its influence with the administration to procure, through the village Notables, more cheap Tonkinese labour, so as to save them from having to hire the more expensive Chinese. Montpezat, in his publicity, spared no detail of the terrible conditions, not only on the Islands themselves, but on the boats transporting the workers. The unhealthy climate, and the failure to take any medical care of the sick or legal care for the rights of the labourers, he also scored. Montpezat became the bane of the government's existence, but the facts that he brought to light could not be denied, notably in proving the administration's guilty knowledge of this terrible trade.[7]

The evils of contract labor were equalled, or surpassed, by those of forced labor. Mandatory toil on public works was nothing other than the corvee, against which the French themselves had revolted in the days of Louis XVI. Although this particular form of peonage was legally abolished in Indochina at the turn of the century, it persisted in fact,

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6. Virginia Thompson, French Indo-China (1937), pp. 154-155.
7. Ibid., p. 164.

in one form or another, until 1937. The practice of levying forced labor quotas on the countryside had arisen out of the shortage of free labor for the ambitious French program of public works. Mandarins were indispensable intermediaries for procuring the laborers, and they often used the institution as a means for paying off old scores. The colonial government did not show the same consideration for native customs as had the old Annamite regime. Men were often taken from far more useful work in the fields. Village notables arbitrarily selected their victims, who were perennially the same. These men spent their lives on one corvee after another, without respite or any semblance of family life. The heavy mortality and wholesale desertions were eloquent testimony to the lack of care for the human beings engaged on public projects. It was not unusual that villages would be deserted at the approach of a traveller who might have a permit to requisition labor.[8]

Among the misfortunes of the Indochinese was the government's monopoly on salt, alcohol, and opium, which constituted one of the main sources of revenue for the budget.[9] In addition, French companies and Chinese agents, who paid dearly for licenses to sell the three items, realized enormous profits. The use of opium was not widely practiced in Indochina before the arrival of the French. Thereafter, consumption increased rapidly. In France, opium smoking was a criminal offense; in Indochina, it was a financial prop of the government.[10]

Alcohol was a requirement of Annamese religious rites. Before 1898, the natives had been free to distill it for their own use. After that time, its sale was under government monopoly, and in 1903, a French-controlled company was granted a monopoly on its manufacture. Increased consumption was

8. Ibid., p. 162.
9. Charles Robequain, The Economic Development of French Indo-China (1944), p. 155.
10. Thompson, French Indo-China, pp. 184-186.

actively encouraged, while domiciliary searches and bonuses for denunciations were instituted to combat contraband buying and selling.[11]

The gabelle, a tax on salt, had been highly unpopular in France under the ancien regime. Similar in nature, the salt monopoly in Indochina was the most widely resented form of taxation. Salted fish, together with rice, constituted the major element of Annamese diet. Soon after the government took over the sale and distribution of salt at the end of the nineteenth century, the price trebled. Consumption fell off, with adverse effects upon the health of the natives, to say nothing of their political viewpoint. Speculation and fraud were rampant in the salt industry, and minor reforms in the 1930's did little to relieve popular resentment over the government's salt policies. The monopolies on salt, alcohol, and opium led to a constant struggle between the administration and the masses, with thousands imprisoned yearly for contraband trade in these commodities.[12]

Nevertheless, French rule did bring many genuine benefits to Indochina. The Pasteur Institute, of which the French were justly proud, made important advances in the study and treatment of tropical diseases, and greatly improved sanitation and hygiene. Hospitals and dispensaries were built. The French strengthened and extended the dike system that for centuries past had proved incapable of holding back the waters of the delta areas. Thousands of acres of farmland were reclaimed by drainage and irrigation, and French agricultural experts helped the Indochinese to increase their crop yields. Modern road systems were constructed in and around the cities, and a main highway was laid northward from Saigon to the Chinese border. The French also built the Trans-Indochinese and the Yunnan Railroads, the former paralleling the main highway, the latter linking the interior of south China with the port of Haiphong on the Gulf of Tonkin.

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11. Ibid., pp. 186-188. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 69.

12. Thompson, French Indo-China, pp. 184-191.

Rise of Nationalism and Political Parties

There are few better goads toward nationalism than subjection to a foreign power. Before the arrival of the French, the Vietnamese already had a centuries-long history of resistance to Chinese attempts to incorporate, and retain, Vietnam within the confines of the Chinese Empire. On the other hand, Annamese emperors ruled by divine sanction and Confucianist doctrine stressed docility in the face of authority. At first this concept aided the French in establishing themselves in the country. But in pressing their language upon the natives, the French unwittingly opened the way for the discovery by Annamese intellectuals of the historic French revolutionary tradition. Once acquainted with the political liberties of the French people, and impressed by the theories upon which those liberties were based, the Indochinese began to seek similar rights for themselves.

The dissatisfaction of Indochinese intellectuals was heightened by the position they were forced to occupy in their own country. They could not travel among the three Vietnamese regions without permission, and to go abroad they needed a police permit. The few who were allowed to go to France to study were treated there as social equals, but upon their return home they were constrained to revert to being "second-class citizens." Important positions in the government of their own country were closed to them. Even in the few posts available, they received much lower salaries than Frenchmen discharging equivalent tasks. Up to half the members of important councils in Indochina were French, and the Vietnamese members were either appointed by the government or elected under a system of highly restricted suffrage. Moreover, the councils had only advisory power.

Regardless of labels, authority was entirely in the hands of the highly centralized French administration. Policy was laid down in France, sometimes by Parliament, more often by ministerial decree. It was implemented in Indochina by the French bureaucracy, which extended downward from the Governor General, the Resident Superieur of the protectorates, and the Governor of Cochin China, to a network of lesser officials.

Ellen Hammer cites the testimony of a French official who had visited the Philippines in 1925-1926 and had been struck by the fact that "all the services with which travelers came into contact--health, police, customs--were staffed by Filipinos." In Indochina they were all French, not only in 1925 but also in 1940. The French held jobs that white men in other colonies considered below their dignity. As a result, the proportion of French officials to Indochinese was higher than that of European officials to the people of any other southeast Asian dependent area. Many Vietnamese withdrew entirely from public life, in passive resistance to French rule. Others turned to violence and revolution in attempting to expel the French and reestablish imperial Viet Nam, with a corresponding return to ancient doctrine and customs. Each revolt, however, lacking organization, direction, or popular support, was easily put down by the French.[13]

There was an upsurge of nationalistic feeling after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, which destroyed the myth of white invincibility. World War I also played its part. Over 100,000 Annamites were sent to France as soldiers, farm laborers, and factory workers. Resentment over forced participation in the French war effort, coupled with new ideas, such as that of the political party, was transformed into political action upon their return home.[14]

In the period between world wars, Indochinese nationalism changed direction and grew stronger. Whereas formerly opposition to the French had been centered in the mandarins, who wished to restore the old regime and traditional institutions, there now arose a class of French-educated intellectuals who hoped to take the lead in establishing a modern state along western lines. During the twenties, reform movements sprang up throughout the country.

13. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 72-74. Thompson, French Indo-China, p. 455.
14. Thompson, French Indo-China, pp. 480-481.

The most important non-Communist political party before World War II was the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD), or Nationalist Party, founded in 1927 by a group of young intellectuals who looked to China for aid in ousting the French. By the beginning of 1929, membership exceeded 1,500. Emboldened by their waxing strength, Nationalist Party leaders were instrumental during 1930 in staging a number of anti-French riots and demonstrations, bombings in Hanoi, and raids in various parts of the country. They went too far, however, in inciting the Yen Bay garrison to mutiny and massacre the French officers. French troops ruthlessly quelled the revolt, and the VNQDD leaders who were not executed or imprisoned fled to China.[15] The organization followed the surviving leadership and remained in China until 1945, when it again came to the fore in Vietnamese political life.[16]

Another important political party was the Cao Dai, founded in 1926 in Cochinchina as a religious movement. It professed to look toward Indochinese salvation by uniting Buddhism, Confuciansim, Christianity, Taoism, and Animism. It was organized along the same lines as the Catholic hierarchy, having both a pope and a priesthood. By 1930, it had over a million adherents spread through Cochinchina, south Annam, and Cambodia. Its leaders were highly critical of French rule and strongly nationalistic. From 1934 on, the Cao Dai secretly supported the Japanese pretender to the throne of Annam, and aided the Japanese in policing Cochinchina during the wartime occupation.[17]

The Hoa Hao was also a religious movement, founded just prior to World War II by Huynh Phu So, an "idealistic young leader . . . followed devotedly by many thousands of untutored peasants to whom he quoted ancient prophecies as he preached, somewhat vaguely, independence and social reform."[18]

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15. State Dept, Political Alignments of Vietnamese Nationalists, OIR No. 3708, 1 Oct 49, pp. 21-25.
16. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 82-84.
17. State Dept, Biographical Information on Prominent Nationalist Leaders in French Indo-China, R&A No. 3336, 25 Oct 45, pp. 5-6. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 51-52, 79.
18. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 52.

The story of the early development of the Communist Party in Indochina is inseparably connected with the life and activity of Nguyen ai Quoc, now known as Ho Chi Minh.

Descendant of an Annamese mandarin family, Ho left home at the age of 19 and worked his way around the world on a French ship. He finally established residence in Paris, where he became interested in Communist teachings. During the Versailles Conference in 1919, he drew up, and introduced, a memorandum of Annamite desiderata. Also while in Paris, he founded the Intercolonial Union of Colored Peoples.[19]

Ho Chi Minh attended the Socialist Party Congress at Tours in 1920. Ideological differences developed, and Ho was among those who split away from the Socialists to establish the French Communist Party. In 1922, he founded a newspaper, in which he denounced French colonial policy, and in October 1923 he went to Moscow as Indochinese delegate to the International Peasant Conference. He remained in the Soviet Union for a year and a half, "studying revolutionary methods and associating with Soviet leaders who esteemed him for his remarkable intelligence."[20]

Ho then went to Canton, ostensibly as a Chinese translator in the Soviet Consultate. His primary mission, however, was evident in his founding, in China, of the Association of Revolutionary Annamite Youth--the first Communist cell for Annamites. He also instructed in the politico-military school of Whampoa, originally established to prepare leaders for a world Communist revolution.[21]

When the Kuomintang turned on the Communists in 1927, Ho fled with Borodin to the Soviet Union, where he was officially given the mission of founding Indochinese Communism.[22] By that time, 250 Annamites had received revolutionary training, and over 200 had returned to Indochina to assume key positions in the Communist movement.[23]

19. State Dept, R&A No. 3336, pp. 27-28.
20. Thompson, French Indo-China, p. 490.
21. State Dept, R&A No. 3336, pp. 28-29.
22. Thompson, French Indo-China, p. 491.
23. State Dept, OIR No. 3708, p. 31.

The course of Communism in Indochina did not run smoothly. By 1929, a split in the ranks of the Youth League and the rise of dissident groups led to competition among three separate factions for recognition by the Third Internationale. Moscow understandably showed great reluctance to select any one group for official investiture. Instead, the Soviets called upon Ho Chi Minh, as the only personality capable of the task, to unite the three parties. In this he was successful. Although Moscow gave its blessing and a monthly subsidy of 5,000 francs to the united Indochinese Communist Party, the fact that Ho held in his own hands the key to Soviet support later proved to be a serious weakness.[24] The Party reportedly had over 1,000 members in 1930, but the true index of its strength lay in the estimated 100,000 peasants who followed its leadership.[25]

That same year, however, saw the beginning of a series of events that virtually wrecked the Party. Between May and September, the Communists seized upon the discontent and suffering caused by severe famines to organize a chain of demonstrations and uprisings, several of which reached serious proportions. This activity was undertaken while Ho was apparently out of the country and there is reason to believe that it was without his knowledge and consent. French reaction was swift and effective. The outbreaks were ruthlessly crushed and many Communist leaders were tried publicly as common criminals. As a result, Communist power and influence underwent a sharp decline.[26]

Further misfortunes followed. Ho Chi Minh was arrested by the British in Hongkong. The Party, bereft of its leader, lost touch with the Comintern which, in any event, had been highly critical of the campaign of ineffectual violence. The Indochinese Communist Party was faced with practical disintegration. An attempt at reorganization was smashed by the French police in 1932.[27]

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25. State Dept, OIR No. 3708, pp. 35-36.
26. Ibid., p. 36. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 84-86.
27. Ibid.

Following the release, in 1933, of a number of political prisoners taken during the events mentioned above, the Communist Party slowly began to revive in Indochina. The turning point in its history came at the Macao Conference in 1935. Here, besides reaffirming its adherence to the Comintern, the Party received the order from Moscow to join forces with non-Communists in the fight against Fascism. Henceforth, the Asians were expected to cease opposing their European masters and, instead, campaign for democratic rights so that they could work together with the colonialists to combat the Axis. When the Popular Front collapsed in France in 1938, its Indochinese counterpart, the Democratic Front, did likewise, and the Communist Party went underground. This time, however, the Communists fared better than in 1930-1931. Although the Party was outlawed, and some of its leaders were temporarily at leisure in jail, party organization remained intact, the secret cells were undisturbed and the network of party workers and sympathizers continued loyal.[28]

The political parties accounted for in this chapter are but the more outstanding ones among a bewildering array of groups of every political hue. During the war, and especially during the Japanese occupation, almost all Vietnamese political parties found it necessary to join in coalitions in order to further more effectively the work for independence. And of these coalitions, only the Dong Minh Hoi and the Viet Minh acquired sufficient stature to emerge as potent political entities after the war.

28. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 90-93.

CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHMENT OF JAPANESE DOMINATION IN INDOCHINA 1940-1941

Japanese plans for the creation of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere relied heavily on possession of Indochina. Rich in rice and raw materials, it was also the natural gateway to all Southeast Asia. In addition, by 1940 the strategic location of Indochina had assumed increasing importance for Japan's prosecution of the long and costly war against China.

By the summer of that year, Japanese forces had driven the armies of Chiang Kai-shek into the interior of south China. Cut off from his coastal ports, Chiang depended for a large part of his supplies upon the Yunnan Railroad and the port of Haiphong. Denial of this supply route was, therefore, an early and important Japanese objective.

Japanese Pressure on the French

With the collapse of the French armies in Europe in the spring of 1940, Japan decided to delay no longer. In April, Japanese aircraft bombarded the Yunnan Railroad, and a strong press and radio campaign was initiated against the "provocations" of French Indochina. Japanese troops stirred along the south China border.

Although they were well aware of the impending storm, there was little the French could do to avert it, for Indochina was woefully weak, both economically and militarily. The French now had cause to regret their mercantile policy of restricting Indochinese manufacturing; the country was almost wholly dependent upon overseas sources for industrial products and munitions. For defense, the French had a widely dispersed army of 50,000 French and native troops, one cruiser, four cutters, a few miscellaneous

smaller craft, and no modern aircraft. Munitions and supplies were sufficient for only one month of fighting, at the most.[1]

Yet, though isolated from France, virtually defenseless, and subjected to strong Japanese pressure, the French in Indochina still hoped to protect their sovereignty from Japanese encroachment. They embarked on a desperate and dangerous game of delay and compromise.

On 19 June, two days after Petain had asked Germany for an armistice, Japan demanded of General Georges Catroux, Governor-General of Indochina, that the Yunnan Railroad be closed to shipments of war materials for China. To guarantee that the blockade would be effective, Japan also demanded the right to set up a control commission in Tonkin. Catroux was given 24 hours to reply, or suffer Japanese attack. Although he knew acquiescence would probably result in new demands, Catroux felt he had no choice but to yield.[2]

He hoped that, following his submission, the Japanese would be content to wait a time before demanding new concessions. He planned, in the interim, to carry on negotiations with the head of the control commission, and to use the respite of the rainy season to build up his military strength with the help of France and the United States. But his plan soon went awry. In informal discussion with General Gaku Nishihara, chief of the control commission, Catroux made the mistake of suggesting that Vichy France might grant the Japanese further facilities for carrying on their campaign against southern China, provided Tokyo would guarantee French sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Indochina.[3]

When news of this unauthorized proposal reached France, Petain's Colonial Minister was profoundly distressed. Already dissatisfied with Catroux's bowing to the Japanese

1. Direction de la Documentation, Notes Documentaires et Etudes (hereinafter: Notes et Etudes), Rpt of Gen Georges Catroux, "La crise franco-japonnaise de juin 1940," No. 120, 22 Aug 45.
2. Ibid.
3. William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Undeclared War, 1940-1941 (1953), p. 9.

ultimatum, the Minister urged the French Cabinet to recall him. This was done, and Vice Admiral Jean Decoux was named in his stead.[4]

Decoux relieved his predecessor on 20 July, and less than two weeks later the Japanese presented France with a new list of demands. They asked for transit rights through Indochina for Japanese troops, the right to build airfields, and an economic accord that would tie Indochina's resources to Japan. In desperation the Vichy Government tried to bargain for time. Decoux was ordered to resist a Japanese invasion while Vichy reopened discussions with Japan along the identical lines of Catroux's original suggestion.

Behind this apparent willingness to consider new concessions, however, the French were secretly hoping to strengthen their hand enough to reject Japanese demands. The British were in no position, in the summer of 1940, to support the French in Indochina, which left the United States as the best remaining potential source of aid against Japan.[5]

Even as Vichy was dispatching its conciliatory reply to Japan, another message was on its way to the French Ambassador in Washington, instructing him to inform the United States Government of Tokyo's demands. He was also directed to indicate that "the resistance of the French Government to the Japanese demands would necessarily depend to a large extent on the nature and effectiveness of the support which the American Government would be disposed to give it."[6]

The Ambassador was forced to cable his government that there was "no prospect of active American aid against Japan." James C. Dunn, Political Adviser to the State Department, had informed him that "we have been doing and are doing everything possible within the framework of our established

4. Paul Baudouin, Neuf mois au gouvernement, Avril-Decembre 1940 (Paris, 1948), p. 216.
5. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, p. 9.
6. Ibid., p. 10.

policies to keep the situation in the Far East stabilized; that we have been progressively taking various steps . . . to exert economic pressure on Japan; that our Fleet is now based on Hawaii, and that the course which we have been following . . . gives a clear indication of our intentions and activities for the future."[7]

Ambassador Saint-Quentin correctly interpreted this reply to mean that "the United States would not use military or naval force in support of any position which might be taken to resist the Japanese attempted aggression on Indo-China."[8]

Disappointed in Washington, the French continued to temporize with Japan while they next sought to enlist the aid of their recent conqueror, Germany. Cynically appealing to Nazi racism, they suggested that support in Indochina would ensure an Asian foothold for the white race. Germany, however, while expressing sympathy with France's plight, refused to intervene.[9]

Japan's threats of military action were becoming stronger, and France could find no outside solution to her predicament. Therefore, on the night of 16 August, the French Cabinet decided to make new concessions, hoping in this way to avoid losing all of Indochina at once. The following day, Paul Baudouin, the French Foreign Minister, notified the American Charge d'Affaires that, "in the absence of any material support from Great Britain and the United States as distinguished from the enunciation of principles," France must yield.[10]

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7. (C) Doc A-1, Msg, Dunn to USecState, 6 Aug 40, in (TS) State Dept, Hist Div, Documentary History of United States Policy toward Indochina, 1940-1953, Research Proj No. 354, April 1954 (hereinafter: Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina).

8. Ibid., p. 2; Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, p. 10.

9. La Delegation Francaise aupres de la Commission Allemande d'Armistice, Recueil de Documents publie par le Gouvernement Francais, Tome Premier, 29 Juin 1940-29 Septembre 1940, pp. 107-108. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, p. 11.

10. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, p. 12.

As the result of negotiations carried on in Tokyo, a Franco-Japanese political accord was signed on 29 August. Under the terms of this agreement, Japan recognized the "permanent French interest in Indo-China" and France recognized the "preponderance of Japanese interest in that area."[11]

The French had hoped to gain a brief respite by insisting that the political accord not go into effect until a military agreement had been signed. To their chagrin, on the very next day; General Nishihara handed Decoux the complete text of a military agreement and demanded that it be signed by midnight, 2 September. Decoux rejected the ultimatum and prepared to fight. In the meantime, however, Vichy had appealed directly to the Japanese Government, which disavowed Nishihara.[12]

It had been a close call, and the French sought frantically to escape the closing trap while there was yet time. They approached British, American, and German representatives in turn, seeking material support from Britain and America and, from Germany, permission to send Vichy-owned military equipment to Indochina. Great Britain and the United States contented themselves with remonstrating in Tokyo against any change in the status quo, and Germany refused to release the equipment. On the other hand, the Chinese Ambassador in France had several times proposed that Chinese troops move into Indochina to defend it against the Japanese, but Vichy, suspicious of Chinese motives and also afraid of antagonizing Germany, had rejected the offer.[13]

On 19 September, her patience ended, Japan made it clear that Vichy's dilatory tactics would no longer be tolerated. Three days later a military agreement was signed, granting the Japanese use of three airfields in Tonkin and permission to station 6,000 troops there. The French also agreed to permit the eventual passage of Japanese forces (never to number more than 25,000) through

11. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, p. 13.
12. Ibid.
13. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 21.

Tonkin to Yunnan, and consented, subject to further negotiation, to allow a division of the Kwantung Army to be evacuated through Tonkin.[14] But there was no further negotiation. Elements of the Kwantung Army began to move across the frontier on 23 September and were immediately fired upon by the French. Outnumbered and outgunned, the French were badly beaten; by the twenty-fifth, all resistance ceased. The Japanese proceeded to consolidate their hold by taking over strategic points in the north, but they seemed quite content to leave a framework of French control.

Although free to run the country as before, the French had their work cut out for them. Not only did they have native unrest and rebellion to cope with, but by January 1941, they were also embroiled in an undeclared war with Thailand. On 10 September, Thailand had formally demanded retrocession of territory in Laos and Cambodia, and islands in the Mekong, that the French had taken from them in 1904 and 1907. Vichy rejected the claims and, following border skirmishes, Thailand announced the occupation of three districts in Cambodia on 30 November. After a number of indecisive engagements, the French were soundly defeated on 16 January, but had their revenge the next day, when they sank 40 per cent of the Thai Navy in the Gulf of Siam.[15]

With German help, Japan persuaded Vichy to accept mediation of the dispute, and on 31 January 1941, an armistice was signed aboard a Japanese cruiser in Saigon harbor. The French had little choice; they had been warned to accept Japanese mediation or "face the consequences of Japan's determination to assert leadership in Greater East Asia." On 9 May a compromise peace settlement was signed, whereby Thailand received an estimated 26,970 square miles of territory in western Cambodia and Laos, paying France

14. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, p. 15.
15. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 25.

6 million piastres (1.37 million dollars) in compensation. Japan was made guarantor of the execution of the peace terms, and both Indochina and Thailand were bound not to conclude any political, economic, or military agreements with third powers, directed against Japan.16

U.S. Policy toward France and Japan Concerning Indochina

The Vichy-Japanese accord of 29 August 1940 brought about a change of attitude in American relations with both signatories. It also set in motion the series of events that led inexorably to Pearl Harbor.

When the United States learned of the accord, and the extent of French concessions to Japanese military demands, patience wore thin. Secretary Hull announced to the French Ambassador that "the French Government cannot imagine our surprise and disappointment when it took this step without any notice whatever to us."17 His surprise was even greater when Vichy issued a statement on 23 September alleging that the United States had approved of the agreement. An emphatic and public denial was immediately put out by the Secretary.18

In the meantime, Ambassador Grew in Tokyo had been instructed to protest to the Japanese Government. The thinly veiled insult he received in reply convinced him of the hopelessness of further temporizing and inspired his now famous "green light" message, advocating much stronger measures.19 The Administration had had such

16. (S) State Dept, Div of Research on the Far East (DRF), SEA Br, "Chronological History of Events in Indochina Since 1940 (Background Paper for Indochina Phase of Geneva Conference, April 1954)," 1 Apr 54 (hereinafter: (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology), pp. 18-19, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 60 BP pt 10.

17. Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (1948), vol I, p. 904.

18. Ibid., p. 907.

19. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, pp. 19-20. Hull, Memoirs, vol I, pp. 906-907.

measures under consideration for some time; it only remained to apply them. On 25 September a loan of 25 million dollars to China was announced and, on the following day, the President brought the export of iron and steel scrap under the licensing system in such a way as to exclude Japan.[20]

In the months that followed, the Vichy Government made repeated attempts to purchase airplanes and munitions for use in Indochina. As Secretary Hull states: "We on our part saw no reason to sell planes to Vichy when at that very moment about one hundred American planes originally destined for France were rusting away at Martinique." Hull offered to get British clearance in order to facilitate shipment of these planes to Indochina. Vichy replied that the German Armistice Commission would not permit movement of the aircraft, but was willing to let arms go from America to Indochina. However, the United States chose to sidestep this obvious trap. In spite of being refused material aid, the Vichy Government, and Pierre Laval himself, were forced to admit that it was American policy in the Far East that was deterring Japan from further encroachment.[21]

The extent to which American policy really acted as a deterrent is debatable. Japan was not ready for southward expansion until she had secured herself against attack by the Soviet Union in the north, and until she was sure that seizure of the Far Eastern possessions of Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands would not be challenged by a presumably victorious Germany. The answer to both problems lay in the Tripartite Pact, signed by Germany, Italy, and Japan on 27 September 1940. Germany, in turn, was allied with the Soviet Union, and Japan relied upon this roundabout relationship to keep the Soviets in check.[22]

The stage was now set for the next move, and it was not long in coming. On 12 July 1941, Baron Kato "regretfully" informed the French Government that Japan felt obliged to send land, sea, and air forces into southern

20. Hull, Memoirs, vol. I, p. 907.
21. Ibid., pp. 907-908.
22. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, pp. 21ff.

Indochina. He demanded eight air and two naval bases, the withdrawal of French garrisons from places to be occupied by the Japanese, and freedom of movement in southern Indochina for Japanese forces. If a favorable answer were not forthcoming by 20 July, the Bäron explained that the use of force would become necessary.[23]

When Washington learned of the Japanese demands, it instructed Ambassador Leahy to use all his influence to delay a decision as long as possible. Leahy bluntly informed Admiral Darlan that "if Japan was the winner, the Japanese would take over French Indochina; and if the Allies won, we would take it." However, since neither the Americans nor the British held out any prospect of aid, Vichy was helpless. Accession at least meant that French sovereignty would be respected on paper.[24]

Japanese troops occupied the southern portions of Indochina on 21 September and by the twenty-ninth Vichy had formally acquiesced to the use of eight airfields and the naval bases at Saigon and Camranh. No limit was placed on the number of troops to be stationed in the area, and the first contingent consisted of 50,000.[25]

As President Roosevelt expressed it, Japan's daring move posed for the United States an "exceedingly serious problem." The President suggested to Ambassador Nomura that, if the Japanese would withdraw their troops, he would try to obtain a solemn declaration by the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Netherlands to regard Indochina as a "neutralized" country, much like Switzerland, provided Japan made a similar commitment. The alternative, he hinted, might be economic sanctions. Nomura unfortunately transmitted this message to his government in garbled form, stressing the sanctions and almost entirely ignoring the constructive offer. As a consequence, the Japanese continued pouring troops into Indochina.[26]

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23. Ibid., p. 641.
24. Ibid., pp. 641-644; William D. Leahy, I Was There (1940), p. 44.
25. Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, pp. 21ff.
26. Ibid., pp. 649-651; Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan, 1931-1941 (1943), vol. II, pp. 527-530.

An executive order freezing all Japanese funds and assets in the United States was issued on 26 July. On the same day, Great Britain and the Dominions denounced their trade treaties with Japan and imposed various financial restrictions. The Netherlands followed suit on 28 July. As one American observer commented: "Japan must move quickly to consummate her conquests in Asia or face economic ruin and defeat."[27]

The Japanese intended to move quickly. A message from Matsuoka to Nomura on 2 July read in part: "Preparations for southward advance shall be reenforced and the policy already decided upon with reference to French Indo-China and Thailand shall be executed."[28] Therefore, when Nomura and Kurusu handed Japan's last-word version of a modus vivendi to Secretary Hull on 20 November, it was, in effect, an ultimatum. It was clear to all that Japan's steadily expanding control over Indochina would cease only at the price of "clearly unacceptable . . . conditions that would have assured Japan domination of the Pacific, placing us in serious danger for decades to come."[29]

On the eve of Pearl Harbor (7 December, Asian time), Japanese troops infiltrated Hanoi and took up key positions throughout the city. The next day Governor-General Decoux was presented with a new ultimatum: do nothing to hinder the activities of the Japanese forces, or else Japan would take over Indochina. Decoux bowed to the inevitable. In recompense, French sovereignty was reconfirmed--for what it was worth--and the French were left in control of their own army and of the administration of the country. As Ellen Hammer observes: "Defeated in Europe in 1940, France was defeated in Asia in 1941. One day the Vietnamese would cite their failure as proof that France had forfeited its right to 'protect' Indochina."[30]

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27. Wilfred Fleischer in the New York Herald Tribune, 27 Jul 41, quoted by Langer and Gleason, Undeclared War, p. 652.
28. Hull, Memoirs, vol II, p. 1013.
29. Ibid., p. 1069.
30. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 26.

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD INDOCHINA 1942-1946

Roosevelt Policy

For both military and political reasons, the United States did not challenge Japanese control of Indochina during World War II. Allied strategy called for crushing Germany first, then defeating Japan, and the road to victory over the Japanese did not lead through Indochina. It was assumed by American military planners that victory in the Pacific would mean the end of Japanese control of Indochina--without the necessity of large-scale operations there. Politically, the President made it clear that he did not intend "to get mixed up in any Indochina decision" or "in any military effort toward the liberation of Indochina from the Japanese." Indochina, the President insisted, was "a matter for post-war."[1]

Nevertheless, Indochina was a frequent topic of study and discussion by the President, the State Department, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the war. Sometimes this topic arose from French requests for permission to participate in the war against Japan--a euphemism for a French campaign to regain control of Indochina. After March 1945, when the Japanese overthrew the French administration in Indochina, the American Government had to consider the problem of aid to French resistance forces. No less frequently, the subject of Indochina was introduced by the President himself, who held strong views regarding the disposition of Indochina after the war and did not hesitate to express them to such widely differing personalities as his son Elliott, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of State, Churchill, the Generalissimo, General Stilwell, officials of the Turkish and Egyptian Governments, and Stalin.

At first, the President's view was that all French territory should be restored to France after the war. In January 1942 through his Ambassador to Vichy, Admiral William D. Leahy, he assured Petain and Darlan of his

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1. (S) JCS 1200/2, 11 Jan 45, CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 2.

intention to see France, including the French Empire, "reconstituted in the post-war period in accordance with its splendid position in history." Twice in November 1942 the French were assured that America would see that their colonies were returned after the war. On 2 November the President, through Mr. Robert D. Murphy, pledged the re-establishment of French sovereignty "throughout all the territory, metropolitan and colonial, over which flew the French flag in 1939." This pledge was given when American troops were preparing to land in North Africa and the President was seeking to enlist French support, or, at least, to ensure that the French would not oppose the American landings. Then just as American troops hit the beaches, the President himself sent a message to Petain that "the ultimate and greater aim /of the American armies/ is the liberation of France and its Empire from the Axis yoke." Unfortunately, these pledges did not dissuade the French from resisting the American landings. Instead, Petain replied: "We are attacked; we shall defend ourselves; this is the order I am giving."2

After this, the President made no further pledges to restore French sovereignty throughout the Empire, and by the time of the Casablanca Conference of January 1943 he had changed his original view. Whether his change of mind stemmed from anger over French resistance to the American landings in North Africa or from his own strong anti-colonialism is not clear. Whatever the cause, at Casablanca he confided to his son Elliott that he was not sure "we'd be right to return France her colonies at all, ever, without first obtaining in the case of each individual colony some sort of pledge, some sort of statement of just exactly what was planned, in terms of each colony's administration." "The native Indo-Chinese," the President asserted, "have been so flagrantly downtrodden that they thought to themselves: Anything must be better, than to live under French colonial rule!" "Don't think for a moment," the President

2. Elliott Roosevelt, ed, F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945 (1950), vol II, pp. 1275-1276. Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (1950), pp. 645-647. (C) Doc A-8, "Extract from Letter of Robert D. Murphy to General Henri Giraud," 2 Nov 42, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina.

added, "that Americans would be dying in the Pacific tonight, if it hadn't been for the shortsighted greed of the French and the British and the Dutch." In concluding this discussion with his son, the President pledged that, once the war was won, he would work with all his "might and main to see to it that the United States is not wheedled into the position of accepting any plan that will further France's imperialistic ambitions, or that will aid or abet the British Empire in its imperial ambitions."3

At subsequent wartime conferences the President made it clear that he did not want Indochina returned to France. Instead, he favored placing it under an international trusteeship for twenty to twenty-five years to prepare the native population for eventual independence. At Cairo he found the Generalissimo receptive to this idea. At Tehran and Yalta Marshal Stalin was enthusiastic about it. But Churchill was dead set against any action that infringed upon French sovereignty over their colonial empire. As the President explained matters to Stalin, the British opposed establishing an international trusteeship over Indochina because of the implications of such an arrangement to the British Empire. As matters developed, the President never got around to proposing a specific plan for a trusteeship and that idea did not advance beyond the discussion stage.4

But, while he lived, the President's attitude toward Indochina constituted American policy. And in the fall of 1943 that policy began to collide with French colonial interests in Indochina. The first collision occurred when the French Committee of National Liberation requested an enormous increase in American arms and equipment for French forces and petitioned for representation on the Pacific War Council.

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3. Elliott Roosevelt, As He Saw It (1946), pp. 114-116.
4. (TS) State Dept, Hist Div, "Handbook of Far Eastern Conference Discussions," Research Proj No. 62, Nov 49 (hereinafter: FE Conf Disc), pp. C-4, C-36, C-65, D-7, D-16, D-17, D-20, E-9, E-10, E-24, E-25, E-41. Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Roosevelt and the Russians (1949), pp. 237-238.

In submitting their new armament program, the French Committee of National Liberation disclosed that it was based in part on aiding the Allied war effort in the Far East and on restoring French sovereignty to all the territories of the Empire. The new program was rejected on both military and political grounds. On 8 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted a Joint Strategic Survey Committee recommendation that, "except for minor readjustments from time to time to utilize trained French personnel, no additional U.S. military assistance and equipment be promised the French beyond that now contemplated." As to French participation in the war against Japan, the Chiefs could not visualize any assistance the French could give. "It most certainly does not appear logical," they stated, "to renovate the French fleet for use in the Pacific at a time when the maintenance of the U.S. and British fleets in that area will tax to the utmost the resources of these countries." As for ground and air forces, the United States and Britain ultimately would have an abundance, "and any assistance which we shall require from the French would be in the nature of token forces for political or psychological reasons rather than for military reasons." Referring to the desire of the French Committee of National Liberation to restore French sovereignty over her colonial empire, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asserted that "the accomplishment of such a purpose is of itself not of direct military interest to the United States and we should not obligate ourselves to furnish military assistance to the French for that purpose." The Chiefs assumed that the defeat of the Axis would restore all French territory, "with possible reservations as to certain sites for naval and air bases."

The Chiefs soon learned that this assumption was false. When they discussed the French rearmament program with the President, the President emphatically agreed that it should not be increased beyond that already contemplated. But he supported his position with a political reason the Chiefs had not taken into account: "we should not commit ourselves to the French to give back to France all her colonies. . . . We should not let our policy regarding this matter give the appearance of a definite commitment." And in listing the territories he felt should not be restored to France, he placed Indochina first.

In the end, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not even reply to the French request for additional armament. In late December, some two months after the French had submitted their request, they sought to obtain an answer from the War Department. General Marshall was noncommittal. He merely said that the desire of the French to participate in all phases of the operations in their homeland was fully appreciated and that it was planned "to make the fullest possible use of the French forces in this crucial phase of the war."5

Meanwhile, the French request for admission to the Pacific War Council had encountered an equally cool reception from the President and the Department of State. On 29 October Under Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., informed the President that the French Committee of National Liberation had informally asked for representation on the Pacific War Council. Stettinius advised the President that the State Department believed this request was based on the Committee's desire to enhance its own prestige, to place itself in a better position to protect French interests in Indochina after Indochina was liberated from the Japanese, and to insure its own eventual control of that colony. If this proposal were accepted, Stettinius pointed out, the Committee's representative would probably take the position that the Committee represented all French interests in the Pacific, including Indochina, and that one objective of the Pacific campaign must be the reconquest of Indochina and its return to France. Therefore, Stettinius recommended that the State Department be authorized to put off replying to the French for an indefinite period. The President approved this recommendation and the State Department merely filed the French request for future reference.

On 13 December, M. Henri Hoppenot, the Delegate of the French Committee of National Liberation, again raised this question with the State Department. Hoppenot pointed out that the British War Office had already accepted a French

5. (C) JCS 547, 25 Oct 43; (S dg C) JCS 561, 2 Nov 43; (C) JCS 547/2, 8 Nov 43; (S) Memo, Leahy to Pres, "Rearmament of French Forces," 9 Nov 43. All in CCS 370 France (10-6-43) sec 1. (S) Mns, JCS 121st Mtg, 2 Nov 43, item 11; (S) Mns, JCS 122nd Mtg, 9 Nov 43, item 1; (S) Mns, Mtg, JCS with Pres, 15 Nov 43, item 3. Marcel Vigneras, MS, The Rearmament of the French Forces in World War II (OCMH), Ch XI, pp. 24-25.

military mission to Delhi headed by General Blaizot. This new development, Hoppenot stated, made it even more desirable that parallel collaboration should be established at Washington, by the association of a French representative in the deliberations of the Pacific War Council.

Once more the French did not receive the answer they desired. Instead, they were informed by Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, Jr., that their communication had been received and that the question raised therein had been referred to the appropriate authorities of the government. Mr. Berle apparently did not intend to answer either of these French requests any time soon, for he merely forwarded the pertinent correspondence to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their information. The Chiefs circulated this correspondence, then apparently did not pursue this matter further.[6]

The American Government had, in effect, marked these French requests "file and forget," and for the next few months, as attention focused on opening a second front in Europe, American interest in Indochina lay dormant. Then, in the summer of 1944, when Allied armies had landed in France and the liberation of that nation from Germany appeared imminent, the French renewed and intensified their efforts to obtain American permission to participate in the war against Japan.

In July, Major General M. E. Bethouart, who was visiting Washington on a mission with General de Gaulle, discussed with Admiral Leahy the intention of France to recover Indochina from the Japanese. General Bethouart, of course, asked for American equipment for this purpose. He got nowhere. Instead, Admiral Leahy informed him that "Indo-China could not at that time be included within the sphere of interest of the American Chiefs of Staff."[7]

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6. (R) JCS Info Memo 177, 10 Jan 44, CCS 370 France (10-6-43) sec 2.

7. ADM William D. Leahy, I Was There (1950), p. 244.

Thus rebuffed by the Americans, the French turned for support to the British, who proved more sympathetic. In July 1944 the French Committee of National Liberation asked the British to obtain American acceptance of French participation in both regular military operations and clandestine activities in Indochina. The French Committee of National Liberation submitted four proposals: (1) that French forces participate in the war against Japan; (2) that they participate in planning the war against Japan; (3) that a French military mission be attached to the headquarters of Lord Louis Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command (SEAC); and (4) that the French participate in the planning of political warfare in the Far East.

As to French participation in regular military operations against Japan, the British proved no more receptive than the Americans. In submitting these French proposals to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in August, the British Chiefs expressed strong opposition to accepting either French land and air forces or French participation in the planning of military operations. On this point the American and British Chiefs of Staff were in complete accord. There were sound military reasons for their views, which they subsequently listed in rejecting a French offer to form two ground combat divisions for the war against Japan: no operations were contemplated that required a special knowledge of Indochina; because of serious deficiencies in service troops, critical equipment, and shipping, the use of French combat troops would not accelerate operations already planned; deployment and maintenance of French units in the Far East could only be accomplished at the expense of equivalent American and British troops. In short, the British and American Chiefs of Staff believed it would be militarily unsound to use French troops against Japan prior to the defeat of Germany.[8]

But the American and British Governments held sharply divergent views on the question of clandestine operations in Indochina. Eager to undertake such operations, the British firmly supported the proposals of the French

8. (C) CCS 644, 5 Aug 44; (C) Rpt by CadC, same subj, "French Participation in the War against Japan," 17 Dec 44; (TS dg C) CCS 644/8, 5 Jan 44. All in CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 1.

Committee of National Liberation, and strove for several months to obtain the concurrence of the American Government. Specifically, the British Chiefs of Staff and the British Foreign Office wanted the American Government to agree to have a French military mission accredited to SEAC, where it could effectively assist any clandestine operations undertaken by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) or by the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The British also asked the Americans to accept French participation in the planning of political warfare in the Far East, with the understanding that such participation would be limited to those areas in which the French had a definite interest. Finally, the British wanted the Americans to agree to accept a French Corps Leger D'Intervention of 500 men, already in being in Algiers and designed to operate exclusively in Indochina against Japanese lines of communication.

These proposals threatened to reopen an old controversy over whether Indochina should be in the China Theater or in the Southeast Asia Command. As matters then stood, both the British and the Americans recognized that Indochina was in Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's China Theater. But Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, SEAC, had entered into a "gentlemen's agreement" with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek under which both commanders could launch regular military operations in Indochina, when the time came, with theater boundaries to be adjusted according to the advances made by their respective forces. This much of the "gentlemen's agreement" was not in dispute, though it had not been formally ratified by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. But there still existed a difference of interpretation over whether Lord Mountbatten could conduct clandestine or irregular operations in Indochina from SEAC. The British claimed that right under the "gentlemen's agreement." The Americans insisted that this agreement covered only regular military operations. Thus, to agree to the British proposals regarding clandestine activities would be to weaken the China Theater's claim to strategic responsibility for Indochina.

Yet the Joint Chiefs of Staff were sympathetic to the British proposal for clandestine activities. They felt that, since the United States already had recognized Portuguese rights in Timor and Dutch rights in the Netherlands East Indies, it would be proper to recognize,

insofar as was consistent with American national policy, French desires concerning Indochina. But in informing the British Chiefs of Staff of their concurrence in the British program, the Joint Chiefs of Staff so qualified their approval that they actually committed neither themselves nor their government. Thus, instead of agreeing to French participation in the planning of political warfare in the Far East, the Chiefs agreed only to French participation in such planning within the limits of the Southeast Asia Command. And they reminded the British Chiefs that Indochina was in the China Theater, rather than in SEAC, and hence was an area of American, rather than British, strategic responsibility. The Chiefs, however, did let the British know that they looked with favor on the establishment of a French military mission at SEAC.

Several weeks later, Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces, China Theater, informed the War Department that General Blaizot, with a French military mission, had arrived at SEAC Headquarters, Kandy, Ceylon. The British, Dutch, and French, General Wedemeyer reported, were working closely together to insure the recovery of their political and economic prewar position in the Far East. Toward this end, the Blaizot mission was proposing to infiltrate French parties into Indochina to assist resistance groups carrying out sabotage. Since General Wedemeyer expected to deal with this problem, he asked for United States policy on Indochina. His reply was not long in coming. The President had already been informed through the State Department that General Blaizot's mission had been accorded American approval and recognition at SEAC, and he was very much displeased. Two days after General Wedemeyer asked for instructions, the President informed Admiral Leahy in vigorous terms that he intended to control American policy on Indochina himself:

> With regard to this matter, I wish to make it clear that American approval must not be given to any French military mission being accredited to the South East Asia Command; and that no officer of this Government, military or civilian, may make decisions on political questions with the French military mission or with anyone else.

I would like further to have it made clear that this Government has made no final decisions on the future of Indo-China, and that we expect to be consulted in advance with regard to any arrangements applicable to the future of Southeast Asia.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff lost no time in communicating the President's policy to General Wedemeyer and to the Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces, India-Burma Theater, and it was strictly adhered to.9

Soon after this incident, the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord Halifax, reopened the question of irregular operations into Indochina from SEAC. Specifically, he asked that the American Government agree to the entire program previously advanced by the British Chiefs of Staff and confirm the "gentlemen's agreement" between the Generalissimo and Admiral Mountbatten. Lord Halifax claimed, incidentally, that this agreement covered irregular as well as regular operations. Although the British motives in reviving this question seem to have been primarily political, Lord Halifax stressed the military gains Admiral Mountbatten hoped to achieve through such operations. He emphasized that Indochina lay astride the Japanese land and air reinforcement route to Burma and expressed optimism about the results to be achieved by cooperating with French resistance forces. The French Army and Civil Service in Indochina, according to Lord Halifax, were unquestionably anxious to take part in liberating that area from the Japanese and constituted "virtually a well-organized and ready-made Maquis." All that was necessary to exploit this situation, Lord Halifax emphasized, was the presence in SEAC of French personnel from whom alone the French in Indochina would take orders. In concluding his plea for American approval, Lord Halifax promised that such approval would in no way prejudice the ultimate

9. (C) JCS 1013, 22 Aug 44; (C) JCS 1013/1, 28 Aug 44; (C) CCS 644/1, 30 Aug 44; (S) Msg, CG USAFCT (Wedemeyer) to Marshall, CFBX 26367, CM-IN-14501, 15 Nov 44; (TS) Msg, JCS to Sultan & Wedemeyer, WARX 66178, CM-OUT-66178, 21 Nov 44; (TS) Memo, Pres to Leahy, 17 Nov 44. All in same file. (S) Mns, JCS 170th Mtg, 29 Aug 44, item 4. Hull, Memoirs, vol II, p. 1598.

settlement of theater boundaries between the China Theater and SEAC, nor the broader question of French participation in the war against Japan.

Once again the President refused to agree to this program, on the ground that Indochina was a postwar problem with which he was not ready to become involved. "You can tell Halifax," the President informed his Secretary of State, "that I made this very clear to Mr. Churchill. From both the military and civil point of view, action at this time is premature."10

The President had made his policy clear, and, until it was slightly relaxed, in March 1945, the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff rigidly adhered to it. Nothing was done during this period that could be interpreted as an American commitment to aid the French regain Indochina. But the position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department in following the President's policy was not an easy one. For while the President had freely expressed his views on Indochina to Churchill, Stalin, and to numerous others, he had studiously avoided discussing them with the French. And the French, by submitting numerous proposals to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sought to discover what the President's policy was. Such proposals the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to treat with the utmost caution to avoid revealing American policy. In these circumstances, they answered as many as they could of these proposals the same way--with a generous "thank you" for bringing them up, a polite rejection of whatever was proposed, and a promise to reconsider the matter should conditions change.

But this simple formula for answering French requests had its limitations, and in February 1945 the Chiefs were forced to abandon it. This came about when Admiral Fenard

10. (S) JCS 1200, 16 Dec 44, CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 1. (S) JCS 1200/2, 11 Jan 45, same file, sec 2. (U) Doc A-16, Memo, Stettinius to Pres, 27 Dec 44; (U) Doc A-17, "Extract from Stettinius Diary," nd. Both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina.

submitted a proposal so clearly involving American national policy that the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to refer all such requests to higher authority. Admiral Fenard reported that General Wedemeyer had recently approached the French military attache in Chungking to ascertain the attitude of French resistance forces in Indochina toward possible Allied operations there. The French Government, said Admiral Fenard, was eager to bring to bear its maximum strength in support of Allied forces everywhere, but it needed to know Allied intentions concerning Indochina before making any commitments for the use of French resistance forces. Also, there were several conditions the French Government considered essential to effective cooperation between Allied and French resistance forces: (1) French resistance forces could be called to action only on French orders; (2) regular French forces from without Indochina must be employed; (3) the French Government must be kept informed of contemplated operations; and (4) the Allied assault must be in sufficient force to warrant calling the resistance forces to arms, without risk of premature suppression by the enemy.

It quickly became apparent that General Wedemeyer had neither contemplated a major operation in Indochina nor played fast and loose with the President's policy, as Admiral Fenard's statement seemed to indicate. In late November 1944 General Wedemeyer had, at the request of the Generalissimo, sought to determine the French attitude toward a possible Chinese advance into Indochina to forestall a Japanese drive on Kunming. He had held one informal discussion with the French military attache at Chungking, then dropped the matter. But he had learned, through this discussion, that the French were fearful of Chinese ambitions and suspicious of American plans for postwar disposition of Indochina. And this suspicion of American intentions was doubtless the reason for the barrage of requests the French had been submitting to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

At least the Joint Staff Planners thought so. In reviewing Admiral Fenard's request, the Planners made the following observation:

> The various proposals submitted by the French, their timing and the agencies to which they are

submitted, indicate a definite pattern of French effort to obtain under the guise of military considerations an expression of U.S. policy with respect to Indochina. Any reply, no matter how non-committal, furnishes the French with some information either directly or by inference with respect to our national policy. When considered together, the various replies, each of little significance in itself, indicate trends from which the French can make definite deductions and can take action accordingly to jeopardize the U.S. position.

The Planners had some further incisive comments to make. The British, they said, were actively assisting the French in Indochina by clandestine operations from SEAC. Such assistance was of little military value, but its political significance was considerable. By this acquiescing in French desires rather than in American policy toward Indochina, the British were seeking to create a situation whereby Indochina should logically be considered in a British rather than an American sphere of strategic interest. As for the views of the French Government concerning cooperation between the Allies and French resistance forces, most of them were unacceptable. Thus any reply to Admiral Fenard based on purely military considerations would furnish the French with further indication of American policy and support the British contention that Indochina belonged in a British sphere of responsibility. Therefore, the planners recommended, and the Chiefs agreed, that Admiral Fenard's proposal be referred to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC). And, until the heads of state had reached a decision on the future of Indochina and communicated that decision to the French, the Chiefs would review all similar requests from the military viewpoint and pass them on to SWNCC.11

The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee at once began a study of Admiral Fenard's proposal, and the SWNCC Subcommittee for the Far East drafted as non-committal a

11. (S) JPS 599/D, 19 Jan 45, CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 2. (S) JCS 1200/6, 15 Feb 45; (TS) Memo, JCS Secy to SecWar and SecNav, 22 Feb 45. Both in same file, sec 3.

reply as Admiral Fenard had yet received. But this one was never sent, for spectacular events had overtaken this study and invested the problem of aid to Indochina with an aura of urgency it had hitherto lacked.

On 9 March 1945 the Japanese overthrew the French administration in Indochina, interning many French officials and waging ruthless warfare against those members of the underground who resisted. This dramatic turn of events spurred the French to an all-out effort to obtain immediate American aid. On 12 March the French Ambassador to the United States asked the American Government to intervene through the Joint Chiefs of Staff to obtain CCS approval of aid to French resistants. On the same day Major General A. M. Brossin de Saint-Didier, Chief of the French Military Mission to the United States, submitted the following requests to the Combined Chiefs of Staff: (1) that all possible information be furnished the French relative to this Japanese aggression; (2) that Allied air forces bomb the Japanese and drop arms and ammunition to the resistants; (3) that American ground forces nearest the Sino-Indochinese frontier render active support; and (4) that General Blaizot, Chief of the French Military Mission at SEAC, be accredited to the headquarters of the commander of the theater of operations concerned, to assist in coordinating whatever steps were taken to aid the resistants. Additionally, General de Saint-Didier reminded the Combined Chiefs of Staff of previous French offers to employ regular French troops in the war against Japan.[12]

In these circumstances, the President began to relax his policy somewhat. The day after General de Saint-Didier asked for American aid, Admiral Leahy informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the President did not object to according General Blaizot a status that would enable him to be of help "in such efforts as we can make towards assisting the French forces now in Indo-China." Three days later Admiral Leahy and General Marshall agreed that General Blaizot could talk to the China Command on the

12. (S) SWNCC 35/4, 15 Mar 45; (TS) SWNCC 35/2/D, 14 Mar 45; (C) CCS 644/16, 13 Mar 45. All in same file.

single subject of relief for the French underground. They also agreed that Admiral Fenard could confer with General Wedemeyer, who happened to be in Washington on a mission concerning China. General Wedemeyer did discuss the Indo-china crisis with Admiral Fenard and also with the Presi-dent himself. On 19 March General Wedemeyer sent the following message to General Chennault, announcing a new departure in American policy: "Admiral Fenard reports 14th Air Force loaded and ready to aid French resistance, but unable to move without permission from Washington. Informal statement of new attitude US Government is to help French provided such aid does not interfere with planned operations. The 14th Air Force may undertake operations against the Japanese in Indo-China to assist the French within the limitations imposed by the above policy."[13]

This deviation in the President's policy did not mean a return to his original view that all French possessions should be restored after the war. Nor did it herald the approach of vast American armies marching to liberate Indochina. The President instructed General Wedemeyer to give the French only such support as would be required in direct operations against the Japanese. And he urged the general to "watch carefully to prevent British and French political activities in that area"--as if the General could! As to military operations in support of French resistance forces, the only Americans entering Indochina under this policy were members of the OSS, whose mission was to gather intelligence and furnish arms to those fighting the Japanese.[14]

13. (TS) Memo, McFarland to Marshall, King, Arnold, "French liaison in Southeast Asia," 13 Mar 45; (S) Memo, Leahy to Marshall, King, Arnold, McFarland, 15 Mar 45; (S) Memo, Col McCarthy to Leahy, 16 Mar 45. All in same file. (S) Msg, Wedemeyer to Chennault, WARX 55402, MAPLE 52, 19 Mar 45, Msg file "MAPLE," 06104-2-E, vol III, DRB AGO.

14. (TS) Msg, Wedemeyer to Marshall, CFB 38169, CM-IN-27033, 28 May 45, CCS 385 Chinese Theater (12-29-44). (S) Memo, LTC Paul L.E. Helliwell (Ch SI OSS CT) to Strategic Services Officer, CT, "OSS Activities in French Indo-China," 10 Apr 45, "French Indochina, File No. 93-1, Operations and General Information." CIA Archives.

No American in a position of responsibility seriously entertained the idea of employing American ground forces to aid the resistants. In the first place, there was just one battalion of American combat troops in that vicinity. And even had more powerful American combat forces been available, their use in support of the French underground almost certainly would have been precluded by the strategy adopted for winning the war against Japan. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff viewed the problem of aid to the French underground, Indochina, though flanking Allied positions in China and Burma, was of relatively minor military significance at that particular time. Furthermore, activities of resistance groups in Indochina would not be of substantial military benefit to the United States. And, finally, any lasting commitment of American resources to aid the French could only be at the expense of operations in China and in the Pacific, requirements the United States was already being severely strained to meet.

Why, then, did the President and his military advisors decide to give the French underground any help at all? This, unfortunately, is a question the available records do not wholly answer. But they do furnish some clues. From the evidence at hand, it seems very likely that the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were seeking to prevent the British from stealing a march in the jurisdictional squabble over Indochina between SEAC and the China Theater. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that unless the United States furnished at least token aid to the French, the British Chiefs might offer to let Admiral Mountbatten render substantial assistance from SEAC. In that event, not only would the matter of Admiral Mountbatten's operations in Indochina be further complicated, but urgently needed American resources might be diverted from China. If, for example, Admiral Mountbatten should employ transport planes to aid the French, his total requirements for SEAC would be increased, and the transfer of planes from the India-Burma to the China Theater might be delayed. Whether the Chiefs communicated this view to the President is not apparent from the records, but it seems most likely that they did.

Such advice from his military advisors doubtless would have been sufficient to persuade the President to give token aid to the French underground. But it seems very probable that he was motivated less by military than by

Whether President Roosevelt would have accepted Churchill's plan for settling the dispute over Indochina will never be known. For the day after Churchill advanced it, the President died very suddenly at Warm Springs, Georgia, of a cerebral hemorrhage. His successor, President Truman, did not insist that General Wedemeyer be permitted to control all Allied operations in Indochina, no doubt realizing that the British would never consent. Nor did President Truman accept Churchill's proposal that the two heads of state issue joint directives to Admiral Mountbatten and General Wedemeyer. Instead, he preferred to leave such matters to his military advisors. In these circumstances, the British and American Chiefs of Staff directed Admiral Mountbatten and General Wedemeyer to coordinate their activities in Indochina and to refer to their respective Chiefs of Staff any dispute they could not settle themselves. This agreement was probably the best the United States could obtain with the British under conditions then existing. But it fell far short of settling the jurisdictional dispute over Indochina.[16]

Concerning the policy President Roosevelt would have pursued toward Indochina had he lived, one can only speculate. It would appear, however, that before his death he had abandoned the idea of an international trusteeship. To be sure, he had discussed such a trusteeship with Stalin at Yalta, and both had agreed it was desirable. But further than this they did not go. Then, on 3 April, just nine days before his death, the President had approved the release of the following statement by his Secretary of State:

> As to territorial trusteeship, it appeared desirable that the governments represented at Yalta, in consultation with the Chinese

16. (TS) Msg, PM to Pres, 17 Mar 45; (TS) Dft Msg, Pres to PM, 21 Mar 45 (pencilled notation indicates it was sent "without substantial change" on 22 Mar 45). Both in OPD 336 TS Case No. 1. (TS) Msg, PM to Pres, 943, 11 Apr 45; (TS) Msg, Pres (Truman) to PM, 4, 14 Apr 45. Both in OPD Exec File 10, bk 63C. (TS) Msg, JCS to Wedemeyer, WARX 69380, CM-OUT-69380, 17 Apr 45; (U) JCS 1315, 18 Apr 45; (TS) Msg, BCOS to SACSEA, COSSEA 240, 19 Apr 45, CM-IN-19827 (21 Apr 45). All in CCS 385 Chinese Theater (12-29-44).

> Government and the French Provisional Government, should endeavor to formulate proposals for submission to the San Francisco Conference for a trusteeship structure as a part of the general organization. This trusteeship structure, it was felt, should be defined to permit the placing under it of the territories taken from the enemy in this war, as might be agreed upon at a later date, and also such territories as might voluntarily be placed under trusteeship.

When this statement was released, General de Gaulle had made it very clear that the government of France expected a proposed Indochina federation to function within the framework of the "French Union." Therefore, the President must have realized when he approved this statement that France would never agree to a trusteeship. And with the strong support the French could count on from the British and the Dutch, the prospect of establishing a trusteeship against the wishes of the French was virtually eliminated.[17]

Truman Policy

The day after President Roosevelt died, members of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee began to challenge his policy toward Indochina. They were clearly dissatisfied with it. Speaking for the War Department, Mr. Robert A. Lovett complained that the lack of a clear-cut American policy had seriously embarrassed the military authorities in answering French requests for aid. He also thought the late President's prohibition against discussing American policy toward Indochina should be removed. Mr. H. Freeman Matthews, Chief of the State Department's Division of European Affairs declared that "the time has come when our position must be clarified." Other members of SWNCC strongly agreed, and it was decided that the State Department should seek to obtain from President Truman a precise definition of American policy toward Indochina.

17. (TS) JCS 1200/13, 27 Apr 45, CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 5.

political considerations; that his main reason for aiding the resistants was his own determination to prevent an Anglo-French coalition from exploiting the situation in Indochina in a manner best calculated to restore the status quo ante bellum to Southeast Asia. This interpretation is consistent with the President's many statements on Indochina. It is also supported by his charge to General Wedemeyer to prevent British and French political activities in that area.15

One thing is certain: the President did try to prevent the British from obtaining the whip hand in the jurisdictional struggle over Indochina. On 17 March, when the question of American aid to Indochina was still under study, Churchill once again raised the issue of theater responsibility for Indochina. He asked the President to affirm the "gentlemen's agreement" between Admiral Mountbatten and the Generalissimo as applying to "pre-occupational activities" and to agree to a "full and frank exchange of intentions, plans and intelligence between Wedemeyer and Mountbatten." The President countered with the proposal that Churchill agree that "all military operations in Indo-China, regardless of their nature, be coordinated by General Wedemeyer as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo. . . . This would place on Wedemeyer the normal responsibilities of a theater commander and . . . provide coordination between the extensive Chinese and American operations in Indo-China and any operations by Mountbatten which may be necessary." As to Churchill's proposal for a full exchange of views between Admiral Mountbatten and General Wedemeyer, the President agreed that this was highly desirable.

Not unexpectedly, the Prime Minister refused to accept the President's proposal that General Wedemeyer assume toward Indochina the responsibilities of a theater commander. All Churchill would agree to was that he and the President direct their respective commanders to effect "the closest correlation of Allied military interest in that area." And the directive Churchill offered to send Admiral Mountbatten to effect such correlation was carefully phrased to give the commander virtual carte blanche in Indochina.

15. (S) JCS 1200/7, 17 Mar 45; (TS) Dec Amending JCS 1200/7, 21 Mar 45. Both in CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 3.

attached to it. For the President had accepted only French assistance that synchronized with operations already planned against Japan. And he had emphasized that the extent of such assistance would depend primarily on transport, adding that the problem of transport for the war against Japan involved three times the tonnage required for the war against Germany. Furthermore, the President had stressed that it would be up to General MacArthur to decide how the French military contribution could best be utilized. Clearly, the President's acceptance of French participation in the war against Japan was not a commitment to revise American strategy to help the French regain Indochina.19

When the French followed up this Truman-Bidault conference with an offer to place two divisions "at the entire disposal of the American Command," the difficulties of synchronizing French assistance with American operations soon became apparent. In submitting this offer, General de Saint-Didier estimated that the 9th Colonial Infantry Division would be ready to embark from France by the end of June, the 1st Colonial Infantry Division by the end of July. Their equipment, of course, would have to be furnished by the Americans.

This offer raised some knotty problems for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When, how, and where should these troops be used? The first of these questions proved the simplest. Owing to the shipping problem, these divisions could not be moved till months after the dates so optimistically advanced by General de Saint-Didier nor committed to action before the spring of 1946. Seeking answers to the other questions, the Chiefs consulted General MacArthur. General MacArthur expressed the greatest admiration for the fighting qualities of French troops, but he did not want them introduced during the initial assault on Japan, lest they greatly weaken it. He advised the Chiefs that, if French troops were furnished him, they should be made available with the "reenforcement echelons." Admiral

19. (C) Doc B-1, Msg, Stettinius to Grew, EOC-1608, 8 May 45, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol towards Indochina. (TS) SWNCC 35/11, 25 May 45, CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 5.

King was less enthusiastic than General MacArthur about the French proposal. He believed that the disadvantages of employing French troops in operations against Japan would actually outweigh the advantages. Therefore, he urged that General de Saint-Didier's offer be referred to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and he expressed the hope that the British could arrange to use the proffered divisions under British command.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff achieved a partial solution of these problems at the Potsdam Conference, almost two months after the French submitted their offer. On 19 July the Combined Chiefs of Staff informed General de Saint-Didier that his proposal had been accepted in principle, with the understanding that the questions of where and under whose command the French divisions should serve would be settled later. This arrangement reflected the views of the British Chiefs of Staff, who thought the French forces should be employed "in due course" in Indochina and wanted to put off deciding whether they should serve under a British or an American command. The Combined Chiefs of Staff also told General de Saint-Didier that the French were expected to make maximum use of equipment already furnished them under the North African and Metropolitan Rearmament Programs. And, finally, they informed him that, because of shipping and other requirements in the Pacific, the French divisions could not be moved from France for several months nor committed to operations prior to the spring of 1946.

General de Saint-Didier expressed his pleasure over this acceptance of his offer, but objected that to equip French troops with material from the North African and Metropolitan Rearmament Programs would not be satisfactory. For one reason, a large part of this equipment had deteriorated through use in the campaigns in Italy, France, and Germany. Furthermore, the French Army needed it for its mission of occupying Germany. Therefore, General de Saint-Didier urged that General Eisenhower be consulted on this problem, so that further discussions could be held on a "solid basis."

But operations in the Pacific were racing to a climax, and shortly after General de Saint-Didier submitted his

Mr. Matthews subsequently drafted a memorandum asking President Truman to agree to several changes in the Roosevelt policy, and it was submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for review. The most important of these proposed changes were as follows: (1) the United States should neither oppose the restoration of Indochina to France nor take any action toward French overseas possessions that it was unwilling to take toward those of its other Allies; and (2) French offers to participate in the war against Japan should be accepted as desirable in principle and judged on their military merits. Though the Joint Chiefs of Staff found no objection to the military implications of these proposals, Mr. Matthews' memorandum never reached the President. For there was such a disagreement over it in the State Department that it had to be withdrawn. Nevertheless, this memorandum was important. Not only did it reflect the thinking of Mr. Matthews and the Joint Chiefs of Staff; it also pointed the direction American policy was about to take.[18]

The month of May brought several occasions for French rejoicing. On the seventh, their traditional enemy, Germany, surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. At about the same time, M. Georges Bidault, the French Foreign Minister, received the first genuine assurance since the landings in North Africa that the United States would not oppose the return of Indochina to France. He was perhaps surprised, though, when informed by Mr. Stettinius that the record was "entirely innocent of any official statement of this government questioning, even by implication, French sovereignty over Indo-China." Then, on 19 May, President Truman himself accepted in principle an offer from General de Gaulle of French participation in the war against Japan. After almost two years of submitting such offers, the French had finally had one accepted.

But if M. Bidault experienced a feeling of elation on hearing the President's acceptance, he also had cause for misgivings over the reservations the President

18. (UNK) Mns, SWNCC 16th Mtg, 13 Apr 45, item 3. (TS) JCS 1200/13, 27 Apr 45; (TS) JCS 1200/14, 28 Apr 45, dec atchd; (TS) Memo, SWNCC Secy to Mr. Bard & Mr. Lovett, 4 May 45. All in CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 5.

request, the war ended. Further American action on the French proposal was suspended when the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided that the French should refer all such problems directly to the British Chiefs of Staff in London.[20]

Immediate Postwar Policy

When Japan surrendered, whatever hopes the French may have had for American aid in regaining Indochina were soon dispelled. At Potsdam the United States had turned its back on that area. Eager to rid themselves of encumbrances to the all-out prosecution of the war against Japan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should extend Admiral Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command to include that part of Indochina south of the 16th parallel. Northern Indochina remained in the China Theater, under the responsibility of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Subsequently, General MacArthur, as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, directed all Japanese forces in those two areas of Indochina to surrender to Admiral Mountbatten and the Generalissimo respectively. Thus official responsibility for disarming the Japanese in Indochina fell to the British and the Chinese.[21]

Both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department were pleased with this arrangement. Engrossed as they were

20. (C) JCS 1013/6, 2 Jun 44; (TS) Msg, MacArthur to Marshall, C-17621, CM-IN-1646, 2 Jun 45; (C) JCS 1013/7, 4 Jul 45. All in same file. (S) Mns, JCS 195th Mtg, 16 Jul 45, item 4. (TS) CCS 895, 16 Jul 45; (TS) CCS 895/1, 18 Jul 45; (TS) CCS 895/2, 19 Jul 45; (TS) Memo, CCS Secys to Ch Fr Mil Miss, 19 Jul 45; (TS) CCS 895/3, 6 Aug 45; (S) Memo, CCS Secys to Ch Fr Mil Miss in US, 13 Sep 45. All in same file, sec 6.

21. (TS) CCS 890/1, 17 Jul 45; (TS) Mns, CCS 195th Mtg, 18 Jul 45, item 4; (TS) CCS 900/3, 24 Jul 45. All in TERMINAL, pp. 153-155, 248, 252, 280-282. Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Govt Sect, Political Reorientation of Japan, September 1945 to September 1948 (Washington, nd), vol II, p. 442.

with the problems of Japan and Germany, with events in China, and with "bringing the boys home," the Chiefs did not look for additional responsibility in Indochina. And if they had, they probably would have met with objections from the State Department. For American policy toward Indochina, as described by Mr. Dean Acheson, was neither to oppose the restoration of French control nor to assist it by force. Moreover, Mr. Acheson said, American willingness to see French control reestablished assumed that French claims to the support of the people of Indochina were "borne out by events."22

The French soon learned that the United States would not be a party to those events. When Admiral Fenard asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff about arrangements for the Japanese surrender in Indochina, he was referred to Admiral Mountbatten and to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. He was told, however, that "the United States supports French presence in connection with Japanese surrenders" in both northern and southern Indochina. When Admiral Fenard asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff to transport to Indochina the French forces previously offered for employment against Japan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff eagerly accepted a British proposal that the French send all such requests directly to the British Chiefs of Staff in London. And when the French Military Mission to the United States asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff to transport by plane from China to Indochina General Alessandri and his detachment of 5,000 men, it was the American Chiefs who drafted the memo denying this request. "The movement of French forces from China into French Indo-China," the Chiefs asserted, "is a matter for consideration by the Chinese and French governments." Besides, American aircraft were "fully committed to other urgent tasks and cannot be diverted at this time from the accomplishment of those duties." This explanation was fully acceptable to

22. (C) Doc B-3, Msg, Acheson to AmEmb Chungking, 1622, 5 Oct 45, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina.

the British Chiefs, who amended the memorandum, however, to indicate that British aircraft also were unable to fly in General Alessandri and his men.[23]

Special precautions were taken to avoid American involvement in either British or Chinese occupation policy. In the Chinese zone, American liaison teams were attached to Chinese forces, but their role was to assist in the supply and movement of Chinese troops. OSS personnel also were present in the Chinese zone. Indeed, some of them had been there since March 1945, when the United States decided to aid the French resistance forces. But during the occupation they were under strict orders to dissociate themselves from the French and to remain aloof from Sino-French-Ammanese relations, lest they place the United States "right in the middle." Their role during the occupation was limited to aiding prisoners of war and internees. Nor were these directives to be taken lightly. When General Wedemeyer heard that members of the OSS had interceded in Franco-Ammanese disputes, he ordered all uniformed OSS personnel withdrawn from the Chinese zone of occupation.[24]

Even before Japan surrendered, the United States had begun to consider how to avoid involvement in British

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23. (U) JCS 1475, 17 Aug 45, CCS 387 Japan (2-7-45) sec 2. (C) CCS 903, Memo from Ch Fr Nav Miss in US, "French Participation in Surrender of Japanese Forces in Indochina," 16 Aug 45; (C) CCS 903/1, 19 Aug 45; (C) CCS 903/2, 6 Sep 45; (S) Memo, CCS Secys to Ch Fr Mil Miss in US, 7 Sep 45. All in CCS 370 (4-25-45). (C) CCS 644/35, 28 Aug 45; (C) CCS 644/36, 11 Sep 45; (S) Memo, Cornwall-Jones to McFarland, "Transportation of French Forces from China to Tonkin," 13 Sep 45. All in CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 6.

24. (S) Msg, Wedemeyer to CO, OSSCT, OFBX, 24 Aug 45, (S) Msg, Davis to Heppner, NR 889, 1 Sep 45; (S) Msg, Indiv & Swift to Mims, Nr 6849, 9 Sep 45. All in "FIC 93a-1," CIA Archives. (S) Msg, Wedemeyer to CO, OSS, CFB 11209, 10 Oct 45; (UNK) Ltr, Col W. R. Peers to CGUSFCT, "SSU Personnel in FIC," 2 Nov 45. Both in "FIC 93a-3," CIA Archives.

occupation policies. On 11 August the American Consul at Colombo, Mr. Calvin H. Oakes, informed the State Department that British members of the Southeast Asia Command seemed perturbed because the war might end before they could mount an operation considered important to British prestige. Mr. Oakes also stated that if an appreciable length of time should elapse between the end of the war and the beginning of this operation, it would appear that the British were substituting their own occupation for a Japanese occupation. In these circumstances, he wondered if the State Department wanted to continue American participation in SEAC after the Japanese surrendered.

On this question the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff took different positions. The Assistant Secretary of State believed the United States should participate in SEAC at least until American consulates were established in Thailand and in other important listening posts within area of the Southeast Asia Command. The Chiefs demurred. They felt that, since the United States had already withdrawn all its combat forces from SEAC and would not participate further in SEAC operations, continued American participation on a reduced basis would be ineffective and American influence "practically nil." Moreover, the Chiefs believed that the required American consulates could be established without maintaining the Allied character of SEAC. Therefore, they recommended that official American representation give way immediately to an American liaison section at, but independent of, Lord Mountbatten's headquarters.

On 14 September the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it approved their recommendations but wanted to delay American withdrawal until Lord Mountbatten had reached a military agreement with the Thai Government. Here matters rested for another month. Then on 15 October the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee asked the Chiefs to notify the British immediately of their intentions to withdraw from SEAC. "Prompt action in this connection is particularly necessary," SWNCC stated, "in order that the implication of United States participation in Southeast Asia Command policies and activities in the Netherlands East Indies and Indo-China may be eliminated immediately."

On 1 November 1945 official American representation at SEAC gave way to a section having liaison functions only. But whether the implication of American participation in SEAC policies was entirely eliminated was a moot point. For, out of deference to a British request to avoid publicity, the Chiefs did not publicize their withdrawal until January 1946.[25]

The United States observed a strict "hands off" attitude toward British and Chinese occupation policies until late December 1945, when the British Chiefs of Staff served notice that British forces would be withdrawn from Indochina. They informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the British withdrawal would be substantially completed by the end of January 1946, at which time most of the Japanese would have been disarmed. It might be necessary, however, to leave behind one brigade to guard disarmed Japanese in the Cap St. Jacques area until French forces were able to assume that task. In any event, the British wanted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to agree that when the Commander of the 20th Indian Division withdrew, all of southern Indochina, with the possible exception of the Cap St. Jacques region would be removed from Admiral Mountbatten's responsibility. The British did not specify who would finish repatriating the Japanese, but, by references to the buildup of French forces in Indochina, they left the impression that the French would assume that responsibility.

From the attitude taken by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee toward this proposal, it would seem that the United States had not decided whether it wanted French sovereignty restored

25. (TS) SWNCC 177, 23 Aug 45; (C) JCS 1494, 29 Aug 45. Both in CCS 092 Thailand (1-4-45) sec 1. (C) JCS 1494/1, 4 Sep 45; (C) JCS 1949/2, 14 Sep 45; (C) JCS 1494/3, 17 Oct 45. All in same file, sec 2. (R) CCS 930, 15 Oct 45; (TS) Memo, Cornwall-Jones to McFarland, 19 Nov 45; (TS) SM-4593, 5 Dec 45; (S) Memo, Cornwall-Jones to McFarland, 7 Dec 45; (C) CCS 930/2, 12 Mar 46; (TS) Msg, CGIBT to War Dept, CRA 6078, CM-IN-3751, 17 Mar 46. All in CCS 323.361 (6-19-43) sec 2.

to Indochina. On 28 January the Chiefs informed the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee that to transfer to the French the responsibility for repatriating the Japanese in Southern Indochina would in effect admit France to a co-equal status with the other Allied powers in enforcing the surrender terms. In that event, the terms of General Order No. 1 for the surrender of Japanese military forces might have to be renegotiated at the government level. Moreover, the French might seize such an opportunity to demand the return of all of Indochina to their control. From the military viewpoint, the Chiefs preferred that the British remain in Indochina until the last Japanese had been disarmed and evacuated. This position was approved by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, and on 1 February the Chiefs asked the British to retain control of Indochina until the last Japanese had been repatriated. Otherwise, the Chiefs stated, it might be necessary to renegotiate the terms of General Order No. 1.

The British Chiefs rejected this request. In their reply they said: "On the British side at any rate, it has always been the intention that the French and the Dutch should resume responsibility for their own territories as soon as they are in a position to do so and it is felt that the resumption of this control cannot possibly await the repatriation of all the Japanese, which may take some three years to complete." But the British were willing to compromise. As an interim measure, Lord Mountbatten would transfer to the French full responsibility for southern Indochina but continue to represent the Allied powers there for the limited purpose of repatriating the Japanese. This arrangement, the British Chiefs pointed out, would eliminate any necessity for the French commander to deal directly with General MacArthur.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff promptly accepted the British proposal.[26] Indeed, they could hardly have done otherwise, for they had been informed by General Wedemeyer that

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26. (S) CCS 644/38, 21 Dec 45; (TS) JCS 1200/16, 17 Jan 45; (TS) SWNCC 35/13/D, 29 Jan 46. All in CCS 370 France (8-5-44) sec 6. (S) CCS 644/39, 1 Feb 46; (S) CCS 644/40, 22 Feb 46; (S) JCS 1200/17, 26 Feb 46; (S) CCS 644/41, 27 Feb 46. All in same file, sec 7.

the Chinese also were preparing to withdraw from Indochina. Subsequently, General de Saint-Didier asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff to approve a Franco-Chinese military agreement by which French troops would relieve Chinese forces in northern Indochina by 31 March 1946. Simultaneously, the French Embassy raised this question with the State Department.

Taking the position that such an agreement was a matter for the French and the Chinese Governments, the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved this arrangement. Accordingly, the Chiefs drafted the reply which the Combined Chiefs of Staff forwarded to General de Saint-Didier. On 3 April the Combined Chiefs of Staff informed him that they accepted the Franco-Chinese agreement. Since their acceptance would bring all of Indochina under French control, they asked that the French military commander assume responsibility for disarming and evacuating the Japanese from northern Indochina. As to southern Indochina, Admiral Mountbatten would be directed to make the necessary arrangements to transfer his responsibility there to the French commander.

On 8 May the British Chiefs informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that Lord Mountbatten had arranged for the French to assume the task of disarming and evacuating the Japanese from southern Indochina. The time set for this official transfer of responsibility was 13 May 1946 at 2400.[27]

27. (S) Msg, Wedemeyer to JCS, CFB-24359, CM-IN-5928, 27 Feb 46; (U) Memo, Fr MA, in US to CCS, "Replacement by the French of Chinese Troops Occupying Northern Indo-China," 12 Mar 46; (U) SWN-4017, Memo, SWNCC Secy to JCS Secy, "Relief of Chinese Forces in Northern Indo-China by French Forces," 14 Mar 46, w/encls; (S) JCS 1200/18, 21 Mar 46; (S) CCS 951/1, 3 Apr 46; (S) Memo, CCS Secys to Fr MA, "Relief by French Forces of Chinese Troops Occupying North Indo-China," 3 Apr 46; (S) CCS 951/3, Memo by RECOS, "Transfer of Responsibility to the French Authorities for Disarmament and Repatriation of Japanese from French Indo-China," 8 May 46. All in same file.

Thus did the British and the American Governments come to recognize French authority over all Indochina. Whether the French could persuade the natives to accept it remained to be seen.

In reviewing American policy toward Indochina from Pearl Harbor to the end of the British and Chinese occupations, several questions naturally arise: Did either President Roosevelt's or President Truman's wartime policy delay the restoration of French sovereignty? Did America's immediate postwar policy delay that restoration? What might the United States have done, that it did not do, to bring peace to Indochina?

President Roosevelt, to be sure, did not help the French reestablish their control. From Casablanca to Yalta he spoke of placing Indochina under a trusteeship. But shortly before his death, he apparently abandoned that idea. In any event, it would be difficult to show that his policy postponed the restoration of French control. It must be remembered not only that the President died before VE Day, but that the Combined Chiefs of Staff believed it militarily unsound to employ French troops against the Japanese prior to the defeat of Germany. Furthermore, those who shaped America's Pacific strategy did not contemplate a campaign to liberate Indochina, either before the President's death or after.

It would be even more difficult to show that President Truman's wartime policy postponed the return of the French to Indochina. Indeed, Mr. Truman showed more sympathy than his predecessor toward French desires. He did not object to the restoration of French control, and he accepted in principle French participation in the war against Japan, leaving it to his military advisors to decide what contribution the French should make. For military reasons, neither General MacArthur nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff were eager to use French troops in the assault on Japan. And though the Chiefs seemed inclined to agree that French troops might eventually serve under British command in a campaign to liberate Indochina, the war ended before French troops could be committed.

When Japan surrendered, there were three obvious policies the United States might have pursued toward Indochina: (1) help restore it to the French; (2) help the Indochinese toward eventual independence by establishing a trusteeship; or (3) observe a "hands-off" attitude. Accepting the first would have entailed the use of American troops or resources. And the American public undoubtedly would have complained about aiding French imperialism and delaying the demobilization of American servicemen. The second policy had virtually been precluded by a provision of the United Nations Charter that would have required French consent to the establishment of a trusteeship. The United States chose the third course, and left the solution to the Indochina problem to the French, Indochinese, British, and Chinese.

Possibly, an international trusteeship might have brought better results than the restoration of French rule. But such a solution was strongly opposed by the French and British, and even President Roosevelt did not advance the idea with sufficient vigor to obtain its acceptance. Nor can anyone say for certain that it would have worked. In retrospect, then, it appears, that given the situation from Pearl Harbor to the return of French rule, the United States followed the course that at the time seemed most suited to its own interests.

CHAPTER IV

INDOCHINA DURING THE WAR YEARS

Birth and Early Development of the Viet Minh

In the spring of 1941 a group of Vietnamese nationalists meeting in South China founded the Viet Minh League. Little fanfare attended the birth of the League, and the event went largely unnoticed by the statesmen and soldiers of the western world. Initially the Viet Minh League seemed to be only another of the myriad national groupings that functioned ineffectually outside their homelands. Yet, in little more than a decade it was to become the vehicle of Communist domination over approximately half of Viet Nam.

For years Vietnamese revolutionaries had sought sanctuary in South China whenever the French police began to breathe too heavily on their necks. With the outbreak of the war these dissident elements were soon augmented by a new flow of Indochinese nationalists over the border. Though often pledged to different parties, these newcomers shared a common goal. They aimed at the explusion of both the Japanese and the French from Indochina, and the creation of an independent Viet Nam. Rightly they reasoned that their closest and most promising source of aid was China, for the Kuomintang had an important stake in Indochina. In the prewar years China had permitted French economic penetration of Yunnan in return for access to the Gulf of Tonkin. Then in the hour of China's greatest need the French had closed the Yunnan Railroad to Chinese supplies. Also, Indochina had become an important base of Japanese operations against South China. "It became a matter of direct military concern to the Chinese National Government to strike a blow against the Japanese in this area. The utilization of Vietnamese for espionage purposes and the creation of a local military force against the Japanese became a military necessity. The remnants of the nationalist parties and groups in exile began to reform their ranks and vie for support from the Chinese."[1]

1. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 58.

The Viet Minh was conceived by Vietnamese Communists, and from the start the League was dominated and directed by the members of the Indochinese Communist Party. Under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, the Party, in a classical Communist tactic, planned and worked for a united front to which parties and groups of virtually every political shade could adhere. To win these adherents the Communists played upon the nationalistic feelings of the exiles. Shrewdly, the members of the Party soft-pedaled orthodox Communism, and emphasized independence and its benefits. They were well aware, however, that the independence of Indochina would have to wait until after the war. And any help they might give during the struggle to the Allies would strengthen their case. In the meantime they could as part of the Viet Minh improve their organization, increase their numbers, and strengthen their military elements. The Viet Minh, therefore, made collaboration with the Allied nations in the war against Japan a cardinal tenet of its policy.

Before long, however, the Viet Minh ran into serious trouble with the Chiang Kai-shek government. Ever distrustful of Communists, the Kuomintang was displeased that Ho Chi Minh and his followers dominated the Viet Minh. To restore the balance of leadership in the Indochinese Nationalist movement the Chinese decided to sponsor and support a rival league, a league whose parties and leadership might be more easily persuaded that the future of Indochina was indissolubly linked with China's future.[2]

In April 1942 the Chinese arrested Ho Chi Minh as a "French Spy," and in October of the same year the Viet Nam Revolutionary League (Dong Minh Hoi) was founded under the aegis of Chinese Marshal Chang Fa-Kuei. Most of the leadership of this new League was provided by the VNQDD, or the Viet Nam Nationalist Party, which was strongly pro-Chinese. "The program of the Dong Minh Hoi was modeled broadly on that of the Chinese Kuomintang . . . . . It sought the liberation of Indochina from the French and the Japanese and envisaged close cooperation between Vietnam and China. Organizationally, the Dong Minh Hoi was set up as a paramilitary formation to work in close

2. Ibid., pp. 60-63.

liaison with the Chinese Nationalist Army. It also maintained an espionage network in northern Tonkin centering on Moncay, Hanoi, and Haiphong."[3]

The Viet Minh League, despite Chinese hostility towards its leadership, lost no time in affiliating with the new League, but the Viet Minh preserved its extensive and separate organization. The Chinese permitted the Viet Minh this autonomy in their own interest, for they soon discovered that "only the Viet Minh had a network of cells throughout the Vietnamese lands, which it had inherited from the Communist Party and its affiliates."[4]

In June of 1943 the Chinese went a step farther. Marshal Chang Fa-Kuei released Ho Chi Minh from prison so that he might improve the espionage activities of the Viet Minh and other political groups in Indochina. As the most prominent leader of the Viet Minh, Ho Chi Minh was made a member of the Central Committee of the Dong Minh Hoi, but his main efforts were devoted almost exclusively to strengthening the ranks and organization of the Viet Minh in Indochina. The Viet Minh, as well as the other affiliates of the Dong Minh Hoi received a monthly stipend, military equipment, and military training from the Chinese, who before very long had cause to regret aid given to Ho Chi Minh and his followers.[5]

Though the Dong Minh Hoi was, theoretically, a working coalition, in fact the Viet Minh never merged its organization with the others. Indeed, Viet Minh and the Dong Minh Hoi waged an under-the-surface but constant struggle for leadership of the nationalist movement, for mass support in Indochina, and for Chinese and American aid. This friction ran counter to Chinese plans, and in March 1944 the Kuomintang made another effort to redistribute the balance of power.

Under Chinese auspices a nationalist congress was convoked at Liuchow, in March 1944, and a republican government for the future state of Viet Nam was selected.

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3. Ibid., p. 63.
4. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 96.
5. SD OIR No. 3708, pp. 61-63.

Ho Chi Minh was to be one of several ministers, and the Viet Minh one of several forces in the new government. However, the creation of this provisional government increased rather than decreased the power and prestige of Ho Chi Minh and his followers.[6] The Viet Minh had the only well-knit organization functioning in Indochina, and it used the organization to convince the population that the Viet Minh alone spoke in the name of the united revolutionary parties and the new government; that the Viet Minh alone was capable of leading the fight for independence; and that Ho Chi Minh was the great champion of their cause. By August 1944 the Viet Minh claimed a membership of 220,000 in Tonkin alone. French sources, however, credited the League with only 50,000 followers.[7]

Inevitably, the growing strength of the Viet Minh re-aroused the Chinese distrust and fear of Viet Minh intentions. Relations between the two grew steadily worse, so the Viet Minh tried to get American support. "It offered the Allies co-operation in the war and asked in return that the great powers, particularly the United States, give the Vietnamese military support and recognize their eventual independence under the Atlantic Charter."[8] No such support or recognition was granted but the Viet Minh did succeed in establishing relations with American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) groups and French resistance elements.[9]

Meanwhile in northern Tonkin a new and formidable figure began to emerge, Vo Nguyen Giap, the leader of Viet Minh guerrilla forces. A Doctor of Law and a member of the Indochinese Communist Party, Giap fled to China with the outbreak of war. At Yenan, the Chinese Communist capital, he studied guerrilla tactics and learned his lessons well. Returning to his homeland in 1943, Giap became chief of all Viet Minh clandestine activity. In his activities Giap combined persuasion with terrorism, converting and recruiting the Indochinese who were susceptible to persuasion and terrorizing those who were not.

6. Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940-1952 (Paris, 1952), p. 109.
7. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 24.
8. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 97.
9. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 61.

In addition to espionage and the harassment of the Japanese, Giap's guerrillas also helped American aviators shot down in Indochina to reach safety in South China. But his main efforts were always directed toward building up the strength and military capabilities of his force.[10]

By the end of 1944 Giap had built up a force of approximately 10,000 hardy guerrillas that kept the Vichy French and Japanese detachments in border areas in an almost constant state of alert. The force Giap created during this period was the nucleus of the Viet Minh army that would in the fall of 1950 drive the French out of their strong border positions, and in the spring of 1954 defeat a strong French force in pitched battle at Dien Bien Phu.

French Activities in Indochina, January 1943-March 1945

During World War II while Ho Chi Minh and Giap prepared for the struggle that would follow the fall of Japan, the French made preparations of their own.

From the beginning the Free French never lost sight of Indochina's importance to France. During the war de Gaulle and his advisers devoted a great deal of time and effort to charting the future of Indochina as part of the French Empire. They worked unceasingly to secure United States agreement for French participation in the war against Japan, hoping thereby to bring Indochina back into the fold of the French Empire. At the same time they watched jealously for any indication of Allied designs on their Far Eastern territory and were not reluctant to state their own plans for the future of Indochina.

On 7 December 1943, for example, the French Committee of National Liberation announced:

> . . . France solemnly repudiates every act and every cession of territory that may have been accomplished in complete disregard of her rights and of her interests. . . .

10. Jean Sainteny, Histoire d'une Paix Manquee (Paris, 1953), p. 243.

> . . . France will not fail to remember the proud and loyal attitude of the Indo-Chinese peoples, the resistance which by our side they opposed to Japan and to Siam, the faithful bonds which tied them to the French community.
>
> To these people who have been able to assert both their national feeling and their responsibility, the French mean to give a new political status by which, within the French community and within the framework of the federal organization, the franchises of the different countries of the Union will be reshaped and established on a wider scope; a status whose institutions will have a more liberal character without losing the features of Indo-Chinese traditions and civilization, and whereby at last, all Indo-Chinese citizens will have access to every position and every public office of the state.
>
> With this reform of the political status, there will be a recasting of the economic status of the Union which, based on a system of autonomy concerned with customs and taxes, will ensure its own prosperity and contribute to that of the neighboring countries as well.[11]

The Free French did not, however, limit themselves merely to making proclamations. They organized a resistance movement in Indochina that eventually included the French military forces and a substantial part of the civilian Frenchmen of the country. In the end Admiral Decoux himself took his orders from de Gaulle.

After the fall of France few Frenchmen chose to risk open adherence to de Gaulle. But as the fortunes of the Allies and Free French rose, more and more joined the ranks of de Gaulle supporters. In 1943 de Gaulle established a Free French mission in Calcutta and another in Kunming with the task of "maintaining a discreet contact between our French comrades who remained in Indochina and Free France."[12] A year later de Gaulle officially appointed General Mordant to lead the resistance movement.

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11. "French Committee's Statement on Indochina," The United Nations Review, vol. IV, 15 Jan 44, p. 16.

12. Sainteny, Histoire d'une Paix Manquee, p. 21. (Translated by author.)

And Admiral Decoux, after consulting with de Gaulle's government, established a new Council with General Mordant as Vice President.

The French mission in Kunming received little encouragement or help from the Americans and Chinese, who reflected the cautious attitude of their governments toward the future of Indochina. In Calcutta, however, it was quite a different story. The British were more than willing to help France regain its prewar positions in Indochina. Although Indochina was in the China Theater of Operations, the British were soon dropping agents, arms, and equipment into Tonkin, Laos, Cochinchina, and Annam.[13]

Unfortunately for the French, the Japanese were well abreast of the resistance movement's progress. The secret of the movement was no secret at all. The resistance was common talk among the white men in Indochina, and in Saigon every Frenchman knew that Mordant was the head of the movement. Some of the air drops fell into Japanese hands and Indochinese agents in Japanese employ provided a steady flow of information. But the Japanese chose to bide their time.

Meanwhile the French, who had their own intelligence sources, began to receive reports that the Japanese, too, were planning a showdown. And in January 1945 General Mordant drew up a plan of operations for use in the event of a Japanese attack on French forces. This plan called for a gradual withdrawal of the French Army from the population centers to the mountain regions of Tonkin and Laos where guerrilla operations would be carried out against the Japanese. In January the plan was approved by the French Government in Paris, and the deployment of troops was initiated according to plan.[14]

Meanwhile the Japanese had begun to suspect that Indochina would soon be invaded by an American amphibious assault. And they feared that unless they disposed of the French Army, Japanese troops would be attacked from the front and rear simultaneously. French troop movements and increased aerial activity seemed to indicate an attack in the very near future. The Japanese decided, therefore, to strike first.

13. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 121.
14. Ibid.

In the evening of 9 March the Japanese demanded that Admiral Decoux place all French armed forces in Indochina under Japanese command. Any delay would be interpreted as a refusal. That night the Japanese troops, already deployed, attacked the dispersed French forces. In less than twenty-four hours the French Army of Indochina was destroyed as an effective military force. A handful of small units escaped to the mountains of Laos, and a few thousand men, under Generals Sabatier and Alessandri, made their way to South China but most of the French troops were rounded up by the Japanese and interned. General Mordant himself was captured and Admiral Decoux was taken into "protective custody."

The "Independent" Government of Viet Nam

With considerable forethought the Japanese had prepared the overthrow of the French, politically as well as militarily. In anticipation of the 9 March coup they had encouraged the pro-Japanese nationalist parties to give up their underground activities and prepare to take over the government of Viet Nam. The Japanese protected the leaders of these parties from arrest by the French authorities and permitted them to organize their followers. Thus, on 9 March the Japanese had two coalitions of parties as well as several other unaffiliated parties ready to organize a native regime friendly to Japan. One of the party groups was the Viet Nam Restoration League, which soon absorbed the other organizations as affiliates and became the dominant group of the coalition.[15]

The Japanese lost no time in setting up a friendly Vietnamese government. Too few in number and unequipped to take over the whole government apparatus, they were forced to rely on the Vietnamese for the maintenance of services, utilities, and civil administration. On the day after the coup, 10 March, they announced that the country was "free" and proclaimed Bao Dai as Emperor of Viet Nam.

Bao Dai was the direct descendant of a famous prince of Annam who in the eighteenth century unified Cochinchina, Tonkin, and Annam into a single country of Viet Nam, and ascended the throne as Emperor. ...

15. SD OIR No. 3708, pp. 53-54.

However, by 1925, the year Bao Dai took the throne, the powers and prerogatives of the royal house had been gradually whittled away until the Emperor served merely as a French-supported figurehead. Bao Dai's imperial government at Hue possessed no real authority in Annam, and not even the semblance of authority in Tonkin and Cochinchina. The Emperor seemed content to while away his days in Hue indulging his sybaritic tastes and co-operating wholeheartedly with the French administration.[16] When, however, in March 1945, the Japanese promised him the chance to reunite Viet Nam, he revealed his patriotism and manifested a good deal of energy and skill.

Later Bao Dai was to explain that the French themselves had ended their protectorate over Viet Nam by their failure to defend the country from the Japanese. "I could have accepted it /independence/ or refused it. But in the latter case they would have imposed their administration; also I chose what would save my people from the worst. And then they gave us our independence which was the first thing."[17]

Bao Dai cooperated as fully with the Japanese as he had with the French, but within the narrow limits of authority permitted him by the Japanese, he attempted to unite and govern Viet Nam.

On 11 March Bao Dai issued an imperial proclamation in which he abrogated the French-Annamese Treaty of 1886, pronounced Viet Nam an independent country, and pledged the adherence of Viet Nam to the Japanese bloc of Greater East Asia.[18]

16. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 46.
17. Le Monde, 23 Feb 46. (Translated by author.)
18. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 125.

From the beginning, however, it was apparent to Bao Dai and his supporters that government by fiat could not endure long. It was essential that the new regime have a broad base of national support. To rally this support, Bao Dai tried to win further Japanese concessions to Vietnamese nationalism, hoping to organize a government that would be more representative of the seething political forces of the country. On both scores he had but little success.

Annam was ostensibly independent but the status of Tonkin and Cochinchina remained unresolved for several months, although in both parts of the country, as in Annam, Vietnamese functionaries took over the administration in the lower echelons. Supposedly, the Imperial Court was to appoint resident superiors to govern in Tonkin and Cochinchina. In fact, however, the Japanese kept control in their own hands. Like the French, the Japanese governed Cochinchina as a colony, merely replacing the French officials at the top of the administration with their own functionaries. Only when they saw clearly that their dream of a Greater East Asia was no longer realizable did the Japanese permit Viet Nam to incorporate Tonkin. They surrendered Cochinchina even more reluctantly, waiting until 8 August before they permitted Bao Dai to issue an imperial edict officially joining Cochinchina to Viet Nam.[19]

On 10 March the members of the existing Imperial Cabinet were all representatives of the mandarinate. It was obvious to all, including Bao Dai and the Cabinet itself, that the government was not representative of the political forces of the country. Bao Dai knew that without the support of these political forces and the popular will they reflected, a stable government for Viet Nam was not feasible. He tried repeatedly, therefore, to broaden the representation in the government. In his effort to engage important and popular political figures for a new government, Bao Dai several times attempted to secure the services of Ngo Dinh Diem as Prime Minister.

Ngo Dinh Diem was a Catholic mandarin of high reputation. In 1933, at the age of 32, Diem had served as Minister of Interior and secretary of a government reform

19. SD OIR No. 3708, pp. 55-56.

commission, but he had resigned from the government after only a few months, saying "that he was no longer able to take part in this comedy" of government.[20] Diem's importance stemmed from the high esteem in which he was held throughout Viet Nam. His integrity and ability, widely known, and his sincere devotion to the cause of independence and unity for Viet Nam were recognized even by the Japanese. In addition, Diem represented the support of conservative Catholic elements whose participation in the government was much to be desired.

During the war Diem had been antagonized by Admiral Decoux, and along with other nationalists had turned to the Japanese for support. At the time of Bao Dai's overtures he was living under Japanese protection in Saigon. Diem knew that there was little substance to the Japanese promises of independence and unity, and he remained deaf to Bao Dai's pleadings.

Finally, Bao Dai dared delay no longer, and on 17 April he appointed Tra Trong Kim as Prime Minister. Kim was a respected scholar, a prominent Freemason, and a nationalist, but he was subservient to the Japanese and a man of limited political ability. Under Kim the government was composed largely of pro-Japanese nationalists who wanted to make the most of their new independence. They hoped to create a functioning government that would survive the Japanese control of the country and greet the Allies as an independent and stable government.

The Kim government was supported by several nationalist groups, of which the Greater Viet Nam Nationalist Association (Dai Viet) and the Viet Nam Restoration League were the most important. The Dai Viet, a wartime creation, was a hodgepodge of intellectuals, Boy Scouts, students, and extremist patriots. The Viet Nam Restoration League was a much older party, tracing its origin to before World War I. The League had a long history of friendly relations with the Japanese and opposition to the French.[21]

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20. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 126. (Translated by author.)

21. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 54; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 48, 49.

The members of the Kim government tried to govern well, but the heavy hand of Japanese control, lack of wide public support, a disrupted economy, famine, and their own limitations all contributed to their failure. A few concessions were granted by the Japanese, but the government's inability to bring Cochinchina under its rule, as well as its apparent subservience to the Japanese, prevented it from gaining strong support among the mass of the people. It had little support even among the mandarinate, and it was opposed by influential elements--for example, Diem and his followers.[22]

As the weeks passed a sense of impotence grew among members of the government. They saw the end of the war approaching, and they realized that when peace came they would be regarded as collaborators. They showed less and less initiative at a time when the internal situation required the utmost efforts of the government. When French rule ended and the new government of Viet Nam was organized, the mass of the people did not realize the independence carried with it serious responsibilities. The countryside thought of the change mostly in terms of no more taxes, no more requisitions, no more control. Even the ranks of government employees were not immune to a certain "live and let live" attitude. As a result the government soon found that it possessed little or no authority outside of the principal towns, and in certain provinces an administrative vacuum existed.[23]

Adding to the woes of the government, spring brought famine to Tonkin and Annam. Hundreds of thousands died. Rioting and lawlessness became widespread. Discontent infected all ranks of the population. By August the government held only the trappings of authority donated by the Japanese.

More and more the Vietnamese turned ears and eyes toward the northern frontier. They heard that the Viet Minh was already ensconced in the northern provinces; that the Viet Minh had a powerful army and a patriotic leadership; that collaborators would be hanged; and, of the greatest importance, that the Viet Minh was the ally

22. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 26.
23. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 128.

of the United States, China, and the USSR. There was little truth and much fiction in these stories. Nevertheless, the stage was being set for Viet Minh's rise to power. It did not keep its audience waiting long.

The Viet Minh Seizes Control

In the early months of 1945, while Giap strove to expand, equip, and train his military formations, Ho Chi Minh was already at war on the political front. Under his inspiration and guidance a comprehensive postwar program was drawn up and publicized by the Viet-Minh--the only group to do so. The Viet Minh promised the Vietnamese a republican constitution that would guarantee democratic rights and privileges, an end of French taxes, a national economy without colonial influence, industrialization, and improved agriculture. Along with all these pledges, it promised, would come a program of social legislation undreamed of by the mass of the people--the 8-hour day, unemployment insurance, a minimum wage, aid to large families, increased medical facilities, and educational and intellectual stimulation in all ranks of Vietnamese life. But as long as the French governed, these were only empty promises. However, once the Japanese had neatly disposed of the French, the Viet Minh laid down a program of action and stepped up its activity.[24]

The Viet Minh bitterly attacked the Tran Trong Kim government as a Japanese puppet regime, and in the tone of a directive appealed to the people, exhorting them to organize processions, demonstrations, and strikes against the Japanese; to hold back rice and pay no taxes; to destroy communications, transportation facilities, ammunition dumps, and foodstores; and to launch surprise assaults against isolated outposts and small patrols.[25]

In April the Viet Minh called a military conference to map out the strategy and organization for a national revolt. A general staff of the army was appointed, and Giap was named its chief. Thereafter, Viet Minh forces increased their harassment of the Japanese but they never risked a pitched battle. They contented themselves with hit and run raids against numerically inferior Japanese

24. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 98.
25. Ibid., p. 99.

units and the destruction of Japanese communications facilities and supplies. Their greatest "battle" was an assault by approximately 500 Viet Minh troops against a post manned by forty Japanese soldiers. After a 24-hour combat they broke off the fight, leaving behind eight dead Japanese.[26] Nevertheless, as Japanese commitments to the south increased, Giap's guerrillas were able to move out of their mountain lairs in force and gradually extend their hold on the border provinces.

In May, with the French Army no longer a factor in its military considerations, the Viet Minh was strong enough to organize a "liberated" zone of Tonkin.[27] This zone, made up of six northern provinces, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Bac An, Tuyen Quang, and Thai Nguyen, formed a substantial part of Tonkin. In the eyes of the population Viet Minh control over such a large area was a considerable achievement, and the stock of the Viet Minh went up accordingly. Emboldened by its success, "Viet Minh Central Headquarters," under Ho Chi Minh's leadership, called a National Congress for Viet Nam but "transportation difficulties," or perhaps the Japanese, forced its postponement.

In the spring the Japanese made some effort to seek out and destroy Viet Minh units in the north, but by summer they needed all their forces to control key cities and villages, the main lines of communications, and the more vulnerable parts of the coast. As a result the Viet Minh guerrillas and innumerable agents were soon operating throughout the Tonkin delta area and as far south as Annam.[28]

Constantly in evidence were certain skills the Viet Minh had acquired from the Communist Party--skillful agitation, excellent organizational ability, and successful infiltration of the opposition. Agents cleverly

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26. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 133.
27. (S) Geneva Conf. Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 27.
28. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 135.

created and exploited disorder and discontent, steadily increasing the ranks of Viet Minh adherents. They organized revolutionary committees and provincial organizations with allegiance to the national central committee. They infiltrated the pro-Japanese parties and the very highest ranks of the Kim government. And by July the Viet Minh had sympathizers even among the members of the Cabinet.[29]

Wherever members of the Viet Minh found an audience they dinned into its ears the claim that their organization was part of the Allied coalition, that the Allies supported the Viet Minh, and that victory would soon be theirs. Actually, however, they knew that the future of Indochina was still far from decided. They knew, too, that even if the Viet Minh succeeded in replacing the Kim government, it would have to contend with an aroused Free France, jealous of its overseas empire and eager to reassert its hegemony over Indochina. The Free French had already made it abundantly clear that France had no thought of permitting Indochina to go its own way.

Earlier, when the Japanese had toppled the Decoux regime, the French Provisional Government had hastened to state its plans for Indochina lest any nation or group doubt France's firm intention of re-acquiring the territory. On 12 March the Minister of Colonies in an address before the Provisional Consultative Assembly said: "We firmly hope that the sometimes touching loyalty of which the people of Indochina have given proof, and the courage and patriotism manifested by the French there, will quickly find their reward." At the moment Indochina was still in the grip of the enemy. "But," said the Minister, "soon our flag will float anew over Hanoi, Hue, and Saigon as at Strasbourg and Metz."[30]

Less than two weeks later the French Government announced a postwar plan for Indochina, to go into effect as soon as possible after the end of the war. The Indochinese Union would be replaced by an Indochinese

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29. Ibid. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 100.

30. Notes et Etudes, "L'Indochina francaise delivree," No. 115, 17 Aug 45, pp. 1-2. (Translated by author.)

Federation composed of five semi-independent states united under the French flag. This Federation was to constitute with France and the other members of the old French Empire a French Union whose interests would be represented abroad by France. Within this Union, Indochina would enjoy autonomy; nationals of the Indochinese Federation would be at the same time Indochinese citizens and citizens of the French Union. This double citizenship would entitle them to all federal posts in Indochina and in the Union, on the sole ground of merit and without discrimination of race, religion, or national origin.

Indochina would have its own federal government, presided over by a Governor-General, and composed of Ministers responsible to him. These Ministers would be selected from among the Indochinese as well as the French residents, and a State Council composed of the outstanding members of the Federation would assist the Governor-General in preparing the laws and regulations of the Federation. A representative body chosen in accordance with the mode of election best suited to each of the States of the Federation, and in which French interests would be represented, would vote on the imposition of all taxation, approve the federal budget, and discuss the bills. Freedom of thought and creed, liberty of the press, right of association and meetings, and, generally speaking, all domestic liberties would constitute the basis of all Indochinese laws.[31]

In prewar Indochina this declaration would probably have exceeded the fondest hopes of Vietnamese nationalists, including Ho Chi Minh, but by the summer of 1945 it was not enough. The proposed reforms were still cast in the traditional French mold. The Governor-General was in essence the "High Commissioner." He was to retain control, flanked by ministers appointed by and responsible to him. A Council would assist him in preparing the laws and regulations of the Federation. The "representative body" would vote on taxes, approve the federal budget, and discuss the bills, but there its powers ended. Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina would remain separate.

31. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 21.

In July the Viet Minh made several attempts to meet with Jean Sainteny, chief of the French mission in Kunming, but without success. The only French-Viet Minh contact worthy of note during this period came about through the good offices of the OSS. Using OSS channels the Viet Minh sent a message to the mission in Kunming listing certain reforms which it wanted instituted in the "political future of French Indochina." The Viet Minh asked that:

1) a parliament be elected by universal suffrage to govern the country and a French governor act as President until independence was assured.

2) independence be given to Indochina in a minimum of five years and a maximum of ten.

3) the natural resources of the country be returned to it inhabitants after fair compensation was made to the present holders; France continuing to benefit from economic concessions.

4) all the liberties described by the United Nations be assured to the Indochinese people.

5) the sale of opium be forbidden.[32]

The Viet Minh's request was carefully studied by Inspector of Colonies de Raymond, his deputy, Leon Pignon, General Alessandri, and M. Sainteny. In brief, the French representatives were bound by the already announced government policies which were incompatible with conditions set forth by the Viet Minh and the limitations of their authority. In their response, therefore, they were unable to offer the Viet Minh much hope that the French Government would look upon the five conditions with favor. Actually, an encouraging reply would probably have come as a surprise to the Viet Minh.

In the beginning of summer, 1945, OSS activity in Indochina increased sharply. By the middle of July several OSS teams, supplied by airdrops, were operating in Tonkin where they organized and directed guerrilla action against

32. Sainteny, Histoire d'une Paix Manquee, p. 57. (Translated by author.)

the Japanese. These teams also provided military and political intelligence to OSS headquarters in Kunming. The July and August reports of the head of one of the teams are revealing. He had been in close contact with a Dr. Hoo and a Mr. Van (actually Ho Chi Minh and Giap) for a period of almost two months. Both Ho Chi Minh and Giap had strongly manifested their hostility to the French. At Ho's insistence the head of the team had been compelled to send a French officer attached to his group back to China. He also reported that Ho "would welcome a million Americans to come /to Indochina/ but not any French," for Ho considered the return of any French an "opening wedge." Yet the Viet Minh knew that the French would return eventually. When they did the Viet Minh would insist that complete independence be given to Indochina after a specified number of years. According to the report, the Viet Minh also realized that Indochina would need outside technical help. The Viet Minh would especially welcome United States aid.[33] Clearly, the Viet Minh was looking ahead, but as it planned and prepared for the future, it was overtaken by events.

When it came, the collapse of Japan was so quick that it scrambled the Viet Minh timetable. On 26 July Great Britain, the United States, and China called upon the Japanese Government to surrender unconditionally. And on 6 August the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. Rightly the Viet Minh surmised the surrender of Japan was now a matter of days. The Viet Minh knew that its preparations still left much to be desired--in the north it wanted more time to train its troops and to organize a larger following among the broad mass of the population in the south the Viet Minh had no military formations worthy of the name and less than moderate public support. Nevertheless, the Viet Minh realized that the decisive moment to seize power had arrived. On 7 August Giap's guerrilla formations became the Viet Nam Army of Liberation, and at Viet Minh headquarters Military Order No. 1 was issued. It announced that "The hour has struck for a general offensive on all fronts." In rapid order the command was issued to march on Hanoi. A country-wide insurrection was launched, and a National Congress was hastily convened.[34]

33. (S) Thomas Rpts, Jul-Aug 45, FIC file 93a-3, SI Projects, CIA.

34. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 135. (Translated by author.)

The so-called National Congress convened by the Viet Minh met in the "liberated" province of Thai Nguyen on 14 August, the day that President Truman announced that Japan had accepted unconditional surrender. At this gathering the Viet Minh laid down a clear-cut program which bore on the following points:

a) to disarm the Japs before the entry of Allied forces into Indochina;

b) to wrest the power from the hands of the enemy;

c) to be in a position of authority when receiving the Allied Forces.[35]

The National Congress also set up an executive organ, the People's Liberation Committee, to assume power in Hanoi as the official government of Viet Nam. Ho Chi Minh was unanimously elected President. The Committee was composed of fourteen members--six belonged to the Indochinese Communist Party, six to other parties of the Viet Minh League, and two were members of the Viet Nam Democratic Party. But it was dominated by the six Communists, one of whom was Giap. Though the Committee had a wide popular support in the north it fell far short of representing the whole nationalist movement. In truth, there existed considerable opposition to the high-handed People's Liberation Committee and its monopoly of the center stage. In Tonkin bitter fighting broke out between Giap's troops and the military formations of the Nationalist Socialist Party and the Viet Nam Nationalist Party. In Annam, too, sporadic clashes occurred between Viet Minh units and other nationalists. Nevertheless, the Viet Minh succeeded in temporarily composing its differences with these local groups and soon established itself as the main stream of the nationalist movement.[36]

Meanwhile, as Giap's men approached Hanoi, the Japanese showed that they had no intention of opposing the Viet Minh. As far as they were concerned, the war and their dream of the Co-Prosperity Sphere were over. Better, they reasoned, that Indochina should fall to Asians, even if they were

35. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 66.
36. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 27.

not of the pro-Japanese camp, than to Japan's conquerors. At least it would be in keeping with Japan's historic task--the liberation of Asia from white imperialism. Isolated cases of fighting between Japanese and Viet Minh units did occur but these clashes were minor. In the main the Japanese held to a benevolent neutrality. They did, however, turn a considerable amount of arms and material over to the native forces and they posed no obstacle to the Viet Minh's seizure of public facilities and property. It is doubtful that the Viet Minh could have come to power without at least the passive acquiescence of the Japanese.[37]

Even before Giap's formations entered Hanoi, the city passed into the hands of the Viet Minh. Large demonstrations took place in Hanoi on 17-18 August, and for the first time Viet Minh adherents began to harangue the crowds openly, the imperial flag was lowered and the red flag with a gold star was raised in its place, and processions moved through the streets carrying Viet Minh banners and shouting Viet Minh slogans. On 19 August, Giap's men reached Hanoi where they were immediately joined by the local militia. On 20 August, the Viet Minh became master of the city without opposition. In the next few days the Viet Minh extended its grip over most of the Tonkin countryside, using the revolutionary committees and the youth groups trained by the French and the Kim government to good advantage.[38]

In the meantime, in Hue, Bao Dai was preparing to surrender the seal of national power to the Viet Minh. He saw on every side the evidences of the Viet Minh's superior power. The Kim government had already resigned on 15 August and Hue itself had a revolutionary committee. At first Bao Dai attempted to maintain his position as Emperor. On 20 August he sent messages to the Allies, including France, pleading that they recognize the independence of Viet Nam, and on 22 August he invited the Viet Minh to form a new government. Bao Dai heard nothing from the Allies, and from the Viet Minh came only messages urging his abdication. Even among his personal counsellors

37. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 136-137; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 101.

38. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 66; Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 136-137.

were those who advised him to give up his throne. By 24 August Bao Dai felt there was no other course open to him; he wired to the Viet Minh in Hanoi that he was ready to abdicate and that the revolutionary government should send its representative to Hue for the transfer of legal power.[39]

The Viet Minh took Bao Dai at his word. On 25 August a delegation, headed by the Communist Vice President of the People's Liberation Committee, Tran Huy Lieu, arrived in Hue. That evening, without incident and in a friendly atmosphere, Bao Dai handed Tran Huy Lieu the two traditional symbols of rule, the gold seal and the gold sword with the ruby-encrusted handle. In return, Lieu pinned a red insignia with a gold star to the tunic of the former Emperor.[40]

In his abdication address, Bao Dai stated: "We ask all parties and groups, all classes of society as well as the Royal Family to unite and support without reservation the Democratic Government in order to consolidate national independence. . . . Henceforth we shall be happy to be a free citizen in an independent country. We shall allow no one to abuse our name or the name of the Royal Family in order to sow dissent among our compatriots."[41] As Citizen Vinh Thuy, Bao Dai now became Supreme Commander of the new government.

Hanoi became the new capital and Ho Chi Minh reorganized the People's Liberation Committee into the "Provisional Government" of Viet Nam. It was a ministerial government with a more moderate composition, but Ho remained President and the largest representation was given to the Communists who filled posts in the new cabinet. Of the remaining posts, three were filled by other Viet Minh adherents, three by the Democrats, three by independents, and one by a Catholic representative.[42] Ho Chi Minh took for himself the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Giap became Minister of Interior.

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39. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 139.
40. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 104.
41. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 139-140. (Translated by author.)
42. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 27-28.

On 2 September, Ho Chi Minh solemnly announced the birth and independence of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRV). The new government was now master of Tonkin and Annam, but in Cochinchina it was quite a different story.

In the south the defeat of Japan produced an immediate upsurge of activity by all the nationalist organizations. The Viet Minh did not represent a large enough body of the population to dominate the nationalist movement. It controlled Saigon, but little more; it was compelled, therefore, to vie for power with many rival organizations. Each of these organizations had armed elements, and each was thus able to impose its control on those areas where it was strongest. For example, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao attempted to set up unitary religious states. The militant wing of the Cao Dai maintained the seat of its order in the city of Tay-Ninh, and the Hoa Hao set up an independent state in Can-Tho. All the parties and groups wanted independence, although each aimed for an independence modeled after its own conception.[43]

Since, however, no party or group was strong enough to impose its will on the others, each was forced to compromise its aims. On 14 August a United National Front was established, composed of the formerly pro-Japanese parties and Trotskyists. The National Independence Party, the Cao Dai, elements of the Hoa Hao, and the Trotskyists of "the struggle" group formed the most important elements of the front. Under the influence of the intransigent Trotskyists the United National Front favored a policy of resistance to all foreign powers, including the Allies. In contrast, the Communist-dominated Viet Minh was inclined toward a policy of negotiation with the Allies and friendly relations with foreigners. It, too, however, proclaimed its readiness to fight "foreign imperialism."[44]

The formation of the United National Front gave the members of the Viet Minh good cause to fear that they might soon find themselves confronted by a coalition of nationalist parties, strong enough to control the political future of Cochinchina. They reacted to this threat by appealing to all nationalist parties to compose their differences in order to meet the Allies as a unified body,

43. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 68.
44. Ibid.

with a common policy. The Viet Minh called a meeting in Saigon of all political groups on 25 August. The United National Front participated in this meeting, but unity was difficult to achieve. The Viet Minh and the United National Front found themselves far apart in their attitudes toward the Allies and the conduct of the struggle to maintain the independence of Viet Nam. Nevertheless, the Viet Minh's argument that in unity there is strength was strong enough to achieve a superficial unification, and a Provisional Executive Committee of Southern Viet Nam was formed. But the Committee was dominated by the Indochinese Communist Party, and it was not representative of the general nationalist movement. It considered itself as the southern adjunct of the Ho Chi Minh government in the north.[45]

As such the Provisional Executive Committee could hardly hope to unite the widely diversified political elements in the south. All parties knew that unification was a short-range affair. In effect, all parties were observing a short period of truce. In the interim they would try to rally more supporters, to increase their military strength, and to plan for the struggle that was certain to break out shortly. The truce was even shorter than they expected.

45. Ibid.

CHAPTER V

SIXTEEN MONTHS OF CRISIS
SEPTEMBER 1945-DECEMBER 1946

The months from September 1945 to December 1946 were a period of increasing turmoil in Indochina. The occupation forces of Great Britain and China came and went. The Viet Minh became the spokesman and principal force of the Vietnamese nationalist movement. The French returned to Indochina in force, and clearly indicated their intention to remain. The French and Viet Minh alternated negotiations with charges and counter charges of bad faith. They spilled each other's blood, and it was often impossible to distinguish the victim from the aggressor. By the end of 1946 one thing, at least, was clear--Vietnamese were prepared to fight and die to assure the independence of Viet Nam. But it soon became equally clear that Frenchmen were prepared to fight and die to preserve the French Empire.

The British Occupation

At the end of World War II the South East Asia Command's area of responsibility was increased to include Indochina south of the 16th parallel. Consequently, after the defeat of Japan, the occupation of southern Indochina fell within the province of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia. In its occupation planning SEAC assigned Indochina the lowest priority. Malaya, Hongkong, Siam, and Java all ranked before Indochina, for it was assumed that the French would take over occupation of the country at the earliest possible moment. Since, however, the end of the war found the French unprepared to carry out the occupation, SEAC assumed more of the task than it had originally contemplated.

As stated on 14 August the SEAC objective in Indochina was "to introduce a force into French Indo-China south of 16 degrees north in order to control the Japanese Southern Army headquarters, to concentrate and evacuate Allied prisoners of war and internees and to disarm Japanese forces." "The eventual re-occupation of FIC is a matter for the French. . . . As far as possible all

matters affecting the civil population should be dealt with through the French representatives . . . who should be given every assistance necessary."[1]

On paper the occupation of Indochina seemed to be a routine matter of no great moment. The Japanese had only to be rounded up and disarmed, and Allied prisoners of war and internees taken care of. The French would soon be available to handle the more complicated and nettlesome problems of civil administration. And, as far as the British knew, the "liberated" native population would be friendly. But it was not very long before the British were disabused of these notions.

The British advance mission that arrived in Saigon on 6 September immediately found itself beset by problems beyond its competence and means. Saigon was full of conflicting groups that might at any moment turn the city into an arena of bloodshed. Only the Japanese possessed enough strength to control the situation, but, for reasons of their own, they preserved only a semblance of order. The Vietnamese independence demonstrations of 2 September had culminated in unorganized attacks on French homes. Each day brought new incidents. And try as it might the Committee of the South could not control the extremists in the ranks of the nationalist parties. The French returned the hatred of the Vietnamese in equal measure, but for the time being they were weak, and dared not react against the Vietnamese. Their hour of vengeance would come later.[2]

As their first task the members of the British Mission tried to restore order in Saigon. They directed the Japanese to increase the police forces in the city to seven battalions, and they ordered the disarmament of the Vietnamese. Tran Van Giau, the Communist-Viet Minh head of the Committee of the South, was willing to comply, for he still hoped to convince the Allies that the Vietnamese were capable of governing themselves, an important qualification of independence. Thus when Japanese headquarters issued a directive ordering general disarmament,

1. (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 85, par 2, 1-2 Sep 45; ibid., par 10.
2. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 154-155.

Giau supported the order. He called upon the population to obey the directive, and pleaded for the people's confidence. "In the interest of our country," he said, "we call on all to . . . not let themselves be led astray by people who would betray our country. It is only in this spirit that we can facilitate our relations with the Allied representatives."[3]

Giau's appeal, coupled with the rumor that the British planned to bring back French rule, brought the Trotskyists and elements of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai out into open opposition to the Viet Minh. In the countryside para-military formations of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai clashed with Viet Minh units while in the city the Trotskyists ordered the population not to give up its arms, and incited the people against the British troops who were expected momentarily.[4]

As soon as British troops appeared in Saigon the Trotskyists issued a manifesto accusing the Committee of the South of treason. The Viet Minh's reaction was swift and deadly. In the name of the Committee of the South Viet Minh police arrested the entire Central Committee of the international Trotskyist movement. The result was a violent conflict between Trotskyists of all shades and the Viet Minh. But it was an uneven contest, and a short one. The Viet Minh were by far the stronger faction. They killed the leaders of the Trotskyists, and dozens of the hierarchy. In the end the Viet Minh succeeded in destroying the Trotskyists as an important element in the nationalist movement.[5]

While the Viet Minh were acting against the Trotskyist organizations on the one hand, on the other they were trying to appease other discontented political groups. Viet Minh places in the Committee of the South were reduced from six to four and the membership of other groups increased from three to nine. Tran Van Giau stepped down from the Presidency of the Committee, and an independent took his post.

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3. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 109.
4. SD OIR No. 3708, pp. 72-73; Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 156.
5. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 73; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 110.

his permission to rearm 1,400 French troops "to lighten the task" of the overburdened British-Indian force. That night French soldiers descended on the city and occupied the public buildings against virtually no opposition. In the early morning hours they moved on the city hall, the seat of the Committee of the South, but forewarned, the members of the Committee escaped the French net. By dawn the French controlled the city.[11]

The pendulum now swung the other way as Frenchmen set out to pay back the debt of Vietnamese violence and terror. "'The behavior of the French citizens during the morning of Sunday, 23 September, absolutely ensured that counter-measures would be taken by the Annamites. The more emotional of the French citizens . . . unfortunately took this opportunity of taking what reprisals they could. Annamites were arrested for no other reason than that they were Annamites; their treatment after arrest, though not actively brutal, was unnecessarily violent.'"[12]

The situation was getting out of hand on the 23rd when the French authorities tried to apply the brakes. Cedile still hoped to negotiate with the Vietnamese nationalists and he feared the reaction of foreign newsmen, present in Saigon, to the French coup. More important he feared the reaction of General Gracey, who was certain to be displeased, and the results of that displeasure. Cedile moved about the city urging peace and moderation on the French population, but matters had gone too far.

General Gracey had good cause to be angry, for the French, like the Viet Minh, failed to maintain order. In his own words Frenchmen were engaged in "exacting revenge from any Annamite that they could get their hands on or arresting them without charge and beating

11. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 28; Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 159.

12. Supreme Allied Command, Southeast Asia, Commission No. 1, Saigon, Political History of French Indochina South of 16 Degrees, 13 September-11 October 1945. Quoted by George Sheldon in an unpublished manuscript, and quoted by Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 117.

and French sovereignty would be established in the near future. He decided, therefore to go to General Gracey and enlist his help "in safeguarding French lives and property."[8]

General Gracey hesitated, for he found himself in an extremely awkward position. His instructions did not authorize him to intervene in Franco-Vietnamese matters, and the political advisors he had been promised were not yet available. Nevertheless the British Commander felt that "although the situation was not serious," some action ought to be taken to curb Vietnamese nationalists before serious violence occurred. First he ordered the Japanese to take measures to maintain order between the French and Vietnamese. But half-hearted Japanese measures failed to have the desired effect, and when the Viet Minh leaders admitted that they were powerless to control all elements of the population, he took matters into his own hands.[9]

On 20 September General Gracey issued a proclamation affirming his responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in all of Indochina south of the 16th parallel. In the next twenty-four hours he ordered the Vietnamese press shut down, banned all public gatherings and the carrying of arms, directed that all Vietnamese police be confined to barracks, and all troops remain in their present location, proclaimed martial law and a curfew, and announced that sabotage and looting would be punishable by death. [10]

Even after these stern measures had been ordered, there was still a slim chance that the Viet Minh at least might bow to the British Commander's authority. But the French, abetted by General Gracey, made a peaceful solution to the problem impossible. On the 22nd the British took over from the Viet Minh control of the central prison and released the French parachutists who had been confined there since the Japanese coup of 9 March. The same day Cedile went to General Gracey and secured

8. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 156-158.
9. (UNK) Pers Msg, Gracey to SAC, 211500Z Sep 45, in (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary; Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 158.
10. Ibid., pp. 158-159.

But the fighting between the Viet Minh and other nationalist groups left deep scars. This conflict largely explains both the later inability of the Viet Minh to maintain order under the British occupation and the gradual weakening of the Vietnamese nationalist position in the south.[6]

The First Allied Occupation Forces, consisting of one battalion of Indian troops from the British 20th Division and one company of the French 5th Colonial Infantry, arrived in Saigon by plane on 12 September. British Major-General Douglas D. Gracey, the Commander of the occupation force, landed the next day. He found the situation little improved from what it had been at the time of the British mission's arrival. Tension remained high between the Vietnamese and the French, and sporadic warfare was going on between the Viet Minh and other nationalist groups. Though General Gracey's primary duty was to disarm the Japanese, his troops were so few that he felt compelled to use Japanese troops to maintain order "as they were the one safeguard against lawlessness and disorder, until the French troops should come, if British forces were not to become involved."[7]

The French, however, now felt much more secure. Without incident they took over from the Japanese control of the port, the arsenal, and other key points. Their success increased their aggressiveness, and, with the memory of their recent terror still fresh in their minds, they urged the French authorities to take repressive measures against the Vietnamese. At this time the highest French official in southern Indochina was Jean Cedile, a colonial administrator, and the delegate of the High Commissioner of France for South Indochina, Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu. Cedile had parachuted into the country three weeks earlier with the firm intention of negotiating with the Vietnamese. According to instructions from his government Cedile was to re-establish order, re-assert French sovereignty, and prepare for the future regime envisioned by the Declaration of 24 March. In his view the first two conditions were necessary to achieve the third, but under the circumstances there was little hope that order

6. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 72; Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 156.
7. (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 90.

them on the flimsiest pretext."[13] Gracey ordered the French troops to return to their barracks and surrender their arms. Further, he announced that it was his firm intention to treat breaches of law and order by Frenchmen under his proclamations of 20 and 21 September. Cedile agreed fully with General Gracey, and issued a stern warning to French civilians. Unfortunately, the damage had already been done.

As soon as the shock of the French coup had worn off, the Viet Minh struck back. On 24 September several dozen Frenchmen disappeared in the port area, never to be heard from again. The central power station was attacked and electric service cut off. Armed Viet Minh bands invaded the city proper and took the center of Saigon under fire. That night, under the eyes of indifferent Japanese guards, several hundred Vietnamese infiltrated a French suburb of the city and massacred over 150 French men, women, and children before the French and British authorities could intervene. Arms were now hastily reissued to the French troops, but it was too late. Giau ordered a general strike, the interdiction of the main thoroughfares, and the evacuation of the city by the Vietnamese population. Saigon, he promised, would be reduced to ashes.[14]

General Gracey divided the city into sectors held by Anglo-Indian, French, and Japanese troops. Civilians were either barricaded in their homes or herded together to make their protection easier. All waited for a large scale Viet Minh attack. But the Viet Minh were too weak and disorganized to launch such an attack, and in the next few days, General Gracey was able to stabilize the situation in the city. It was in this period that Lieutenant Colonel A. Peter Dewey, head of the OSS detachment in southern Indochina, was ambushed and killed in the outskirts of the city by Vietnamese of undetermined political affiliation. Other American officers and some newspapermen were besieged for several hours before a contingent of Gurkhas came to their relief.[15]

13. (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 89, 25 Sep 45.
14. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 28; Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 160.
15. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 29.

In the last days of September, General Gracey's problem was still a serious one. He had only about 2,500 British-Indian troops, and the French troops available created problems instead of solving them. Also available in Saigon, however, were approximately 5,000 Japanese, and had the British Commander been able to rely on this force he would have had little trouble in coping with the Viet Minh. Indeed, had the Japanese cooperated with General Gracey from the beginning, the establishment and preservation of order probably would not have been a problem. Instead the Japanese often betrayed their sympathy for the nationalist movement. There was little doubt that they would have preferred to see the Vietnamese victorious in a struggle between "white imperialism" and "Asiatic nationalism." As early as 14 September Admiral Mountbatten had warned General Gracey that there were "strong indications . . . Japanese providing Annamites with arms . . . ." In the next two weeks the British confirmed several instances of Japanese turning arms over to Vietnamese. Some elements of the conquered army went even farther. There were cases of Japanese troops making common cause with Vietnamese units against the Allied forces. In other cases, while acting as escorts or guards, they permitted Allied personnel to be killed and wounded, and in one instance Japanese soldiers opened fire on troops of the occupation force.[16]

Repeatedly General Gracey warned the Japanese that they were expected to cooperate fully in maintaining order, and repeatedly violations of his orders occurred. Finally, on 27 September with the city virtually besieged by the Viet Minh, General Gracey threatened to treat the Japanese as war criminals unless they mended their ways, but the Japanese chief of staff replied that his men feared Vietnamese reprisals after they were disarmed. Then, with a straight face, he offered to mediate between the British and French and the Vietnamese.[17]

Adding to British woes in this period, news of the French coup and General Gracey's apparent support of the act had, in the meantime, spread outside Indochina. The

16. (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 88, 14 Sep; vol 90, 27 Sep; vol 91, 1 Oct.

17. Ibid., vol 90, 27 Sep; Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 161.

first press reaction was unfavorable, and the British could now expect strong public criticism of their position in Indochina. Nevertheless, Admiral Mountbatten quickly came to the defense of his subordinate. He wired the British Chiefs of Staff that, in his opinion, General Gracey had acted "with courage and determination in an extremely difficult situation." Had General Gracey acted otherwise, continued Admiral Mountbatten, "the safety of the small British force and the French population in Indochina might have been risked."[18]

In the next few days a steady stream of accusations poured from the DRV radio station in Hanoi. The Ho Chi Minh government announced to the world that Gracey's command was guilty of acts of "barbarism," and that responsibility for any future bloodshed in southern Indochina would rest squarely on British shoulders. Even more galling to the British was the DRV charge that "the main reason for the unfair and inhuman attitude of the /occupation force/ . . . is her /sic/ interest in seeing the French oppress Indochina as a screen for British oppression of other countries."[19]

In varying degrees the British were now assailed by the press of several countries, but the strongest criticism came from India. The British were particularly sensitive to criticism from this quarter, for General Gracey's command was composed primarily of Indian Gurkhas. From India Lord Wavell, the British Viceroy, tried to forestall Indian criticism of the use to which the Gurkhas were being put. He wired Admiral Mountbatten that the Indian division should be withdrawal "the sooner . . . the better." Unfortunately Admiral Mountbatten had no replacement available. He was compelled not only to leave the original force in Indochina, but to augment it during the fall with the remaining elements of the 20th Division.[20]

When the Indian reaction came, it was a bitter one. Pandit Nehru issued a statement in which he declared, "We have watched British intervention /in Indochina/ with growing anger, shame and helplessness that Indian

18. (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 89, 24 Sep.
19. Ibid., vol 90, 26 Sep; vol 91, 2 Oct.
20. Ibid., vol 90, 26 Sep; vol 94, 29 Oct.

troops should thus be used for doing Britain's dirty work against our friends who are fighting the same fight as we."[21]

At the end of September matters in Saigon took a turn for the better. An Anglo-French convoy dropped anchor in Saigon and landed French reinforcements. The balance of power now shifted definitely into the hands of the British and French. The Viet Minh recognized this fact, for on 1 October a number of Viet Minh leaders called upon General Gracey with proposals for peace.[22] General Gracey informed the delegation that his sole mission was to disarm Japanese, but he insisted that the Viet Minh put a stop to terrorist activity. The delegation countered with the proposition that only by reinstating the DRV government with all of its former powers, could peace be established. To attain this result the Viet Minh were willing to negotiate with the French provided the British would arbitrate. General Gracey agreed and arranged with the Viet Minh for a truce to commence the following evening. It was also arranged that French and Viet Minh representatives would meet on the morning of 3 October with a member of the British staff acting as observer.

At this initial meeting the French laid down the prerequisites for satisfactory conversations. The Viet Minh would have to return all hostages, agree to a mutual exchange of prisoners, and retrieve for occupation authorities the body of Colonel Dewey, the murdered American officer. The Vietnamese accepted these conditions, and the conference concluded on a note of harmony that prompted General Gracey's opinion that "undoubted progress" had been made.[23]

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21. NY Times, 31 Dec 45.

22. (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 91, 1 Oct. The new Anglo-French supremacy also became apparent to the Japanese. Early in October General Gracey's headquarters reported that although "some Japanese are assisting the revolutionaries . . . /the Japanese commander/ has condemned them as traitors to the Emperor, and the bulk of the Japanese forces are carrying out defensive talks in accordance with General Gracey's orders." Ibid., vol 93, 24 Oct.

23. Ibid., vol 91, 3 Oct.

General Gracey's optimism, however, was premature. Three days later the Viet Minh leaders returned to admit failure. They had been unable to uncover evidence pointing to the whereabouts of the missing French hostages or to locate the body of Colonel Dewey. The French replied that this admission was proof of native incapacity to govern effectively, but they were assured that efforts to meet the French demands would be redoubled.[24]

The Viet Minh returned on 9 October, but hardly had the meeting commenced when news arrived of a Vietnamese attack on a British-held airfield. "Considerably taken aback," the Viet Minh delegation left immediately to try to end the fighting. The attack on the airfield was followed next day by an even more serious incident. British troops were fired upon from ambush, and four soldiers were killed. These actions terminated the short-lived truce and led General Gracey to warn the Vietnamese that they "now must take full consequences for any armed action against any Allied or Japanese forces."[25] And Gracey's threat was not an empty one. His small army had recently been strengthened by reinforcements of French soldiers under General Leclerc.

The reconquest of Indochina was now begun.

With Tonkin and most of Laos still under Chinese occupation, the French were primarily concerned during the autumn of 1945 with establishing their supremacy south of the sixteenth parallel. While French soldiers were steadily arriving in Saigon preparatory to "pacifying" Cochinchina, French and British troops had already made progress in bringing Cambodia back under French influence. The Cambodian monarch had remained loyal to France, and his subjects, most of whom were lacking in political consciousness, had followed his example. Nevertheless, Son Ngoc Thanh, an ardent nationalist, had maneuvered himself into the post of Prime Minister. After the Japanese capitulation, he secured a quantity of Japanese arms and contested the French advance. The Japanese watched from the sidelines and "made no attempt whatsoever to quell the disturbance."[26] On 10 October,

24. Ibid., 6 Oct.
25. Ibid., vol 92, 11 Oct.
26. Ibid., vol 89, 20-25 Sep.

however, an Anglo-French force seized the capital of Pnom Penh. Thanh was captured and sent to Saigon, while his followers either scattered into Thailand or went underground. General Alessandri and King Norodom Sihanouk began negotiations looking to a French-Cambodian agreement, and Prince Monireth formed a government committed to a pro-French policy. On 22 October the King announced that Cambodia desired unreserved collaboration with France.[27]

Although British troops had participated in the conquest of Cambodia and were stationed in Cochinchina, by early November French authority was rapidly supplanting British influence. England and France had signed an agreement on 9 October that recognized France's paramount rights in Indochina and turned over civil administration of Indochina south of the 16th parallel to French authorities.[28] To organize the administration, the new French High Commissioner, Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, arrived in Saigon on 31 October. A strange combination of Carmelite monk and Admiral of the French Navy, d'Argenlieu was an unyielding imperialist. Whatever his intentions when he arrived in Indochina, he soon became the most prominent exponent of force as a solution of the Indochinese problem.

Admiral d'Argenlieu was immediately confronted with the problem of assuming control of Saigon and a small surrounding perimeter from the British and then spreading that control effectively throughout Cochinchina. He made it plain from the beginning that his primary concern lay not in a peaceful adjustment of differences with the Viet Minh, but in the rapid re-establishment of French sovereignty.[29] This inflexible attitude was bound to heighten the conflict with the Vietnamese. The French were soon faced with increased guerrilla opposition. Led by Tran Van Giau, once an advocate of peaceful negotiation, the Viet Minh organized a resistance movement that bitterly fought the French advance into Cochinchina.[30]

27. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 30.
28. Ibid., p. 29.
29. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 122-123.
30. Ibid.

The Viet Minh were outnumbered and ill-equipped, but they proved stiff opposition. They conducted a scorched earth campaign that sorely harassed General Leclerc's army. Leclerc's forces repeatedly encountered burned villages, mined roads, and demolished bridges in the course of its pursuit of the rebels. Although the General had virtually reconquered Cochinchina by the end of November, he soon discovered that establishing effective control was quite another matter. An estimated 100,000 men would be required to stamp out guerrilla resistance and consolidate French military gains. These forces the French simply did not possess; and the British division, having fulfilled its mission, was soon to be withdrawn.

Nevertheless, the French by late December felt themselves able to hold their gains until sufficiently strong to assert their authority throughout Indochina. French reinforcements continued to debark in Saigon, with more promised shortly. Already General Leclerc's command numbered 21,500 French soldiers.[31] The Japanese were no longer a difficult problem for the French, most of them having been disarmed and assembled near Saigon to await repatriation. Admiral d'Argenlieu faced the year 1946 with rebellious guerrillas in Cochinchina and an entrenched DRV government backed by an unfriendly Chinese army in Viet Nam and northern Laos. His success or failure in coping with these obstacles would, in a large measure, determine the future of Indochina.

The Chinese Occupation

While the French and the Viet Minh waged war, in Cochinchina, in Tonkin they preserved an uneasy peace. The Viet Minh, guided by the experienced hand of Ho Chi Minh, was firmly in power. The new DRV government was backed by Giap's military forces, a coalition of Vietnamese political parties, and substantial public support. The French on the other hand had only a few officials in Tonkin. Remnants of the French army defeated by the Japanese in March remained in the Hanoi Citadel under Viet Minh guard, and General Alessandri had failed to secure Chinese permission or American and British help to move his 5,000 troops into Tonkin. In northern Indochina, as in the south, the decisive factor was the occupation force. But in the north, the occupation force was pro-Vietnamese.

31. (TS) Encl, "Present Situation in French Indo-China," to (TS) CCS 644/38, 21 Dec 45, CCS 370 (8-5-44) sec 6.

Soon after the Japanese capitulation of 16 August, M. Sainteny and a small party of his staff succeeded in reaching Hanoi along with an American OSS group, headed by Major Archimedes Patti. The Americans were well received by the Viet Minh and the Japanese, but the Frenchmen were confined in the Governor-General's palace. The first few days after M. Sainteny's arrival were crucial for the future of French sovereignty over northern Indochina. Bao Dai's regime was passing from the scene. Giap's army was marching on Hanoi. Within the city itself the Viet Minh were in the process of taking over the administration of Hanoi. Next they would extend their control over most of Tonkin and Annam. The commissioner for north Indochina appointed by Admiral d'Argenlieu had been captured by the Viet Minh, and was being held incommunicado. There was no one to represent France in the north except M. Sainteny, and he lacked credentials. The Japanese doubted his authority, and refused to deal with him. Repeatedly, M. Sainteny appealed by radio to French authorities in Calcutta and Kunming for the powers he needed to deal with the Japanese, but his superiors seemed to have no inkling of the urgency of the situation. They would not replace him, and they would not give him authority to speak for France. On 2 September M. Sainteny, still without powers, looked on while crowds of Vietnamese marched through the streets of Hanoi celebrating "the independence of Viet Nam."[32]

Although the Viet Minh declared itself against violence to Frenchmen, and did try to keep a tight rein on extremists, occasional attacks against French civilians took place. The anti-French feeling among the Vietnamese was as great in Hanoi as it was in Saigon, and the French population of the northern city also lived in daily fear of Vietnamese pillaging and attack. If the French population hoped for relief from the Chinese occupation they were soon disappointed.

The Chinese occupation of northern Indochina began at the end of August. Four Chinese armies, 180,000 men, marched into Viet Nam and spread out over the land. On 18 September Lieutenant General Lu Han, the commander of

32. Sainteny, Histoire d'une Paix Manquee, pp. 91-96; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 130-131.

the occupation force, arrived in Hanoi. He was soon joined by Brigadier General Philip E. Gallagher, head of the American mission attached to General Lu Han's command, General Alessandri, and Leon Pignon.

From the beginning General Lu Han made no secret of his hostility toward the French. He ejected M. Sainteny, who had just been appointed French Commissioner for North Indochina, from the Governor-General's palace, and left him to seek quarters elsewhere. As one of their first acts, the Chinese set about dismantling the French military fortifications along the Sino-Vietnamese border. At the Japanese surrender ceremonies the French flag did not fly among those of the Allies, and as a result General Alessandri walked out on the gatherings. General Lu Han refused to recognize M. Sainteny's authority, and stated in the Chinese press of Hanoi that China was bringing independence to Indochina. The Chinese pointedly ignored French requests for permission to move soldiers and civil administrators into Tonkin, and every Frenchman entering the occupied area was searched. Vietnamese were permitted to keep their weapons, but all Frenchmen were disarmed. Control of most public buildings, public services, communications, and the whole structure of administration was in the hands of the DRV, and the Chinese were content to see it rest there.[33]

The French knew that General Lu Han was hostile to them, but they did not know to what extent he reflected the policy of the Chinese Nationalist Government. Actually General Lu Han was, in general, carrying out the policy of his government. Behind the obvious Chinese hostility lay a long history. For many years the Chinese had nursed a deep resentment of French territorial and economic concessions in China. While Frenchmen enjoyed special rights in China, Chinese in Indochina lived in special communities under close French supervision, under administrative restrictions, and under heavier taxes than those levied on other foreigners. Also fresh in Chinese minds was the comparatively recent closing of the Yunnan-Haiphong railroad.[34] The Chinese had learned the hard way

33. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 28; Sainteny, Histoire d'une Paix Manquee, pp. 123-124; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 130-134.
34. Cf. Ch. II.

that this railroad was a vital trade outlet from southwest China to the seas.[35]

Other and older reasons lay behind the Chinese intransigence. The Chinese army that marched into Indochina marched into a country once ruled by China. The people and the civilization of the country were very much like those of China. For many years the Chinese had given sanctuary to the political exiles who fled across the border, and the Kuomintang government had long encouraged and supported the nationalist movement in Indochina. Moreover, Chinese dreams of dominating the country through the installation of an independent, but pro-Chinese, government of Indochina were not quite dead.

Yet with all these reasons to oppose the return of the French to Indochina, the Chinese were open to persuasion. Despite their unfeigned hostility to the French, the Chinese were willing to turn northern Indochina over to the French, but the price they were preparing to ask for their cooperation was high, very high. The Chinese felt that the greater the French fear of losing northern Indochina the higher the price France would be willing to pay. The greater the insecurity of Frenchmen in Tonkin the greater would be the urgency to come to terms with China. To this end the Chinese tried to keep the French and the Viet Minh at swords point, for a French-Vietnamese conciliation would weaken China's bargaining position. They succeeded admirably.

Agreement between the French and the Viet Minh would have been difficult even under a completely neutral occupation force, for the two were far apart in their demands. In northern Indochina the Viet Minh were strong and the French weak, but the French wanted to negotiate as if the reverse were true. In brief, the DRV was "determined to mobilize all its courage, strength and wealth to preserve this liberty and independence," while the French refused to budge from the policy laid down in the declaration of 24 March. In the fall of 1945, therefore, the meetings between the leaders of the DRV and French officials produced no tangible result.[36]

35. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 135-136.
36. (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 89, 21 Sep; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 148.

French inflexibility in dealings with the DRV was undoubtedly reinforced by the hope that, with the end of the Chinese occupation, France would be able to move into northern Indochina in sufficient strength to redress the balance of power. Should this hope be realized France would then be in a position to force the Viet Minh to accept French terms. As they were well aware, however, first the Chinese would have to be paid off.[37]

A first installment on the purchase price had already been paid. On 18 August France had returned to China the Kwangchowwan territory, leased to the French in 1898. Chiang Kai-shek had promptly disavowed any territorial ambitions in Indochina, but then went on to say that it was his "hope that Indochina would emerge to independence."[38] The French made no public response to the Generalissimo's statement, but their private reaction is not difficult to imagine.

Two months later Admiral d'Argenlieu was in Chungking to discuss "the affirmation of French political rights in Indochina" and the future status of the French-owned railroad connecting Yunnan with the port of Haiphong. The Admiral balked at the Chinese demands, however, and no concrete agreement emerged from the negotiations.[39]

It was not until matters in Tonkin took a turn for the worse that the French renewed negotiations with Chungking. In January 1946 Viet Minh and Chinese hostility reached a high pitch. French sources cite fifty-four Vietnamese and thirty-three Chinese acts of aggression committed against Frenchmen during that month alone. In six cases Frenchmen were killed. Reluctantly the French decided to reopen negotiations with the Chinese. Hat in hand, they again made the pilgrimage to Chungking. On 28 February France and China signed a treaty providing for the relief before 31 March of Chinese forces stationed in Indochina by the French Army, and Chinese recognition of French sovereignty over Indochina. According to the terms of the agreement France gave up her concessions at Shanghai, Tientsin, Hankow, and Canton, and all extra-territorial rights in China. She also guaranteed that

37. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 205-206.
38. Notes et Etudes, No. 555, 24 Feb 47; NY Times, 25 Aug 45.
39. Ibid., 14 Oct 45.

Chinese goods shipped over the Yunnan-Haiphong Railroad would be exempt from customs and transit duties, and that a free zone would be set up for Chinese merchandise reaching Haiphong. Those portions of the railroad lying in Yunnan would be turned over to China. Finally, France agreed to special privileged treatment of Chinese residents in Indochina.[40]

With this treaty the French assured themselves entry into Tonkin, but the question was could they stay there, for the Viet Minh had, in the meantime, weathered a serious crisis of its own, and emerged virtually unscathed.

The DRV under the Chinese Occupation

When the Chinese marched into Tonkin in September 1945, they brought with them the exiled leaders of the Dong Minh Hoi and VNQDD movements. The exiles counted heavily upon Chinese assistance to re-establish themselves as a political force in Indochina. As the Chinese army moved through Tonkin on its way to Hanoi, it stopped along the way to remove the Viet Minh representatives from positions of authority, installing in their places members of the Dong Minh Hoi or VNQDD. These two parties, along with elements from the Dai Viet movement, soon controlled the northernmost provinces in Tonkin, living off the land and tribute collected from the population. They fought intermittently among themselves and with troops sent by the Viet Minh in an attempt to subdue them.[41]

Among General Lu Han's first efforts after his arrival in Hanoi was his attempt to introduce the Dong Minh Hoi and VNQDD into the Viet Minh government. Nguyen Hai Than, leader of the Dong Minh Hoi, stated publicly that the Chinese would not tolerate the presence of Ho Chi Minh at the head of the government for long, and demanded a place in the Provisional Government for his party and the VNQDD. He was confident of the support of Siao Wen, heading the Political Secret Service of

40. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 33; Notes et Etudes, No. 555, 28 Feb 47.

41. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 193; SD OIR No. 3708, p. 67.

the Chinese Occupation Army, whose primary mission was to bring the Vietnamese nationalist movement under Chinese control.[42]

In the face of constant pressure from the Chinese, the Dong Minh Hoi and VNQDD, Ho Chi Minh decided to make whatever political concessions were necessary to maintain power in the hands of the Viet Minh. His first act along these lines was to initial a pact with a dissident segment of the Dong Minh Hoi "as a prelude to unity." The two contracting parties vowed to "defend the liberty and independence of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam /against/ the aggressive attempts of the colonial French. . . ."[43]

Another tactic used by Ho Chi Minh was to minimize the role of the Indochinese Communist Party in the Provisional Government. On 11 November, both to placate the Chinese and as a protest against the French Communists who had failed to support Indochinese aspirations toward independence, the Indochinese Communist Party formally dissolved itself. The rank and file of the party, who had never been communists in the classical sense, drifted away to join other groups, but Ho Chi Minh reorganized the Communist hard core into a number of Marxist "study groups." The leadership of these "study groups," including such militant Communists as Vo Nguyen Giap and Tran Van Giau, continued to exercise considerable influence in the Viet Minh government.[44]

Probably the most popular Viet Minh move of all had been their promise to hold elections for a National Assembly at the end of the year. Siao Wen, realizing that these elections would only confirm the popularity of the Viet Minh, tried to get the elections cancelled, but with no success. He was only able to get them postponed for two weeks, until 6 January 1946.[45] On 23 December the Viet Minh announced that, whatever the

42. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 193-194.
43. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 77.
44. Ibid., p. 92.
45. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 200.

result of the voting, the Dong Minh Hoi would receive twenty and the VNQDD fifty seats in the projected National Assembly.[46] It was hoped that this would satisfy the appetite of these two parties long enough for the Viet Minh to consolidate its power in the country.

Meanwhile, the Viet Minh faced other problems. The Chinese occupation created an economic dilemma for the DRV, as well as a political one. Unlike the British and French forces in the south, the Chinese lived almost entirely off the country, constituting a severe drain on the resources of Tonkin and Annam, already depleted to the danger point during the floods, famine and drought experienced earlier in the year.

When French authorities in Cochinchina offered during October to send shiploads of rice to Haiphong in exchange for coal to meet Saigon's urgent need for fuel, the Viet Minh refused their offer.[47] Instead, Ho Chi Minh's regime instituted an intensive food production campaign, patterned on the "soviet" system. Although the claims made by the Viet Minh of amazing increases in crop yield cannot be substantiated, there is no question but that the famine expected in 1946 was averted largely due to the Viet Minh food production program.[48]

The Viet Minh regime's hold on the country was increased not only by its successful battle against famine, but also by certain basic alterations that it made in the administration of local government. The mandarinate and councils of village notables who had governed in the hinterland of Indochina as long as anyone could remember were replaced by so-called "people's committees." theoretically chosen by the local inhabitants but actually by the Viet Minh. Other measures, such as an intensive propaganda campaign, the organization and indoctrination of youth groups, the banning of prostitution and gambling, and the prohibition of the

46. SD OIR No. 3708, p. 77.
47. (TS) Msg, SACSEA to REAR SACSEA, SAC 25924, TOO 200551Z, in (TS) HQ SACSEA, War Diary, vol 93, 16-24 Oct.
48. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 145-146.

use of alcohol and opium, helped to gain the support of most of Tonkin and northern Annam for the Viet Minh. In lieu of unpopular French taxes, the Viet Minh promulgated a system of "voluntary contributions" and "popular subscriptions" which seemed to insure the government an income adequate to its needs.[49]

As the year 1945 came to an end, the Viet Minh continued to control the Provisional Government of Viet Nam in spite of all the Dong Minh Hoi and VNQDD could do, yielding on specific issues only when necessary to placate the Chinese. While the pro-Chinese parties seemed content to battle among themselves for tribute exacted from an unwilling population in the provinces under their control, the Viet Minh concentrated on building up good will through propaganda and reforms of various kinds. The determining factor in the struggle for power among the nationalist factions was to be the January elections.

On 6 January 1946, the DRV government held the long awaited elections for a National Assembly, openly in Tonkin and Annam, and clandestinely in parts of Cochinchina. The elections themselves were no more than could be expected from a country unfamiliar with the parliamentary system. Discrepancies were common. But there was no mistaking the general sentiment in favor of independence and in support of Ho Chi Minh, who was said to have received ninety-eight percent of the vote.[50]

Apparently, the results of the election so impressed Siao Wen that he promptly threw his support to the Viet Minh, hoping thereby to bring them under Chinese influence and prevent them from reaching an understanding with the French. It was clear to the leaders of the Dong Minh Hoi and the VNQDD that they had lost the battle for political supremacy; therefore they were happy for the opportunity during February to merge with the Viet Minh in a united government. Nguyen Hai Than, head of the Dong Minh Hoi, became Vice President under Ho Chi Minh, and VNQDD members took over the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economy, and Social Welfare. In

49. Ibid., pp. 141-143.
50. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 32.

addition, Ho Chi Minh also dropped, temporarily, two leading Communists from the Cabinet--Vo Nguyen Giap (Interior) and Tran Huy Lieu (Propaganda).[51] This seemed to satisfy all concerned, and a united DRV, backed by the Chinese, turned to face the threat of French invasion.

French Charges of U.S. Obstruction in Tonkin

The failure of the French to reassert their sovereignty over Tonkin in these early postwar days gave rise to strong French criticism of American army officers and OSS personnel in northern Indochina. These officers were charged with inciting the Viet Minh to oppose the return of the French during the early phase of the Chinese occupation. Actually, these Americans were so few in number and remained in Tonkin so short a time that it would have been difficult for them to have altered appreciably the eventual outcome. The one officer whose exploits were questionable, the head of the American OSS mission, was transferred as soon as word of his activities reached his superiors.

Nonetheless, some French sources have used the presence of these officers to charge the United States with being in large measure responsible for French difficulties. The United States, motivated by what Sainteny termed an "infantile anticolonialism," was alleged to have urged Ho Chi Minh to resist France and establish an American type of democracy. The United States, they have asserted, had other interests in Indochina too. It harbored an uncommon interest in the port of Haiphong and the strategic routes into south China, and it wished to promote American business interests in order to make Indochina an economic satellite of the United States.

There is no foundation for these charges. As has been seen, the American attitude was neither to assist or oppose the re-establishment of French authority in Indochina. The United States even insisted that Britain and China accept the Japanese surrender in Indochina. The small number of American officers in

51. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 144.

Tonkin were under strict injunction to remain aloof from internal affairs and were promptly withdrawn when OSS involvement became apparent to General Wedemeyer. High American officials in 1945, far from wishing to substitute the United States for France in Indochina, went out of their way to maintain a strict neutrality in Indochinese affairs.

The French Succeed and Fail

The year 1946 was one of political maneuvering between the French and Viet Minh. Moderate elements of both sides wished to compromise, but their differences were so pronounced that compromise proved a virtual impossibility. Divergent views appeared on the point of reconciliation as conference followed conference, but extremist elements on both sides blocked more than an illusory settlement. The negotiations of 1946 appeared promising on the surface, but actually they were merely agreements to agree. Although seeming harmony prevailed on the diplomatic front, there was vicious guerrilla fighting in the back country. More ominous yet, both France and the Viet Minh embarked upon a program of military expansion. Should a decision by force become necessary, both intended to be ready. By the end of the year, all negotiations having failed, the future of Indochina was entrusted to the French and Viet Minh armies.

The early months of 1946 saw the gradual spread of French civil and military authority throughout most of Indochina. In Cochinchina British forces turned over the administration to French authorities in February and evacuated Saigon. The new French High Commissioner, Admiral d'Argenlieu, quickly suppressed the weak southern arm of the DRV and re-established French rule; but the activities of nationalist guerrilla bands confined actual French authority to the cities and a few key towns of Cochinchina.

French rule in Cambodia had been reimposed during the autumn of 1945. The French military had crushed resistance bands in Cambodia, and King Norodom Sihanouk, by hurriedly switching his allegiance from Japan to France, managed to save his monarchy. French-Cambodian

relations were put upon a more secure footing by an agreement concluded on 7 January 1946 that brought Cambodia into the Indochinese federation. Locally, Cambodia was to be ruled by French-advised administrators, and in internal affairs of federal concern France and Cambodia would exercise joint responsibility. Foreign relations were to be conducted exclusively by France. The reconquest of Laos had been delayed by the Chinese occupation, but French troops entered Laos in March 1946. On 27 August 1946 a similar arrangement was concluded with Laos, where King Sisavong Vong followed the example of his fellow monarch and swore loyalty to France.[52]

With French control tightening upon Cochinchina, Cambodia and Laos, the immediate problem facing the French in early 1946 was to secure entry into Tonkin. Ho Chi Minh's DRV government at Hanoi, backed by a hostile Chinese occupation army, effectively controlled northern Indochina and barred the returning French. The Sino-French treaty of 28 February 1946 eliminated a major obstacle, leaving the French to overcome the final and higher hurdle of Viet Minh opposition. Negotiations begun in January by Sainteny dragged through February and into March.

While Sainteny and Ho Chi Minh were maneuvering in Hanoi, the Viet Minh had been attempting to improve its bargaining position by clothing the DRV in the trappings of popular support. In January elections for a National Assembly had been held openly in Tonkin and Annam and clandestinely in Cochinchina. The extent to which these elections can be considered as an expression of popular will, however, is open to serious question. Before the elections the DRV assigned blocs of Assembly seats to the Dong Minh Hoi and Viet Nam Nationalist Party, and after the election it claimed a suspiciously large vote

52. SD OIR No. 4303, 10 Mar 47, pp. 14-15.

for an area whose inhabitants were largly ignorant of the idea of popular representation.[53]

Even as the first session of the National Assembly convened in Hanoi on 2 March, the French were nearing agreement in principle with the DRV. On 6 March 1946 an accord was signed by Vo Nguyen Giap for the DRV government and General Raoul Salan for France. The so-called March 6 Accord formed the basis for the negotiations between France and the DRV during the remainder of 1946. It represented a major concession in principle by both France and the Viet Minh.

The French attained their major aim of securing entry into Tonkin, where the DRV pledged its followers to receive French forces "in a friendly way." France would supplant the Chinese occupation army with a mixed Franco-Vietnamese army under French command. This army was limited by the terms of the agreement to 25,000 soldiers, of which 10,000 were to be Vietnamese. France promised to withdraw one-fifth of its troops each year and at the end of a five year period terminate its occupation.[54]

Although the Viet Minh leaders had conceded an important point, they had gained what in their estimation was an equally important concession in return. France in the March 6 Accord acknowledged the DRV as the legitimate government of Viet Nam and recognized it as a free state in the Indochinese federation of the French Union. According to the agreement, Viet Nam was now to have an indigenous government, parliament, and army, and

53. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 32. In assigning blocs of Assembly seats to the Dong Minh Hoi and Viet Nam Nationalist Party, Ho Chi Minh was following the policy of strengthening his regime by attempting to win the allegiance of non-Viet Minh nationalists. Some nationalist leaders refused to cooperate with Ho. Such was Ngo Dinh Diem, whom the Viet Minh held captive in the Tonkinese mountains in an effort to coerce him into supporting the DRV. When Diem remained intractable, Ho at length released him. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 149-150.

54. Notes et Etudes, "Accord annexe a la Convention preliminaire du 6 mars 1946," No. 548, 15 Feb 47.

the right to conduct its own finances, concessions that would have exceeded the fondest dreams of prewar nationalists.55

The March 6 Accord also called for a referendum to be held in Cochinchina to determine whether its inhabitants desired union with the DRV. This provision laid the basis for a dispute that became the principal issue preventing a settlement between France and the Viet Minh during 1946. The DRV had always contended the Cochinchina was an integral part of Viet Nam. The ties between the two areas were geographic, ethnic, cultural, and economic; and according to the DRV these ties should be completed by bringing about the political union of Cochinchina with the rest of Viet Nam. French colonial officials, however, were extremely reluctant to yield so important an area. French authority was much more firmly entrenched in Cochinchina than elsewhere in Indochina Cochinchina had a long tradition of French rule; it was of great economic value to France; and Saigon had long been the center of French colonial power in the Far East. Now, in the view of many Frenchmen, they were being asked to yield the seat of their power to what many of them considered a group of nationalistic adventurers in Tonkin. Nevertheless, French negotiators at Hanoi, in the interests of conciliation, agreed to submit the question to popular vote in Cochinchina and abide by the results. France's failure to carry out this promise was a major factor in the breakdown of subsequent negotiations.

France found an excuse for postponing the referendum in the continued opposition of resistance groups in Cochinchina. Conditions outside the cities had become so chaotic that French authorities claimed that elections were not possible until order had been restored. The DRV was convinced that a referendum would demonstrate an overwhelming native desire for unification with Viet Nam, and it urged the Cochinchinese nationalists to stop contesting French authority so that elections might be held. But French colonial officials stepped up their campaign of encouraging autonomist and separatist tendencies, and the guerrilla opposition broke out anew.56

55. Ibid., "Convention preliminaire franco-vietnamienne du 6 mars 1946," No. 548, 15 Feb 47.
56. SD OIR No. 3708, pp. 79-80.

If the French faced open hostilities in Cochinchina, the Viet Minh were hardly better off in Tonkin. In the opinion of many Viet Minh adherents, Ho Chi Minh had gone too far in his attempt to compromise with France. Only by placing his full prestige behind the agreement of 6 March had he secured its grudging acceptance by the bulk of the nationalist movement. Yet even Ho's great prestige could not silence all of the opposition in the diversified political alignment that composed the DRV. Certain elements of the Dong Minh Hoi and Viet Nam Nationalist Party, angered by Ho's "pro-French" policies, had demonstrated their hostility by spreading terror through the Tonkin countryside. The growing DRV army, together with the French troops that marched into Tonkin pursuant to the March 6 Accord, organized a campaign to crush the dissidents. The Franco-Viet Minh military forces within a short time eliminated most of the organized resistance and drove the leaders into China, where they organized a "Nationalist Front." The Front was designed to serve as a nucleus for disaffected nationalists.[57]

Against this backdrop of civil strife in Tonkin and Cochinchina the first step in implementing the March 6 Accord was taken. The Accord had specified that further discussion would be held in the near future to define more precisely its terms and to arrive at means for carrying out its principles. Accordingly, French and DRV negotiators gathered at Dalat on 19 April, but three weeks of discussion failed to establish agreement on more than minor educational and cultural matters. Even a mixed armistice commission, organized to attempt a solution of the Cochinchinese fighting, found itself unable to agree and disbanded after several fruitless sessions. Nevertheless, the Dalat Conference ended with the participants believing that a basis for future compromise had been reached.[58]

The Dalat Conference having failed to resolve the issues preventing settlement, a second conference was scheduled for July, this time at Fontainebleau, France. The agenda for the Fontainebleau meeting would include all of the problems vital to better relations between France and the Viet Minh. To be discussed were such

57. Ibid., p. 78.
58. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 34.

items as foreign relations, the composition of the Indochinese federation, the Cochinchinese problem, economic questions, and finally the all important issue of a treaty to define the relationship between the two countries.[59] Ho Chi Minh departed for France late in May, but even before his arrival an event was in the making in Cochinchina that would wreck the Fontainebleau Conference.

Since his arrival in Saigon as High Commissioner, Admiral d'Argenlieu had been earnestly seeking to prevent the union of Cochinchina with the DRV. As early as February he had erected a "Provisional Consultative Council" in Cochinchina that could rule should the occasion to do so arise. At the same time, French officials had encouraged separatist tendencies in every way possible and had attempted to foster the impression that the people of Cochinchina in fact desired an autonomous and separate regime. The DRV had protested the French actions and insistently demanded that the promised referendum be held. The French answer came on 1 June. Admiral d'Argenlieu announced the creation of the "Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina" as a member of the Indochinese federation of the French Union. Immediately thereafter he sponsored a provisional government under the presidency of Dr. Nguyen Van Thinh. The Admiral's action resulted in an increased tempo of guerrilla resistance to French authority that revealed the close ties between the Committee of the South and the DRV government at Hanoi.[60]

The developments in Cochinchina did not improve the disposition of the Viet Minh delegation arriving at Fontainebleau. Since the referendum question was included on the Fontainebleau agenda, Admiral d'Argenlieu's move must have impressed them as an act of singularly bad faith and certainly did not augur well for the negotiations. But the Admiral was not finished yet. The Fontainebleau Conference had been in session only

59. Ibid, p. 36
60. Ibid., (S) State Dept, Brief on Issues in Dispute between France and Vietnam, OIR No. 4303, 10 Mar 47, p. 9.

three weeks when he called a second Dalat Conference, without representatives of the DRV government, to discuss federalization of the Indochinese states. He recognized as participants in the meeting Cochinchina and Annam, whose future status was even then under consideration at Fontainebleau. The DRV delegation, with considerable justification, regarded the second Dalat Conference as a serious violation of the March 6 Accord and refused to continue the Fontainebleau talks.[61]

Undaunted by the repercussions of their gathering, the representatives at Dalat continued their discussions. They agreed at length upon a blueprint for federalization that would have effectively subordinated Indochina to French control, and they concluded by denouncing the DRV delegation at Fontainebleau as unrepresentative of the Vietnamese people. In the final analysis, the only accomplishment of the Dalat Convention was to destroy hope of an agreement at Fontainebleau.[62]

Ho Chi Minh, however, refused to abandon his pursuit of a settlement. Hoping to salvage something from the wreckage of Fontainebleau, he remained in France when the DRV delegation departed for Hanoi. On 14 September Ho and Marius Moutet, Minister of Overseas France, signed a provisional modus vivendi. The modus vivendi was designed to continue in effect the policy established by the March 6 Accord until a new meeting could be held in January 1947. It reaffirmed the principle of referendum and provided for (a) reciprocal democratic rights for citizens of one country in the territory of the other; (b) reciprocal property rights and restoration of seized French property; (c) establishment of a single currency unit for Indochina by tying the piastre to the franc; (d) a customs union, free trade, coordinated transportation and communication; and (e) a Franco-Vietnamese armistice commission for Cochinchina.[63]

61. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 36.
62. Ibid., p. 37.
63. Notes et Etudes, "Modus vivendi Franco-Vietnamien du 14 septembre 1946," No. 548, 15 Feb 47.

Ho Chi Minh regarded the modus vivendi as "better than nothing," but it actually solved none of the burning questions that were disrupting French-Vietnamese relations. The agreement fell far short of Viet Minh aspirations, and some of the more extreme elements bitterly attacked Ho for conceding too much to France. Handbills disseminated in Hanoi by Ho's opponents suggested that his long residence overseas had made him a foreign slave. On the other hand, French colonial officials in Indochina were none too happy with the concessions made by the Paris government. Mutual distrust thus destroyed any chance that the modus vivendi might effect even a temporary solution, and after the Haiphong incident in December both sides freely violated the terms of the agreement.[64]

The repeated breakdown of negotiations, the ineffectual modus vivendi, the erection of the autonomous regime in Cochinchina, and continued guerrilla fighting throughout Indochina, set the stage for the convening of the second session of the DRV National Assembly in October. Since the March session of the Assembly, the DRV had been energetically engaged in consolidating its hold on Viet Nam and increasing its popular support. In the absence of Ho Chi Minh, these efforts were carried out primarily by Giap. Following Bao Dai's departure into voluntary exile the preceding April, Giap had inaugurated a campaign to eliminate opposition either through repression or absorption. To facilitate this process, he had built a relatively strong Vietnamese army. Giap also instituted a number of social welfare measures that, incidentally or designedly, strengthened the DRV among the people. The National Assembly that met in October to draft a constitution was supposed by many to be another indication of the DRV's resolve to become a democratic state.

64. Ibid., Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 177, 181-182; (U) Institut franco-suisse d'Etudes coloniales, France and Viet-Nam, The Franco-Vietnamese Conflict According to Official Documents (Geneva, Aug 47), pp. 41-42 (hereinafter: France and Viet-Nam). The latter source is an extremely biased French account of the origins of the Indochinese conflict and contains the French viewpoint on violations of the modus vivendi.

Although questionable as an expression of popular will, the Assembly nonetheless was broadly representative of the dominant political groupings. Several instances of Viet Minh intimidation of non-Viet Minh assemblymen occurred, but the body succeeded in producing a constitution nevertheless. The document that resulted incorporated many features of western democracy, including such ideals as freedom of the press, assembly, inviolability of person, and ministerial responsibility. Since almost immediately war broke out between France and the Viet Minh, the DRV government was never put to the test of proving that the high sounding phrases of the constitution were not empty words. Two facts, however, were significant. After its adjournment, the National Assembly was not called again until 1953; and the government that assumed power on 3 November registered an increase in Communist Cabinet representation from three to five ministries. Thus the guiding or controlling hand of avowed Communists was now much more apparent in DRV policy--a reflection of the dangerous deterioration of relations with France.[65]

Clearly, any further deterioration of Franco-Viet Minh relations would almost certainly bring war. That deterioration was not long in coming. Again the locus of conflict was Cochinchina, where the President of Cochinchina, Dr. Thinh, found himself facing an almost impossible political tangle. French colonial officials in Saigon supported the Cochinchina Autonomous Republic, while the Paris Government dealt with the DRV within the framework of the modus vivendi, which reaffirmed the principle of referendum. Confronted with this anomalous situation, and harassed by French and native political intrigue, Thinh committed suicide on 10 November. Although the Cochinchina Assembly elected a new President, Cao Daist Le Van Hoach, the developments in Cochinchina put an increased strain on relations between French authorities and the DRV. All that was needed to touch off a full-scale war was an incident.[66]

65. SD OIR No. 3708, pp. 82-83.
66. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 39.

That incident came in the form of two clashes between French and Viet Minh troops on 20 November. A French War Crimes investigating team journeyed to Lang Son to disinter the remains of some French officers allegedly killed by the Japanese the preceding year. On its return trip to Hanoi the team was fired upon by Viet Minh troops and nine Frenchmen were killed. Each side accused the other of provoking the skirmish.[67]

This incident was of minor significance compared with the armed encounter in Haiphong the same day. The Haiphong incident was the culmination of a lengthy customs dispute. A French patrol craft seized a Chinese junk running contraband and was fired upon by DRV troops on the shore. Fighting spread to the city of Haiphong. General Morliere, commanding the French troops in northern Indochina, and Hoang Huu Nam, the DRV Under Secretary of State, immediately intervened and by 22 November had restored peace to the city. Upon learning of the situation in Haiphong, Admiral d'Argenlieu, who was then in Paris, cabled General Valluy in Saigon to instruct General Morliere to reply with force. Morliere protested that order had been restored and the situation was under control. General Valluy then bypassed Morliere and wired Colonel Debes, commanding the French garrison in Haiphong, to "make yourself completely master of Haiphong by all means at your disposal and bring the Vietnamese Army to surrender." On 23 November Colonel Debes moved to carry out these instructions. Encountering resistance, he called upon the French fleet in Haiphong Harbor for naval and air support. The resulting bombardment killed an estimated six thousand residents of Haiphong. After five days of street fighting, French troops established absolute supremacy in the city.[68]

The Haiphong incident dealt a mortal blow to any hope of settling the differences between France and the DRV. During the ensuing few weeks, rumors were rife among the Vietnamese that the next blow would fall on Hanoi. Frenchmen and Vietnamese were killed in the

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67. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 182; France and Viet-Nam, pp. 43-44.

68. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 40; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 180-182.

streets of the city, and Viet Minh riflemen sniped at Frenchmen from the windows of the public buildings. Vo Nguyen Giap, the Viet Minh Commander-in-Chief, concentrated upon preparing native armies throughout Indochina for war; Ho Chi Minh, on the other hand, seemed to be making every effort to avert war through conciliation. Both France and the DRV, determined not to be taken off guard should the other attack, repeatedly violated the provisions of the modus vivendi. On 19 December General Morliere ordered the Viet Minh militia to surrender its arms, and that night Vo Nguyen Giap struck. The Viet Minh cut off Hanoi's water and electricity and launched a full scale assault upon the French garrison, and in the process killed a number of French civilians. After twenty-four hours of hard fighting, French troops succeeded in expelling the Viet Minh and restoring order to the city. Giap immediately called for a general offensive against the French throughout Indochina. French garrisons were attacked simultaneously at Phu Lang Thuong, Bao Ninh, and Nam Dinh in North Viet Nam, at Hue and Tourane in Central Viet Nam, and two days later at outposts in Cochinchina.[69]

The eight year war had begun.

69. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 41; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 186-187; France and Viet-Nam, pp. 50-52.

CHAPTER VI

MILITARY AND POLITICAL STALEMATE: GROWING U.S. CONCERN, JANUARY 1947-JUNE 1949

In Indochina, the two and one-half years between January 1947 and June 1949 formed a pattern of guerrilla war and diplomatic maneuver. On the military front France fought an indecisive war of attrition with the Viet Minh, while on the political front the French Government struggled to create a central Indochinese government that would capture the imagination and loyalty of the Vietnamese. The vital first step in the creation of this new regime was to persuade Bao Dai to return to his homeland at the head of an anti-Viet Minh government. Unfortunately, negotiations with Bao Dai dragged on for almost two years before a formula acceptable to both the ex-Emperor and France was found. All the while the war continued; the Viet Minh held its own, but France slowly expended more men, money, and materiel than she could afford.

At the start of the period United States policy-makers, preoccupied by the growing threat of the Soviet Union, paid little more than routine attention to the problem of Indochina. Gradually, however, United States interest increased until in the summer of 1948 the United States adopted a position of tentative support of the Bao Dai solution. As French reluctance to make real concessions to Vietnamese nationalist aspirations became manifest, United States interest grew into concern. And with this concern came the first United States consideration of more active support of the Bao Dai restoration movement, and of the general French position in Indochina.

Military Situation in the Spring of 1947

The outbreak of war in late 1946 had tended to unify the various parties in the Viet Minh-controlled DRV in united opposition to France. The Viet Minh had long been under attack from other nationalist parties and extremist elements within the coalition, all of whom strongly opposed Ho Chi Minh's apparent willingness to compromise

with the French. In early 1947, however, the DRV concentrated its activities on the conduct of military action, procurement of supplies, control of the flood program in Tonkin, and coordination of the nationwide educational program. All DRV parties now joined in the non-controversial policy of supporting the war and in a common effort to achieve social and economic progress, thus increasing the unity of the coalition.

To bring the various parties even more closely together, the DRV government was twice reshuffled, giving the appearance of more equal representation to all political forces in the nationalist alliance, but in fact the Communists and Viet Minh representatives continued to dominate the government.1

During the first five months of 1947, Ho Chi Minh's attempts to reach a peaceful settlement through negotiation gradually ceased in the face of French intransigence. Although the French Premier declared his willingness to submit the unity of Cochinchina to a popular referendum, he insisted that all previous agreements had been made null and void by the Viet Minh attack in December. Firmly adhering to this view, the French Government rejected a Vietnamese proposal for an armistice based on the accord of 6 March; it also rebuffed a peace appeal by Ho Chi Minh on 20 February, calling for an end to the war, independence, and unity within the French Union.2

This diplomatic impasse found its reflection in the military situation. From February on it became increasingly clear that the war had reached a stalemate. In the early weeks of the conflict the French had regained control over the major cities of the Tonkin Delta and had lifted the siege of Hue. Elsewhere, except for the principal highway from Haiphong to Hanoi, the road system and most of the countryside were in the possession of the Viet Minh forces. The fighting had spread from Tonkin southward into Cochinchina, and aggressive bands of nationalist guerrillas appeared from time to time on the outskirts of Saigon to harass the numerically superior French forces.3

1. SD OIR No. 3708, pp. 86-89.
2. (S) SD OIR No. 4303, pp. 10-11.
3. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

Early in 1947 the Viet Minh commanded a force of approximately 150,000 troops, but the units of this force were still basically guerrilla formations. Only about one-third of the troops were organized and equipped with weapons at least the size of small arms. Their heavier weapons included about 50 artillery pieces, 650 automatic weapons, and 150 mortars.[4]

The bulk of the Viet Minh Army was concentrated in Tonkin, but Giap was also able to control most of Annam's long coastline against relatively weak French opposition. In Cochinchina, the lack of unity among the nationalist forces and the preponderance of French military strength restricted the Viet Minh to ineffective guerrilla activity. In the north, however, Giap's larger, better equipped, and better organized units were more successful, and by 7 February they had inflicted 1,855 casualties on the French.[5]

Matched against the Viet Minh Army were some 100,000 of the best trained and best equipped regular troops at the disposal of the French.[6] According to one source, these troops were supported not only by armament brought along with them from France, but also by more than $77,040,000 worth of army equipment turned over to French authorities in Indochina by Great Britain. It was alleged that the British sold this equipment to France so that General Leclerc "could pursue operations against the Viet Minh and Ho Chi Minh." This materiel was reported to be sufficient to equip completely one light division, one infantry brigade, and the major part of any army corps composed of two divisions, as well as an airborne division of 16,000 men, and assorted antiaircraft, engineer, and parachutist units.[7]

When the question was raised in the House of Commons, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asserted,

4. (S) War Dept, Intel Div, WDGS, Intelligence Review, No. 65, 15 May 47, pp. 51, 54-56.
5. NY Times, 8 Feb 47, p. 6.
6. (S) War Dept, Intel Div, WDGS, Intelligence Review, No. 62, 24 Apr 47, pp. 26-27, 36-37.
7. NY Herald-Tribune, 10 Mar 47, p. 3.

in a carefully worded statement, that "No aid specifically designed for Indo-China has been given to the French armed forces."[8]

It is not clear whether or not the equipment referred to was provided by the British; the most accurate guess would probably be that it was actually captured Japanese equipment turned over to the French during the British occupation of south Indochina.[9]

Whether or not the French received aid from the British, they still found Indochina an expensive proposition. The French budget for 1947 called for the expenditure of 25 million dollars to support the campaign in Indochina during the first three months of the year. Although desperate efforts were being made in Paris to trim other budgetary expenses, there was little protest, except by the Communists, against the government's proposals to increase military spending for Indochina.[10]

The French Break with the Viet Minh

In March, while French forces battled the Viet Minh in Indochina, French legislators fought each other on the floor of the National Assembly in a series of spirited debates on Indochina policy. On three separate occasions, the Communist delegates walked out of the chamber after sharp verbal clashes. Once, blows were exchanged.

A Communist deputy, Pierre Cot, accused the government of instructing French troops to use the accord of 6 March 1946 as a lever to bring about a coup d'etat. He stated that the day of colonialism was over and that the only practical policy was one of free collaboration and association with the Indochinese people.[11]

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8. House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 435, 24 Mar 47, p. 827.
9. (TS) HQ SACSEA War Diaries, "Draft Civil Affairs Agreement - French Indo-China," vol. 87, 11 Sep 45, DRB AGO.
10. NY Herald-Tribune, 10 Mar 47, p. 3.
11. Journal Officiel, Assem Nat, pp. 869-871.

In rebuttal, Premier Ramadier took the position that the French constitution of October 1946 invalidated several provisions of the 6 March Accord.[12] He made no promise of negotiation or peace in Indochina, saying only that:

> We have done everything possible, conceded everything reasonable; it did not work. One of these days there will be some representatives of the Annamite people with whom we can talk reason. If it is desired, France will not oppose union of the three countries nor refuse to admit the independence of Viet Nam within the French Union.[13]

At the end of the debate on Indochina, the Premier received a vote of confidence from the Assembly. The delegates approved his position on Indochina by a vote of 410-0, with 195 abstaining. The results of the balloting appeared to indicate that French Communists were not seriously concerned with the struggle for independence in Viet Nam except as it served their own ends. Although the Communist deputies withheld their votes, their fellow party members in the cabinet voted with the majority in support of the war. Also, the Communist Vice-Premier, Marcel Thorez, put his signature on a directive ordering military action against the Viet Minh in accordance with the Premier's recommendations.[14]

Throughout April and May, the French continued to adhere to an extremely inflexible policy toward Indochina; consequently there was little progress toward a settlement. In March, Admiral d'Argenlieu, who had been the subject of increasing criticism, was replaced by Emile Bollaert, Radical-Socialist parliamentarian and politician. M. Bollaert arrived in Saigon on 1 April and immediately set to work to implement Premier Ramadier's policy. He announced in May that "France will remain in Indochina and Indochina will remain within the French Union. That is the first axiom of our policy. . . . we do not admit that any group has a monopoly on representing the Vietnamese people."[15]

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12. Ibid., p. 905.
13. Ibid., p. 29. (Translated by author.)
14. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 199-200.
15. Ibid., p. 209.

This assertion was the first important indication that the French were considering doing business with someone other than Ho Chi Minh in their search for a solution to the Indochinese problem. This idea was soon to become the keystone of French policy, but in April there were several items holding a higher place on M. Bollaert's agenda: First, agreements had to be negotiated with Cambodia and Laos, in order to draw them more closely into the French sphere and reduce the possibility that they would join with Viet Nam at some future time to oppose the French.

On 6 May, by means of a document patterned on the French Constitution of 1946, Cambodia changed from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. The new government included a Cabinet responsible to an elected bicameral legislature, the functions of the upper house being mostly advisory. Division of power among three branches of government--executive, legislative, and judicial--provided a system of checks and balances. All power emanated from the King; his authority, however, had to be exercised in accordance with the Constitution, and each of his acts, except those pertaining to palace matters, had to be signed by the Prime Minister and one other member of the Cabinet.[16]

On 11 May, a Laotian constitution, similar to that of Cambodia, was promulgated, Despite the complete newness of a representative government in the country, the document was seemingly assured of strong popular support owing to its approval by a "highly respected" monarch.[17]

The DRV still continued to press the French for a settlement. As early as February, Ho Chi Minh stated the terms on which he proposed to base all future negotiations when he said, "we want unity and independence within the French Union. . . . /then/ we will respect the economic and cultural interests of France in this land."[18]

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16. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 43-44.
17. Ibid., p. 44.
18. NY Times, 27 Feb 47, p. 4.

On 19 April 1947, the DRV Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a proposal for "the immediate ending of hostilities and the opening of negotiations for the pacific settlement of the conflict" to the French Government. In reply, the French drew up a series of clearly unacceptable demands and sent Paul Mus, M. Bollaert's personal counselor, to contact the DRV leaders.[19] He was directed to request the Vietnamese forces to:

1. Cease immediately all hostile acts, terrorism and propaganda.
2. Deliver over the greater part of their armament.
3. Allow free circulation of French troops throughout Viet Minh territory.
4. Surrender hostages, prisoners and deserters.[20]

The nature of these demands made it a foregone conclusion that the Mus mission would fail. It was hardly correct to claim, as did the Minister of Overseas France, that the mission failed only because of the clause in the French demands concerning the handing over of foreigners in the ranks of the Viet Minh.[21]

So far M. Bollaert had accomplished little more than his predecessor. Considerable revision of French policy was long overdue.

The Bao Dai Restoration Policy

The failure of the Mus mission in early May convinced the French that further talks with Ho Chi Minh would serve no purpose. They decided, therefore, to encourage and assist the formation of an anti-Viet Minh government for Indochina.

French emissaries had been in touch with Bao Dai in Hongkong as early as March, but he had declined thus far

19. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 43.
20. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, pp. 389-390. (Translated by author.)
21. Journal Officiel, Assem Nat, p. 1569.

to commit himself to any particular course of action. Indications were, however, that the ex-Emperor realized the strength of his position, and that he would demand concessions similar to those insisted upon by Ho Chi Minh. It was M. Bollaert's task to outmaneuver Bao Dai, and to bring him to agreement on terms favorable to the French.

Conveniently, a number of Vietnamese nationalists appeared, who were willing to work with Bao Dai to create a new central government under French auspices. Among these nationalists were the exiled leaders of the VNQDD and Dong Minh Hoi who, after losing control of the nationalist movement to the Viet Minh in 1945, had fled to China where they had established a "National Union Front" under Chinese sponsorship. This group of Bao Dai supporters was soon augmented by the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and a number of mandarins and monarchists in Annam.[22]

These political elements constituted a core around which Bao Dai could form an anti-Viet Minh government; the French saw to it that a steady procession of nationalist leaders called upon the former Emperor to keep this idea firmly planted in his mind. In response to this barrage of attention, Bao Dai gravitated toward a position of alignment with the National Union Front, twice rejecting Viet Minh suggestions that he negotiate with the French in the name of the DRV.[23]

On 5 July 1947, Bao Dai finally broke his long silence, declaring that:

> If all Vietnamese place their confidence in me, and if through my presence I can contribute to re-establishing good relations among our people and France, I will be happy to come back to Indochina. I am neither for the Viet Minh nor against it. I belong to no party. . . . Peace will return quickly if the French are only ready to admit that the spirit of our people is not the same today as it was ten years ago.[24]

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22. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 209-211.
23. Ibid., pp. 209, 217.
24. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 399. (Translated by author.)

In the meantime, M. Bollaert was busy preparing the way for Bao Dai's return to Indochina. During May, he presided over the installation in Saigon and Hue of two "Provisional Administrative and Social Committees." These two groups worked closely with the French to rally Indochinese public opinion behind the Bao Dai restoration movement. The committee at Saigon demanded the unification of Viet Nam, the admittance of a free and independent Viet Nam to the French Union, and the creation of a central national government disassociated from the DRV.[25]

Even with French support it was clear that Bao Dai's only hope for lasting success lay in securing from France the two major concessions that Ho Chi Minh had failed to obtain. Conscious of this, Bao said in September: "I want first of all to get independence and unity for you."[26] As the French subsequently learned, he did not intend to compromise on these terms.

Meanwhile, in a last bold attempt to come to terms with the DRV, the French High Commissioner planned a striking departure from his government's recent policy of intractability toward Ho Chi Minh. M. Bollaert decided to direct a conciliatory speech to the DRV on 15 August, the day on which India and Pakistan received their independence. He intended to offer Ho Chi Minh a cease fire, and French recognition of an independent Viet Nam within the French Union. But before he could make his speech, M. Bollaert was summoned to France for consultation, presumably because news of the content of his address had reached the French Government.

> When Bollaert arrived in Paris, the French Cabinet was called into session and the MRP members made clear their firm opposition to taking any action from which Ho Chi Minh might profit. It would be the Viet Minh which would be strengthened, not Bao Dai, if there were to be a truce in Viet Nam, they reasoned, and therefore France could not afford peace.[27]

25. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 44-45.
26. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 214.
27. Ibid., pp. 212-213.

M. Bollaert finally gave his speech on 10 September, but it bore little resemblance to the original. No mention was made of either a truce or independence for Viet Nam, and the address included the condition that all of the proposals put forth by the High Commissioner would have to be accepted without alteration. It stipulated that:

> a. The Indo-Chinese people must agree to remain in the French Union. . . . On the other hand, France will not interfere in the three disputated States' /Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin/ decision to join in a Vietnamese Federation or remain aloof.
>
> b. France is prepared to surrender direct and indirect administration to a qualified Government.
>
> c. The French will retain control over foreign relations, although the Indo-Chinese States are expected to participate in the representation of the Union . . . .
>
> d. The French Republic will ensure the coordination of the military resources to be pooled by all members of the French Union (including Viet Nam) for the defense of the Union as a whole.
>
> e. Collaboration among the several States in such general problems as customs, currency, immigration policy, and in economic development will proceed under the aegis of the French High Commissioner.
>
> f. The High Commissioner will further guarantee the protection of French interests in Indo-China and will oppose any interference by one State in the internal affairs of another.
>
> g. The French pledge themselves not to take reprisals against the Vietnamese, and all prisoners will be exchanged under conditions of reciprocity.[28]

As expected, Ho Chi Minh rejected these terms. It appears probable that the French offer had been purposely vague and unacceptable in order to provide an excuse for resuming military operations the following month. The rainy season was rapidly drawing to a close, and good fighting weather was expected.[29]

28. (S) War Dept, Intel Div, WDGS, Intelligence Review, No. 83, 18 Sep 47, pp. 13-15.
29. Ibid.

From October 1947 to the beginning of 1948, a lull occurred in the French-Bao Dai conversations while the French military forces attempted to "liquidate" the DRV, and thus clear the way for Bao Dai's return. Although the French Minister of War had estimated that it would require a force of at least 500,000 men to take back the areas controlled by the Viet Minh,30 not more than 60,000 French troops were utilized during the fall campaign. The objectives of this drive were to close the China frontier, cut DRV lines of communication, kill or capture the DRV leaders, and destroy, as far as possible, their regular army.31

The French succeeded in cutting the principal supply route between Tonkin and China, but traffic continued to move freely across other parts of the border. And, although they captured large stocks of DRV military supplies and seized two broadcasting stations, shortages of manpower and supplies soon forced the French to withdraw from many of the areas they had occupied. "None of the principal DRV leaders were killed or captured /and7 . . . DRV political and military resistance to the French remained basically unimpaired."32

The unsuccessful fall offensive cost the French heavily. It was reported that France spent more than $33,613,446 (4 billion francs) monthly on Indochina during this period, and lost over 600 men a month in combat.33

Even before military operations had ceased, Bao Dai and M. Bollaert resumed negotiations. On 8 December, aboard a French cruiser in D'Along Bay, they initiated a secret protocol, in which Bao Dai tentatively agreed to return to Indochina as soon as France sanctioned a united Viet Nam. The following were reported to be the terms of agreement:

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30. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 207.
31. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 47.
32. Ibid.
33. William C. Bullitt, "The Saddest War," Life Magazine, 29 Dec 47, pp. 64-66.

(1) Viet Nam, which will include Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin-China, will be granted "independence" within the French Union; (2) Viet Nam will have an "independent" army, which will, however, be "available for defense of any part of the French Union"; (3) foreign relations are to be conducted by France, with Viet Namese included in the French Foreign Service; and (4) there will be common customs and integration of transportation facilities in the several states of Viet Nam.[34]

The D'Along Bay Agreement did not measure up to the expectation of Bao Dai's supporters in Hongkong and Viet Nam. They urged him to disavow it and seek more favorable terms.[35] Soon thereafter, taking the position that he had approved the protocol only in the capacity of a private individual, Bao Dai renounced the agreement.[36]

The French, however, were not yet ready to give up hope of reaching an agreement. On 23 December 1947, the French Cabinet announced that it had instructed M. Bollaert "to carry on, outside the Ho Chi Minh government, all activities and negotiations necessary for the restoration of peace and freedom in the Vietnamese countries."[37] By thus making the Bao Dai restoration solution the official policy of France, the French Government enhanced Bao Dai's bargaining position. But M. Bollaert, during several interviews with Bao Dai in January, refused to compromise on his terms of 8 December. The main point of disagreement was that while both Bao Dai and the French agreed that he was to return to head a provisional government in Viet Nam, they differed on procedure. Bao Dai insisted upon unity and independence prior to his return, whereas the French wanted him to return immediately as head of a nationalist government with which they could then negotiate regarding the manner in which unity and independence would be realized.[38]

34. (S) Dept Army, Intel Div, GSUSA, Intelligence Review, No. 97, 1 Jan 48, p. 26.
35. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 47.
36. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 215.
37. Ibid., p. 216.
38. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 49.

Following Bai Dai's return to Hongkong in March 1948, a growing coolness became apparent in his relations with the French. While Bao Dai doubted French assurances that they would no longer attempt to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh, the French for their part suspected that the former Emperor was engaged in undercover dealings with the Viet Minh.[39] Another factor contributing to Bao Dai's suspicion of French intentions was the announcement on 4 March 1948 of a Thai Federation in upper Tonkin, founded under French auspices. This step appeared to indicate a French desire to weaken any Vietnamese government which might come to power by setting up French-controlled political subdivisions under the pretense of protecting minority rights. There was a precedent for such a French policy in Admiral d'Argenlieu's recognition of the Cochinchinese Republic during the Fontainebleau Conference and, later, the establishment of a separate Moi state in southern Annam.

Culmination of the Bao Dai Solution

As the year 1948 unfolded, Bao Dai remained adamant in his refusal to return to Indochina without official French recognition of Vietnamese independence and unity. This the French were not prepared to grant. Reluctantly they turned to General Nguyen Van Xuan, President of the Provisional Government of South Viet Nam (Cochinchina), to form a provisional government for Viet Nam.

Plans for the establishment of such a government were formulated in consultation with Bao Dai and differences between the various nationalist elements in opposition to the Viet Minh were gradually resolved. Finally, on 20 May 1948, a number of representatives from Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, "all of whom had been hand-picked by Xuan and approved by the French," met at Saigon as a "Vietnamese Congress" to form a central government for Viet Nam.[40] Bao Dai's approval of General Xuan, expressed in a letter which General Xuan read before the delegates, was sufficient to overcome the remaining opposition to the general's leadership. Without debate, he was

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., p. 50.

designated President of the "Provisional Central Government" of Viet Nam, which was later to supersede the government of Cochinchina. The new government would negotiate with France on the status of Viet Nam, and would be replaced by a permanent government as soon as agreement regarding the powers and responsibilities of the latter was reached.

The weakness of the new government was recognized by all. Powerful elements from among the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao movements refused to lend it their support. Le Van Hoach, ex-President of the defunct Cochinchina Republic rejected an offer of the Vice Presidency. Moreover, administrators of ability were dissuaded by the temporary nature of the new government from joining its ranks; they preferred to wait until Bao Dai returned to Viet Nam before offering their services.

The Xuan regime was formally installed at Hanoi on 6 June. The day before, Bao Dai had met with General Xuan and M. Bollaert at D'Along Bay to seek mutual understanding. Out of this meeting came an agreement wherein the French promised to recognize the unity and independence of Viet Nam within the French Union as a state associated with France.[41] The text of this agreement as reproduced by a French source follows:

> 1. France solemnly recognizes the independence of Viet Nam, whose unity must be freely accomplished. For its part, Viet Nam proclaims its adherence to the French Union in the capacity of a State associated with France. The independence of Viet Nam is limited only by that which its attachment to the French Union imposes upon itself.
> 2. Viet Nam pledges itself to respect the rights and interests of French nationals, constitutionally to ensure respect for democratic principals, and to give priority to French councillors and technicians, for the needs of its internal organization and its economy.

41. State Dept, "Outline of Basic Treaty Relationships Between France and the Associated States of Indochina," IR No. 5758, 9 Jan 52, pp. 1-2.

3. After the constitution of a provisional government, the representatives of Viet Nam will pass with the representatives of the French Republic various arrangements of a cultural, diplomatic, military, economic, financial, and technical nature.[42]

It appeared for a while that an acceptable basis for an anti-Viet Minh government had been laid down in the D'Along Bay agreement. But the gift of independence was in fact hedged with qualifications, unity was yet to be accomplished, and the plain fact of the matter was that the French had dealt with a group that did not control the country. Too, Paris seemed reluctant to implement the agreement. Gaston Palewski, de Gaulle's political advisor, said on 7 June that the formation of the Central Provisional Government was "illegal and in violation of the French Constitution."[43] And two days later, M. Coste-Floret, Minister of Overseas France, told the National Assembly that the agreement did not imply French recognition of the unity of Viet Nam, since the status of Cochinchina could be changed only with formal approval of the French Parliament. He went on to state that France would not approve a Vietnamese army, apart from police forces, nor would a separate Vietnamese diplomatic service be tolerated. Vietnamese public opinion "reacted with great discouragement" to these declarations, and the prestige of the Xuan government, never very high, sank even lower.[44]

The D'Along Bay agreement was not ratified by the French National Assembly until 19 August, and then only "in principle." It was under constant attack all the while by a number of influential Frenchmen. One, Georges Bidault, Minister of Foreign Affairs and a leader in the MRP, said that the concessions granted by M. Bollaert were "very dangerous" in view of probable repercussions in French North Africa. He especially condemned the use of the word "independence" in any form.[45] The failure of

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42. Journal Officiel, Assem Nat, 14 Mar 53. (Translated by author.)
43. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 51.
44. Ibid.
45. Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam, p. 422.

the Paris government to implement the agreement speedily cost the French more in terms of Vietnamese popular support than they had gained by signing it in the first place; more and more Vietnamese began to believe further negotiations with the French useless.[46] In view of his failure to persuade Bao Dai to return to Indochina without further concessions, M. Bollaert was recalled to France, and Leon Pignon, formerly French Commissioner in Cambodia, took his place on 20 October 1948.[47]

By the end of 1948, the Xuan government was so obviously a puppet administration that it steadily lost ground in its efforts to win popular support. No Vietnamese of any stature would consent to serve in the administration, and there were rumors of graft and corruption at all levels. It controlled no territory of its own; in fact the governors of north, south, and central Viet Nam felt no responsibility to General Xuan, and in the south, Governor Huu openly defied him. Although the French insistently proclaimed that they had granted independence to Viet Nam, French administrators refused to turn over even the most limited powers to General Xuan. Even in areas where a Vietnamese administration existed, the French retained control of the army, police forces, and the financial structure.[48]

By contrast, Ho Chi Minh's government in its third year of existence controlled the greater part of the countryside. In these areas lived over half the population, producing practically all the food. The DRV aimed at economic self-sufficiency, directing its efforts toward raising the living standards of the peasants. To this end it set up forest factories to manufacture locally items formerly imported, such as textiles and weapons urgently needed by the Viet Minh army. It endeavored to increase food production, and won considerable popularity by lowering land rents as much as 25 per cent.[49]

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46. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 51.
47. Ibid., p. 52.
48. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 222, 224, 228-230.
49. Ibid., p. 223.

The DRV continued to pose as a nationalist movement during 1948. Although Communist control was being increasingly tightened, little in the way of Communist inspiration appeared openly in its activities and policies. As yet, it did not reject the Bao Dai restoration plan, appearing instead to entertain the hope that the ex-Emperor could be brought to join Ho Chi Minh in combatting the French.[50]

The military situation showed little change throughout 1948. The French retained control of Saigon, Hanoi, and Haiphong and established small garrisons in Annam, but half-hearted attempts to expand local perimeters met with little success. At the same time, the Viet Minh, gradually stepping up the pace of their activities, harassed the French throughout all of Viet Nam, and the north-south lines of communication were immobilized, owing to the inability of French units to seize and hold them.[51] In view of the growing difficulty of replacing casualties, and troops who had been rotated, the French offered bonuses to all officers and men who extended their service in Indochina beyond two years.[52]

In January and February of 1948, a 12,000-man French task force undertook offensive operations in Cochinchina, the over-all effect of which was to expand French control slightly in the Saigon and Mekong river delta areas.[53] The French also began an offensive in Tonkin during October, as they had the previous year. Their object was to secure communications between Hanoi and outlying garrisons. In this they failed, "owing to low morale, inadequate military transportation facilities, and the replacement of French troops by locally-recruited forces of doubtful loyalty."[54]

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50. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 52-53.
51. (S) Dept Army, Intel Div, GSUSA, Intelligence Review, No. 155, 17 Feb 49, pp. 85-86.
52. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 53.
53. (S) Dept Army, Intel Div, GSUSA, Intelligence Review, No. 155, 17 Feb 49, pp. 85-86.
54. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 53.

Not having achieved appreciable military success, the French once again resumed talks with Bao Dai. There was now a detectable note of haste in the negotiations. A series of Chinese Communist victories seemed to foreshadow the collapse of the Kuomintang and the appearance of a potential Viet Minh ally on the northern border. Since both the French and Bao Dai were still far apart in their demands, a compromise seemed in order if they were to collaborate successfully in creating a government capable of drawing popular support away from Ho Chi Minh.

During the winter of 1948-1949, the French-Bao Dai negotiations made considerable headway and, on 8 March 1949, Bao Dai and President Auriol of France reached a "compromise agreement" at the Elysee Palace in Paris. By means of an exchange of letters, a program for the future of Indochina was agreed upon:

> . . . France recognized the independence of Vietnam within the French Union. In Foreign relations, the government of Vietnam was limited in its independence by its membership in the French Union; internally, Vietnam's autonomy was confirmed, except for certain limitations in the judicial sphere. Vietnam was to have its own national army, and French forces stationed in Vietnam in peacetime were to be confined to designated bases, garrisons, and communication facilities. Vietnam undertook to give priority to French political and technical advisers. It agreed to reciprocal assurances concerning the status and properties of nationals and the freedom of enterprises in both countries, and to similar guarantees with regard to French educational institutions in Vietnam. Vietnam was to enter into a monetary and customs union with the other Indochinese states, and joint institutions were to be created to harmonize the interests of the three states with each other and with those of France.55

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55. Ibid., p. 54; Accords Franco-Vietnamians du 8-Mars 1949 (Imprimerie Francaisa d'Outre-Mar, Saigon), in Dept State Library.

Had the French attitude kept pace with this document, a Bao Dai government would have had at least a fair chance of capturing enough popular support to function effectively. Unfortunately, the "new" French approach was almost indistinguishable from the old. Ex-Premier Ramadier expressed the attitude of a good many Frenchmen when, during March 1949, he said: "We will hold on everywhere, in Indo-China as in Madagascar. Our empire will not be taken away from us, because we represent might and also right."[56]

Until the French Assembly formally declared Cochinchina a part of Viet Nam, the Elysee Agreement was worth nothing. Therefore, on 12 March 1949, the Assembly voted to authorize the creation of a Territorial Assembly of Cochinchina, the sole function of which was to vote union with Viet Nam. This it did on 23 April. A month later the French Assembly ended the colonial status of Cochinchina which, henceforth, was to be "attached to the Associated State of Vietnam."[57]

The way was now open for the Elysee Accord to go into effect. On 14 June, Bao Dai and the French High Commissioner met at a formal ceremony in Saigon to exchange letters in confirmation of the agreement. Bao Dai assumed the position of "Chief of State" of the "Independent State of Viet Nam" and General Xuan's ill-favored government resigned in favor of the new regime. Viet Nam was once again united, but only on paper. Before any real unification could take place, the French and the new State of Viet Nam had still to cope with the Viet Minh.

American Policy toward Indochina, 1947-1949

The war in Indochina posed a dilemma for the makers of American foreign policy. To aid the French might alienate the peoples of Southeast Asia from the Western Powers. To support complete independence for the Vietnamese might lead to a Communist state in Indochina.

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56. W.L. Briggs, "Vietnam Wins Independence," New Republic, 4 Jul 49, p. 13.

57. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 54.

In these circumstances, the State Department sought to steer a middle course. While recognizing French sovereignty the United States refused to supply the French with arms or ammunition to help them assert it. And while opposing an independent Vietnamese state, the United States sought to persuade the French to abandon their "outmoded colonial outlook" and grant the Vietnamese a large measure of autonomy. Such a concession, the State Department hoped, would strengthen the hands of anti-Communist Vietnamese at the expense of the Communists. As a special ad hoc committee of SWNCC stated it:

> Our objective is a prompt, peaceful, and lasting settlement of the present French-Vietnamese dispute providing for the creation of a stable Vietnamese state that will remain in voluntary association with France and will meet the legitimate demands of the Vietnamese for self-government, and be responsive to their fundamental interests. We consider the creation of such a state as the best defense against disintegrative tendencies in Indochina that could lead to a chronic disorder and political extremism, offer opportunities for the extension of Communism, or tempt the intervention of other powers.[58]

Long before the committee set this objective down on paper, the State Department had been finding it difficult to achieve. Four days after the outbreak of hostilities, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson had invited the French Ambassador to a conference at the State Department. Expressing deep concern over the situation in Indochina, Mr. Acheson made it clear that, while the United States did not wish to mediate the Franco-Vietnamese conflict, it was willing to offer its "good offices" to the French. From every point of view, Mr. Acheson asserted, it was essential that the Indochina question be settled as soon as possible, by conciliatory means.

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58. (S) Doc B-24, Msg, Marshall to AmEmb Paris, 431, 3 Feb 47, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina. (TS) SWNCC 360/3, Note by Secys, "Policies, Procedures and Costs of Assistance by the United States to Foreign Countries," 3 Oct 47, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec 7.

Two weeks later, the French officially rejected Mr. Acheson's offer of "good offices." They preferred to handle their problem their own way. The immediate French military objective in Indochina, said M. Lacoste, Minister in the French Embassy, was "to restore order and reopen communications." Once order was restored, the French would try to live up to the accord of 6 March and to the modus vivendi of 15 September 1946. When asked whether he believed the French could restore order "within the foreseeable future," M. Lacoste answered in the affirmative, but "without much evidence of conviction."[59]

Taking into account the instability of the current French Government, the United States did not press the matter further. And when the Chinese proposed joint mediation by the United States, British, and Chinese Governments, the State Department rejected the idea, partly on the ground that any appearance of intervention would provide political ammunition for the French Communists. Throughout the remainder of 1947 the State Department shrank from measures that might embarrass the French Government. While repeating its offer of "good offices," the State Department coupled it with a disclaimer of American intentions to mediate the Franco-Vietnamese conflict and with a frank statement that the United States had no specific solution to propose. Other than urging the French to adopt a more conciliatory attitude toward the Vietnamese and to keep the United States informed of developments, the State Department adhered to the position that the Indochina problem was one for the French and Vietnamese.

Once in 1947 the State Department ventured slightly beyond that position, and with negligible results. In September Secretary of State George C. Marshall informed the American Ambassador to France, Mr. Jefferson Caffery, of his concern over reports that the French were planning to launch an offensive against the Vietnamese in the dry

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59. (C) Doc B-19, Msg, Byrnes to AmEmb Paris, 6586, 24 Dec 46; (UNK) Doc B-23, Memo, John C. Vincent to Acheson, "French Indochina," 8 Jan 47. Both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

season, which would come toward the end of September. "It is obvious," Secretary Marshall said, "that such an offensive, if it took place under these conditions, would have serious effect on public opinion here which would be reflected in a Congress which will be called upon to consider extensive financial aid for western European nations, including France." Secretary Marshall asked Ambassador Caffery to find out whatever he could about this offensive and notify the Department of State. On the following day, Ambassador Caffery reported that he had talked informally with M. Bidault along the lines suggested by Secretary Marshall. M. Bidault "understood" the American point of view, and said that as far as he knew there were no plans for such an offensive. Whether or not M. Bidault was misinformed is uncertain, but early in October the French launched a major military offensive "to annihilate the Viet Minh forces in Tonkin."[60]

By the summer of 1948 the State Department had decided to urge the French toward more decisive action to settle the Indochina conflict, but to avoid applying any pressure that might imperil the French Government. As Secretary of State Marshall viewed the situation, nothing should be left undone that would strengthen the hand of the "truly nationalist groups" in Indochina at the expense of the Communists. In July the French were informed that the United States believed they were faced with two alternatives: either they must promptly and unequivocally approve the union of Cochinchina with the rest of Vietnam and carry out the D'Along Bay Agreement or lose Indochina. As an inducement to earnest effort, the French were informed that, once they put this program

60. (S) Doc B-20, Msg, Byrnes to AmCon Hanoi (IC), 25, 31 Dec 46; (S) Doc B-21, Msg, Byrnes to AmEmb Paris, 75, 8 Jan 47; (S) Doc B-22, Msg, Byrnes to AmEmb Paris, 74, 8 Jan 47; (UNK) Doc B-23, Memo, John C. Vincent to Acheson, "French Indochina," 8 Jan 47; (S) Doc B-24, Msg, Marshall to AmEmb Paris, 431, 3 Feb 47; (S) Doc B-25, Msg, Marshall to AmEmb Paris, 1737, 13 May 47; (UNK) Doc B-26, Msg, Marshall to AmEmb Paris, 3433, 11 Sep 47; (S) Doc B-27, Msg, Caffery to SecState, 3715, 12 Sep 47. All in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 47.

into effect, the United States would publicly support it as a "forward looking step" toward solving the Indochina problem and toward fulfilling the aspirations of the Vietnamese. The French were also told that, when these measures were adopted, the United States would reconsider its policy of withholding assistance to Indochina through ECA. But something more than promises was required to obtain action from the French Assembly, and in October Ambassador Caffery reported that he saw little hope of obtaining any position action toward a solution for Indochina.[61]

As the war continued the United States drew closer to direct involvement. Alarmed by the Communist victory in China, the State Department looked for ways to avert a Communist Viet Nam. To Mr. Acheson there appeared no alternative to supporting Bao Dai, and in May 1949 he told the American Consul in Saigon that no effort should be spared by the Western Powers or by the non-Communist nations of Asia to assure the success of Bao Dai. At the proper time and under the proper circumstances, said Mr. Acheson, the United States would do its part by extending to Bao Dai official American recognition. And it would do much more. It would provide Bao Dai with military and economic aid. But before these steps were taken, Mr. Acheson wanted both the French and Bao Dai to demonstrate that American assistance was justified. The French should make every possible concession to make the Bao Dai government attractive to the nationalists. Bao Dai should demonstrate his own capacity to conduct his affairs wisely enough to obtain popular support. Otherwise, Mr. Acheson believed, the Bao Dai experiment would be foredoomed to failure.[62]

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61. (TS) Doc B-28, Msg, Caffery to SecState, 3621, 10 Jul 48; (TS) Doc B-29, Msg, Marshall to AmEmb Paris, 2637, 14 Jul 48; (S) Doc B-30, Caffery to SecState, 5129, 1 Oct 48. All in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

62. (S) Doc B-32, Acheson to AmCon Saigon (IC), 77, 10 May 49, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

Conclusions of the Period Prior to Direct US Involvement

The history of Indochina from the beginning of World War II to the summer of 1949 is essentially a story of French failure. The period began tragically with the collapse of France before the German onslaught, and the domination of Indochina by Japan. In the years that followed, France strove persistently to regain her position of eminence in the world community of nations. Her desire was strong, but her means remained weak. Furthermore, she labored under a severe handicap. French colonial administrators and bureaucrats of the postwar era seemed generally to have been of poor calibre, and they exhibited most of the failings of the old regime. They were sometimes morally weak, frequently arrogant, and too often blind to the implications of their actions.

Indochina was important to France, not only for its wealth, but also for the sake of prestige and the continued existence of the French Empire. Always in French minds there lurked the spectre of a France divested of her overseas territories. These areas were necessary to the economy of France and, in the French view, a vital attribute of a great power. To many Frenchmen, the loss of Indochina, after the humiliations of World War II, offered an intolerable vista. If France surrendered Indochina to a nationalist movement, where would she draw the line thereafter? In North Africa and Madagascar nationalists had already begun to stir restively.

At the close of the war the French seemed to have almost deliberately ignored the wave of nationalism sweeping over Southeast Asia. They drew comfort and confidence from the recollection that for decades France had succeeded in suppressing the Indochinese nationalist movement. The increased capabilities and fever heat of the postwar movement came as a distinct and unpleasant shock. Yet, despite clear evidence of the sincerity and proportions of the movement, the French clung to their outmoded colonial outlook.

Their strongest opponent, the Viet Minh, started out as a small group of parties under the domination of the Indochinese Communist Party. During the war they represented only a small part of the nationalist movement, and an insignificant number of the Indochinese

people. By 1946, the Viet Minh had increased its following and military strength, but it was only one of many forces in Indochina's political life. The allegiance of the majority of the Indochinese people still hung in the balance.

Under the expert guidance of Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Minh did, however, develop excellent leadership, a disciplined and dedicated following, and a military organization far stronger than that of any other Indochinese nationalist group. Then, when the French returned to Indochina, their highhandedness, bad faith, and use of force drove not only politically conscious elements but also the Indochinese peasant and man in the street to make common cause with the Viet Minh against the French. And therein lay an important factor in the success of the Viet Minh.

The French were well aware that the Viet Minh regime posed a serious threat to their plans for Indochina, but they failed to recognize that a French-sponsored substitute for the Viet Minh would have to possess many of the same qualities. Above all they failed to realize that a government sponsored by France would have to offer tangible evidence that Viet Nam was or soon would be unified or independent.

From 1947 to 1949 France fought a costly war against the Viet Minh, and at the same time struggled to create a central government capable of winning the loyalty of the Vietnamese. Unfortunately the government that resulted was jerry-built; it was subservient to the French, and offered the Vietnamese little hope for unity and independence. Instead of gaining public support for the new government, the French maneuver increased the following of the Viet Minh.

By 1949 the French seemed to realize that drastic measures were needed to save Indochina from the Viet Minh. As a result the French came to terms with Bao Dai and pledged themselves to grant Indochina unity and independence.

But time had begun to run out. The growing shadow of the Chinese Communist armies was already darkening

the landscape of northern Indochina and aid for the sorely pressed Viet Minh was now in the offing. This prospect filled France and other democratic nations with unhappy speculation. The hope of keeping Indochina within the orbit of France by solely French means was growing steadily fainter. A quick and decisive victory over the Viet Minh, and the speedy implementation of the Elysee Agreement might conceivably have redressed the situation. Unfortunately for France and the western world, the military stalemate continued, and implementation of the Elysee Agreement dragged.

CHAPTER VII

ORIGINS OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN INDOCHINA

The months between the summer of 1949 and the spring of 1950 marked the beginning and early growth of direct United States concern with the war in Indochina. Gradually, American policy planners realized that unless measures were taken to change the course of the conflict France was headed for almost certain defeat. They realized, too, that the defeat of our European ally in Indochina might result in the end of the French Union, the end of the French Empire, and the end of France as a first rate power. This defeat in a sense would also represent a defeat for the United States, for Communist possession of Indochina would increase the power, prestige, and capabilities of the Soviet bloc. More immediately, the power represented by the men, materials, and resources of Indochina, if coupled with that of a Communist China, would gravely endanger the whole American security system in the Far East. Further, as the Japanese proved in World War II, Indochina was the natural gateway for the conquest of Southeast Asia. Obviously, therefore, Indochina was not a single problem that could be isolated and cured by itself; it was a vital part of the whole body politic of Asia. Thus, when early in 1950 the United States decided to help France achieve victory in Indochina, it did so within the framework of an over-all policy for Asia, and with specific objectives in mind.

United States Attitude toward Indochina, June 1949-January 1950

Throughout the last six months of 1949, however, United States policy toward Asia was negative and vague. The defeat of the American-supported Nationalist Chinese armies caused a general United States withdrawal from involvement in the Far East, and until January 1950 no decisive, over-all policy toward Asia was developed. There were, nonetheless, two general objectives apparent in American thinking as applied to all Asian nations. These goals were containment of Communism and encouragement of non-Communist nationalist movements. The former,

actually world-wide in application, was dictated by the realities of the Cold War; the latter was in harmony with traditional American sympathy for subject peoples. Pending the emergence, early in 1950, of a more forward looking approach to Far Eastern problems, American policy was determined by these twin aims.

The dominant factor influencing the rebirth of a strong stand in Asia and leading to a paramount American interest in Indochina was the victory of the Communists in China. The triumph of Mao Tse-tung opened the way for Communist expansion into Southeast Asia. If Southeast Asia fell, the Communists would be in an excellent position to threaten the island chain stretching from Japan to the Philippines that United States military planners regarded as the bastion of American defensive strategy in the Far East. A Communist victory in Southeast Asia would also deny to the free world and secure to the Communist cause a vast reservoir of vital raw materials.[1]

The logical course for Mao Tse-tung to follow in any projected conquest of Southeast Asia lay through Indochina, where the situation was ideally suited to Communist penetration. China and Viet Nam possessed a common boundary over 500 miles long. Direct support of the Viet Minh war effort over this border was now anticipated, and the threat of overt Chinese intervention was an ever-present possibility. Without foreign aid the Viet Minh had successfully resisted the French for over three years. Even if Ho Chi Minh failed to secure Chinese aid, the war gave no signs of ending conclusively.

This situation had its repercussions in Europe, too, and the United States found the Indochinese war endangering its objective of erecting a Western European security system. The annual expenditure of 500 million dollars for Indochina was damaging a French economy struggling to recover from the effects of World War II. Approximately 1-1/2 billion dollars had already been consumed combating the Viet Minh insurgents.[2] Since 1948,

1. (S) NSC 51, State Dept, "United States Policy Toward Southeast Asia," 29 Mar 49, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 1.
2. (TS) JIC 529/1, 16 Aug 50, same file, sec 5.

the United States had been attempting to revive the French economy with Marshall Plan dollars, a process largely cancelled by French budgetary requirements for Indochina. The North Atlantic Treaty had been signed on 4 April 1949, and French troops were expected to play a vital role in the European Army that the United States proposed to equip. Yet French Union Forces approximating 156,000 ground troops, plus three fighter squadrons, three transport squadrons, and a small navy, were tied down in Indochina.[3] By the end of 1949, the French Expeditionary Corps had suffered, in killed and missing, 16,270 casualties.[4] The consequences to France's prestige of an Indochinese defeat would likewise hamper her contribution to the European coalition. It was becoming increasingly apparent to the United States, therefore, that France's ability to become an effective partner in the North Atlantic alliance would be gravely and indefinitely jeopardized by the continued drain on her resources.

The Indochinese situation during the latter half of 1949 offered little hope for future improvement. The most discouraging indication was the persistent evidence of closer ties between Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse-tung. As the Chinese Communists moved closer to the Tonkinese frontier in the fall of 1949, the Viet Minh underwent a change that gave promise of future collaboration between China and the DRV. Whereas Ho Chi Minh had previously posed as a genuine anti-colonial patriot fighting for a democratic, independent Viet Nam, he now publicly identified himself more closely with international Communism.[5]

Viet Minh fighting techniques were also undergoing a change. Although guerrilla tactics and large scale infiltration still remained the dominant characteristics of Viet Minh operations, regularly organized combat units began to make their appearance. The French outposts in Tonkin were subjected to intensifed pressure, and their supply became a serious problem. By the close

3. Ibid.
4. (TS) Memo by State Dept, "Military Information re Indochina, Thailand and Indonesia," 12 Apr 50, same file, sec 3.
5. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 247-250.

of 1949, the fort at Dong Khe, lying between Lang Son and Cao Bang on the Tonkinese border, had to be provisioned entirely by air. French Union Forces abandoned a number of scattered strong points in northern Tonkin and concentrated on strengthening and extending the defensive perimeter about Hanoi.[6]

At the base of the French difficulties still lay the persistent nationalist-colonialist conflict that had prevented a military decision for three years. French efforts to solve the political problem throughout the latter half of 1949 were directed at implementing the Elysee Accords of 8 March 1949. The failure of these Accords to effect a lasting political solution was probably owing to the fact that neither the Vietnamese people nor the sovereign Asian nations believed the new government sufficiently representative of the people or independent of French domination.

As the first step in the erection of a Vietnamese government, Bao Dai was proclaimed Chief of State on 14 June. A week later the government of General Nguyen Van Xuan resigned, but consented to serve temporarily while Bao Dai consolidated his position. Although no constitution was promulgated, two ordinances issued on 1 July defined temporary agencies by which Viet Nam was to be ruled pending the establishment of internal stability. The principal governing institutions, as outlined by the ordinances, were to be the Chief of State, a Cabinet with a Prime Minister, and a Consultative National Council.

The members of the Cabinet were appointed by, and responsible to, the Chief of State. The members of the Consultative National Council were designated by the Chief of State on the basis of their ability to represent regional and national interests and express public opinion. The Council was supposed to develop gradually into a more representative organ, and it was anticipated that the appointments of the councilors would later be confirmed by popular election. The ordinances also specified that upon the restoration of peace, an elected

6. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 58.

Constituent Assembly would replace the Consultative National Council and decide upon the future government. For the time being, however, government by executive was established on all levels.[7] The Consultative National Council did not meet until September 1952, and then under a different name. The Constituent Assembly was never convened.

As a result, the form that the Bao Dai government assumed was essentially authoritarian. In addition, the nature and organization of the future government remained extremely vague. The Preamble to Ordinance No. 1 left open the question of whether Viet Nam's political authority would be concentrated in a republic or a constitutional monarchy, a highly centralized or loosely federated regime.

One reason for Bao Dai's failure in succeeding months to unify the country behind his government is thus suggested. While it would not have been realistic to expect a truly representative government, in view of the instability of the internal situation, it was still obvious to all that Bao Dai's source of power lay with the French, and not with the Vietnamese people.

Although the ordinances of 1 July established Bao Dai's regime in fact, specific agreements still had to be concluded to transfer services from the French colonial administration to the Vietnamese Government; and the French National Assembly had to ratify the 8 March Accords to give the entire transaction sanction in law. As the first step in this process, a Joint Commission convened at Saigon in August 1949. The Commission sat for four months, and on 30 December signed twenty-nine specialized conventions by which the French arranged to hand over certain internal administrative services to the Bao Dai government. Although the concessions to native independence were substantial, France still retained predominant interest in such fields as military affairs, press and information, the judiciary and police.[8] With regard to foreign affairs, acceptance of the status of

7. (S) NIS 43, Indochina, Ch V, "Political," sec 51, "The Constitutional System," pp. 51-15 - 51-21.
8. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 57.

an Associated State within the French Union entailed a limitation on the right of engaging in international relations. The Vietnamese were especially sensitive over the restriction of their right to send diplomatic representatives abroad.

By the agreements of 30 December, the French retained key functions that made Bao Dai extremely vulnerable to charges of being a French puppet. The privileged position that Frenchmen continued to enjoy, both in government and society, did not impress the Vietnamese or their Asian neighbors as a significant reduction in French influence.

Although the French encountered a more troublesome political problem in Viet Nam than in the other two Associated States, they faced similar difficulties in neighboring Laos and Cambodia. Treaties with Laos and Cambodia were signed on 19 July and 8 November 1949, respectively. These agreements closely resembled the Elysee Accords with Viet Nam. Implementing conventions concluded with Laos on 6 February 1950, and with Cambodia on 15 June 1950, transferred sovereignty to the two kingdoms on substantially the same basis as the agreement of 30 December 1949 with Viet Nam. The governing structures that evolved in Laos and Cambodia were more representative than that in Viet Nam. Although the two smaller states were presided over by hereditary monarchs, the National Assemblies were popularly elected and exercised important legislative powers.9

French efforts to translate the 8 March promises into reality were observed with great interest by the United States. Consistent with its twin aims of halting the spread of Communism and encouraging non-Communist nationalist movements, the State Department desired the Bao Dai government to be sufficiently independent of France to win the support of Vietnamese nationalists, as well as the respect and recognition of other Asian countries. Beginning in the summer of 1949, the State Department encouraged the French to interpret the 8 March

9. Ibid., pp. 55-57; (S) NIS 43, Indochina, Ch V, "Political," sec 51, "The Constitutional System," pp. 51-6 - 51-15.

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9. Ibid., pp. 55-57; (S) NIS 43, Indochina, Ch V, "Political," sec 51, "The Constitutional System," pp. 51-6 - 51-15.

Accords liberally enough to achieve these aims. Although American sympathy for Viet Nam's new regime was publicly declared in June 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson doubted that the French intended to make the essential concessions. The Secretary felt that the United States could not afford to back a puppet regime; therefore, recognition and aid must be withheld until the French understood the necessity of making the solution attractive to the nationalist elements, and until the Bao Dai regime itself demonstrated a capacity for independent government. Despite their denials, Secretary Acheson feared that French officials in general, and High Commissioner Leon Pignon in particular, regarded the Elysee Agreement as a final concession, whereas the American view was that it was but one step in the evolution of Vietnamese independence.[10]

The United States and Great Britain worked in close cooperation to induce the French to declare their purpose of adjusting the French-Vietnamese relationship in a liberal manner. Indochina was a subject for discussion at tripartite talks held 28 September 1949 between Secretary Acheson and the British and French Foreign Ministers, Ernest Bevin and Robert Schuman. On this and subsequent occasions, Schuman declared his agreement with the American view that the 8 March Accords were but one step in the evolution of the Indochinese problem. But French delay in implementing the Elysee Accords led the United States to doubt the sincerity of this declaration. State Department experts believed France unwilling to make liberal concessions to Vietnamese independence, or to publicize the concessions already made, for fear of causing trouble in North Africa. Schuman was urged to push ratification of the 8 March Accords in the National Assembly, and to place as few restrictions as possible on Vietnamese conduct of their own foreign relations. In particular, the United States and Great Britain wished to see Associated States affairs transferred

10. (S) Doc B-32, Msg, Acheson to AmConsul Saigon, 77, 10 May 49; (S) Doc B-33, Msg, Acheson to AmConsul Saigon, 112, 29 Jun 49. Both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

from the Department of Overseas Possessions to the Foreign Ministry. Schuman, however, felt that this could not be done until after the Accords were ratified by the National Assembly.[11]

The United States and Great Britain attached great importance to French concessions to Viet Nam in the field of foreign affairs. They felt that unless France made these concessions the Asian nations would refuse to recognize the Bao Dai regime on the grounds that it was not truly independent. Recognition by such sovereign Asian countries as India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Burma was considered essential to the success of Bao Dai's attempts to strengthen his government. These nations were highly respected in the Far East because they had successfully rid themselves of foreign rule. The United States and Great Britain felt that recognition of Viet Nam by these States might influence wavering Vietnamese intellectuals to back Bao Dai. At the very least, it would improve his standing with the rest of the world. Finally, acceptance of Viet Nam into the community of Asian nations would place the Western Powers in a better position to extend recognition and aid.

Unfortunately, however, the Asian countries did not look with favor upon the Elysee solution. India, whose good will was most desired, regarded Bao Dai as a French puppet, with no genuine popular support. The Indian attitude was not improved by the strained relations with France over continued French rule in Pondichery. Despite British and American prodding, Indian Prime Minister Nehru refused to recognize Viet Nam; and the other Asian nations, with the exception of Thailand, followed his lead. While still urging the Asian countries to reconsider their stand, the State Department, in January 1950, decided to extend diplomatic recognition to Viet

11. (S) Doc B-34, Memo of Conv, "Discussion of Various Far Eastern Problems," 14 Sep 49; (TS) Doc B-35, Msg, J. E. Webb, Actg SecState, to AmConsul Saigon, 162, 28 Sep 49. Both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

Nam as soon as the French National Assembly should ratify the 8 March Accords, an event anticipated in late January.[12]

After an acrimonious debate, the French National Assembly, by a vote of 396-193, formally approved the 8 March Accords on 29 January 1950. That same day, actually before the Parliamentary vote, United States Ambassador-at-Large Philip C. Jessup, in Saigon, extended the congratulations of the United States to Bao Dai on his assumption of the powers transferred early in January and expressed "confident best wishes for the future of the State of Viet Nam with which it /the United States/ looks forward to establishing a closer relationship. . . ."[13] Formal recognition of Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia followed on 7 February. The United States Consulate at Saigon was elevated to Legation status, although Consul Edmund Gullion continued to represent the United States in Viet Nam until Minister Donald R. Heath arrived on 5 July 1950.

Even before ratification of the Elysee Accords, however, the lines of opposition in the Indochinese war had stiffened. American and British efforts to secure world backing for Bao Dai were accompanied by evidence of similar Soviet activities in behalf of the Viet Minh. On 19 January Communist China recognized the DRV as the legitimate government of Viet Nam; the Kremlin followed suit twelve days later. Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Albania, and Yugoslavia subsequently recognized the Viet Minh. Secretary Acheson, commenting on the international diplomatic support that Ho was receiving, declared that "The Soviet acknowledgment of this /the Viet Minh/ movement should remove any illusions as to the 'nationalist' nature of Ho Chi Minh's aims and reveals Ho in his true colors as the mortal enemy of native independence in Indochina."[14]

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12. (S) Doc B-38, Msg, J. W. Butterworth, Asst SecState (FEA) to Philip Jessup, USAmb-at-Large, Saigon, 25, 20 Jan 50, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

13. State Dept Bulletin, 13 Feb 50, p. 244.

14. (U) Doc B-41, State Dept Press Rel No. 104, 1 Feb 50, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

American recognition of Bao Dai was accompanied by similar action on the part of England and twenty-five other Western Powers. Indochina thereafter became an increasingly important center of conflict in the diplomacy of the Cold War.

Thus the situation in Indochina, as it stood at the close of 1949, impelled the United States to adopt a positive stand. The Viet Minh was growing stronger; the French were growing weaker. Increasing Chinese activity promised to strengthen the Viet Minh even further, and the possibility of actual Chinese intervention made the future prospects dim indeed. The Bao Dai solution gave scant hope of unifying the Vietnamese in support of the war effort, and it was received with suspicion by most of the Asiatic nations. The French must obviously have help or be expelled from Indochina. Throughout the latter half of 1949, the United States had been reassessing its interests in the Far East, and, by January 1950, it had arrived at an appreciation of the vital role of the Indochinese war in the contest for Southeast Asia. On this appreciation, plus a realization of France's precarious position, the decision to assist the French was based.

Emergence of a Far Eastern and Indochinese Policy

The decision to help France combat the Viet Minh was the logical outgrowth of a reassessment of American interests in Asia as a whole. This process began in the summer of 1949 in the National Security Council but was given considerable impetus by a bitter dispute in Congress that served to focus public and official attention on Asia. The result was the formulation of an Asian policy that emphasized the Indochinese problem and prescribed a program of assistance to bolster anti-Communist forces in Indochina.

The movement leading to the National Security Council actions on Asia was initiated, in the summer of 1949, by Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson. Secretary Johnson deprecated the "day-to-day, country-by-country approach" of United States policy in Asia. On 10 June 1949 he called upon the staff of the National Security Council to determine exactly how American security was

threatened by the current situation in the Far East and to formulate tentative courses of action for consideration by the National Security Council. These courses of action, he emphasized, should be coordinated for the whole region and outline specific objectives to be attained.[15]

While this study progressed behind the scenes, a Congressional battle over the military assistance bill heightened public concern for the Far East and laid the basis for the Indochinese aid program. Although the arms bill was primarily concerned with equipping the projected North Atlantic Treaty armies, a group led by Senator William Knowland sponsored a section to appropriate funds for assisting the Nationalist Chinese armies on Formosa. But the State Department had abandoned the Nationalist cause and Administration forces refused to accept any Asian aid formula that mentioned Chiang Kai-shek or Formosa. Several attempts at compromise failed, but at length a plan was agreed upon by the opposing factions. This resulted in Section 303 of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act, the so-called Connally Amendment, which set aside the sum of 75 million dollars, to be spent at the President's discretion, for combating Communism in "the general area of China."[16]

This money was eventually spent in a manner different than intended by Senator Knowland. On 17 December 1949 the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a plan for programming Section 303 funds. The Chiefs defined "the general area of China" as including "not only China proper, but also such areas as Hainan and Formosa, French Indo-China, Burma and Thailand."[17] The Joint Chiefs of Staff thus took the first step in shifting the battle for Asia from China to Southeast Asia. The inclusion of Indochina in "the general area of China" provided the means for an early program of assistance in the French struggle against Ho Chi Minh.

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15. (TS) NSC 48, 10 Jun 49, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 1.

16. NY Times, 25 Aug 49, 9 Sep 49, 11 Sep 49, 13 Sep 49; State Dept Bulletin, 24 Oct 49, p. 605.

17. (TS) JCS 1721/42, 17 Dec 49, CCS 452 China (4-3-45) sec 7, pt 6.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in recommending methods for employing the 75 million dollars, did not appraise American strategic interests in the Far East or point out the importance of Southeast Asia and Indochina to the United States. They merely proposed to undertake overt and covert measures to support anti-Communist forces and undermine Communist movements in the countries of Southeast Asia. They had nevertheless laid the groundwork for a series of important policy decisions reached by the National Security Council within the next two months, and created a vehicle by which those decisions could be carried out with dispatch.

The National Security Council study prepared at Secretary Johnson's instigation and considered by the Council on 29 December did warn of the threat to United States security of Communist expansion in the Far East. It reaffirmed that the loss of Asia to Communism would secure for the USSR and deny to the United States a power potential of the first magnitude, a major source of raw materials, and control of coastal and overseas lines of communication. It would also seriously threaten America's defensive island chain. To counter this danger, American objectives in Asia should include the reduction and eventual elimination of Soviet influence and the prevention of any power relationships that might threaten "the peace, national independence or stability of the Asiatic nations." Specifically, it was proposed that the United States provide military assistance and advice to Asian nations threatened by external aggression and internal subversion and use its influence to resolve the colonialist-nationalist conflict in such a manner as to satisfy nationalist demands with minimum strain on the colonial powers.[18]

NSC

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, believed that the conclusions of the National Security Council report were too general. They desired an integrated policy toward Asia, embodying more concrete courses of action. "The time has come," they declared, "for determination, development, and implementation of definite United States

18. (TS) NSC 48/1, 23 Dec 49, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 2.

steps in Asia; otherwise, this nation will risk an even greater and more disastrous defeat in the ideological conflict in that area." The Chiefs pointed out that Section 303 of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act provided the means for initiating immediate action in specific areas, and they recommended that a program for spending this money be drafted and executed as a matter of urgency.[19]

In accordance with the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council revised the original report. The resulting policy declaration, NSC 48/2, established more clearly a course of active "support," as distinguished from "encouragement," of Asian countries threatened by Communism. The United States would provide "political, economic, and military assistance and advice where clearly needed to supplement the resistance" of non-Communist governments in the Far East. Authority was given for immediate programming of Section 303 funds, and an ad hoc committee was formed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to decide how best to spend the money.[20]

That the United States was now resolved to adopt a definite stand in Asia was indicated by Secretary of State Acheson in two public speeches. Before the Washington Press Club and the Commonwealth Club of California, the Secretary declared that the United States was now prepared to grant military and economic assistance to selected Far Eastern countries where it was "the missing component in a problem which might otherwise be solved."[21]

During January and February 1950, it became increasingly apparent that successful solution of the Indochinese problem was an essential precondition to attaining the newly enunciated objectives in Asia. Although this fact had not yet emerged in January, NSC 48/2 recognized the necessity of giving "particular attention" to Indochina by urging the French to remove the barriers

19. (TS) JCS 1992/7, 29 Dec 49, same file.
20. (TS) Encl B, NSC 48/2, 30 Dec 49, to (TS) JCS 1992/8, 5 Jan 50, same file, sec 3.
21. (U) State Dept Bulletin, 23 Jan 50, pp. 111-118. Ibid., No. 560, 27 Mar 50, pp. 467-472.

preventing Bao Dai from winning native allegiance. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were more specific. In proposing military aid programs for certain Southeast Asian countries, the Chiefs warned that the situation in Indochina would be greatly complicated should the Chinese Communists come to the aid of the Viet Minh. Accordingly, an Asian aid program should give first priority to anti-Communist forces in Indochina. It was recommended that the sum of 15 million dollars be programmed for Indochina from Section 303 funds.[22] The judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated a growing conviction that the war in Indochina was among the most critical and immediate concerns to the United States.

The United States officially sanctioned this conviction in late April 1950 when the President approved NSC 64. This paper noted the growing strength of the Viet Minh, the possibility of active Chinese Communist intervention, and the failure to date of French efforts to solve the political problem. The significance of Indochina in US eyes was concisely stated: "It is important to the United States security interests that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further Communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is the key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat." The Departments of State and Defense were directed to prepare a program embracing "all practicable measures designed to protect United States security interests in Indochina."[23]

By adopting NSC 48/2 the United States, in January 1950, abandoned the uncertain and seemingly confused approach to Asian problems so apparent throughout 1949 and took a definite stand against Communist expansion in the Far East. By adopting NSC 64 the United States, in April 1950, decided that the most direct means of attaining the over-all objective lay in concentrating American efforts on the battle for Indochina. The next

22. (TS) JCS 1721/43, 16 Jan 50, CCS 452 China (4-3-45) sec 7, pt 7.

23. (TS) NSC 64, 27 Feb 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 3. (TS) Memo, ExecSecy NSC to NSC, "The position of the United States with respect to Indochina," 24 Apr 50, same file, sec 4.

step would be to inaugurate a program of assistance aimed at neutralizing the Viet Minh strength and stabilizing the Associated States economies.

Beginnings of American Aid

The principle of extending military and economic aid to threatened Asian countries had been agreed upon by February 1950, and Indochina had been determined the area in most immediate danger. The United States, however, had yet to make specific commitments or enter formal arrangements. It was during the spring of 1950 that the aid machinery was developed and the program of assistance to Indochina actually initiated.

Although the United States had concluded by February that the French would have to be helped in Indochina, negotiations on the subject were actually opened by France. French overtures were inspired by Communist recognition of Ho Chi Minh's government. Paris interpreted the action of Moscow and Peiping as presaging Soviet or Chinese aggression in Indochina and realized that substantial outside assistance was imperative. Accordingly, M. Henri Bonnet, French Ambassador in Washington, presented an aide-memoire to the State Department on 16 February. In this document the French urged the United States to make a public "affirmation of solidarity before the Communist menace" as a warning to China and the USSR and to undertake immediate measures to grant military and economic aid to France and the Associated States in Indochina. They also suggested that the "French and American General Staffs" jointly examine not only French and Vietnamese military requirements but also the military situation in general.[24]

A week later, Alexandre Parodi, Secretary General of the French Foreign Office, further emphasized the need for help. In discussing Indochina with American Ambassador David Bruce and Minister Charles Bohlen, M. Parodi warned that the United States must inaugurate

24. (S) App B, Aide-Memoire, Washington, 15 Feb 50, to (TS) JCS 1992/10, 10 Mar 50, same file.

a program of long-term assistance or France might be forced to withdraw from Indochina. French withdrawal was precisely what the United States feared. Since the success of any program of external assistance would be decided by the French determination to remain in Indochina, the United States considered it necessary to obtain a firm French pledge to continue the war. Ambassador Bruce and Mr. Bohlen impressed M. Parodi with this fact in unequivocal terms.[25]

Final decision was reached in March to undertake the Indochinese military assistance program. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 16 January, had proposed that 15 million dollars be set aside for Indochina and 10 million dollars for Thailand. The State and Defense Departments approved the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 March. Secretary of State Acheson advised the President that "The choice confronting the United States is to support the French in Indochina or to face the extension of communism over the remainder of the continental area of Southeast Asia and possibly farther westward." Accordingly, he recommended that 15 million dollars be reserved from the Section 303 fund to finance the beginnings of a military aid program for Indochina, plus 10 million dollars for Thailand. President Truman approved on 10 March 1950.[26]

The basis for a program of economic aid was slower in developing. In laying the groundwork for specific American programs, it was anticipated that the reports of two surveys and a conference in progress in the Far East would play a major role in determining the form that these programs would assume. Ambassador-at-Large Philip C. Jessup had been visiting various Asian countries

25. (S) Doc B-44, Msg, USAmb Paris to SecState, 837, 22 Feb 50, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

26. (TS) App A, Memo for Pres, "Allocation of Funds to Provide Military Assistance to Thailand and Indochina under Section 303 of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act," 9 Mar 50, (TS) Ann B to App A, "Military Assistance for Indochina," 9 Mar 50, and (TS) App B, Ltr, Pres to SecState, 10 Mar 50, to (TS) JCS 1721/48, 29 Mar 50, CCS 452 China (4-3-45) sec 7, pt 8.

since December. Dr. Jessup's mission was to analyze the situation in Asia and report his recommendations for an integrated Far Eastern policy. Dr. Robert Allen Griffin headed an economic survey team charged with formulating a co-ordinated economic aid policy for Asia. In addition the Southeast Asian chiefs of diplomatic missions met in Bangkok, Thailand, in February to discuss regional problems and consider prospective economic programs.

The diplomats at the Bangkok conference believed that emphasis should be placed upon Point IV type technical aid in order to increase Asian capacity for self-help, and they agreed that the focal point of the Southeast Asian economic program should be Indochina.[27] The recommendations of Dr. Jessup in March and Dr. Griffin in May coincided substantially with the Bangkok conclusions. Both of these authorities were convinced that only through Indochina could Southeast Asia be saved from Communism, and they believed that small amounts of money properly spent would go far toward achieving this result.[28] As the program subsequently developed, however, the emphasis was on economic projects of immediate benefit to the war effort. Nevertheless, the program, as originally conceived, was based upon the Bangkok conclusions and upon the Griffin and Jessup recommendations.

The decision to undertake an economic program was not made public until 11 May, when Secretary Acheson, at the conclusion of the London Foreign Ministers Conference, announced the American intentions. On 24 May separate notes were delivered to representatives of the Associated States in Saigon and to the President of the French Union in Paris. These notes defined the nature of the proposed assistance. It would, declared the notes, be "complementary to the effort made by the three Associated States and France, without any intention of substitution."[29]

27. NY Times, 19 Feb 50; "Matters Considered by Regional Conference of U.S. Envoys in Bangkok," State Dept Bulletin, 27 Mar 50, p. 502.

28. (TS) "Oral Report of Ambassador-at-Large Philip C. Jessup upon his Return from the Far East," 23 Mar 50, in State Dept files; "Administration of Economic Aid to Southeast Asia," State Dept Bulletin, 29 May 50, p. 869.

29. "Economic Aid Program for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia," State Dept Bulletin, 12 Jun 50, pp. 977-978.

Mr. Robert Blum was placed in charge of the Special Technical and Economic Mission (STEM) to the Associated States, and he was to begin work even before the bilateral agreements regulating the arrangement were concluded. It was announced in June that 23.5 million dollars, from unexpended China Aid Funds, would be spent in Indochina for Fiscal Year 1951.

In spite of the obvious importance of economic aid in achieving stability, the prospect of military equipment in large quantities had more immediate effect on the political atmosphere of Indochina. The announcement of prospective American assistance created new complexities in French-Vietnamese relations and in Vietnamese domestic politics. Repercussions were felt alike in Paris and Washington and resulted in strained relations between the two capitals that in turn affected the development of the aid program. The French realized that a military assistance program would represent a direct American investment in the Indochinese war and feared that it would be used as a lever for American pressure in the political field. French apprehension was misdirected, however, for it was the Vietnamese who seized upon the pending aid program and attempted to turn it to their own political advantage.

In all discussions with France over the possibilities of American arms aid, the United States continued to emphasize the fact that a political solution was essential to military success. France, however, regarded immediate conclusion of an agreement to furnish military equipment to French troops in Indochina of infinitely greater importance. The French position was summed up in instructions given to Foreign Minister Robert Schuman by the Cabinet before the London Foreign Ministers Conference. M. Schuman was to impress upon Secretary Acheson that, if the United States wanted to save Indochina from Communism, it should quit encouraging Bao Dai to believe he could win greater independence and proceed to the more urgent business of supplying aircraft and arms to French forces in Indochina. France was amazed that the United States insisted upon discussing future Vietnamese independence from France when Vietnamese independence from Communism was at stake.[30]

30. NY Times, 4 May 50.

Although Paris circles feared that the United States would insist upon greater French concessions to Bao Dai as a condition for arms aid, the actual American position was that for the present the French had conceded enough--provided they executed the Elysee Accords in good faith. The State Department held that "Bao Dai and Co." were "barely able to discharge responsibilities they are now facing," and tried to convince France that the United States was not arguing for further immediate concessions.[31] The Department did believe, however, that not only must Bao Dai win the allegiance of the Vietnamese people, but the Asiatic countries must be convinced that Viet Nam would evolve into a truly democratic, independent nation. Consistent with this belief, France was insistently pressed to make a public declaration of what had been accomplished by the 8 March adjustment and a public promise of future concessions. France just as insistently refused to make such a statement, protesting that it would encourage the belief that the 8 March settlement had not in fact granted a high degree of independence.[32]

Although Paris entertained a groundless fear that the United States would use the arms program to win Bao Dai more independence, the Bao Dai government itself apparently decided that American generosity might in fact be used to accomplish this purpose. As early as January, Vietnamese actions indicated they intended using the arms program to their own advantage. A list of military and economic requirements for Viet Nam, prepared by Bao Dai's staff without French knowledge, was handed to Ambassador-at-Large Philip Jessup.[33] On 18 March 1950, Charge d'Affairs Gullion warned that "responsible Vietnamese

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31. (S) Doc B-45, Msg, Acheson to AmEmb Paris, 1363, 29 Mar 50, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

32. (S) App C, State Dept, Memo of Conv, "Indochina," 16 Feb 50, to (TS) JCS 1992/10, 10 Mar 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 3.

33. (S) Memo, Dean Rusk, Asst SecState (FEA), to Maj Gen J. H. Burns, Asst to SecDef (FMA&MA), 20 Mar 50, same file.

believed they held the whiphand on the French and could play us off against them" in an effort to acquire functions not contemplated by the 8 March Accords.[34]

This judgment appeared valid in light of an astute move by the Vietnamese government a week later. Defense Minister Phan Huy Quat outlined to Charge d'Affaires Gullion a plan for equipping the Vietnamese Army without French participation. Quat's plan envisioned an American-equipped Vietnamese Army trained and advised by United States military personnel. Although Mr. Gullion labeled Quat's views "fantastic," he admitted that the Vietnamese attitude raised serious problems.[35] The logical outgrowth of the proposal, of course, would have been an American-controlled Vietnamese Army serving under the operational command of the French Army within a State of the French Union.

Meanwhile, the French had submitted their own list of arms requirements and briefed American military attaches at the Legation in Saigon on their equipment deficiencies. The list was prepared by the French General Staff in Indochina without consultation with officials of Viet Nam. The United States was thus confronted with two separate estimates of arms needs and an exceedingly delicate diplomatic problem.

If the United States decided to deal with the Vietnamese Government in equipping the indigenous army, the French would be highly incensed and probably withhold essential cooperation. But a measure of Vietnamese authority in the direction of their own military affairs was implicit in the 8 March Accords. Therefore, to deal exclusively with the French would not only contradict the American position on the Accords, but also promised to increase Franco-Vietnamese tension and undermine Vietnamese friendship for the United States. The separate

34. (S) Msg, Gullion to Acheson, 190, 18 Mar 50, CM-IN-14886, 21 Mar 50, same file.
35. (S) Msg, Gullion to Acheson, 204, 25 Mar 50, CM-IN-15891, 27 Mar 50, same file.

Vietnamese overtures to the United States had already caused friction between High Commissioner Leon Pignon and the Bao Dai government, and led the French to force the resignation of Premier Nguyen Phan Long.

Commissioner Pignon flatly informed the United States that France, and not the Associated States, must control distribution of arms. In M. Pignon's view, the "operations of receiving and distributing important quantities of material involve a series of complex technical problems which only the French military services can resolve at this time." Since the French Commander-in-Chief in Indochina was responsible for the conduct of military operations, he must also direct the distribution of materials. The French lists would be prepared by the French commander, acting in his capacity of Chief of Staff of National Defense for each Associated State, and "There can be no question of changing this established program (procedure)."[36]

The United States was thus faced with the necessity of devising an aid formula that would have minimum adverse effect on the political situation, and the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was sought. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized the political implications of military aid, they believed that, such was the urgent need for immediate shipment of arms, the aid program should be adapted to the reality of French control of Vietnamese affairs. The requirement estimates drafted by the French General Staff reflected a more realistic appraisal of military needs, and contained more information essential to programming, than the "broadly generalized Bao Dai list." Consequently, deliveries should be made to French authorities, with such Vietnamese participation in reception as the Secretary of State might desire. Although development of a coordinated aid policy for all Southeast Asia was necessary, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that Indochina should be given top priority and shipments dispatched with haste. The Chiefs recommended, however, that French

36. (S) Informal Trans /Fr/, Aide-Memoire, 11 Apr 50, same file, sec 4.

requests be carefully analyzed and military aid integrated with political and economic programs. This could be accomplished by the creation of a Southeast Asia Aid Committee, composed of representatives of the State and Defense Departments and the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), charged with drafting and executing an over-all aid program for Southeast Asia. Although final approval of all requirements would rest with the Chiefs themselves, a military aid group should be established in Indochina to screen French requests and coordinate them with French operational plans.37

The French accorded the American plan a chilly reception. They wanted American arms with no strings attached and on their own terms. Their views indicated a desire that the United States concern itself simply with filling French orders for equipment without attempting to influence types or quantities of material or how it was employed. General Marcel Carpentier, French Commander-in-Chief of Indochina, said that he "would welcome" a United States military mission, but wished it to be as small as possible and a part of the attache group at the American Legation in Saigon. Although he "would welcome" representatives of the Associated States in the receiving and distributing apparatus, only the French High Command "would be equipped /to/ receive and stock American materiel for Indochina." Charge d'Affaires Gullion, however, believed that General Carpentier could be induced to moderate his stand on the size of the military aid mission.38

A formula designed to satisfy Vietnamese demands for participation in the aid program was agreed upon in April. The Vietnamese High Military Committee, a French organ with Vietnamese representatives, would devise the arms programs for submission to the United States. Mixed commissions, including officers of Viet Nam, would then receive and distribute the equipment.

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37. (TS) JCS 1992/11, 29 Mar 50, same file, sec 3; (TS) JCS 1721/49, 7 Apr 50, CCS 452 China (4-3-45) sec 7, pt 8.

38. (TS) Msg, Gullion to Acheson, UNN, 3 May 50, CM-IN-1262, 5 May 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 4.

Similar organizations would perform these duties in Laos and Cambodia.[39] Implicit in the arrangement, of course, was French control, and in actual practice the Vietnamese were not admitted to programming conferences until the summer of 1952.

The many problems created by the new character of the Indochinese struggle and the new American role in Far Eastern affairs indicated that Indochina and Southeast Asia would occupy a prominent position on the agenda for the approaching American-British-French Foreign Ministers Conference, scheduled for May 1950.

In preparing for the Foreign Ministers Conference, the State Department faced the knotty problem of formulating a position that would resolve the Franco-Vietnamese conflict over control of the aid program. The Department decided upon a compromise by which the United States, in aid matters, would treat with "the three Associated States and the French as a unified force." Although not stated, this implied French control of all aid. The hard fact was that, although military success depended upon political success, it also depended upon the vigor with which the French prosecuted military operations; and the more political concessions the French made in Indochina, the less they had to fight for. Although not abandoning its desire for a French declaration of future intentions, the United States was led by these considerations to accept an arms program controlled, with a few surface concessions to Vietnamese pride, by France.[40]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in light of recent statements by General Carpentier, advised the Secretary of State to "make unmistakable the firm desire of the United States to send a military aid group to Indochina at the earliest possible date . . . ." They linked this to a

39. (S) Msg, SecState to USAmb Paris, 1800, 24 Apr 50, CM-IN-19886, 25 Apr 50, same file.

40. (TS) FM D A-2/4a, State Dept Position Paper, "May Foreign Ministers Meeting, Southern Asia," 5 May 50; (S) Encl B, FM D C-3a, State Dept Position Paper, "May Foreign Ministers Meeting, Indochina," 25 Apr 50, to (S) JCS 1992/16, 30 Apr 50. Both in same file.

rejection of the French suggestion made in February that the "French and American General Staffs" proceed to a "joint examination" of the Indochinese military situation, pointing out that the same purpose could be accomplished by consultation between the aid mission and the French High Command in Indochina.[41]

The Foreign Ministers Conference convened in London early in May. Discussions on Indochina were taken up primarily on a bilateral basis between Secretary Acheson and Foreign Minister Schuman. M. Schuman declared that France accepted primary responsibility for holding Indochina against the Communists and promised that she would now withdraw. He pointed out, however, that the continued drain on French resources made it impossible for France to carry on alone in Indochina and at the same time meet her obligations in the defense of Western Europe. Therefore, the United States must reconcile itself to supporting France in the war against the Viet Minh.[42]

Secretary Acheson gave assurances of forthcoming American aid but emphasized that no large sums of money would be available until Congress convened. Although 20 million dollars could probably be programmed before 30 June, he declared, the extent of future support would be up to Congress, which also must reckon with American obligations throughout the world.[43]

The Secretary voiced his concern for Bao Dai's failure to gain prestige at home and abroad but did not press the point. M. Schuman, however, reaffirmed France's intention of granting more autonomy to the Associated States when internal conditions made it safe to do so.

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41. (TS) Encl A, Dft Memo, JCS to SecDef, to (TS) JCS 1992/15, 30 Apr 50; (S) Encl B, FM D C-3a, State Dept, "May Foreign Ministers Meeting, Indochina," 25 Apr 50, to (S) JCS 1992/16, 30 Apr 50. Both in same file. (TS) JCS 1992/11, 29 Mar 50, same file, sec 3.

42. (S) Doc B-47, Mns (FR), Acheson-Schuman Conversations, 8 May 50, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol Toward Indochina.

43. Ibid.

Reflecting French discontent with American interest in Bao Dai, M. Schuman predicted that "If the United States gives France its support in the military field and trusts it for the internal development of its policy, a happy ending will be achieved." He did state, however, that France was now removing all restrictions on the diplomatic representation of the Associated States, and had reached a decision to establish a "Ministry for relations with the Associated States." This new Ministry would be charged with handling Associated States affairs and would be staffed with personnel who thoroughly understood the new status of the Associated States.[44] It was hoped that this would remove the stigma of colonialism inherent in regulation by the Ministry of Overseas Possessions.

The May Foreign Ministers Conference quieted American fears that France would abandon Indochina to the Communists and clarified for France American intentions on military and economic aid. Politically, it marked a further French concession to the independence of the Associated States, even though the public announcement of intention long desired by the United States was still not forthcoming. It also coordinated American, British and French policy on Southeast Asia, although Great Britain, fearing Commonwealth reaction, refused to join in a tripartite declaration of solidarity and collaboration to resist Communism in the region as a whole.

The May Foreign Ministers Conference cleared the way for early inauguration of aid shipments to Indochina. In Washington, machinery was devised to handle a long term, coordinated aid program for Southeast Asia. On the policy level, the Southeast Asia Aid Committee, proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in March, was established. In June its name was changed to the Southeast Asia Aid Policy Committee (SEAAPC) to distinguish it clearly from an operating agency. SEAAPC was charged with coordinating general policy for political, economic, and military assistance to Southeast Asian countries. The Foreign Military Assistance Coordinating Committee (FMACC), an

44. Ibid.

interdepartmental organ that supervised world-wide military assistance programs, was still to have final responsibility for policy matters involving military assistance to Southeast Asia. FMACC and SEAAPC would work in close cooperation on military aid policy.[45]

On the operating level, economic assistance would be handled by the Economic Cooperation Administration in Washington, and a Special Technical and Economic Mission in Indochina. Responsibility for the military program was lodged with the Office of Military Assistance (OMA), Department of Defense. A Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) attached to the American Legation in Saigon was to screen French requests and oversee distribution of the material once it arrived. Both OMA and MAAG Indochina would work closely with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and use screening criteria drafted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[46]

A special Joint Survey Team, with representatives from the State and Defense Departments, was to be sent to Southeast Asia as soon as practicable. The mission of the Team was to gather information on the internal situation in the various Southeast Asian countries benefiting from the program and to make recommendations regarding specific on-the-spot organization necessary to carry out the program efficiently. Neither the shipment of material nor the formation of MAAG Indochina, however, was to be delayed pending the Survey Team's report.[47] The Secretary of Defense, on the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, appointed Major General Graves B. Erskine, USMC, to head the military section of the Joint Survey Team.[48]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, early in June, proposed that the 15 million dollars already earmarked for expenditure in Indochina be augmented by an additional

45. (TS) Encl, Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Mutual Defense Assistance Program Implementation for Southeast Asia," 6 Jun 50, to (TS) JCS 1992/18, 8 Jun 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 4.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. (S) Memo, SecDef to JCS, "MDAP Implementation for Southeast Asia," 14 Jun 50, same file, sec 5.

16 million dollars for equipment, supplies, and training. They further advised that, of all Asian aid programs, Indochina should have first priority.[49]

The spring of 1950 thus saw the beginning of a program of military assistance to French and Associated States forces fighting in Indochina and a program of economic aid designed to stabilize the economies of Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia. Although the initiation of these programs marked the fulfillment of recommendations made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as early as the preceding December, it was the logical outgrowth of basic policy decisions reached in January and February, and was expedited by fear of a general disintegration of France's will to continue the war.

Indochina on the Eve of the Korean War

During the first half of 1950, the decisions reached and actions taken by the Western Powers and the Soviet bloc with regard to Indochina lent an international significance to the Indochinese war. The American-led coalition was arrayed behind France to free Indochina, and thereby Southeast Asia, from the threat of Communist subversion and eventual domination. The recognition of Bao Dai's government by the United States and other powers of the free world cleared the way for the American decision to grant military assistance to France and the Associated States. Recognition of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam by the Communist world presaged similar aid agreements with the Viet Minh. When, in June 1950, the Korean Conflict put a new complexion on the Cold War, a world power alignment had already congealed in Indochina.

Although the prospect of large quantities of American arms encouraged a new determination and hope of success among French and Vietnamese forces, the introduction of Soviet and Chinese Communist equipment to Viet Minh troops vastly improved Ho Chi Minh's ability to wage modern war. By June 1950, intelligence estimates

49. (TS) Encl, Dft Memo, JCS to SecDef, to (TS) JCS 1721/55, 12 Jun 50, CCS 452 China (4-3-45) sec 7, pt 10.

indicated that Communist China and the DRV had agreed upon a general plan for Chinese aid and participation in Viet Minh operations. Reinforcing this fact, the intelligence sources discovered that during March 1950 alone Viet Minh forces received from China 52,000 rifles, together with a quantity of automatic weapons, mortars, and artillery pieces. The makings of a major buildup were perceived in the development of a supply corridor from China through northern Tonkin to central Annam. In this region roads were improved, bridges built, concealed supply dumps established, and airfields constructed. Two training camps, which intelligence agencies estimated capable of accommodating twenty to thirty thousand Viet Minh troops, were established in South China. The presence of Soviet training teams at these centers was strongly suspected.[50]

The new Viet Minh strength did not immediately affect the military situation. Although the Viet Minh obviously now possessed new and dangerous capabilities, it was apparently holding them in reserve for the time being. The pressure on the French, however, was undiminished. During the fighting season of 1949-1950, French Union Forces succeeded in clearing and securing the Red River Delta in Tonkin, but on Tonkin's vital northern frontier the French retained only a few scattered and hard-pressed outposts that were supplied with great difficulty.[51]

If the French could anticipate better days to come, they had little to congratulate themselves upon in the current military and political situation. The drain on the financial and manpower resources of France and the Associated States continued. The Vietnamese Army, authorized by the agreements of 30 December 1949, was still no more than a hope for the future. Many of the old political problems remained, with some new ones created by the measure of autonomy granted under the 8 March Accords.

50. (TS) JIC 529/1, 16 Aug 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 5.

51. Ibid.

Bao Dai's success at winning popular support, after some initial progress, had come to a standstill. In January, after six months as his own Premier, Bao Dai appointed Nguyen Phan Long to head the government. Nguyen Phan Long launched a determined campaign to secure the allegiance of the Vietnamese people, but his efforts were unsuccessful. His attempts to orient Viet Nam toward the United States, to the exclusion of France, caused the French to force his dismissal in May 1950. He was succeeded by Tran Van Huu, Governor of South Viet Nam, who adopted a tough policy toward disloyal elements, but failed to better Bao Dai's prestige at home or abroad.[52]

By June 1950 the Indochinese war was on the threshold of transition. The months between the summers of 1949 and 1950 had witnessed what in the French view were generous and concrete measures to satisfy Vietnamese nationalism. These had failed, and the political problem continued to interfere with French military activities. American and Soviet-Chinese interest in the contending forces had focused world attention on the battle for Indochina. The arms shipments already reaching the Viet Minh and soon to reach the French would transform the struggle from a war against guerrilla bands into a modern war of considerable proportions, and make settlement in the near future a virtual impossibility. By their acceptance of external assistance, both France and the Viet Minh were committed to a war without compromise for some time to come. By June 1950 Indochina had become a battleground in world politics.

52. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 272-275.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM THE START OF THE KOREAN CONFLICT TO 1 JANUARY 1951

The outbreak of the Korean Conflict on 24 June 1950 was an event of profound significance for the Indochina problem. Since 1947 the importance of the struggle for Southeast Asia had been largely obscured in the eyes of the United States Government by the overriding necessity to meet the Communist threat in Western Europe. Now, just when the outlines of that struggle were becoming clear they were again overshadowed by a major armed clash in the Far East. From the day that the Communist armies burst across the 38th parallel till the hour of the Armistice, more than three years later, the attention of the American people was focused on Korea. To the American Government, and especially to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the demands of the Korean battle were more immediately important than those of the war in Indochina. Except for the few weeks in October, 1950, when the Korean fight seemed almost won, there could be no serious consideration of sending Army ground forces to carry out the Truman Doctrine in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, materiel for the MDAP was frequently in short supply, and shipments waiting in West Coast ports were sometimes threatened with diversion to Korea when the situation there turned for the worse. For at least two years the course of the Korean Conflict was one of the major determining factors in American policy toward Indochina.

On the other hand, the forces of the free world fighting in Indochina drew some advantage from the United States reaction to the clash in the Far East. The realization that the Soviet Government was prepared to engage in aggression by satellite heightened American concern for the countries on the periphery of the Iron Curtain. The fact that the attack came in the Far East drew attention to that area. It underlined the threat that Communist possession of certain areas, such as Korea, Indochina, and Indonesia, would offer to the chain of island bases upon which United States defense plans in the Pacific were founded. These factors,

reacting upon the thinking of planners in Washington, added to the urgency with which military aid was programmed and shipped to Indochina. And the increased rate of production of military equipment demanded for the Korean Conflict aided, in the end, the support program for Southeast Asia.

Then, too, the fighting in Korea distracted the attention of the Chinese Communists from Indochina. Although United States intelligence estimates in the early months of the Korean Conflict indicated that the Chinese Red Armies had the capabilities of intervening in Southeast Asia and in Korea, at the same time it seems, in the three-dimensioned view of hindsight, that the concentration of Chinese Communist troops, first against Formosa and later in Korea, prevented Peiping from aiding the Viet Minh to the extent that it otherwise might have. That the operations in Korea, which reportedly destroyed much of the trained personnel in the Chinese Communist Armies, must have been a factor in deterring a Chinese invasion of Indochina seems obvious.

On 27 June 1950 President Truman, in announcing the intervention of American armed forces in Korea, also announced that he had "directed acceleration in the furnishing of military assistance to the forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina and the dispatch of a military mission to provide close working relations with those forces."[1] The first result of this policy was the approval of the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to increase the MDAP aid programmed for Indochina by 16 million dollars, bringing the total military aid for Indochina from Fiscal Year 1950 funds to 31 million dollars. This amount was allocated among the three United States military services, which had already begun to act on the original 15 million-dollar grant. As of 31 July the Army was scheduled to provide 11.9 millions in equipment, the Navy 15.3 millions, and the Air Force 4.9 millions.[2]

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1. State Dept Bulletin, 3 Jul 50, p. 5.
2. (S) Memo, Lemnitzer to Burns, "Monthly Status Report - Mutual Defense Assistance Program (to include 31 July 1950)," 5 Aug 50 (hereinafter: MDAP Status Rpt for month of), in Records and Control Office, OASD (ISA).

Although the aid program was somewhat slow at the start, supplies soon began to make their way, by sea and air, to Saigon. On 30 June eight C-47's, loaded with spare parts, arrived in the Indochinese capital. The Director, Office of Military Assistance (OMA), reported that on 31 July Army equipment for twelve Indochinese battalions was afloat, consigned to the High Military Committee of the Army of the French Union. A French aircraft carrier was scheduled to take on forty F6F aircraft in California in September while another French ship was expected to depart the United States in the near future with eighteen LCVP's, six LSSL's and other mixed cargo. The first shipment of infantry equipment arrived in Saigon on 10 August and was delivered to the French supply facilities. This equipment was received without ceremony, because of a delay in arrival.[3]

Further grants of military aid to Indochina were not long in coming. President Truman, on 1 August, asked the Congress for a Fiscal Year 1951 supplemental appropriation of 4 billion dollars for the MDAP. The general appropriations bill, which had already been submitted, was passed on 6 September and included 75 million dollars for "Aid to the General Area of China." Of this amount Indochina was scheduled to receive $25,700,000. Three weeks later the supplemental appropriations bill requested by the President was passed, under the terms of which $107,300,000 was allocated to Indochina. Thus, by 31 October 1950, the total Fiscal Year 1951 program for military aid to Indochina was $133,000,000, this in addition to the $31,000,000 already allotted from Fiscal Year 1950 funds.[4]

3. (S) MDAP Status Rpt for month of July 1950, 5 Aug 50; (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology.

4. (S) MDAP Status Rpt for month of October 1950, 31 Oct 50; (TS) JCS 1992/44, 26 Dec 50, CCS 452 China (4-3-45) sec 7 pt 12.

Erskine Report

The Joint State-Defense MDAP Survey Mission for Southeast Asia arrived in Saigon on 15 July. The Mission was headed by Mr. John F. Melby of the Department of State. Major General Graves B. Erskine, USMC, was chief of the military group, which included members from each of the armed services and the United States Coast Guard, the last being included because of the smuggling problem in Indochina. For a period of three weeks members of the Mission talked with French and Indochinese officials, both military and civilian, and observed conditions in the country. Unfortunately, the High Commissioner for Indochina was recalled to Paris during their stay, so that they were unable to hold final talks with him. Also, many of the Indochinese officials were in France attending the Pau Conference. Nevertheless, the members of the Mission believed that they were able to accomplish their aims.

Before leaving Saigon for Singapore on 7 August the Survey Mission submitted a bulky interim report on Indochina to the Foreign Military Assistance Coordinating Committee (FMACC). This report set forth most of the criticisms of French actions in Indochina and the far from optimistic estimates of future prospects that were to be echoed by American representatives in Indochina often in the years that followed. The absolute interdependence of the military, political, and economic problems in the country, the mutual distrust and lack of good faith between French and Indochinese on all levels, the lack of offensive spirit in the French high command, and the correspondingly poor strategical distribution and use of its forces were stressed by General Erskine. Investigations by the Mission, wrote the General, indicated that there were "grounds to doubt that the French authorities have sincerely put forth their best efforts to train and equip a Vietnamese army and thus remove one of the great sources of distrust now existing."

As the Survey Mission saw it, the basic problem in establishing internal security in Indochina and defeating the Viet Minh was winning the cooperation of the people. Military victory was necessary, of course,

but it was unlikely to be decisive without a political solution that included concessions on the part of the French and definite plans for eventual independence of Viet Nam. In the words of the report:

> The magnitude of the problem which confronts the French in this respect /internal security against Communism/ can hardly be overestimated. . . . Many elements which have aligned themselves with the Communists are basically hostile to Communism, but believe that the problem of independence must be solved first and other problems subsequently. It should be noted, parenthetically, that no responsible Vietnamese suggest the desirability of the total withdrawal of French forces at present on the grounds that this would only result in an early Communist victory. Rather, they speak of a timetable for independence and assumption by the French of responsibility for defense against outside attack, leaving internal matters to the Vietnamese. Much public opinion which finds itself in open opposition to the Viet Minh secretly supports the Viet Minh as the group which is having the greatest success in opposing the French. These Vietnamese elements, at the same time, are skeptical of French protestations. The great political problem which confronts the French in Indochina, therefore, is to persuade the Indochinese that they will implement their signed agreements; and at the same time, to persuade that co-operation with the Communists will not, in the end, secure Vietnamese independence, but will represent only another form of subjection to an external force. At the present moment, it may be questionable whether the French can do this in view of the long standing suspicion and deep-seated hatred with which the Indochinese regard the French. . . . It is the opinion of the Mission that unless some agreed political solution can be found, the French will, in time, find themselves eliminated from the scene.[5]

5. (TS) FMACC D-33/6, "Report on Indochina," 24 Aug 50 (hereinafter: Erskine Rpt), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP.

The United States, the Mission believed, should continue to use its influence to obtain implementation in good faith of the political programs agreed upon by the French and Indochinese.

The report went on to the statement, significant for the history of the American effort to hold Indochina against Communism, that the Mission made its recommendations and observations without particular reference to the internal situation in France or to that nation's commitments in NATO. All too often in the succeeding years reports such as this were to be acted upon without real reference to the political situation in metropolitan France. Yet that situation was a morass in which every solution of the basic political problem stated by the Mission faltered. Regardless of the variations of public opinion in France on the Indochina question, the various French governments considered themselves the guardians of the French Empire (officially the French Union) on which rested France's prestige and her position as a great nation. American pressure for concessions to the Indochinese had to be exerted on the French governments through diplomatic channels, for the most part, and had to overcome the natural resistance of those governments to give up part of France's colonial position. And even when a French government was willing to make, and did make, important concessions, their implementation was delayed and resisted by the colonial administrators and the army, the influence of which in French politics should not be underestimated.[6]

6. It is a commonplace among historians of the Third Republic that while cabinets and legislatures may come and go, the French Government, embodied in the corps of permanent civil servants, remains the same. The power of the army in French government, and even its ability to operate in opposition to the government, is illustrated by l'affaire Boulanger, l'affaire Dreyfus, and the activities of General Mangin in the Rhineland after World War I. It must also be remembered that in regard to colonial affairs the traditions of such men as Marshal Lyautey are still strong in the army.

As to military aid, the Survey Mission found that the existing program was inadequate. General Erskine noted that there had been a considerable increase in Viet Minh offensive capabilities in recent months, as well as a developing threat of invasion by the Chinese Communists in support of Ho Chi Minh. As a result of these developments the French urgently needed more equipment, a list of which they turned over to the Survey Mission on its arrival in Saigon. The Mission viewed the French requests as reasonable but requested that the MAAG, Indochina, the first elements of which had already arrived in the country, screen the list further and furnish its comments to the Mission before that body left the Southeast Asia area. The Mission stated, however, that the materiel requested seemed to be the maximum that the French and Indochinese forces were capable of handling without additional reinforcement.[7]

U.S. Government Acts on Erskine Report

The Indochina Report of the Survey Mission was received in Washington toward the end of August and action on its recommendations began immediately. Prompt consideration was necessary for the Communist threat to Southeast Asia was growing daily. An estimate of the Indochinese situation, submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Joint Intelligence Committee on 25 August, confirmed General Erskine's view that Viet Minh capabilities for launching an offensive had grown. Indeed, it went farther to state that the intention of the Viet Minh to make a large-scale attack was established and that their preparations would be sufficiently complete for it to begin on 1 September. A French offensive during the period of good autumn weather would, with the troops and equipment presently available, only postpone the Viet Minh attack since the rebels could retreat across the Chinese border to re-form. The Joint Intelligence Committee did not agree entirely with the Survey Mission's observation on the threat of Chinese Communist invasion. The Committee regarded covert

7. (TS) Erskine Rpt.

participation by the Chinese in a Viet Minh offensive as more probable than overt aggression. The Committee's estimate noted, however, that a Communist attack in Indochina in September might reduce United Nations pressure in Korea at a time when the build-up of General MacArthur's forces would be reaching considerable proportions.[8]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, therefore, were well aware of the urgency of the situation when, on 6 September, the Secretary of Defense requested them to prepare "an interim program of items for immediate supply action based upon the lists of current military requirements" contained in the Erskine Report. This task was turned over to the Ad Hoc Committee on Programs for Military Assistance, which rendered a report on 16 October.[9] In the meantime, however, the French had experienced a severe reverse in Tonkin and were becoming impatient for more military aid. On 12 October the French Minister of Defense, M. Jules Moch, pressed Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall for a schedule of aid to be furnished for Indochina, and especially for quick delivery of a group (thirty) of B-26 light bombers that had been included in the request to the Survey Mission. When asked for their recommendation on furnishing the bombers the Joint Chiefs of Staff replied that while the planes would not materially aid the situation in Indochina their diversion to that country could weaken United States potentialities in Korea and Europe, depending on possible developments in those areas. They therefore recommended against sending the requested aircraft. The Secretaries of State and Defense, however, overruled the Joint Chiefs of Staff and ordered the immediate programming of twenty-one B-26's, the remaining nine to be included in the final Fiscal Year 1951 program for Indochina. In view of the deteriorating situation in Viet Nam these aircraft were to be furnished on a priority ahead of all other MDAP programs and equal to that of

8. (TS) JCS 1992/22, 25 Aug 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 5.

9. (TS) Memo, Col Kenneth R. Kreps, USAF, Actg Exec-Secy OSD, to JCS, "Military Assistance to Indo-China," 6 Sep 50; (TS) JCS 1992/32, 16 Oct 50; same file, sec 6.

requirements for the Far East Air Force (FEAF) scheduled to be shipped subsequent to 1 November.[10]

The report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Programs of Military Assistance, rendered to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 16 October, was approved by them two days later. A program of 133 million dollars worth of equipment was set forth, to be provided as a matter of urgency. Important items in the list included ninety F8F and thirty B-26 aircraft, three PC vessels and other light craft, considerable signal and engineer equipment, with other ground force supplies, and a large amount of ammunition for all three services. The Committee noted, however, that only a small amount of the recommended aid could be shipped within sixty days, and therefore placed its standard of availability at six months. Certain items, such as army general purpose vehicles and SCR 300 radios were in short supply and none could be furnished within that time. Even with this screening, fulfilling the recommended program would occasion deficiencies in essential equipment for United States forces (especially army) then in being and scheduled for activation within the next six months, although precautions had been taken to insure that the equipping of such units would not be seriously hampered.

Because French authorities were in charge of the military campaign in Indochina as well as in control of the native armies, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed, that all military assistance should be delivered to the French with "such participation by the representatives of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as the Secretary of State may deem appropriate." Also, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense, it was their view that increases in military aid should be provided in accordance with operational plans that were acceptable to the United

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10. (S) Memo, Kreps to JCS, "Mutual Defense Assistance to Indochina," 12 Oct 50; (TS) Memo, Dir, JS to SecDef, same subj, 13 Oct 50; (TS) Memo, Lemnitzer to John H. Ohly, Actg Dir MDA, State Dept, "Military Assistance to Indo-China," 16 Oct 50; same file.

States and therefore the recommended assistance to Indochina would be subjected to observation and supervision by the MAAG in Saigon.[11]

On 23 October the program set forth by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was approved and the services were directed to expedite its fulfillment. It was assigned a priority immediately below that of the requirements of United States forces in combat or alerted for early movement to the Korean area, and above all military assistance programs other than those in direct support of the Korean effort.[12] The services lost no time in scheduling what deliveries they could. In a message of 26 October the Chief of Staff of the Army instructed General MacArthur to ship to Indochina at the earliest possible date a considerable amount of ordnance spare parts, and signal equipment, some armored cars, one hundred 105-mm howitzers, and a large quantity of ammunition. The Navy began shipping fighter aircraft and additional small vessels, and the Air Force scheduled the first flight of seven B-26's to leave the United States by 1 November. Cargo tonnages shipped to Indochina were low during October and November but increased during December, so that by the end of 1950 a total of 43,400 measurement tons had been sent off, of which over 19,000 measurement tons had been dispatched in the last month.[13]

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11. (TS) JCS 1992/32, 16 Oct 50, same file.

12. (S) Memo, Lemnitzer to MG R. E. Duff, USA, DepAsst CS, G-3 Army, Capt Howard Orem, USN, Dir Int Aff, DepNav, and Col M. W. Brewster, USAF, P&O Div, DepAF, "Military Assistance to Indo-China," 23 Oct 50, same file, sec 7; (S) MDAP Status Rpt for month of October 1950, 31 Oct 50.

13. (S) Msg, CSA, WAR-95099, to CINCFE, CM-OUT-95099, 26 Oct 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 7; (S) MDAP Status Rpt for month of November 1950, 7 Dec 50; (S) MDAP Status Rpt for month of December 1950, 12 Jan 51.

Crisis in Indochina

During the latter half of 1950 the military position of the French forces in Indochina was growing constantly worse. The estimates of the Survey Mission and the Joint Intelligence Committee concerning the dangerous increase in Viet Minh offensive capabilities and intentions were borne out in a dramatic fashion in actions along the northeast Tonkin border. On 16 September the rebel forces organized for conventional combat struck at the border post of Dong Khe, erasing two companies of the French Foreign Legion in a two-day battle. As a result the important post at Cao Bang became untenable and its evacuation was ordered. In the first week of October the garrison, consisting of three battalions, left Cao Bang for Thatkhe while a similar force started from Thatkhe to meet and reinforce it. Upon joining, the two groups were smashed by a massive Viet Minh attack and scattered, to straggle back to Thatkhe as best they could. A week later only about one-seventh of the six-battalion force had reached that post, the evacuation of which had already begun.[14]

Although the forces engaged at Cao Bang were small by World War II standards, they were considerable for the Indochina war and the defeat was all but a disaster for the French. Before the year was out they were compelled to abandon all of their northeast border outposts except Moncay, which was near the coast. This withdrawal opened the border and strengthened the communications of the Viet Minh with the Chinese Communists in Southeast China. The rebels thereafter had easier access to the supplies and equipment with which the Chinese had been aiding them for some time. Moreover, they were in a position threatening the rice-rich delta. And not only was the military position of the Viet Minh greatly strengthened and their morale bolstered, but such a triumph as Cao Bang gave them increased prestige among the Indochinese people, the French losing face correspondingly.

14. (U) Note handed to State Dept by FrEmb, 14 Oct 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 6; (TS) Memo by CSA, "Possible Future Action in Indochina," 18 Oct 50, same file, sec 7.

Aside from the purely strategical effects of the autumn Viet Minh campaign, there were important repercussions in other areas. As we have seen, it spurred on the flow of American military aid. It also prompted the French to make certain concessions to Vietnamese nationalism and to speed implementation of some already made. A new strategy was devised, calculated to meet the shift of the Viet Minh from guerrilla to conventional warfare, and a new commander was sent out to make it effective.

Letourneau-Juin Mission

On 17 October General Alphonse-Pierre Juin, French Resident General in Morocco, an officer with long experience in colonial affairs, arrived in Saigon to review the military situation with an eye to changing French strategy and possibly reinforcing the effort in Indochina with additional personnel from the home country. He was accompanied by M. Jean Letourneau, Minister of State for the Associated States in the French Cabinet, whose mission was to assess the political actions required to halt the rapid deterioration of the French position in Indochina. After a week-long survey the two men returned to Paris to report to the French Government.

On the basis of their reports the alarmed French Government took some drastic, necessary, but long-belated actions. In the military sphere, the basic decision was made to pass from a defensive strategy of "pacification" in Indochina to concerted offensive effort to root out and destroy the Viet Minh forces in their own lairs. To accomplish this M. Letourneau was given increased power over the military direction of the war, enabling him to coordinate the activities of the armed service bureaus insofar as they concerned Indochina. And to complement the unification of direction in France, the government decided to unite in the person of General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny the functions of High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in Indochina. This step, it was hoped, would eliminate much of the conflict between the French political and military functionaries in that country, a conflict that had contributed greatly to the confusion of aims, the defensive strategy, and the

defeatist attitudes of the French forces. The National Assembly backed up these decisions by a strong resolution voted with a large majority.[15]

Pau Conventions

Alongside the military reforms, which were inaugurated in November and December, the French Government made some sweeping political concessions to satisfy the claims of Indochinese nationalism and attract support for the fight against Communism. The twenty-seventh of November saw the signing at Pau, in France, of ten conventions regulating the internal relations of the Associated States and the influence of the French in the Indochinese economy. The Elysee Accords of 8 March 1949 had stipulated that an interstate conference (Conference inter-etats) was to be held between France and the three Indochinese states to determine the scope of joint committees, which were to be erected to govern communications facilities, foreign trade and customs, immigration control, finance, and economic planning. This conference had met on 29 June 1950 and fumbled along for four months with little real progress but with mounting friction and controversy. Not only was the position of the French delegates removed from that of the Associated States, but quarrels developed among the states themselves, the representatives of Laos and Cambodia resenting what they felt to be an attempt by the Vietnamese delegation to dominate them. After the military defeats of October, however, it behooved the French to moderate their position and to compromise. The conference was rapidly and, to some extent, successfully brought to a close with the agreement on the subjects specified, plus conventions regulating the port of Saigon and navigation of the Mekong River. A group of interstate agencies was set up, staffed by personnel of all four countries, to take over the tasks of the "common services" of the former Indochinese Union, which had been administered directly by the French High Commissariat. Agreement on a monetary union and a customs union of the Associated States salvaged to a large extent the economic unity of the peninsula.

15. Journal officiel de la Republique francaise, Debats parlementaires, Assemblee nationale, 22 Nov 50, pp. 7998-8050.

Although an accord had been reached at Pau, neither the French nor the Indochinese were really satisfied. Frenchmen who felt France's prestige to rest on her empire wailed that too much had been given up. The Indochinese, however, while recognizing the fact that the Pau conventions were an advance from the position of the Elysee agreements, wanted much more independence than the French had been willing to concede. From the standpoint of the Indochinese nationalists, French control was perpetuated by the inclusion of French representatives in the joint agencies and by the guarantees for protecting French interests in the fields of money and banking, foreign investments and exchange, tariff policy and customs control, and certain educational establishments. The port of Saigon and navigation on the Mekong remained under the effective control of Frenchmen. And too many French officials, whom many Indochinese could never regard as anything but colonial exploiters, were to remain in Indochina. The Vietnamese man-in-the-paddy, if he concerned himself about it at all, probably could not discern any difference between the old relationship and the new. For these reasons the Pau conventions, insofar as they were aimed at stimulating native support for a "free and independent Vietnam" and for the fight against Communism, fell short of the mark.[16]

Furthermore, although the Pau conference had its beginning before the autumn attacks of the Viet Minh, the fact that the signing of the conventions came hard on the heels of a series of French defeats gave some Indochinese the impression French concessions were the result of those defeats. Those who already regarded the Viet Minh as the most successful force working for Indochinese independence were undoubtedly strengthened in their belief. The unfortunate sequence of events buttressed the argument that more was to be gained for Vietnamese freedom by permitting the French forces to fall before Communist guns than by supporting an army that, if victorious against Ho Chi Minh, might be used to reassert colonial government.

16. Notes et Etudes, "Conventions inter-etats," No. 1.425, 24 Jan 51; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 274-281.

Vietnamese Army

In early December the French made yet another concession to Vietnamese nationalism, one intended to bestow on the Emperor Bao Dai the still missing halo of sovereignty and to convince the Indochinese that the French would convey the powers of government to them as rapidly as possible. This was the establishment of an independent national Army of Viet Nam, a step long desired by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and urged on the French by the Department of State in Washington and by Minister Donald Heath in Saigon. The measure was decided upon in principle by the French and Vietnamese Governments in October and about six weeks were spent in discussions at Dalat about the size, organization, and command structure of the army. Finally, on 8 December, the retiring High Commissioner, M. Leon Pignon, signed a military convention with officials of Viet Nam. According to the agreement Bao Dai would be in supreme command of the national army, but responsible to the French High Command in Indochina. French officers and cadres, in Vietnamese uniforms and paid by Viet Nam, would be subject to Bao Dai's command. As a military force, the army was not expected to be effective for at least a year, after which it might be able to take over certain "pacification duties," freeing French units for offensive work in the north.

It was obvious to all concerned that such an army would require heavy support from the MDAP. There was no other source for the necessary armament and supplies. Nevertheless, no American representative was invited to the discussions at Dalat, either to observe or participate. As Mr. Edmund A. Gullion, the Special Assistant for MDAP to the American Minister at Saigon, complained to Washington, this "appeared further to delay implementation of the project."[17]

The outstanding weakness of the sweeping concessions made by the French in the autumn of 1950 lay in the fact

17. (S) Msg, Edmund A. Gullion, SpecAsst; MDAP; Saigon, to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 3 (October 1950)," 1 Dec 50, G-3 091 Indo China, sec II A, bk I, Case 31; (S) CIA, NIE - 5, 29 Dec 50, p. 2.

that they came too late. Given the perspective of four years it is easy to see that the growing strength of the Viet Minh, the emergent threat of invasion by the Communist Chinese, as well as their increasing ability to support the Viet Minh materially and politically, and the growing distaste in France for the war, did not permit enough time for the measures to have the desired effect. Even before the ink was dry on the new conventions the critical importance of the time factor was apparent to American observers in Indochina. As Minister Heath reported from Saigon, "Had French willingly made two years ago 1950 concessions and had Bao Dai and his government had two years experience under new formula, there would have been radically different IC situation. Basic political question today is whether there is time enough to utilize new political framework to mobilize mass allegiance behind Bao Dai."[18]

Change of Command--General de Lattre de Tassigny

To carry out the reforms in Indochina new men, or rather, a new man, was needed. The High Commissioner, M. Pignon, and the Commanding General, Marcel Carpentier, were, to use the French description, fatigues. The military command was worn out, disillusioned, and no longer capable of directing offensive action. The civil administrators of the High Commissioner's office were known to be reluctant to carry out just such reforms as were now demanded. And friction between the civil and military authority was recognized generally as being one of the reasons for the failure of both.

The solution to these problems arrived in Saigon on 17 December in the person of General de Lattre. Armed with the seal of political authority as well as the baton of military command, he immediately took complete control of the French administration and of the armed forces. His first job was to restore guts and backbone to the fighting man. This he did by appeals to the soldiers' pride, by

18. (S) Msg, Donald Heath, NIACT-1157, to SecState, 1 Jan 51, DA-IN-6870, 4 Jan 51, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 9.

insisting on stern discipline, by replacing passive commanders, and especially by setting an example of determination and confidence. Shortly after his arrival he reversed the order, given by M. Pignon, for French civilians to evacuate Hanoi, and declared that the Tonkin delta would be held. He set about organizing a peripheral defense around Hanoi and Haiphong, digging in, constructing mutually supporting positions having adequate fields of fire, organizing mobile reserve units for counterattack at threatened points. And, most important in the minds of American military observers in Indochina, he began planning for offensive operations aimed at defeating the Viet Minh on Communist-held ground.

MAAG Indochina

The dramatic entrance of General de Lattre upon the cluttered stage of Indochina presaged a change in the French attitude toward the American military aid program and toward the MAAG in Saigon. While welcoming American assistance the former French commanders had shown considerable suspicion of American military personnel sent to Saigon to administer the program. Upon their arrival in Indochina General Carpentier had made the observation, tinged with asperity, that the group was larger than he had anticipated and had arrived without his agreement. At the end of August, the first full month of MAAG activity in Saigon, Mr. Gullion reported "some atmosphere of reluctance about French cooperation." He attributed this to the fact that the French High Command had not understood the necessity for, or the advantages of, having the MAAG in Indochina, and had even mistaken its functions. Perhaps more important for explaining the French attitude were the fears of some officials that the MAAG personnel would attempt to interfere excessively in the political and military affairs of Indochina. Despite some improvement in MAAG's relations with the French during the immediately ensuing months the latter continued to regard the group with something less than enthusiastic approval.[19]

19. (S) Msg, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 1 (August 1950)," 20 Sep 50; (S) Msg, Gullion to SecState, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 2 (September 1950)," 6 Nov 50; (S) Msg, Gullion to SecState, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 3 (October 1950)," 1 Dec 50. All in G-3 091 China, sec II A, bk I, Case 31.

From the time the first elements of MAAG arrived in Indochina at the end of July the agency was hampered in accomplishing its mission by several annoying conditions. The chief functions of the group were to screen and pass on to the Department of Defense the French requests for military aid, and then to observe and supervise the distribution and use of the equipment that was provided under the program. For these tasks the thirty-eight officers and enlisted men authorized for the MAAG were too few. And although the authorization was later increased the group continued to suffer from a shortage of personnel.

Screening of French requests was performed on the basis of the Joint Chiefs of Staff screening criteria (to eliminate non-military items, etc.), French and Indochinese needs, and availability of personnel trained to use the materiel requested. To accomplish this screening the cooperation of the French military authorities was necessary, but it was not immediately forthcoming. The MDAP monthly report from Saigon for October 1950 contains a somewhat bitter complaint about the poor liaison between French officials and the MAAG. This, according to the report, "led the French Command to deny the abandonment of Cao Bang even after it had taken place, to withhold information on the extent of French losses in the North, to keep the Legation and MAAG in ignorance of military developments in Tonkin and of French plans for coping with the new situation." Both Legation and MAAG "made every effort to impress upon the French authorities the imperative need for adequate military briefings if the MDAP were to have its maximum effect and by the end of the month definite signs of improvement were to be noted."[20] Nevertheless, sufficient information on the status of French-Indochinese forces continued to be unavailable to MAAG. No troop bases, or even order of battle, were furnished by the French, and screening had to be done by "educated guess." Furthermore, the loose French supply and accounting procedures often made it impossible for the Americans

20. (S) Msg, Gullion to SecState, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 3 (October 1950)," 1 Dec 50, same file.

to determine exactly what the forces in the peninsula had on hand. As a result MAAG personnel sometimes hesitated to blue-pencil French requests even when they felt them to be excessive.[21]

In observing and supervising the use of end items provided under MDAP the Army Section of the MAAG was impeded by French restrictions. Because Air Force equipment was employed chiefly at fixed installations, such as airbases, its day-to-day use and maintenance could be checked. Similarly the Naval member of MAAG could inspect ships, which were in more or less constant use and readiness. Army members, however, were not allowed to go into the combat areas to view the employment and care of ground force supplies. Inspections of troop units were scheduled beforehand with the French Command. Units to be inspected had been sent to rearward areas and prepared for the event. The entire inspection was performed with parade-ground spit and polish and with French officers accompanying the American, partly, it would seem, to make sure that the latter did not see too much. Moreover, such inspections were limited to MDAP equipment only, the French jealously guarded from view that which they themselves had furnished. The value of the inspections for calculating French needs and for determining the efficiency with which American materiel was used was undoubtedly impaired by these procedures.

For distributing MDAP equipment on its arrival in Indochina, the MAAG dealt almost exclusively with French authorities, who obviously desired to keep contacts between Americans and Vietnamese at a minimum. Not until the end of 1951 was the MAAG able to require that signatures of Vietnamese officials appear on manifests of supplies

21. (C) Interv, Capt W.W. Hoare, Jr., USA, with Lt Col S. Fred Cummings, USA (Logistics Officer, Army Sec, MAAG Indochina from Nov 51 to Nov 52), 1 Nov 54, Memo in JCS HS files.

delivered to native units. There is no evidence, however, that earlier shipments destined for any of the Associated States were withheld by French authorities.[22]

By the end of December 1950 the change wrought by General de Lattre was already noticeable and the MDAP report for January 1951 stated that "relations between the MAAG and the French Command were unquestionably better than at any previous point of the Indochina program."[23] This fact testifies to a different attitude toward MDAP on the part of the new commander than that of General Carpentier who, as late as November, was described as "mildly skeptical about American aid."[24]

Pentalateral Mutual Defense Assistance Pact

On 23 December at Saigon Minister Heath signed an "Agreement for Mutual Defense Assistance in Indochina" with representatives of the Associated States and France. This agreement, which had been in the process of negotiation for several months, provided for military assistance, in accordance with Public Law 329, 81st Congress, as amended, to the four states fighting in the peninsula. Generally similar to MDAP agreements between the United States and other recipient nations, the agreement stated: "With respect to aid received from the United States of America, each State shall designate a member or representative of the High Military Committee and authorize such person to receive . . . the title to the materials received." With respect to MAAG Indochina, the Associated States and France were "to extend to such personnel facilities freely

22. Ibid.; (C) Interv, Hoare with Maj H.L. St.-Onge, USA, and Maj Edwin J. Nelson, USA, both at various times Adjutants of MAAG Indochina and aides to Brig Gen Francis G. Brink (first CG of MAAG Indochina), 27 Oct 54, Memo on file in JCS HS.

23. (S) Msg, Heath to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly General Report for the Month of January 1951," 23 May 51, G-3 091 Indo China, sec II A, bk I, Case 31.

24. (TS) Memo, Marshal of the Royal Air Force the Lord Tedder to Gen Omar N. Bradley, 9 Nov 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 8.

and fully to carry out their assigned responsibilities, including observation of the progress and the technical use made of the assistance granted."[25]

Development of U.S. Policy toward Indochina, July-December 1950

At the time of the outbreak of the Korean Conflict American policy toward Indochina was that set forth in NSC 64 and NSC 48/2. There was general agreement among the governmental agencies concerned that the peninsula, and especially Tonkin, provided the keystone of the Southeast Asian arch without which the free nations in that area would crumble. There was also a general agreement that everything possible must be done to maintain Indochina, although with its forces tied down in Korea the United States would have to confine itself to providing military aid in the form of munitions and equipment. Within the government in Washington, however, it was the Department of Defense that showed itself the most anxious about the dangers in Southeast Asia, and this anxiety was stimulated by constant roweling on the part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chiefs seemed to see more clearly than the State Department the threat to the United States strategic position in the Far East inherent in a Communist Viet Nam, and they were more eager to act with the resources at hand in order to salvage it for the free world.

This advanced position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff became clear in the first week of July, when the Chiefs were required to comment on a National Security Council (NSC) paper dealing with "The Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation." How to counter an offensive by the Viet Minh alone was not the question here. It was rather what to do in the event the Peiping satellite of Moscow should provide overt military

25. State Dept, "Mutual Defense Assistance in Indochina-Agreement between the United States of America and Cambodia, France, Laos, and Viet Nam," Treaties and Other International Acts Series 2447 (GPO, Washington 25, D.C.), p. 4.

assistance to Ho Chi Minh, an action which seemed not improbable in view of the Korean example. If, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff, such assistance is given the Viet Minh forces, "the United States should increase its MDAP assistance to the French and urge the French to continue an active defense, with the United States giving consideration to the provision of air and naval assistance." Also, the United States should ask the United Nations to call upon its members to make forces available to resist the Chinese Communist aggression.[26] On 14 August, in commenting on a revision of the same NSC paper, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that in the event of overt attack by organized Chinese Communist forces against Indochina the United States should support France and the Associated States, in concert with the United Kingdom, accelerate and expand the present military assistance program, and mobilize to the extent necessary to meet the situation. Other government agencies represented in the NSC, however, drew back from such a strong position. The National Security Council's decision was to accept the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on supporting French and Indochinese forces and on stepping up MDAP assistance. Mobilization, however, was not accepted and was replaced with a stipulation that, should the Chinese Communists attack in Indochina, the United States should not permit itself to become engaged in a general war with Communist China.[27]

A similar difference in attitude appeared during the preparations or talks between the Foreign Ministers of France and Great Britain and the Secretary of State in September. A State Department position paper on Indochina was submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for comment and recommendation. This paper recommended that Secretary of State Dean Acheson emphasize, in speaking to the French, the importance of liberal implementation of the Elysee agreements and that despite the urgency of the military

26. (TS) JCS 1924/14, 5 Jul 50, CCS 092 USSR (3-27-45) sec 45.

27. (TS) JCS 1924/26, 14 Aug 50, same file, sec 48; (TS) NSC 73/4, 25 Aug 50, same file, sec 49.

situation the political program must not be delayed. The French should be urged to speed the formation of new national armies and to intensify their information activities in Asia. The Secretary was also to recommend staff talks between the United States, United Kingdom, and France regarding "pooling and coordination of resources in Southeast Asia in the event of invasion."[28]

In their comments on this paper the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that

> the recommendations as a whole do not reflect the urgency which, from the military point of view, should be attached to planning, preparing for, and providing adequate means to insure the security of Indochina. . . . Intelligence reports indicate that the Viet Minh military preparations may be sufficiently complete in the very near future to launch a large-scale effort to seize control of all of Indochina. Prior to 1 January 1951, the currently planned level of United States military aid to the French and native allied forces of Indochina should increase their military capabilities but not to the extent of counterbalancing Viet Minh capabilities. In view of these considerations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggest that the proposed United States position take cognizance that the situation in Indochina is to be viewed with alarm and that urgent and drastic action is required by the French if they are to avoid military defeat in Indochina. . . .

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the French be urged to conclude the Pau conference immediately and successfully, to give widespread publicity to its accomplishments, and to initiate bolder political measures. In regard to the proposed military staff talks, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked that the "coordination of resources" be changed to "coordination of operations." They also wished Secretary Acheson to indicate to the French that

28. (S) State Dept SFM D-7/1c, "September Foreign Ministers Meeting - Indochina," 28 Aug 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 6.

increases in military aid would be provided in accordance with operational plans acceptable to the United States and compatible with United States capabilities. But, because of the situation in Korea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked that the Secretary "Inform the French that, regardless of current U.S. commitments for provision of certain assistance to French Indochina, the United States will not commit any of its armed forces under present circumstances."[29]

The records of the September Tripartite Foreign Ministers Meetings do not indicate that Secretary Acheson exerted much pressure on the French in accordance with the desires of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He seems instead to have wished to let the Joint Chiefs of Staff work out their problems in the proposed military staff talks. In accordance with the National Security Council's policy and the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the Secretary refused a French request for the United States to furnish tactical air support for the French forces.[30]

In October the concern of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the preservation from Communism of Southeast Asia prompted them to press for a stronger and more precise American policy than that contained in NSC 64. They were particularly conscious of the fact that there was "no clearly stated United States policy covering the contingency of an attack on Indochina by Viet Minh forces supplied and/or otherwise aided by Communist China."[31]

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29. (S) Memo, Bradley to Louis Johnson, "Indochina," 7 Sep 50, same file.

30. (S) FMN Min - 4, "Minutes of the Fourth Meeting held in the Waldorf-Astoria," 14 Sep 50; (TS) Memo of Conv, New York, bet Robert Schuman, Foreign Minister of France, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, (12 Sep 50). Both in State Dept files.

31. (TS) JCS 1992/29, 7 Oct 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 6.

The deteriorating situation in Indochina after the Cao Bang incident demanded a revision of American policy. And the apparent collapse of Communist resistance in North Korea seemed to offer the opportunity, for if the Korean Conflict could be quickly wound up the United States global strategic position would be greatly strengthened and some American armed forces would be freed for employment in other areas.

On 18 October General J. Lawton Collins laid before his colleagues on the Joint Chiefs of Staff a written proposal for reappraising the government's stand. "I believe that the loss of Indochina would be such a blow to the U.S. strategic position in the cold war that its loss is unacceptable, if we can possibly avoid it," he wrote. "All practicable measures" to deny Indochina to the Communists should be explored, including "even the use of U.S. armed forces if the situation can be saved in no other way." The Army Chief of Staff forwarded a study prepared by G-3, recommending that the United States "be prepared to commit its own armed force" if all else failed. But any such commitment, it was added, must be subject to important qualifications: it must not endanger the US strategic position in the event of a world war, it must offer a reasonable chance of success, and it should be done in concert with other UN members.[32]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered General Collins' views in preparing comments on a proposal by the Southeast Asia Aid Policy Committee for a new National Security Council decision of United States policy toward Indochina. This proposal roughly conformed to the ideas of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, although it did not provide for the use of American armed forces and in their opinion did not reflect the urgency of the current situation in Indochina.[33] The Chiefs, however, delayed their comments while awaiting a report from Brigadier General Francis G. Brink, [commander] chief

32. (TS) Memo by CSA, "Possible Future Action in Indochina," 18 Oct 50, same file, sec 7.

33. (TS) SEAAPC, SEAC D-21, Rev 1, "Proposed Statement of U.S. Policy on Indo-China for NSC Consideration," 11 Oct 50, same file, sec 6.

of the MAAG in Saigon. They had instructed General Brink to confer with General Juin during the latter's visit to Indochina and to furnish them an estimate of the chances of French success against the Viet Minh. By the time the Joint Chiefs of Staff were ready to present their recommendations on the paper by the Southeast Asia Aid Policy Committee the Chinese Communists had struck in North Korea and a longer war, tying down United States forces for some time to come, was in prospect. The Chiefs would not, therefore, advise using American combat forces in Indochina in the foreseeable future.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff sent their recommendations on the Southeast Asia Aid Policy Committee's proposal to the Secretary of Defense on 28 November. But instead of merely commenting on the paper they proposed their own broad policy, which was, in effect, a revision of NSC 64. As NSC 64/1 it was presented on 21 December to the National Security Council for consideration.

The proposal by the Joint Chiefs of Staff listed both short-term and long-term objectives for the United States in Indochina, of which the short-term aims were the most significant for this history. These objectives were the following:

SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES

a. The United States should take action, as a matter of urgency, by all means practicable short of the actual employment of United States military forces, to deny Indochina to communism.

b. As long as the present situation exists, the United States should continue to insure that the primary responsibility for the restoration of peace and security in Indochina rests with the French.

c. The United States should seek to develop its military assistance program for Indochina based on an over-all military plan prepared by the French, concurred in by the Associated States of Indochina, and acceptable to the United States.

(1) Both the plan and the program should be developed and implemented as a matter of urgency. It should be clearly understood, however, that United States acceptance of the

plan is limited to the logistical support which the United States may agree to furnish. The aid provided under the program should be furnished to the French in Indochina and to the Associated States. The allocation of United States military assistance as between the French and the national armies of Indochina should be approved by the French and United States authorities in Indochina.

(2) Popular support of the Government by the Indochinese people is essential to a favorable settlement of the security problem of Indochina. Therefore, as a condition to the provision of those further increases in military assistance to Indochina necessary for the implementation of an agreed over-all military plan, the United States Government should obtain assurances from the French Government that:

(a) A program providing for the eventual self-government of Indochina either within or outside of the French Union will be developed, made public, and implementation initiated at once in order to strengthen the national spirit of the Indochinese in opposition to communism.

(b) National armies of the Associated States of Indochina will be organized as a matter of urgency. While it is doubtful that the build-up of these armies can be accomplished in time to contribute significantly to the present military situation, the direct political and psychological benefits to be derived from this course would be great and would thus result in immediate, although indirect, military benefits.

(c) Pending the formation and training of Indochinese national armies as effective units, and as an interim emergency measure, France will dispatch sufficient additional armed forces to Indochina to insure that the restoration of peace and internal security

in that country will be accomplished in accordance with the timetable of the over-all military plan for Indochina.

(d) France will change its political and military concepts in Indochina to:

i. Eliminate its policy of "colonialism."

ii. Provide proper tutelage to the Associated States.

iii. Insure that a suitable military command structure, unhampered by political interference, is established to conduct effective and appropriate military operations.

The effective implementation of these changes will require competent and efficient political and military leaders who will be able to cope with the conditions in that country.

(3) At an appropriate time the United States should institute checks to satisfy itself that the conditions set forth in subparagraph c-(2) above are being fulfilled.

d. The United States should exert all practicable political and diplomatic measures required to obtain the recognition of the Associated States by the other non-communist states of Southeast and South Asia.

e. In the event of overt attack by organized Chinese Communist forces against Indochina, the United States should not permit itself to become engaged in a general war with Communist China but should, in concert with the United Kingdom, support France and the Associated States by all means short of the actual employment of United States military forces. This support should include appropriate expansion of the present military assistance program and endeavors to induce States in the neighborhood of Indochina to commit armed forces to resist the aggression.

f. The United States should immediately reconsider its policy toward Indochina whenever it appears that the French Government may abandon its military position in that country or plans to refer the problem of Indochina to the United Nations. Unless the situation throughout the world generally, and Indochina specifically, changes materially, the United

States should seek to dissuade the French from referring the Indochina question to the United Nations.

g. Inasmuch as the United States-sponsored resolution, "Uniting for Peace," has been adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and should a situation develop in Indochina in a manner similar to that in Korea in which United Nations forces were required, the United States would then probably be morally obligated to contribute its armed forces designated for service on behalf of the United Nations. It is, therefore, in the interests of the United States to take such action in Indochina as would forestall the need for the General Assembly to invoke the provisions of the resolution, "Uniting for Peace."

5. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the following long-term objectives for Indochina:

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

a. United States security interests demand that this government, by all means short of the actual employment of United States military forces, seek to prevent the further spread of communism in Southeast Asia generally and, in particular, in French Indochina.

b. The United States should seek to insure the establishment of such conditions in Indochina that no foreign armed forces will be required for the maintenance of internal security.

c. The United States should continue to press the French to carry out in letter and in spirit the program referred to in paragraph 4-c-(2)-(a) above, providing for the eventual self-government of Indochina either within or outside of the French Union.

d. The United States should continue to favor the entry of the three Associated States of Indochina into the United Nations.

e. The United States should encourage the establishment of an appropriate form of regional security arrangement embracing Indochina and the other countries of Southeast Asia under Articles 51 and 52 of the United Nations Charter.[34]

34. (TS) NSC 64/1, 21 Dec 50, same file, sec 9.

An "Analysis," written by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, accompanied the draft policy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and contained an explanation of the strategic concept that kept the Joint Chiefs of Staff from recommending armed intervention. Involvement of United States forces against Viet Minh forces, according to the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, would be likely to lead to a war with Communist China, which would probably have to be taken as a prelude to global war. The chief enemy in a global war, "in all probability," would be the USSR, and the principal theater would be Western Europe. And the strength of the Western Powers was insufficient to fight a war on the Asian mainland and at the same time accomplish the predetermined Allied objectives in Europe.[35] This line of reasoning was the one generally accepted by the American Government at the time.

Despite the sense of urgency communicated by the strong words of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, NSC 64/1 was not adopted by the National Security Council. Although the Chiefs complained intermittently about the lack of a more definite statement of policy, NSC 64 remained the basic United States position on Indochina for months. Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff strove to realize the objectives that they advocated and other agencies of the government gradually moved toward their point of view. The policy enunciated in NSC 64, therefore, although not superseded, was at least modified by the prevailing climate of opinion in Washington, and this progression toward a stronger stand on the Indochina question was apparent at the end of 1950.

35. Ibid.

CHAPTER IX

FROM 1 JANUARY 1951 TO THE DEATH OF GENERAL DE LATTRE ON 11 JANUARY 1952

Military Situation in Indochina Improves

During 1951 the French military position in Indochina showed a definite, but not constant, improvement. In the early part of the year General de Lattre, by consolidating his defenses, was able to repulse a series of attacks and inflict heavy losses on the Viet Minh while keeping his own relatively low. In November the French Commander undertook a limited, though not particularly well-considered, offensive in the Hoa Binh area southwest of Hanoi.

The successes achieved by the French forces under de Lattre were made possible by American military assistance. The effect of United States support in the civil war became apparent in mid-January, when the Franco-Vietnamese forces defeated the largest offensive, in terms of manpower and military organization, that the Viet Minh had yet mounted. It was estimated that about 40,000 rebel troops fought in the battle of Vinh Yen, and that their losses may have been as high as 6,000 effectives. Minister Heath reported from Saigon that the French victory could "in very large part be attributed to the action of French air, artillery, especially 105 mm. howitzers, and napalm, all of which were provided to the French Forces under the MDAP." The aid program, he continued, "has thus in its first full-scale test been fully vindicated."1

A certain amount, perhaps the decisive part, of the equipment used in repulsing the Viet Minh offensive, arrived at Hanoi only in the nick of time and as the result of personal intervention by General Brink, who asked General MacArthur's headquarters to have materiel shipped from FECOM stocks outside the established MDAP

1. (S) Rpt, Heath to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly General Report for the Month of January 1951," 23 May 51, G-3 091 Indo China, sec II-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

channels. The value of this assistance was acknowledged by General de Lattre to the American Minister, the Chief of the MAAG, and to the press. His public expressions of gratitude went far toward promoting better relations between the French and the Americans in Indochina. The attitude of the French toward the MAAG changed from one of suspicion and annoyance to one of qualified approval and eased the work of that agency during the months that followed.[2]

After the battle of Vinh Yen the French and Vietnamese forces undertook a series of minor advances, recapturing several outposts around the Tonkin delta perimeter. At the same time they repulsed a number of Viet Minh attacks, reportedly inflicting severe losses on the enemy, and forged ahead with a campaign to clean the rebels out of the delta area itself. During the first week of April the French reported intercepting a radio broadcast by Ho Chi Minh, ordering his troops, who had been maneuvering in daylight in organized units since January, to revert to guerrilla warfare. But while this report indicated some discouragement in Viet Minh ranks, the rebels did not immediately give up the initiative in Indochina. Their attacks continued, though in general with little or no success, until the rainy season slowed all military operations in the country.[3]

With the return of good weather in the autumn the French returned to the offensive for the first time since their defeat at Cao Bang in the preceding year. In a well-executed, surprise move they advanced out of the delta to capture and fortify positions in the Cho Ben-Hoa Binh area southwest of Hanoi. The purposes of this operation were political as well as military. de Lattre hoped thus to disrupt Viet Minh communications and collection of rice, while impressing public opinion with his initiative and skill and demonstrating to the United States the fact that he was using American equipment to good advantage.

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2. Ibid.; (S) Rpt, Heath to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly General Report for the Month of February 1951," 23 May 51, same file; NY Times, 23 Jan 51.

3. Ibid.; NY Times, 15 Feb, 7 Apr, 24 Apr, 5 Jun, 7 Jun, 8 Jun, 10 Jun 51.

The so-called Hoa Binh offensive, however, proved to be something less than a strategic success. It over-extended French lines and weakened the defense of the Hanoi perimeter, opening the door to heavy Viet Minh infiltration into the delta area. By the end of the year it was apparent to American observers in Indochina that the French would be hard pressed to maintain the position at Hoa Binh (which was being subjected to counterattack by regular Viet Minh troops), since at the same time they had to protect the delta from rebel infiltration.[4] Nevertheless, the French and Vietnamese forces were in a far better condition with respect to training, spirit, equipment, organization, and strategical situation at the time of de Lattre's death than when he had taken over the High Command.

Political Situation in Viet Nam during 1951

The general improvement in the military situation in Indochina during 1951 brought no corresponding development in Vietnamese internal political affairs. The basic problem continued to be lack of public support for the Bao Dai government and for the struggle against Ho Chi Minh. Behind the antipathy and indifference of the natives lay their unabated dislike of the French colonial officials, who seldom relaxed their resistance to the reforms dictated from Paris, or ceased to interfere in the internal affairs of Viet Nam. Bao Dai could not shake off the label that identified his regime with French policies and his new army with the French High Command. It is not inexplicable, therefore, that the Vietnamese National Army failed to capture the imagination and loyalty of the people, or that Premier Tran Van Huu was unable to form a government truly representative of the country.

Despite the concessions to Indochinese nationalism embodied in the Pau Conventions the reduction of French control over the economic and political life of the

4. (S) Msg, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 14 (November 1951)," 8 Jan 52; (S) Msg, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 15 (December 1951)," 21 Mar 52. Both in G-3 091 Indo China, sec I-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

Associated States was scarcely visible in the average man in Viet Nam. The turnover of authority was painfully slow and only grudgingly conceded by French officials. For some of the delays the French were not willfully responsible. It was difficult, for instance, to find in Viet Nam men sufficiently experienced in governmental administration to handle the agencies to be transferred. But the easing of the military situation, which ought to have provided breathing space for establishing the new system, seems instead to have reduced in the French the sense of urgency for carrying out the political reforms initiated in more trying times. Mr. Gullion reported from Saigon that as early as March the now more confident French officials, including General de Lattre, had begun to utter doubts about the wisdom of maintaining the then current tempo and limits of Vietnamese independence.[5] Even the United States Government, which had been pushing the French toward more rapid reforms, relaxed its pressure. The official attitude of the State Department was that the Pau Conventions, formally instituted in December 1950, had satisfied Indochinese nationalst aims. American officials, however, continued urging the French not to lag in implementing the conventions or in establishing the national armies.[6]

The equivocal character of French policies was reflected in the actions and attitudes of General de Lattre who, until his death on 11 January 1952, was probably the most important single factor in Vietnamese politics. On the one hand the High Commissioner considered himself a "kingmaker," who would go down in history as the father of Indochinese independence. In April, at a ceremony commemorating the victory of Vinh Yen, he pledged himself to "fulfill the independence of Vietnam." "I have come," he announced, "to accomplish your independence, not to limit it."[7] On the

5. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for Indo-China for the Month of March 1951," 19 May 51, same file, sec II-A, bk I.

6. (TS) State Dept, Pleven D-1/1, "Negotiating Papers for Truman-Pleven Talks - Jan 29-30 - U.S. Aid to Indochina," CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 10.

7. (TS) SM-143-51, 16 Jan 51, same file; (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 64-65.

other hand, General de Lattre was a representative of France and in his mouth the word "independence" meant independence within the French Union. A few weeks before uttering his April pledge the general had remarked to Minister Heath, "'these states (the Associated States of Indochina) could hardly hope to enjoy the same status as members of the British Commonwealth since France had spent too much to protect them.'"[8] That the Indochinese would never be satisfied with the restricted independence the French had in mind was to become increasingly apparent as the months passed.

Nor were the native nationalists content with the rate at which authority was being transferred to the Bao Dai government. General de Lattre seems to have wished to clear up the Viet Minh rebellion before devoting much of his time and energy to political reorganization. Certainly the demands of the military situation were more immediate, and for this reason the one reform that the High Commissioner was most active in accomplishing was the establishment of the Vietnamese National Army, which he expected to use in achieving a satisfactory end to the war. But his attitude in this respect was not conducive to harmonious relations with the Vietnamese government and people, who wanted to see immediate evidence of independence.

Furthermore, the general was impatient of administrative details and with the failures and mistakes of the inexperienced native officials. This trait caused him to intervene personally in the internal affairs of Viet Nam, much to the annoyance of Bao Dai and his premier, Tran Van Huu. During the year the Emperor frequently complained to Minister Heath about de Lattre's interference in such matters, and referred with disgust to the "colonial-minded advisors" retained by the High Commissioner.[9]

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8. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for Indochina for the Month of March 1951," 19 May 51, G-3 091 Indo China, sec II-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

9. Ibid.; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for May 1951," 22 Jun 51, same file.

Cabinet Crisis in Viet Nam

On 20 January the Viet Nam cabinet was dissolved with the object of forming a new government, still under Tran Van Huu, but with a broader base representative of the major non-Communist political groups. This attempt to draw into the government the dissident nationalist parties ended in a fiasco, presaging the failure of the Premier ever to win any great measure of popular support. After a month of negotiations, intrigues, and squabbles Tran Van Huu emerged with a cabinet very much like the last. The Premier also held the portfolios of the Defense Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of the Interior.[10] Just how much General de Lattre and other French officials were involved in the governmental shake-up cannot be determined, but Mr. Gullion reported that in April "Some of the animosity at French intervention in the cabinet crisis in February had begun to subside."[11]

National Army of Viet Nam - A Political Failure

The reshuffling of Huu's government was only one of the factors that delayed the organization of the Vietnamese National Army during the first half of 1951. A similar crisis in France, which began at the end of February and lasted until 9 March, resulted in the replacement of the Pleven cabinet by one under Henri Queuille. The uncertain conditions accompanying the change seemed to paralyze activity in Saigon as well as in Paris. In addition, the development of the army was impeded by disagreements between the French and the Vietnamese governments over the amount of money each should contribute to its support, by the failure of the Saigon government to complete its budget, by the lack of trained cadres, and by the inability of Premier Huu to find a suitable Defense Minister and a Chief of Staff. Also, while MDAP materiel for the French Union Forces was

10. (S) Rpt, Heath to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly General Report for the Month of February 1951," 23 May 51, same file.

11. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for April 1951," 21 May 51, same file, bk II.

arriving at a generally good rate (seven ships unloaded over 10,000 long tons at Saigon during April), equipment for the projected Vietnamese battalions was coming in slowly. And while recruiting for twenty-four battalions was proceeding satisfactorily, the new army was meeting competition from the French Union Forces, who recruited locally more than 7,000 Vietnamese during March and April. Not unnaturally, such activity on the part of the French gave rise to changes of bad faith in their agreement to establish national armed forces in Viet Nam.12

Despite confusion and delay some increase in the national armies of the Associated States was achieved during the year, mainly owing to the efforts of General de Lattre. As of 1 May the regular Army of Viet Nam consisted of about 38,500 men. Cambodia and Laos, whose needs were comparatively small, had under arms 7,500 and 4,000 men, respectively. The program for the Vietnamese army called for the formation of four divisions during 1951. A subsequent expansion to eight divisions was decided upon later in the year. By the time of General de Lattre's death the Vietnamese Regular Army comprised thirty-seven battalions, with a strength of approximately 65,000 men. These were augmented by various auxiliary units (59,000 men) and semimilitary forces. In the Associated States as a whole, men in the regular and auxiliary forces numbered over 132,000; those in semi-military forces about 76,500.13 Had they not been seriously deficient in training, leadership, and the will to fight, these forces combined with the 189,000 troops of the French Union in Indochina, should have given the French High Command an overwhelming superiority against the Viet Minh.

The primary purpose in establishing the National armies had been to stimulate public enthusiasm for the "independent" governments of the Associated States and for the struggle against the Viet Minh Communists. In

12. Ibid.

13. (S) JIC 529/10, 10 Jan 52, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 22 BP pt 3; (TS) JIC 529/9, 2 Jan 52, same file, sec 22; (TS) JIC 529/4, 20 Jun 51, same file, sec 15; (TS) Navarre Briefing Doc, Jun 53, in OMA files.

this respect, the project cannot be described as a great success. The measure of its achievement in 1951 can be seen in the results of the various mobilization measures authorized by the Vietnamese cabinet on 15 July. By a series of decrees the Huu government asserted the principle of obligatory military service and authorized the conscription of 60,000 men in four increments for a period of two months training after which they were to form a partially trained, readily available reserve. It also announced its plans to draft 800 specialists and technicians for the National Army and to select 1,000 candidates for training as reserve officers. That this program did not meet the demands of the situation was the firm conviction of observers in the American Legation, who reported:

> Actually, the severely limited scope of the planned mobilization falls far short of supplying Viet Nam's basic military needs. The calling up of 60,000 men for only two months of training is an expensive gesture which is ill afforded by the shaky military budget; further, two months of training will provide no semblance of a trained manpower pool. Similarly, the callup of only 1000 candidates for reserve officer training is woefully inadequate of estimated requirement; at least four times that number of both categories of personnel are needed to round out the present four division national army. This estimate, of course, makes no allowance for normal attrition or for the necessity of a rapidly expanded force.[14]

But even this modest program fell short of realization. Little more than half of the specially selected candidates ever reported for training. The second increment of conscripts was released after only five weeks training and the fourth increment was never summoned at all. Of the first increment of 15,000 men, only 7 per cent could be persuaded to enlist in the

14. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for August 1951," 13 Nov 51, G-3 092 Indo China, sec II-A, bk III, DRB AGO.

National Army after completing their training. And the quota of 800 specialist that were to be drafted was reduced to 500.[15]

The response to the mobilization program was scarcely an indication of popular support for the Viet Nam government or the National Army. Some French officials blamed the non-arrival of MDAP materiel as well as financial difficulties for the indifferent success of the project. But American observers noted that the Vietnamese government had done a poor job of selling mobilization to a people for whom the Confucian contempt of military service was traditional. Public apathy, which the National Army and mobilization were intended to decrease, actually was the chief stumbling block of the mobilization scheme.[16]

Another mark of the National Army's failure as a means of exploiting patriotic sentiment was the defection of some of the Cao Daist forces. In June the Cao Dai Chief of Staff led 2,500 of his troops out of Viet Nam into Cambodia to "await developments." The immediate causes of this action probably were attempts to subordinate the suppletory forces, such as those of the Cao Dai, to the National Army, and the curtailment of the subsidy paid by the French to the Cao Dai troops. A more basic reason, however, was the feeling that Viet Nam had not been given full independence and was not likely to achieve it under Tran Van Huu.[17]

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15. Ibid.; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 16 (January 1952)," 24 Mar 52, same file, sec I-A, bk I; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 19 (April 1952)," 23 May 52, same file.

16. Ibid.; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for October, 1951," 11 Dec 51, same file, sec I.

17. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 65.

De Lattre-Huu Conflict

Toward the end of the year the political situation in Viet Nam was further complicated by growing enmity between the High Commissioner and the Premier, presaging the fall of Tran Van Huu in 1952. General de Lattre had long been disturbed by the inability of Huu to develop the vigorous and popular government necessary to military as well as political success. Also, with some reason, he had misgivings concerning Huu's use of state funds and the Premier's monopoly of the most important posts in the government. Huu, on the other hand, seemed convinced that the High Commissioner was bent on having the determining voice in all Vietnamese affairs, whether purely internal or foreign. The tensions between the two men, which persisted until de Lattre's death, exacerbated the old French-Vietnamese quarrels and undoubtedly weakened the efforts of both in the war against the Viet Minh.[18]

The conflict, which was actually a struggle for control of Vietnamese policy, became apparent in October when both men returned from visits to the United States. By November General de Lattre was hinting that before too long he might use his "influence" to replace Huu. The Premier, feeling more and more insecure, waved the banner of nationalism, sought the support of dissident groups, including the Cao Dai and the Dai Viet, and revived certain democratic projects, such as the establishment of popular assemblies. At the end of November, when de Lattre and Huu went to Paris to attend the first meeting of the High Council of the French Union, their rivalry became even more bitter. It ended, of course, with de Lattre's death, but by that time Huu's position vis-a-vis the French had grown so weak that his government fell only a few months later.[19]

18. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 14 (November 1951)," 8 Jan 52; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 15 (December 1951)," 21 Mar 52. Both in G-3 091 Indo China, sec I-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

19. Ibid.

First Meeting of the High Council of the French Union, 29-30 November

The de Lattre-Huu dispute affected the meeting of the High Council of the French Union in a manner disappointing to those Vietnamese who supported the Premier's nationalist aspirations. Before the meeting the Vietnamese delegation had been expected to press for an alteration of the quadripartite committee structure laid down in the Pau Conventions, a system permitting the French to dominate committees that supervised the governmental departments and activities of the Associated States. It was also expected to ask for admission to the United Nations (desired by the United States but considered premature by the French) and for changing the system of representation between Viet Nam and France by an exchange of ambassadors. Premier Huu, however, probably because he felt de Lattre was anxious to pull his portfolios from his grasp, refrained from risking his position by advocating ambitious reforms. The meeting never seriously tackled basic questions but contented itself with settling a few minor matters and deciding certain procedural questions, although the French did agree to UN membership for the Associated States. Once again a major inter-state conference ended without satisfying the demands of Indochinese nationalism.20

Everything considered, the political position of the anti-communist elements in Viet Nam improved very little during 1951. Americans in the Legation at Saigon observed a few hopeful developments such as the growth of the National Army, a revival of export trade and commerce, and the beginnings of a conscious Vietnamese administration. But the essential objective of attracting wide popular support for the government was not achieved. The French, who were given a breathing spell by de Lattre's military prowess, sank back into some of the old colonial ruts instead of building new roads to a strong Vietnamese government whose independence could be recognized and respected by loyal citizens.

20. Ibid.

Viet Minh

While Viet Nam was plodding toward freedom at snail's pace the Viet Minh in 1951 took the final steps in achieving an orthodox Communist organization. At two congresses in February and March the Lao Dong (Workers) Party was formed and the Viet Minh League consolidated into the Lien Viet (National United) Front. By these actions the Communists tightened their control of the Viet Minh movement, and their hard core, the Lao Dong, was officially recognized as the dominant directing force. The Lao Dong now exercised direct authority over the civilian population in the Viet Minh occupied areas, which hitherto the Communists had controlled only through their positions in the government and in the armed forces. As in almost all Communist "reforms" there was a purge of government officials at all levels. Those who remained in power were solidly Communist and supporters of the Soviet bloc of nations.[21]

Toward the end of the year the Viet Minh began to suffer severely from the defeats that General de Lattre had inflicted upon its troops. A food shortage arose when French successes interfered with Communist rice collection by tightening defenses around the rice producing areas and stiffening peasant resistance against Viet Minh demands. This resistance was also one of the factors that led to a serious financial deficit, owing to the difficulty of collecting taxes. In addition, the Viet Minh had to combat corruption and inefficiency in its own ranks. The combination of these factors, combined with the losses suffered in combat, partially offset the advantages obtained from the tighter Communist control of the rebel movement.[22]

Development of American Policy toward Indochina

Although in 1951 the French thought that they discerned an important change in the United States Government's attitude toward the Indochina War, there

21. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 67-68.
22. Foreign Report, 6 Sep 51, pp. 7-8, Economist Newspaper Ltd., London.

was actually little modification of the basic policies laid down in the preceding year. NSC 64 was not to be superseded till June 1952, and while NSC 48/2 was replaced in May by NSC 48/5, the section of the latter paper that directly concerned Indochina provided merely for a continuation of current policies, including the decision not to commit United States armed forces.[23] Whatever evolution of policy took place was the result of American participation in various military and diplomatic conferences, of the setting up of certain machinery for liaison and consultation between the French, British, and American commands in the Far East, and of ad hoc decisions on several specific questions. None of these actions, however, either represented or occasioned any considerable alteration in American aims during the year.

Singapore Conference

The first important international military conference that concerned Indochina in this period was held at Singapore. With the concurrence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary Acheson, during the Tripartite Foreign Ministers Meetings in September 1950, had made an agreement with the British and French that military commanders of the three nations in the Far East should meet to discuss the defense of Southeast Asia. The meeting finally took place in May, but only after the Joint Chiefs of Staff objections to holding it at all had been overridden. At the time the Chiefs had agreed to United States participation in discussions, the Korean Conflict had been going well for the United Nations forces. The Chinese intervention in October and November, however, placed such heavy demands on American fighting strength that the Joint Chiefs of Staff could visualize no practical means of assisting Indochina other than increasing the flow of supplies in the event of emergency. Therefore there was little that could be accomplished by a conference. Considering existing limitations on American action, any matters that might

23. (TS) NSC 48/5, 17 May 51, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 14.

require consultation with the French in Indochina could be handled through General Brink, who had already conferred with Generals Juin and Carpentier. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarded the Chinese intervention as having so changed the general strategical situation in the Far East that new basic decisions on the political level were required. Until such decisions were made there would be little value in holding the tripartite military discussions.

All of these arguments were advanced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff when they recommended to Secretary of Defense Marshall early in January that no military conference on Indochina be held in the near future.[24] But an agreement had been made, the French were insistent that the meeting be held, and the State Department was exerting polite pressure on the Department of Defense to carry out the obligation. Political considerations were therefore thought to be overriding and on 9 February Secretary Marshall directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to proceed with the arrangements. The Joint Chiefs of Staff complied. They were resolved, however, to limit the scope of the discussions and not permit them to deal with "matters of strategy affecting United States global policies and plans." Instead of sending the Commander in Chief, Far East, who was preoccupied with the Korean operations, the Joint Chiefs directed the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) to designate an officer from his command to take part in the conference as the United States representative. This officer was to be assisted by General Brink.[25]

After some delay in working out arrangements and agenda for the meeting General de Lattre, General John Harding, Commander of British Forces in the Far East, and Vice Admiral A. D. Struble, USN, met in Singapore on 15 May. Before the conference, the Joint Chiefs of

24. (S) Memo, RAdm A. C. Davis, Dir JS, to SecDef, "Proposed Military Talks Regarding Defense of Indochina," 10 Jan 51, same file, sec 10; (S) Memo, Bradley to SecDef, same subj, 8 Dec 50, same file, sec 9.

25. Ibid.; (S) Memo, Marshall to JCS, 9 Feb 51, same file, sec 11.

Staff had made plain to the British and French their view that the discussions should be confined to studying the situation in Southeast Asia and that the conclusions reached by the participants would in no way commit their respective governments.[26] And it was on this basis that the delegations at Singapore put forth their recommendations.

Although the talks were concerned with the defense of all Southeast Asia, there was general agreement that Indochina presented the most critical problem and that the defense of Tonkin was the key to the security of the entire area. The delegates in their report recommended a continuation of the accelerated delivery of material aid already programmed and the initiation of periodic meetings between military representatives of the three powers to discuss the Indochinese logistical situation. They also proposed increasing the exchange of intelligence information between the Commanders in the Far East using existing channels, and, in addition, conferences at regular intervals between the chiefs of the British and French military intelligence staffs in Singapore and Saigon, with participation by American intelligence officers. Such meetings, the conferees wrote, would help to alleviate the difficulties that all, and especially the French, were experiencing in securing adequate information about Chinese Communists armed forces and lines of communication, and about arms smuggling to communist guerrilla forces.

The delegates considered the possibility of an invasion of Indochina by the Chinese Communists, and included in their report a French estimate of the reinforcements that would be required to defend Tonkin against them. In respect to this matter, however, they made no recommendation other than that the situation and estimate of reinforcements be noted. They finished their work by making recommendations on certain specific logistical questions in Indochina, on control of contraband, and on control of shipping in Southeast Asian waters in the event the Communists began operations on the high seas.[27]

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26. (TS) JCS 1992/77, 10 May 51, same file, sec 13.
27. (TS) Rpt of Singapore Conf, 19 May 51, same file, BP pt 2.

The important recommendations contained in the report of the Singapore Conference was not immediately put into effect. Instead, they provided subjects for military and political negotiations between the three governments for the rest of the year. For the most part the British and French were anxious to have them carried out. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, were somewhat averse to American participation in further tripartite military conversations on the defense of Indochina, including those periodic conferences on intelligence and logistics problems recommended in the report. They feared that the British and French might try to erect out of such collaborative sessions a new Combined Chiefs of Staff organization or an over-all three-power command for Southeast Asia. They wished to keep their hands free so that a new global war might not find them encumbered by pre-established combined commands (other than NATO, in which the contribution expected of the European allies justified its establishment). But disagreements between the three governments over the recommendations of the Singapore Report, as well as changing circumstances, obliged the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the end of the year to accede to participation in a new three-power military conference in January 1952.

The Pleven Visit

Even before the Singapore Conference met, and while the Joint Chiefs of Staff were still arguing against it, two bilateral meetings were held in Washington between American officials and important figures in the French Government. The first, and the more important, took place on 29-30 January when the Prime Minister of France, M. Rene Pleven, visited the United States for talks with President Truman. In a series of conversations the President and M. Pleven agreed that while it was necessary to resist aggression in the Far East, nevertheless "The U.S. and France should not over-commit themselves militarily in the Far East and thereby endanger the situation in Europe." They also agreed that the "interested nations" should maintain continuous contact on the problems of the area, but when M. Pleven proposed the establishment of a British, French, United Sates consultative body to coordinate Far Eastern policies the President declined, expressing United States preference for existing mechanisms.

With specific reference to Indochina, the Prime Minister assured President Truman that France would continue to resist the Communist aggression. Mr. Truman thereupon promised to expedite deliveries of increased quantities of material under the aid program. But the French wanted more than this. For the National Armies, they said, 58 billion francs (approximately 166 million dollars) would be required, of which the combined budgets of France and Viet Nam could supply only 33 billion (approximately 97 million dollars). They therefore made a formal request for the United States to furnish additional aid of 70 million dollars to make up the deficit. President Truman "held out no hope" for the provision of such assistance. As Secretary Acheson informed the National Security Council later, "We cannot become directly involved in local budgetary deficits of other countries." The Secretary of State, however, initiated detailed studies concerning the matter, in the hope of devising "some other method to assure that necessary funds for the development of the National armies be forthcoming."[28]

During the conversations the French also asked for an aircraft carrier for service in Indochina. The CVL Langley had recently been transferred to France for use in Mediterranean waters and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were unwilling to provide another at this time. Secretary of Defense Marshall, however, informed M. Pleven that the conditions imposed on the employment of the Langley would be lifted to permit its operation in Indochinese waters if the French chose.[29] The carrier, which was being refitted in the United States, joined French naval forces in July, enabling the French to keep at least one carrier constantly in service in Indochina.

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28. (S) NSC 105, 23 Feb 51, CCS 337 (1-19-51); (TS) Doc C-24, Msg, Acheson to AmLegation Saigon, 30 Jan 51, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina.

29. Ibid.

The threat of a Chinese Communist invasion of Tonkin, which by this time colored every assessment of the Indochinese situation, was also discussed by the President and the Prime Minister. In accordance with Joint Chiefs of Staff advice, the French were informed that in the event an invasion forced the French to retire from Tonkin the United States would not commit any ground troops but would, if possible, assist in the evacuation of French forces.[30] The Joint Chiefs of Staff had been working on this problem for some weeks. On 26 December 1950 General Juin had written to Secretary Marshall saying that if the Chinese Communists came in, the French would have to pull out of Indochina. A National Intelligence Estimate published a few days later contained the opinion that even a relatively small force of Chinese, combined with the Viet Minh, would be able to drive the French from the delta in a short time.[31] The Chiefs therefore in mid-January directed CINCPAC to prepare plans to give United States naval and air support in case the French requested aid in evacuating their forces from Tonkin under Communist pressure. These preparations were not to be disclosed to the French but, after the Truman-Plevan discussion of the subject, General Bradley recommended to Secretary Marshall that CINCPAC be permitted to coordinate his plan with General de Lattre. On 28 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to consult with the French Commander.[32]

Other subjects, such as the European situation, were also talked over by the President and the Prime Minister, but probably the most important result of the conversations was a better understanding by each party of the other's attitude toward Indochina.

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30. Ibid.

31. (S) Ltr, Juin to Marshall, 26 Dec 50, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 10; (S) CIA NIE-5, "Indochina: Current Situation and Probable Developments," 29 Dec 50.

32. (TS) JCS 1992/49, 15 Jan 51, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 10; (TS) Msg, JCS 86957 to CINCPAC, 28 Mar 51, same file, sec 12.

President Truman throughout hewed to the line of established American policy. M. Pleven succeeded in planting one new seed of thought in the minds of American officials, the idea that France would require direct budgetary support in order to carry out the plans for the National Army of Viet Nam. The germination of this seed, however, was put off until the following year.

Auriol Visit

Two months after the Prime Minister's visit the President of France, M. Vincent Auriol, arrived in Washington, bringing with him the Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman. Once again conversations were held at which Indochina was a subject for discussion. Because, in the eyes of the United States Government, no important change had taken place in the Indochinese situation since the Truman-Pleven talks, there was no alteration of the American position. The conferences with Auriol and Schuman, therefore, added nothing to the results of the Pleven visit.

The Visit of General de Lattre

Of more significance for the development of United States policy toward Indochina was the visit of General de Lattre in September. And, oddly enough, it was in the preparations made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for his visit, rather than in the conversations themselves, that its greatest importance lay. For in considering the position they would take in discussion with the French Commander, the Chiefs came to the conclusion that the current policy had been outmoded by events and needed revision. On 14 September they recommended to the Secretary of Defense that such a review be made by the National Security Council.33

The considerations that prompted this recommendation were not explicitly stated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but an advance in their thinking was implicit in the position-paper adopted for the coming talks. One of the

33. (TS) Memo, Bradley to SecDef, "United States Policy Toward Indochina," 14 Sep 51, same file, sec 17.

items in their paper read: "It would be in the United States security interests to take military action short of the actual employment of ground forces in Indochina to prevent the fall of that country to Communism." This statement was a modification of the established policy that no United States armed forces would be committed in Indochina other than air and naval forces required to aid in an evacuation of Tonkin by the French. It was followed by another important paragraph:

> If the Chinese Communist Government intervened in Indochina overtly, appropriate action by U.S./U.N. forces might include the following:
>
> (1) A blockade of the China coast by air and naval forces with concurrent military action against selected targets held by Communist China, all without commitment of United States ground forces in China or Indochina; and
>
> (2) Eventually, the possible participation of Chinese Nationalist forces in the action.[34]

The ideas contained in this paragraph were not new. For months the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been considering them in connection with the Chinese Communist intervention in Korea. Since July, however, the opening of armistice negotiation in Korea had given them increasing importance, for the conclusion of an armistice would release strong Communist forces that might be directed against Indochina. Taken altogether, the paper provided a basis for a review of United States Indochina policy, and the ideas behind it were eventually included in the National Security Council's study that superseded NSC 64 nine months later.

The actual conversations between General de Lattre and Defense Department officials were for the most part about the aid program for Indochina. A good deal of time was spent in explaining to the general and his aides the limitations, such as those imposed by Congressional appropriations, under which the MDAP

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34. (TS) JCS 1992/93, 11 Sep 51, same file.

operated. Various procedures for administering the program were also agreed upon. General de Lattre had brought with him a list of critical items badly needed in Indochina: trucks, combat vehicles, signal equipment, and automatic weapons, among others. General Collins promised delivery by 1 January, provided shipping was available, of all of the ground force items on the list except 2,700 radios, only one-fourth of which could be provided. The United States Government, General Collins assured de Lattre, would do all it could for Indochina, and would attempt to make deliveries as early as possible.[35]

In this, as well as in other conversations with Secretary Acheson and State Department representatives, General de Lattre put forth the thesis that the conflicts in Korea and Indochina were actually one war and should be fought as such. The implications of his theory were that there should be a single command for both and a single logistical organization under which requirements of the Indochina War would have equal priority with those of Korea. He was unable, however, to sell this idea to American officials or to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who told the Secretary of Defense (since 17 September, Robert A. Lovett) that while they recognized the two wars as "but two manifestations of the same ideological conflict between the USSR and the Western World. . . . It would be wholly unacceptable . . . to attempt, under existing circumstances, to integrate the forces of the Western World engaged in the two wars . . . ."[36]

General de Lattre's visit had other effects than those of his formal conferences with political and military representatives. In a number of public statements, which were given wide coverage in the press,

35. (S) Memo of Conv bet French delegation headed by Gen de Lattre and Defense officials headed by SecDef Robert A. Lovett and Gen Collins, 20 Sep 51, in OMA files.

36. Ibid.; (S) Doc C-33, "Extracts from memorandum of conversation among Acheson, Schuman, and DeLattre, Sept 14, 1951," in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina; (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Combat Operations in Indochina," 19 Nov 51, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 19.

he succeeded in dramatizing for the American people the issues of the Indochinese war. He painted a somewhat too rosy picture, however, proclaiming that the Associated States were indeed independent, that France had abandoned all rights and privileges but was retaining the risks and burdens of the war, that the governments of the Associated States were gaining in popular support, and that popular elections would be held as soon as the military situation permitted. Nevertheless, his statements were not unwelcome to the United States Government, since they helped to justify, in the public mind, the material sacrifices the government was making in support of the French and Indochinese.

Somewhat to the annoyance of American personnel in Saigon, the controlled Indochinese press extolled the general's trip to Washington as a tremendous victory for French policy. The Legation reported:

> De Lattre was also credited with being successful in his presentation in the United States of the "one war (Korea and Indochina) in the Far East" theme; press accounts made it appear that his visit had resulted in a vast increase and acceleration of shipments of arms and materiel for Indochina . . . .
>
> De Lattre also issued a rather flamboyant open letter to Bao Dai in which he claimed to have radically changed American thinking about Indochina, with the implication that all aid programs would now be very greatly stepped up.[37]

The French statements were greatly exaggerated because no basic change in American policy, or even in the aid program, had occurred. Some necessary adjustments in the administration of the MDAP relative to Indochina had been made, however, and delivery of certain critical items were speeded. Also, General de Lattre departed from Washington in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding, and there was considerable disappointment in the American capital at the news of his death in January.

37. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for October 1951," 11 Dec 51, G-3 091 Indo China, sec I, DRB AGO.

First Tripartite Intelligence Conference

One of the few recommendations of the Singapore Conference that were realized in 1951 was the institution of tripartite intelligence conferences in Southeast Asia. The first of these conferences, however, met with United States officers participating only as "observers." At the end of August the Joint Chiefs of Staff had informed the British and French Chiefs of Staff by memorandum that they were willing "to direct U.S. intelligence officer participation in joint meetings with the French and British Armed Forces Intelligence Staffs in Saigon and Singapore on a regular basis . . . ." The British misunderstanding a reservation in the Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum, proceeded to make arrangements for an initial conference in October, to which the French agreed. At first the Joint Chiefs of Staff declined to take part in this meeting, considering it premature but when informed by the British Chiefs of Staff that the British felt themselves committed to meet with the French in any case, they consented. Because they regarded certain items in the proposed agenda, as being beyond the competence of such a conference, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to designate a representative to attend only as an observer. They did not want this representative to subscribe to, or aid in preparing, "agreed estimates" that might bind them in the future.[38]

The conference met in Saigon on 9-10 November, having been twice postponed. American armed services attaches stationed in the various Southeast Asian capitals and an officer of the Far East Air Force

38. (TS) Memo, Bradley to SecDef, "Tripartite Military Staff Talks on Southeast Asia Held at Singapore 15-18 May 1951 (Action on Conference Report)," 30 Aug 51, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 17. (S) Ltr, Brit Jt Services Mission to Secy JCS, "Military Staff Talks on South East Asia," 24 Sep 51; (TS) JCS 1992/102, 9 Oct 51; (S) Ltr, Brit Jt Services Mission to Secy JCS, "Tripartite Military Staff Talks on South East Asia," 15 Oct 51; (TS) JCS 1992/105, 24 Oct 51; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 85523, 30 Oct 51. All in same file, sec 18.

attended, along with the official representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Captain E. T. Layton, USN, designated by CINCPAC. Some disappointment was expressed by both British and French that the Americans were not there as full participants. But Admiral Radford, in forwarding the report of the conference to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, remarked that "as observers the U.S. delegation met the objectives of the conference, i.e., 'the further exchange of information,'" and recommended that the observer status be continued for future meetings.

With respect to Indochina the information revealed at the Saigon Conference was not of such a nature as to be startling to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A member of the French delegation presented an estimate of the situation but gave no data on French plans of operations. His conclusions nevertheless were interesting because of the moderate optimism they expressed, in contrast to recent estimates of General de Lattre who had been publicly predicting an end to the war in as few as fifteen months if China did not interfere. The French delegation, while they saw no important threat in the near future from either the Viet Minh or Red China, expected no "spectacular change in the situation, but only slow suffocation of the moral and armed strengths of the Viet Minh."

The conference was on the whole successful, and "some sound and valuable information" was exchanged. Perhaps more important, it made the delegates aware of each others problems, as well as of procedural shortcomings that could be remedied in future meetings.[39]

39. (TS) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, "Tripartite Intelligence Conference held at Saigon, 9 and 10 November 1951," 15 Jan 52, same file, sec 23; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for October, 1951," 11 Dec 51, G-3 091 Indo China, sec I, DRB AGO.

Origins of The Tripartite Chiefs of Staff Meeting in January 1952

In late autumn it was becoming more and more apparent that the British and French Governments were not wholly satisfied with United States interpretations of the results of the Singapore Conference. The disagreement between the allies rested on a basic conflict. The British and French wanted an over-all strategy for the defense of Southeast Asia closely coordinated between the three powers by some sort of tripartite organization. They also desired to have the United States more deeply committed to the defense of the area than American policies would allow. On the other hand, the United States held that cooperation should be achieved generally through existing mechanisms and strove to avoid any definite commitment in Southeast Asia that might limit its military flexibility in the event of a global war.

Early in November the British Government brought this issue to the surface by an Aide-Memoire addressed specifically to the problem of the Chinese threat in Southeast Asia. The British position was that

> 2. That part of the Singapore Report dealing with operational aspects made it clear that in the event of Chinese invasion of South East Asia considerable reinforcements would be required for successful resistance and that these could only come from outside the area. The provision of such reinforcements involves priorities which could only be settled in the light of an agreed tripartite policy for the defence of South East Asia and the relation of that defence to global strategy.
>
> 3. His Majesty's Government believe that a meeting of the United Kingdom, United States and French Chiefs of Staff to formulate such a policy and to make recommendations to the three Governments would be desirable. They consider that the forthcoming Meeting of the N.A.T.O. Military Committee in Rome affords a convenient opportunity for such a meeting . . . .[40]

40. (TS) Memo, Kreps to JCS, "Proposed Tripartite Discussions on the Defense of Southeast Asia," 8 Nov 51, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 19.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted nothing to do with the suggested meeting. "In effect," they wrote the Secretary of Defense, "this proposal by the British reopens the entire question of the establishment of a single military organization for the strategic direction of the armed forces of the Western World in a global war." They would not agree to the formation of such an authority "even by implication" at this time. Not only would it superimpose another structure over the NATO command organization but it would be premature, it would be labeled warmongering, and, since the USSR did not seem intent on global war at this time, it was unnecessary. Furthermore, the alignment of the Western nations and their contributions in a future conflict was not rigidly fixed and could not be forecast with sufficient accuracy to justify an immediate decision on a future command organization. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore declined the invitation, adding, however, that they would not object to conversations restricted to economic and political matters affecting Southeast Asia.[41]

But at the end of November, when General Bradley attended the NATO meeting in Rome, the British and French strongly urged him to agree to tripartite discussion between the Chiefs of Staff on the Singapore Report. They proposed to hold a conference in Washington early in January. Despite his protest that the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought a meeting unnecessary they prevailed upon him to have the matter reconsidered when he returned to the United States.[42] This he did and on 28 December the Joint Chiefs of Staff, having changed their minds, assented to a conference but with the provision that the discussions would involve no commitment on their part. They issued invitations for a meeting in Washington, and this meeting was actually in session when the news of General de Lattre's death arrived on 11 January.[43]

41. (TS) Memo, Bradley to SecDef, "Proposed Tripartite Discussions on the Defense of Southeast Asia," 12 Nov 51, same file.

42. (TS) Memo, Bradley to Maj Gen C. P. Cabell, USAF, Dir JS, 6 Dec 51, same file.

43. (TS) Memo, Bradley to SecDef, "Conference with French and British on Southeast Asia," 28 Dec 51, same file, sec 21. See Ch. X, below, for the account of the Washington Conference.

By the end of 1951 other agencies of the American Government had joined the Joint Chiefs of Staff in calling for a review of United States policy toward Indochina.[44] Almost half a year was to pass, however, before a new statement of policy was formally approved by the President and the National Security Council. Nevertheless, the ideas that prompted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to urge a revision as far back as September appeared in their actions and planning even before the new National Security Council decision was made, and colored their conversations at the Washington Conference. Although the official policy had not changed perceptibly during 1951 a stronger attitude toward the Indochina problem was in the Washington air as the new year opened.

Progress of Aid to Indochina

During the first four months of 1951 MDAP aid flowed to Indochina at a constant and fairly good rate, averaging over 10,000 long tons per month exclusive of aircraft and vessels delivered under their own power. In May, however, shipments fell off sharply and the average monthly tonnage unloaded at Saigon from July through September was only 4,147 long tons. The lowest point was reached in October, when only 1,772 long tons of MDAP cargo were received in Indochina.[45]

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44. Ibid.

45. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for June 1951," 24 Jul 51, G-3 091 Indo China, sec II-A, bk II, DRB AGO; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for October, 1951," 11 Dec 51, same file, sec I. The figures given in this study relative to the amounts and value of MDAP material delivered to Indochina are only approximate and not always trustworthy. They are obtained from summaries and the periodic reports of various agencies concerned with the administration of the program, and the data given by one office sometimes differ from those of another. Furthermore, discrepancies are to be found within single reports, so that at the present a true, detailed account of the aid program is unavailable.

The French and Vietnamese began in May to express considerable anxiety over the delay of expected shipments for the National Army. A seven months delay in its activation schedule was attributed to this cause by the Vietnamese government. From Saigon the United States Legation reported:

> . . . In assessing the matter at the end of the month /May/ it was determined that out of 34 planned battalions--of which 27 already exist--only eight battalions had been fully equipped and three partially equipped, whereas 16 battalions have been activated with only equipment supplied from French reserve. The final 7 battalions, which are to be activated by February, apparently have little prospect of obtaining army equipment from the FY 1951 program. In the Legation's opinion this is a serious situation since ultimate solution of the entire Indochinese problem is strongly dependent on accelerating the development of an adequate Vietnamese national army.[46]

Expressions of French concern about the slow rate of arrival of MDAP equipment culminated in General de Lattre's complaints to American officials during his visit in September.

This dissatisfaction was not without a reasonable basis. MDAP shipments had been lagging generally behind schedule, and not only those slated for Indochina, but those programmed for other recipient nations as well. In October Secretary Lovett listed for President Truman the reasons why deliveries had been sluggish during the preceding eight months. "One important factor," he wrote, "has been the indefinite extent and nature of the total program which the Defense Department was to undertake when related to the amount of funds that would be available for its implementation." In addition,

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46. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for May 1951," 22 Jun 51, same file, sec II-A, bk I; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for June 1951," 24 Jul 51, same file, bk II.

there was a shortage of machine tools, "spot shortages" of some critical materials, strikes in important industries, some shortage of production capacity and of skilled personnel, and a lack of experience in producing newly developed items of equipment.[47] Constant efforts were being made in the United States to correct this situation with the result that equipment shortages in Indochina were considerably lessened in 1952. The French admitted, among themselves, that in 1952 owing to United States aid, "the supply situation became virtually sound and the services could . . . claim to function normally."[48] Nevertheless, the French never wholly stopped complaining about deficiencies in the aid program. "The squeaking wheel gets the most grease" can be translated into almost any language.

The extraordinary measures taken by the Defense Department to speed deliveries after the de Lattre visit caused the volume of shipments to Indochina to increase greatly. In November 25,200 measurement tons of cargo were shipped and during December 30,050 measurement tons. This tempo of supply was maintained generally throughout the following year.[49]

The magnitude of the United States contribution is indicated by the MDAP Status Report for December, which contained a resume of the shipments of items listed as critical by General de Lattre in September. As of 31 December, of 4,500 general purpose vehicles requested, 2,977 trucks and 854 trailers had been shipped or were in port awaiting shipment; of 300 combat vehicles, 40 had left port and 205 were at port awaiting shipment; 600 radio sets had been shipped; and of 8,900 machine guns, 4,172 had been shipped and 4,743 were in port awaiting shipment. Thirty LCM's, 36 LCVP's, 26 Coast Guard Patrol Craft, and 1 LST had left the United States for Indochina. In January 1952 FECOM stocks

47. (TS) JCS 2099/138, 30 Oct 51, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec 61.
48. (TS) Navarre Briefing Doc, Jun 53, p. 48, in OMA files.
49. Ibid.; (S) MDAP Status Reports for Months of November and December 1951.

were levied upon for 622 additional trucks. By the end of the month the bulk of the items on General de Lattre's list had been shipped.[50]

A summary of the MDAP aid to Indochina as of the end of 1951 shows that since the beginning of the program for that country 260,045 measurement tons of supplies, valued at 163,600,000 dollars, had been shipped. A total of 320,100,000 dollars had already been programmed, and this figure was to rise in January 1952 to 460,000,000 dollars.[51]

ECA Program in Indochina

By mid-1951 the economic aid program administered by the United States STEM in Saigon was making itself felt in support of the military effort. Through it, funds were provided for road construction and improvement (over 3 million dollars), for the purchase of earth-moving equipment and asphalt for the improvement of airstrips, for procuring medical supplies, marine engines and ferries, tin plate used in canning army rations, and for many other items directly or indirectly aiding the armed services. In addition, it was taking care of civilian needs, such as housing and medical facilities, all important to civilian, and therefore, to army morale. In fighting disease and social unrest the ECA program was contributing much to the battle against Communism in the Associated States.[52]

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50. Ibid.; (S) MDAP Status Report for Month of January 1952.

51. Ibid.; (S) MDAP Status Report for Month of February 1952.

52. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for April 1951," 21 May 51, G-3 091 Indo China, sec I, DRB AGO; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report for June 1951," 24 Jul 51, same file, sec II-A, bk II.

French Attitude toward the United States Aid Programs

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the year had begun auspiciously for Franco-American relations in Indochina. MDAP materiel had furnished the substance of General de Lattre's defensive victories and the High Commissioner had proven suitably grateful. But as the ECA program developed there was a recrudescence of the former French attitudes of suspicion and jealousy of Americans in Indochina. In noting the reappearance of French distrust, the Legation in Saigon attributed it to an upsurge of old colonial phobias, to the professional jealousy of military men, to fear of losing prestige, and to exaggerated fears that American participation in the military effort might stimulate Chinese Communist retaliation.53 And while these feelings were directed much less toward MDAP and MAAG than toward STEM, they could not help but limit to some extent the freedom of action afforded General Brink's group. There was no question however, of a return to the antagonistic attitude toward MAAG of the pre-de Lattre days.

The chief target of French suspicions was STEM, probably owing to the fact that this agency dealt directly with the governments of the Associated States and not through the French. Also, the publicity given STEM's work had resulted in a growth of American prestige in Indochina. An event symptomatic of the French state of mind occurred in June, when a United States-Vietnamese Economic Assistance Agreement was scheduled for signing. The French interposed some rather factitious objections at the last minute, thereby delaying completion of the agreement until September. And when an American news story ascribed the delay to the French, General de Lattre responded with a "rather irritated" press release.54

During his visit to Washington the High Commissioner, whose jealousy of French Union prerogatives was well-known, indicated he had not been happy, early in 1951, about "a number of young men with a 'missionary zeal'

53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.

/who/ were dispensing economic aid with the result that there was a feeling on the part of some that they were using this aid to extend American influence." He added, however, that his relations with the economic mission had since become much better.[55] But in this he perhaps was being only diplomatic, for the French attitude of suspicion persisted.

As the year ended another disquieting note was introduced into Franco-American relations as they concerned MDAP in Indochina. In its report for December the Legation in Saigon informed the State Department:

> As the difficulties of the military situation here increased /as a result of the Hoa Binh offensive/ the Legation has noted the disturbing tendency of both the French high officials and medium-level bureaucrats to misrepresent the volume and timing of American military aid deliveries. The theme has been "too little and too late." Mr. MASSOT and M. DUPONT, who are members of Parliament and shortly to visit Viet Nam, have made statements in the French Assembly to this effect. The Minister for the AS, M. LETOURNEAU, is himself responsible for the statement that by the end of the year only 43 shiploads of war material had been delivered to IC amounting to some 70,000 tons and valued at somewhere about 60 million francs. Actually, some 93 ships had offloaded in the ports of IC with a total tonnage approximately 90,000 tons with a value many times that cited by the French.
>
> Appropriate steps were taken at MAAG conferences with the French General Staff to induce these officers, who very well know the actual amount of deliveries, to correct misstatements and prevent further publication of tendentious and erroneous articles.[56]

55. (TS) Doc C-34, Mns, 2nd Mtg, Dep State with de Lattre, 17 Sep 51, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina.

56. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 15 (December 1951)," 21 Mar 52, G-3 091 Indo China, sec I-A, bk I.

The implications of this report were made explicit in the report for the following month:

> there was an intensification of the trend noticed last month for the French to exculpate themselves in advance of a deteriorating military situation by criticizing the amount and timeliness of American aid.[57]

While earlier French complaints about the rate of MDAP deliveries may have had some justification, there was none for the misrepresentations described in the Legation reports. Such actions might well have given American authorities cause to fear that the French would blame a general defeat in Indochina on an alleged failure of United States military aid. In any case these pronouncements could not fail to have a bad effect on the atmosphere in which the assistance program was conducted.

Despite the vastly increased rate of MDAP deliveries in the last two months of 1951 it cannot be said that the aid program for the year was entirely successful. During a considerable part of the period the flow of materiel was behind schedule. Although the subsequent history of the Indochina war indicates that the resultant delay in activation of some National Army battalions probably did not affect the final outcome, it does leave room for speculation about what greater contribution those battalions might have made in 1952 and 1953 had they received the benefit of the lost months of training. On the whole, however, the United States had done fairly well under the circumstances and it must be remembered that in 1951 the men fighting in Korea had first call on American equipment. The "limited war" was also a limiting war.

57. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State Dept, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 16 (January 1952)," 24 Mar 52, same file.

CHAPTER X

FROM JANUARY 1952 TO THE END OF THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

The year 1952 saw little progress in the struggle in Indochina. On neither the political front, nor on the military, did the French and Vietnamese achieve an important victory. On neither did they suffer an important defeat. At the end of the year the situation in Viet Nam was about what it had been at the time of General de Lattre's death, a little better in some respects, a little worse in others. Yet, although the anti-Communist forces had been able to "hold their own," the free world's prospects of victory in that area actually declined. The French and the loyal Vietnamese were in a position where, if they did not go forward, they had to slide backward.

Time was on the side of the Communists. This is not to say that the Viet Minh forces were growing so fast that they would soon be able to crush the French. They were not. The French and Vietnamese regular troops constantly outnumbered the Viet Minh regulars. They had superior equipment. They were supported by air and naval forces to which the rebels could offer little active opposition. In addition, they held well-fortified positions that could not be easily overrun. But in France itself the people and the government were becoming more and more weary of a war that seemed to drag on without end. There were increasingly numerous indications that if the war could not be won quickly in Indochina it might be lost in France. And the war was not being won.

The Military Situation in Indochina

The death of General de Lattre deprived the French in Indochina of a commander who had great prestige, energy, and experience, combined with the will to fight. His successor, General Raoul Salan, could not adequately fill his shoes. Conservative, overcautious, and defensive-minded, Salan conducted the war with a "barbed-wire strategy" reminiscent of the first World War. His

concept of operations seems to have been to fortify strong points and wait for the enemy to attack them in the hope of inflicting many more casualties on the attackers than his own forces suffered. In this he had just enough success during 1952 to keep his strategy from being discredited. The result was that the Viet Minh forces usually held the initiative.

Unlike General de Lattre, General Salan did not wear, over his soldier's cap, the hat of High Commissioner. The duties of that office were given to M. Jean Letourneau, who as Minister Resident, nevertheless retained his position in the French Cabinet as Minister for the Associated States. Thus the French Government returned to the system that had worked so poorly in the years prior to 1951, that of dividing responsibility for French affairs in Indochina between a civil administrator and a military commander.[1] And since the Minister Resident was a more powerful figure than the High Commander, the stultifying hand of politics was once more in a position directly to restrain and blunt the sword of strategy. The extent to which political considerations affected the conduct of operations in Indochina cannot be determined, but it may be surmised that General Salan did not have a free hand.

Unfortunately for the new French Commander, he had to enter upon his duties under rather distressing circumstances. He had to contend with a general letdown in morale following the death of de Lattre, whom many in Indochina had regarded as the one man who could bring the war to a successful end. Also, he had to give up Hoa Binh, thereby acknowledging failure of the one strategically offensive operation undertaken by the French since the autumn of 1950. And in addition, he had to fight in the shadow of what the French were convinced was a constantly growing threat of Chinese Communist intervention. According to a United States intelligence estimate of

1. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 19 (April 1952)," 23 May 52, G-3 091 Indo China sec I-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

to defeat, the Viet Minh regular forces. He had a substantial numerical superiority (about 26,000) in numbers of troops. He could dispose of superior equipment, fire power, mobility, and air support. He could operate on interior lines, backed by the fortifications of the Delta perimeter. He knew in general the strength and disposition of his enemy. He could have seized the initiative--but he did not. The French, by default, permitted the Viet Minh to take the offensive.

Early in October the Communist forces began attacking French outposts in the Thai country west and north of the Delta. The area was one of secondary economic and political importance and the French felt that these attacks were merely diversions calculated to draw friendly forces outside the perimeter. Between 10 and 15 October, however, concerted attacks drove in the outposts of the fortified position at Nghia Lo, which fell to the Viet Minh on 18 October. The French Command then decided to fortify a strong position in the path of the enemy advance and there await the attack. It therefore concentrated at Na San its forces that were in the area and flew in reinforcements from the Delta. After fighting a delaying action along the Black River the French completed their concentration on 20 November.

Meanwhile opportunity was knocking for the second time on the French door. On 29 October General Salan, with the aim of diverting some Viet Minh forces from the Black River, had launched a column from the Delta northwest along the east side of the Red River. This force successfully cut across the Viet Minh lines of communication, destroying about 500 tons of supplies in dumps. But, once astride the enemy lines of communication, the French column withdrew, casting aside what American observers believed to be the chance to inflict a decisive defeat on the Communist forces. The French Command preferred to fight a defensive battle at Na San.

The attack on Na San began on 24 November and ended nine days later when the Viet Minh withdrew, having suffered severe casualties (over 1,500 counted dead). From the French point of view this was a successful

battle. But members of the CINCPAC staff who analyzed the campaign concluded that the battle had contributed little toward ending the war and that in order to achieve an unimportant victory the defensive-minded French Command had thrown away a chance to fight a decisive battle under favorable circumstances.[5] Furthermore, except for the region around Na San, the Viet Minh remained in possession of the territory they had invaded. Although it was an area of secondary importance its capture was a psychological and political victory for the Communists and enhanced their prestige among the native population.

The autumn campaign in Tonkin convinced many American officials that unless some fairly drastic change was made in the French conduct of the war there would be a prolonged period of stalemate in Indochina during which the French-Vietnamese situation might well deteriorate. Two solutions to this problem were put forward. The first was to persuade the French to adopt and carry out an aggressive plan of campaign aimed at a decisive defeat of Viet Minh forces. The second was to persuade them to give their commanders sufficient forces, preferably by raising the number of Vietnamese regular units, so that even a Salan might be enticed from behind his barbed wire to strike a massive blow at the enemy. During the following year both solutions were tried at once.

The Political Situation in Indochina--No Progress

If, by the end of 1952, the military outlook in Indochina was dreary, nothing in the political scene was any brighter. The government of Bao Dai had little more popular support in December than it had enjoyed in January and seemed to have few prospects for gaining such support in the foreseeable future. Its appeal for the average Vietnamese was not strengthened by the appointment, in April, of Letourneau as Minister Resident. M. Letourneau was known to regard the independence of Viet Nam as having already been completed and to

5. Ibid.

oppose any major revision of the 8 March Accords.[6] The French seemed determined to cling to their position in Indochina like a drowning man refusing to let go a sack of gold that is dragging him down.

On 2 June, in an effort to obtain a government with a broader base of popular and regional representation, the cabinet of Tran Van Huu was replaced by one under Nguyen Van Tam. Unfortunately, Tam was not only a French citizen but was well-known as an ardent French supporter, even more closely identified with French policies than Huu had been. The new Premier made many fine promises to the people, which were received with skepticism. He installed a Provisional National Council, ostensibly a sort of representative assembly, but the members were hand-picked by him. The Council never played any important role in Vietnamese affairs and, of course, never captured the imagination of the people. In 1952, at least, Tam was unable to do either the Bao Dai government or the French any good.[7]

The state of affairs in Viet Nam during this period is illustrated by a passage in the April MDAP report from the American Legation in Saigon.

> Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Defense declared that Government has decided not to call up the fourth increment of conscripts in order that funds and present cadres could be used in accelerating the formation of two additional regular VN divisions to make a total of six by the end of 1952. He added that the draft is in any case not a primary source of manpower for the Army in view of the fact that there are

6. (S) CIA NIE 35/2, "Probably Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1953," 29 Aug 52. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 19 (April 1952)," 23 May 52, G-3 091 Indo China, sec I-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

7. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 21 (June 1952)," 31 Jul 52, same file; (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 70-71; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 281-291.

> sufficient volunteers and enlistees to create a regular army of any size required, provided sufficient funds and material are provided. He referred significantly to the uselessness of training conscripts only to have them defect to, or be kidnapped by, the Viet Minh . . . .[8]

Clearly, in the opinion of the Vietnamese government the national mobilization, from which much had been expected, had not succeeded.

In spite of this history of failures the situation in Indochina itself did not seem hopeless to the American Government. But more and more, as the end of the year approached, the word "stalemate" appeared in reports from Saigon, in intelligence estimates dealing with Indochina, and in conversations among United States officials concerning that country. In modern war, however, unlike a game of chess, stalemate is not the end of the game. American planners during 1952 sought to prevent the introduction of a new red queen, Communist China, and at the same time to strengthen friendly forces to the point where the stalemate could be broken.

Development of American Policy toward Indochina

This period witnessed the development of four important trends in the Indochinese war as it affected United States policy. Firstly, Washington was taking its place with Paris and Saigon as a center of political and military strategic planning for the war. For not only was the vital military aid program determined in the United States capital; increasingly numerous tripartite and bilateral conferences between American, British, and French officials concerning the situation in Southeast Asia were held there. Secondly, the United States Government was being drawn into closer and closer cooperation, on a high military level, with the British and French on the problems of the area. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, fearing that this tendency might lead to a combined command of some sort, or to increased American responsibility in the Indochinese conflict, sometimes

8. (S) Rpt, Gullion to State, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 19 (April 1952)," 23 May 52, G-3 091 Indo China, sec I-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

protested against it, though with little success. Thirdly, the threat of Chinese Communist intervention was beginning to dwarf other factors in the Southeast Asian picture, especially for the French, who seemed obsessed with this danger. Finally, France itself was beginning to crack under the triple burden of the Indochinese war, European rearmament, and the chronic instability of its own government. Although this trend was by no means ignored in United States planning, its rapid progress leading to the Geneva settlement was not generally foreseen.

The Washington Chiefs of Staff Conference

All of these trends were operating, directly or indirectly, on United States policy at the time of the tripartite Chiefs of Staff conference in Washington on 11 January. The preparations for this conference had already been made at the end of the previous year and the Joint Chiefs of Staff went into it ready to discuss measures for implementing the recommendations of the Singapore Report and to exchange informal views with the British and French on ways to fight the extension of Communism in Southeast Asia. As it turned out the problem that received the most attention during the discussions was how to deter Chinese Communist aggression in the area, and particularly in Indochina.

General Juin, the spokesman for the French delegation, assured the conferees that the French could at least hold their present positions in Viet Nam against the Viet Minh. He was, however, especially alarmed about the possibility of a Chinese Communist invasion of Tonkin. In this he was joined by the British, who feared for Burma and Malaya should Tonkin fall. Despite intelligence reports about extensive construction and repair work on Chinese lines of communication leading into Indochina, the Joint Intelligence Committee had advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff that although capabilities for it existed such an invasion did not seem imminent.[9] The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, felt that the possibility was great enough to justify serious consideration of deterrent measures.

9. (S) JIC 529/10, 9 Jan 52, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 3.

More than that, the Joint Chiefs of Staff inclined to the view that Chinese Communist aggression was all of a piece, and in this respect the problem of Indochina was linked to that of Korea. The United States Government had already been discussing with other participants in the Korean Conflict a statement, to be issued on the signing of a Korean armistice, warning Peiping that a renewal of aggression in Korea would bring a United Nations reaction not necessarily confined to that area. When, therefore, the possibility of issuing a similar warning against aggression in Southeast Asia was broached at the conference the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with the British and French Chiefs of Staff that they should recommend that this measure be considered by their respective governments.[10]

This agreement logically brought the conference to the question of what to do if such a warning were issued and then ignored by the Chinese Communists. Retaliation in the form of atomic bombs was mentioned, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff brought up the possibilities of naval blockade of the China coast and employment of Chinese Nationalist forces. The delegates, however, decided to turn the problem of determining the form of retaliation over to an Ad Hoc Committee composed of military representatives of the three powers, plus Australia and New Zealand, who, since September 1951, had been allied with the United States in the Tripartite Security Pact (ANZUS). According to the terms of reference provided by the conference delegates, the Ad Hoc Committee was to:

> a. Determine the collective capabilities of the nations represented on the committee which could be made available for retaliation;
> b. Make recommendations for eventual transmission to Governments through the respective Chiefs of Staff as to what specific military measures might be taken as a collective effort

10. (TS) Notes recorded by Secy and DepSecy JCS at the U.S.-U.K.-Fr. CsofS Tri Talks on Southeast Asia (hereinafter: Notes on the Washington Conf), 11 Jan 52, same file, sec 22.

against the Chinese Communists not only in threatened areas but also directly against China.[11]

Although he concurred in the appointment of the Ad Hoc Committee and in the terms of reference, General Juin was not quite satisfied with this solution. He wanted a commitment for air and naval support in the event the Chinese Communists should invade Tonkin before the warning was issued and before the committee had completed its work. General Bradley, speaking for the United States, replied that this was a matter for the governments to decide, that the United States Government was currently giving urgent consideration to the situation in Southeast Asia but had not yet made a decision. The Chiefs of Staff thereupon turned to the problems of implementing the report of the Singapore Conference.

The agreements reached during the remainder of the discussions may be summarized briefly. It was decided that the United States delegates to the Tripartite Intelligence Conferences on Southeast Asia would henceforth attend as participating members rather than as observers. Further, the United States would exchange information with the British concerning control of shipping and contraband bound for the Communists in Southeast Asia and China. The United States refused, however, to participate in establishing a supply base for the French at Singapore or to alter the machinery of the MAAG through which military aid for Indochina was supplied.[12] With agreement on these points the conference closed.

The Cooper Statement--An Implied Warning

The Joint Chiefs of Staff and officials of the State Department realized that it would be some time before the warning contemplated at the Washington Conference could be issued. Not only would they have to wait for the Ad Hoc Committee to complete its deliberations but the required political decision would require lengthy consideration by the governments concerned. They nevertheless

11. (TS) "Terms of Reference to the Ad Hoc Committee," 11 Jan 52, same file.
12. (TS) Notes on the Washington Conf.

agreed that the earlier a warning was issued, the better it would be.[13]

But if, pending a political agreement, the United States Government was not free unilaterally to threaten retaliation, a less drastic warning could be given as an interim measure. Thus, on 28 January, Mr. John Sherman Cooper, United States delegate to the UN General Assembly, solemnly announced to the Assembly's Committee I (Political and Security):

> At this time I must, on instructions of my Government, state clearly that any . . . Communist aggression in Southeast Asia would, in the view of my Government, be a matter of direct and grave concern which would require the most urgent and earnest consideration by the United Nations.[14]

This statement did not commit the United States to any armed reaction against a Chinese Communist attack in Indochina. It did imply, however, that such an attack might meet a United Nations effort similar to the defense of Korea.

The Five-Power Ad Hoc Committee

On 5 February the United States representative on the Ad Hoc Committee, Vice Admiral A. C. Davis, submitted the report of the committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He sent along with it his own analysis of the report and of the discussions that had taken place in the committee meetings, a document more revealing of the individual national positions than the report itself.

The British and French, Admiral Davis stated, had been unwilling to "meet the terms of reference," which

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13. (TS) Summary of notes recorded by DepSecy JCS at State-Defense Meeting held on 16 and 23 Jan 52, in DepSecy, JCS files.

14. State Dept Bulletin, No. 659, 11 Feb 52, p. 224.

required recommendations on what might be done if retaliatory action against a Chinese Communist aggression was instituted by the governments of the five powers. Instead, they had undertaken to decide, within the committee, that real retaliatory action should not be taken and that military measures should be aimed merely at defending the area attacked. Both British and French members had opposed the measures, advocated by the United States delegate, of blockading the Chinese coast. Both had also opposed bombing China except in direct support of operations close to that part of the border over which the Chinese Communist armies were attacking. Their opposition was rationalized by their assumptions that blockade and bombing would be at once impractical and ineffectual.

According to Admiral Davis, the French position was based on a desire to prevent forces from being diverted outside the scene of operations in Indochina; the French wanted all the aid and commitments they could get in connection with their immediate problem in Tonkin. The British position, more definitely expressed than the French, indicated an intention to avoid any measures that might unduly irritate Peiping or Moscow. The British wished to defend Hong Kong and Indochina, but not to take any drastic action against Communist China itself.[15] In the report of the Ad Hoc Committee the British member averred that blockade would at least ruin Hong Kong economically if it did not lead to its fall, while there was little doubt that bombing China would cause retaliatory action against the colony.

One possible course of action all delegates agreed to reject. "We consider," they reported, "/that/ the use of Chinese Nationalist Forces in their present state of training and equipment is inadvisable and unlikely to cause the Chinese Communists to desist from their aggressive action." As to atomic weapons, their use was not mentioned. Admiral Davis had been instructed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff not to consider them.

15. (TS) Memo, Davis to JCS, "Report of the Five Power Ad Hoc Committee on Southeast Asia," 5 Feb 52, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 24.

Despite their knowledge of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff's aversion to anything resembling a combined command for Southeast Asia, the British and French members inserted in the report a plea for setting up machinery for the joint implementation of any agreed military measures. The United States member, of course, registered his opposition. In his analysis of the report Admiral Davis remarked,

> . . . the British and French are determined to persist in their desire to set up a form of combined command in the Southeast Asia area. In the Ad Hoc Committee report this intention is toned down . . . but the original draft on this point as proposed by the British, together with attendant discussion, indicates that they think any direct support operations by us should come under the French in Indochina and under the British in Hong Kong. . . . it seems to me that . . . they would like not only to determine what we shall do with our own forces in the event of our taking military action with respect to the Southeast Asia problem, but also to command our forces while these limited actions are being taken.[16]

In Admiral Davis' opinion the committee, except for clarifying basic differences, had accomplished little. He was convinced that the British and French had expressed themselves on the basis of firm, national politico-military positions, and that the United States views would not be supported by their governments even if the British and French committee members had approved them. The time had come, he thought, to "firm up some sort of Defense-State position before engaging in further argument on the strictly military level."[17]

It was apparent that the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee had put the British, French, and United States

16. Ibid.; (TS) Rpt by Ad Hoc Cmte on South East Asia, 5 Feb 52, same file.
17. Ibid.

August 1952 "The French /were/ apprehensive that substantial French victories would bring about such intervention, with which the French, because of their limited capabilities, would be unable to cope."[2]

Progress of the Fighting in Spring and Summer, 1952

The Viet Minh attacks against the French position at Hoa Binh had been accompanied by extensive infiltration of the Tonkin Delta area. In February, when the French evacuated Hoa Binh, this infiltration grew to serious proportions and occasioned the heaviest fighting since 1950. With considerable success the French employed mobile units against the Viet Minh forces within the delta perimeter and by July had restored the area to a relatively calm condition. In the process they reportedly crippled one Viet Minh division and inflicted severe losses on some other units, thus reducing the capabilities of the rebels, and also their morale, for several months.[3]

During the late summer the French undertook two limited operations south of the Delta against an isolated enemy regiment. These actions were successful in producing a considerable number of Viet Minh casualties but fell short of their aim, which was complete annihilation of the regiment. In the meantime Ho Chi Minh's main forces reportedly were being reorganized and put through a course of training, including combined maneuvers, in preparation for the fall campaign.[4]

The Autumn Campaign in 1952

When dry weather appeared, at the end of September, General Salan was in a position to attack, and probably

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2. (S) CIA NIE-35/2, "Probable Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1953," 29 Aug 52, p. 3; (S) Rpt, Gullion to State, "MDAP Monthly Report No. 16 (January 1952)," 24 Mar 52, G-3 091 Indo China, sec I-A, bk I, DRB AGO.

3. (TS) Navarre Briefing Doc, Jun 53, in OMA files; (TS) Ann B to CINCPAC Staff Study, "Evaluation of Military Operations in Indochina," 18 Apr 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 9.

4. Ibid.

Chiefs of Staff no nearer to agreement on the form of retaliation against Chinese Communist aggression. It was also obvious that their basic differences would have to be resolved before the contemplated warning could be issued. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not need to be reminded of the fact that the United States Government required a new, firm policy toward the problem of Southeast Asia as a basis from which negotiations could be carried on. Such a policy had been the subject of study by the NSC staff since late in 1951. This study was about to emerge from the mill and the Chiefs wished to wait for a final decision on it before undertaking any further military talks with the British and French concerning the area.

The Development of NSC 124/2

The initial draft of the new policy toward Southeast Asia, NSC 124, was submitted by the NSC staff on 13 February. Insofar as it applied to Indochina, it was directed more toward countering a possible invasion by the Chinese Communists than toward helping the French and Vietnamese to win their struggle in Tonkin. Furthermore, the measures recommended for use in the event of overt Communist aggression were tied either to the framework of the United Nations or to joint action with the British and French.[18]

In their official comments on the NSC draft the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that in recent conferences the British and French had shown themselves opposed to even the concept of military action against China other than in an area of aggression. But without military measures directed against China itself the local defense of Indochina would have, in the Chiefs' opinion, no reasonable chance of success. Therefore, unless the National Security Council could give assurance that at least the British and French would agree to such measures, the new policy should provide for unilateral action by the United States to save Southeast Asia. Only on this basis could the Joint Chiefs of Staff make reasonable plans and determine their costs and requirements.

18. (TS) NSC 124, 13 Feb 52, same file.

What the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted was a political decision by the National Security Council on whether or not the United States Government, in order to save Southeast Asia from Communism, was willing to take military actions that would, in effect, constitute war against Communist China. If the answer was affirmative the Chiefs could then estimate the costs of specific courses of action and the National Security Council could make further decisions concerning them. The Joint Chiefs of Staff alerted the National Security Council to the fact that preparations for the contemplated measures in Southeast Asia could be made only at the expense of other programs, such as that for NATO, unless United States military production was stepped up and "forces in being" were increased.[19]

There ensued several months of discussion and negotiations between the Departments of State and Defense and the NSC staff. During this time the National Security Council decided to give more consideration, in the new statement of policy, to what the United States should do for Indochina in the current situation, that is, in the absence of overt Chinese Communist aggression. Finally, on 25 June, President Truman approved a revision of NSC 124--which, as NSC 124/2, included the first comprehensive United States policy toward Indochina.

In NSC 124/2 the United States Government recognized that the primary threat to Southeast Asia lay in the possible deterioration of the situation in Indochina as a result of the French and Associated States Governments weakening in their resolve to continue, or becoming unable to continue opposing the Viet Minh rebellion. It also recognized that the successful defense of Tonkin was "critical" to the retention in non-Communist hands of mainland Southeast Asia. For the purpose of holding the entire area, NSC 124/2 provided that:

19. (TS) Memo, Vandenberg to SecDef, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Communist Aggression in Southeast Asia," 3 Mar 52, same file, sec 25.

7. With respect to Southeast Asia, the United States should:

a. Strengthen propaganda and cultural activities, as appropriate, in relation to the area to foster increased alignment of the people with the free world.

b. Continue, as appropriate, programs of economic and technical assistance designed to strengthen the indigenous non-communist governments of the area.

c. Encourage the countries of Southeast Asia to restore and expand their commerce with each other and with the rest of the free world, and stimulate the flow of the raw material resources of the area to the free world.

d. Seek agreement with other nations, including at least France, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, for a joint warning to Communist China regarding the grave consequences of Chinese aggression against Southeast Asia, the issuance of such a warning to be contingent upon the prior agreement of France and the UK to participate in the courses of action set forth in paragraphs 10 c, 12, . . . and such others as are determined as a result of prior trilateral consultation, in the event such a warning is ignored.

e. Seek UK and French agreement in principle that a naval blockade of Communist China should be included in the minimum courses of action set forth in paragraph 10 c below.

f. Continue to encourage and support closer cooperation among the countries of Southeast Asia, and between those countries and the United States, Great Britain, France, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, South Asia and Japan.

g. Strengthen, as appropriate, covert operations designed to assist in the achievement of U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia.

h. Continue activities and operations designed to encourage the overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia to organize and activate anti-communist groups and activities within their own communities . . . .

i. Take measures to promote the coordinated defense of the area, and encourage and support the spirit of resistance among the peoples of Southeast Asia to Chinese Communist aggression and to the encroachments of local communists.

j. Make clear to the American people the importance of Southeast Asia to the security of the United States so that they may be prepared for any of the courses of action proposed herein.

8. With respect to Indochina the United States should:

a. Continue to promote international support for the three Associated States.

b. Continue to assure the French that the U.S. regards the French effort in Indochina as one of great strategic importance in the general international interest rather than in the purely French interest, and as essential to the security of the free world, not only in the Far East but in the Middle East and Europe as well.

c. Continue to assure the French that we are cognizant of the sacrifices entailed for France in carrying out her effort in Indochina and that, without overlooking the principle that France has the primary responsibility in Indochina, we will recommend to the Congress appropriate military, economic and financial aid to France and the Associated States.

d. Continue to cultivate friendly and increasingly cooperative relations with the Governments of France and the Associated States at all levels with a view to maintaining and, if possible, increasing the degree of influence the U.S. can bring to bear on the policies and actions of the

Defense-State conference on 16 July State Department representatives argued that a five-power military representatives conference would serve as "a step toward bringing the other powers to an acceptance of the United States concept of the solution to the problems incident to Southeast Asia" and that the terms of reference proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not be made acceptable to the other four powers. Faced with these arguments the Joint Chiefs of Staff consented to soften their position and agreed to more general terms of reference. According to these terms the conferees were to assume that the five powers had jointly decided to take action against Communist China in the event of further Chinese Communist aggression and that a joint warning had been issued to Peiping. From a purely military point they were to determine the collective military capabilities that might be made available and to make recommendations on the feasible military courses of action for causing the Chinese Communists to cease their aggression.[24]

On 6 October, their governments having agreed to these terms of reference, the military representatives of the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and New Zealand met with the United States delegation, headed by Major General J. S. Bradley, USA, in Washington. After eleven days of deliberation the conferees submitted a report containing over-all conclusions that conformed generally with JCS positions of long standing. The representatives agreed that:

> Air, ground and naval action limited only to the areas of aggression and contiguous areas of China offers little prospect of causing Communist China to cease its aggression.
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> The imposition of a total sea blockade, in conjunction with /such action/ . . ., might have a significant cumulative effect. This course of action offers little assurance of forcing the Chinese Communists to cease aggression.
>
> A combination of all coercive measures including the defense of the areas of aggression,

24. (TS) JCS 1992/174, 26 Jul 52, same file, sec 33.

> interdiction of the lines of communication, a full sea blockade and air attacks on all suitable targets of military significance in China, insofar as they are within the Allied capabilities, plus such reinforcements in time and scale as may be practicable in the immediate area, offers the best prospect of causing Communist China to cease an aggression.[25]

It was the opinion of Major General Bradley, expressed in a separate report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that these conclusions represented a step forward from positions established in the February Ad Hoc Committee meetings. But it was apparent from the discussions, he said, that the agreement was forced by the terms of reference. When the representatives had attempted to settle on the strategy against Communist China that could be undertaken with the forces available the British and French had displayed the same interests, attitudes, and fears described by Admiral Davis in February. Australia and New Zealand, not unnaturally, adhered in general to the United Kingdom position. Without agreements reached at a high political level, Major General Bradley concluded, or unless there were a decided change in United States policy, further five-power military talks on Southeast Asia would serve no useful purpose.[26]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff Act on the Five-Power Conference Report

The Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred with Major General Bradley's opinion that further five-power military meetings were useless without prior jointly agreed political guidance. They were encouraged, however, by the conference report. They recommended to the Secretary of Defense that NSC 124/2 be amended to provide for securing assent "under the auspices of the United Nations

25. (TS) Rpt of the Five Power Mil Conf on South East Asia, 17 Oct 52, same file, sec 34.
26. (TS) Memo, Maj Gen J.S. Bradley to JCS, "Report of the Five Power Military Representatives Conference on Southeast Asia," 23 Oct 52, same file.

French and Indochinese authorities to the end of directing the course of events toward the objectives we seek. Our influence with the French and Associated States should be designed to further those constructive political, economic and social measures which will tend to increase the stability of the Associated States and thus make it possible for the French to reduce the degree of their participation in the military, economic and political affairs of the Associated States.

e. Specifically we should use our influence with France and the Associated States to promote positive political, military, economic and social policies, among which the following are considered essential elements:

(1) Continued recognition and carrying out by France of its primary responsibility for the defense of Indochina.

(2) Further steps by France and the Associated States toward the evolutionary development of the Associated States.

(3) Such reorganization of French administration and representation in Indochina as will be conducive to an increased feeling of responsibility on the part of the Associated States.

(4) Intensive efforts to develop the armies of the Associated States, including independent logistical and administrative services.

(5) The development of more effective and stable Governments in the Associated States.

(6) Land reform, agrarian and industrial credit, sound rice marketing systems, labor development, foreign trade and capital formation.

(7) An aggressive military, political, and psychological program to defeat or seriously reduce the Viet Minh forces.

(8) US-French cooperation in publicizing progressive developments in the foregoing policies in Indochina.

9. In the absence of large scale Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina, the United States should:

a. Provide increased aid on a high priority basis for the French Union forces without relieving French authorities of their basic military responsibility for the defense of the Associated States in order to:

(1) Assist in developing indigenous armed forces which will eventually be capable of maintaining internal security without assistance from French units.

(2) Assist the French Union forces to maintain progress in the restoration of internal security against the Viet Minh.

(3) Assist the forces of France and the Associated States to defend Indochina against Chinese Communist aggression.

b. In view of the immediate urgency of the situation, involving possible large-scale Chinese Communist intervention, and in order that the United States may be prepared to take whatever action may be appropriate in such circumstances, make the plans necessary to carry out the courses of action indicated in paragraph 10 below.

c. In the event that information and circumstances point to the conclusion that France is no longer prepared to carry the burden in Indochina, or if France presses for an increased sharing of the responsibility for Indochina, whether in the UN or directly with the U.S. Government, oppose a French withdrawal and consult with the French and British concerning further measures to be taken to safeguard the area from communist domination.

10. In the event that it is determined, in consultation with France, that Chinese Communist forces (including volunteers) have overtly intervened in the conflict in Indochina, or are covertly participating to such an extent as to jeopardize retention of the Tonkin Delta area by French Union forces, the United States should take the following measures to assist these forces in preventing the loss of Indochina, to repel the aggression and to restore peace and security in Indochina:

a. Support a request by France or the Associated States for immediate action by the United Nations which would include a UN resolution declaring that Communist China has committed an aggression, recommending that member states take whatever action may be necessary, without geographic limitation, to assist France and the Associated States in meeting the aggression.

b. Whether or not UN action is immediately forthcoming, seek the maximum possible international support for, and participation in, the minimum courses of military action agreed upon by the parties to the joint warning. These minimum courses of action are set forth in subparagraph c immediately below.

c. Carry out the following minimum courses of military action, either under the auspices of the UN or in conjunction with France and the United Kingdom and any other friendly governments:

(1) A resolute defense of Indochina itself to which the United States would provide such air and naval assistance as might be practicable.

(2) Interdiction of Chinese Communist communication lines including those in China.

(3) The United States would expect to provide the major forces for task (2) above; but would expect the UK and France to provide at least token forces therefor and to render such other assistance

as is normal between allies, and France to carry the burden of providing, in conjunction with the Associated States, the ground forces for the defense of Indochina.

11. In addition to the courses of action set forth in paragraph 10 above, the United States should take the following military actions as appropriate to the situation:

a. If agreement is reached pursuant to paragraph 7-e, establishment in conjunction with the UK and France of a naval blockade of Communist China.

b. Intensification of covert operations to aid anti-communist guerrilla forces operating against Communist China and to interfere with and disrupt Chinese Communist lines of communication and military supply areas.

c. Utilization, as desirable and feasible, of anti-communist Chinese forces, including Chinese Nationalist forces in military operations in Southeast Asia, Korea, or China proper.

d. Assistance to the British to cover an evacuation from Hong Kong, if required.

e. Evacuation of French Union civil and military personnel from the Tonkin Delta, if required.

12. If, subsequent to aggression against Indochina and execution of the minimum necessary courses of action listed in paragraph 10-c above, the United States determines jointly with the UK and France that expanded military action against Communist China is rendered necessary by the situation, the United States should take air and naval action in conjunction with at least France and the UK against all suitable military targets in China, avoiding insofar as practicable those targets in areas near the boundaries of the USSR in order not to increase the risk of direct Soviet involvement.

13. In the event the concurrence of the United Kingdom and France to expanded military action against Communist China is not obtained, the United States should consider taking unilateral action.[20]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff Act on NSC 124/2

With Presidential approval of NSC 124/2 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a firm governmental policy on which to base their planning. Moreover, they had successfully inserted into the new policy the consideration of unilateral action against a Chinese Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. They therefore, on 29 August, directed CINCPAC to make unilateral plans, which, in addition to preparing for unilateral action, would develop a United States position in the event that an agreement for allied combined planning was reached. CINCPAC had previously been instructed to establish plans for a naval blockade of Communist China, for supporting participation of Chinese Nationalist forces in hostilities, for assisting in evacuation of the Tonkin Delta, and for military action against selected targets held by Communist China. He was now instructed:

> In order to be prepared to assist our Allies in war in defense of Indochina and approaches thereto, prepare plan for Air and Naval action against Communist Forces and for action against Chi Communist communications lines and facilities operating in support of Communist Forces.

He was to develop his plans under three assumptions: firstly, that the Korean Conflict was continuing and no FECOM naval forces would be available to him; secondly, that conditions in Korea would permit him to have limited naval forces from FECOM; and thirdly, that there was an armistice in Korea and FECOM naval forces above minimum FECOM requirements could be used in Southeast Asia. Implementation of his plans was to be undertaken only upon authorization by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[21]

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20. (TS) NSC 124/2, 25 Jun 52, same file, sec 31.
21. (TS) Msg, JCS 917321 to CINCPAC, 29 Aug 52, same file, sec 34.

The plans called for in the JCS instructions were capabilities plans, based on the forces available in the Pacific and Far Eastern areas. CINCPAC, however, requested authority to make plans based on the requirements for the task contemplated. On 22 December the Joint Chiefs of Staff partially acceded to his request, instructing him to make both capabilities and requirements plans.[22]

The Five-Power Military Conference on Southeast Asia

A few days after the promulgation of NSC 124/2 United States representatives at a Tripartite Foreign Ministers Conference in London tentatively assented to holding another five-power military meeting on the problem of Chinese Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. Mindful that the Five-Power Ad Hoc Committee had failed owing to the lack of agreed political assumptions the Working Committee of the conference drew up a set of "provisional conclusions," which, if approved by the governments concerned, would permit the military representatives to produce a useful report. The Joint Chiefs of Staff found, however, that the "provisional conclusions" expressed chiefly the usual British and French opposition to action against China outside the area of aggression and their desire for a combined command organization. Furthermore, the conclusions did not fit with the provisions of NSC 124/2. The Chiefs therefore refused their assent to such a meeting, recommending instead a joint tripartite conference of heads of state, or their representatives, and Chiefs of Staff, which could settle political and military disagreements at the same time. As a prelude to the conference, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, a meeting of purely military representatives should be held, but only after preliminary agreement had been reached on terms of reference substantially conforming to the pattern of NSC 124/2.[23]

But once again JCS resistance to a military meeting without agreed political guidance was overcome. At a

22. (TS) JCS 1992/188, 31 Oct 52, same file, sec 35; (TS) Msg, JCS 927061 to CINCPAC, 22 Dec 52, same file, sec 37.
23. (TS) JCS 1992/171, 10 Jul 52, same file, sec 32.

Defense-State conference on 16 July State Department representatives argued that a five-power military representatives conference would serve as "a step toward bringing the other powers to an acceptance of the United States concept of the solution to the problems incident to Southeast Asia" and that the terms of reference proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not be made acceptable to the other four powers. Faced with these arguments the Joint Chiefs of Staff consented to soften their position and agreed to more general terms of reference. According to these terms the conferees were to assume that the five powers had jointly decided to take action against Communist China in the event of further Chinese Communist aggression and that a joint warning had been issued to Peiping. From a purely military point they were to determine the collective military capabilities that might be made available and to make recommendations on the feasible military courses of action for causing the Chinese Communists to cease their aggression.[24]

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or in conjunction with France and the United Kingdom and any other friendly government" for undertaking the "combination of all coercive actions" set forth in the report as offering the best prospect of stopping Chinese Communist aggression. They also recommended that the report be used as a basis for securing international agreement on those actions.

Turning to another item in the conference report, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised Secretary Lovett that the French should be encouraged at every opportunity to increase and speed the development of the native armies and supporting facilities in Indochina. The five-power military representatives had concluded that the forces in Tonkin were insufficient to halt a massive Chinese attack. Under existing circumstances the only large scale reinforcements that could arrive in time to stop an invading army would have to come from United States forces in the Pacific and Far East. And not only were facilities for basing United States air and ground forces lacking in Indochina, but commitment of such forces in that limited area would reduce capabilities for direct action against Communist China. The solution, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, lay in building up indigenous combat forces to the extent necessary to meet the threat, and the French should be assisted and encouraged in carrying out this responsibility.[27]

Like its predecessor, the Ad Hoc Committee Report, the Five-Power Conference Report expressed the desire of the British and French for some sort of staff agency to coordinate the planning of the five powers in Southeast Asia. It also registered the opinion of the United States delegation that, insofar as American participation was concerned, CINCPAC already had sufficient machinery for fulfilling the United States obligation to cooperate in the area. Since this was, of course, the position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, they let the issue rest until French and State Department pressure revived it.[28]

27. (TS) JCS 1992/191, 13 Nov 52, same file, sec 35.
28. Ibid.

Early in December the French Government, through diplomatic channels, urged the United States Government to participate in a liaison group drawn from the staffs of the British, French, and United States commanders in Southeast Asia. The French had accommodated themselves to the JCS views so far as to project purely liaison, rather than planning or operating, functions for the group. In passing the French proposal on to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the State Department expressed the view that "it would be advantageous to increase the effectiveness of military liaison arrangements among the countries which have military interests or commitments in Southeast Asia."[29]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff thereupon agreed to the establishment of liaison machinery in Southeast Asia subject to three conditions. Firstly, it should permit participation "on an on-call and need to know basis," not only by each of the five powers, but by additional Southeast Asian countries if this later appeared desirable. Secondly, it should allow representatives of any participating nation to communicate with representatives of one or more other nations either in person or through liaison officers. Necessary coordination should be accomplished on a bilateral basis whenever possible. Finally, it should not result in the establishment of any formal body or committee; there would be no need for regular meetings or for a permanent chair.[30]

On 27 February 1953 the Joint Chiefs of Staff acted on their decision. They instructed CINCPAC to invite the principal local military commanders of the other four powers to send representatives to an exploratory meeting for the purpose of discussing liaison arrangements, including machinery for coordinating national plans.[31] This directive led to the Five Power Military Representatives Conference at Pearl Harbor in April.

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29. (TS) Ltr, Matthews to Cabell, 9 Dec 52, same file, sec 36.

30. (TS) Memo, Cabell to SecDef, "Machinery for Implementing Five-Power Coordinations of Plans," 11 Dec 52, same file.

31. (TS) Msg, JCS 932447 to CINCPAC, 27 Feb 53, same file, sec 38.

Undoubtedly the promulgation of NSC 124/2 was the most important development in United States policy toward Indochina in 1952. In pursuing the objectives of that policy the United States Government, by the end of the year, was becoming more and more involved in the Southeast Asian struggle against Communism. It contrived, of course, to keep responsibility for the war in the hands of the French, it refused to be drawn into a combined military command in Southeast Asia, and it sidestepped any commitment to participate in a purely local defense of Indochina. Nevertheless, the United States had agreed to at least liaison arrangements for coordinating five-power planning in Southeast Asia. United States representatives were backing the French position on Indochina in the United Nations and in international conferences. They were assuring the French Government of continued American support of, and appreciation for, France's efforts in the war. Furthermore, the Truman Administration was expanding the military aid program for Indochina and was publicizing its contribution to the war. By the time President Eisenhower entered the White House at least a part of American prestige rested upon French and Vietnamese success in Tonkin.

American Public Opinion on Indochina

At least one provision of NSC 124/2 was slighted during 1952. This was the obligation to educate the American people concerning the importance of Southeast Asia to United States security to prepare them for the courses of action contemplated by the National Security Council. True, government officials seized upon various occasions, such as international conferences, to make statements on the subject. But these occasions were relatively few in number. It is apparent, after study of the New York Times and other news media, that no concerted effort was made to arouse public opinion. It may be that in an election year, with the unpopular Korean Conflict very much at issue, the Administration feared to present the public with the prospect of another armed action. Nevertheless, this failure was important for the future. In a progress report on NSC 124/2 prepared in August 1953, officials of the State and Defense

Departments estimated that there was as yet no indication that public opinion would support a contribution to the Indochina war other than the current type of aid program. United States military participation, they said, would not be acceptable to the public.[32]

Development of the Aid Program during 1952

Throughout 1952 United States equipment supplied under MDAP passed in a steady stream over the docks of Saigon and Haiphong. A monthly average of approximately 21,300 measurement tons of end items were shipped, exclusive of aircraft and vessels delivered under their own power. The monetary value of this materiel was approximately $171,100,000. These deliveries brought the total of end items shipped to Indochina between June 1950 and 31 December 1952 to 539,847 measurement tons with a value of $334,700,000. As of the end of 1952 the total value of MDAP material programmed under the budgets for Fiscal Years 1950-1953 had risen to $775,700,000.[33]

No breakdown of statistics on major items of equipment shipped during 1952 is available. By the end of June 1953, however, the United States had shipped to Indochina under the MDAP 1,224 tanks and combat vehicles, 20,274 transport vehicles, 120,792 small arms and machine guns, 2,847 artillery pieces, over 220 million rounds of small arms ammunition, and more than 5 million rounds of artillery ammunition. Also, 302 naval vessels and 304 naval and Air Force aircraft had been delivered.[34] Obviously, the United States contribution to the Indochina struggle was not a small one.

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32. (TS) Memo, Actg SecState and Actg SecDef to Exec Secy NSC, "Progress Report on NSC 124/2 -- United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia," 5 Aug 53, same file, sec 44.

33. (S) MDAP Status Report for the Month of January 1953.

34. (S) MDAP Status Report for the Month of July 1953.

The Lisbon Program

In addition to the regular MDAP end item shipments, a program for giving direct support to the French military budget was undertaken by the United States Government early in 1952. In the autumn of 1951 the French announced that their financial difficulties would entail a cut in dollar imports, with resultant injury to their defense program, and to their heavy industry.[35] The United States Government therefore decided to support the French budget to the extent of 200 million dollars by letting contracts in France, chiefly for end items to be used in Indochina. On 25 February 1952 a "memorandum of understanding" on this matter was drawn up by French and United States officials at the Lisbon meeting of the NATO Council. Under this program Indochina was to receive materiel worth 126 million dollars, the remaining 74 million dollars to be used for requirements in France itself. The French Government, however, considered that this permitted the release for Indochina of an equivalent from the French military budget, so that, in the French view, the entire 200 million dollars went for the support of the war.[36]

By 31 December 1952, $127,100,000 worth of Lisbon-type aid had been programmed, and $47,100,000 worth had been delivered. In July the United States Government agreed to support the French Fiscal Year 1953 budget to the extent of $525,000,000, over half of which was to come from MDAP funds. It is not clear, however, what part of this sum was used for Indochina and what part for French requirements in Europe.[37]

35. (TS) JCS 2099/171, 13 Feb 52, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec 68.

36. (S) MDAP Status Report for the Month of March 1952; (C) Msg, USEmb Paris to SecState, 3697, 29 Dec 52, in OMA files, Indochina 2a (1952). Twenty-three million dollars of the 126 million dollars for Indochina was spent in the United States for items that France could not supply.

37. (S) MDAP Monthly Status Reports for the Months of November 1952 and January 1953.

The Pleven Proposal

In early March the French Government intimated that it was not satisfied with the 200 million dollars promised at Lisbon. Unless additional aid was given, the Minister of National Defense wrote, France would have to cancel some of her intended military production then in progress. In May, M. Pleven, then Defense Minister, submitted a list of heavy items, the production of which he proposed the United States finance. The cost of this program was estimated at 623 million dollars. The United States Government, and especially its military services, were reluctant to expend so large a sum, but did promise 186 million dollars for the procurement of jet aircraft and ammunition. According to the MDAP Status Report for July 1952:

> The official reaction of the French to the U.S. position /was/ extremely unfavorable. President Auriol . . . expressed on two occasions to the U.S. Special Representative in Europe (Ambassador William H. Draper, Jr.) his personal disappointment and said that the U.S. decision promised to create grave difficulties for France. . . . Mr. Pleven has stated that, as a result of the U.S. decision, he may have no alternative but to resign.[38]

Despite Gallic disappointment, in June 1953 French officers in Indochina admitted, inter se, that because of United States aid the French taxpayer was carrying less of the burden of the war in 1953 than he had in 1952.[39]

Equipment Shortages in Indochina

French complaints about lagging MDAP deliveries generally subsided after the first few months of 1952. M. Letourneau, during a visit to Washington in June

38. (S) MDAP Status Report for the Month of July 1952.
39. (TS) Navarre Briefing Doc, Jun 53, in OMA files.

expressed to officials of the Department of Defense his satisfaction with the program except in the troublesome categories of aircraft and spare parts.[40] Throughout the year these items were in short supply in Indochina, and Air Force deliveries were behind schedule. Ammunition, too, was sometimes a problem.

When French complaints about these shortages became less strident, General Brink, and later his successor, Brigadier General T.J.H. Trapnell, took up the chorus. As the autumn fighting season approached, MAAG Indochina began to bombard the Pentagon with requests to speed overdue deliveries. On 9 August General Trapnell sent a message to the Chief of Staff, Air Force, saying:

> Successful accomplishment of French Air Force mission of air superiority, interdiction, log opr of grd forces in Indochina is being threatened and jeopardized by lack of implementation of existing Air Force MDA programs. Generally, some C 47 maint Equip and sprares /sic/ have not been dlvr under FY 50 program, 35% of line items of FY 51 consisting primarily of comm equip; acft spares and acft maint equip, 30 of 70 acft programmed under FY 52 program remain undlvr as well as the initial RG of acft spares . . . . The Army spt program curr contains no shortage items of critical nature however the Air Force program contains all above listed item.[41]

As the year wore on such messages became more frequent. CINCPAC, too, added his voice in support of General Trapnell. On 27 September Secretary Lovett approved a recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff placing combat requirements for Indochina alongside requirements for Korea in first priority for allocation of equipment. Finally,

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40. (S) Memo for Rec by Ch, Liaison Div, OMA, "Conferences with Minister Letourneau and Members of His Staff, 16-17 June 1952," nd, in OMA files, Indochina 2a (1952).

41. (S) Msg, Trapnell MG 3824 A, to CSUSAF, DA-IN-170843, 9 Aug 52, same file.

in late December, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, William C. Foster, saw fit to admonish the Service Secretaries:

> It has been brought to my attention, both as a result of my recent inspection trip to the Far East and by numerous communications from Department of Defense representatives and others, that the MDA Program for Indochina may not be receiving proper emphasis. Specific instances of lack of support for this Program have generally been in the area of items to support maintenance activities, spare parts and depot equipment, and in the delivery of some types of ammunition. . . .
>
> Because of the high priority assigned to the supply of materiel to Indochina, I consider that all requirements for this Program should be met on an urgent basis and that no delay in the delivery of major items of equipment, spare parts to support this equipment, and ammunition should be permitted by any of the Military Departments. . . .[42]

Despite efforts to remedy the situation General Trapnell reported that, as of 1 January 1953, while Army and Navy deliveries were generally in good order, the Air Force MDAP stood as follows:[43]

Program	% Complete
FY 50	97%
FY 51	67%
FY 52	22%
FY 53	None

The lag in deliveries was attributed in part to improper planning by the French and the MAAG in Indochina, but a good share of the responsibility was placed on the Military

42. (S) Memo, Foster to SecA, SecNav, and SecAF, "Indochina Mutual Defense Assistance Program," nd, same file.

43. (S) Memo, Trapnell to Dir OMA, "Field Estimate of current and future effectiveness of the French Union Forces in Indochina," 22 Jan 53; same file, sec 2 (1953).

Departments for not placing proper emphasis on the program.[44] French inefficiency also contributed much to the constant shortage of spare parts. Poor organization, poor training, lack of personnel, lack of an inspection system, no stock control system for spare parts, and lack of an aggressive attitude in correcting malpractices hampered French maintenance activities. All of these factors raised the French rate of utilization of spare parts to a level much too high according to American standards.[45]

French Requests for Additional Aircraft

When M. Letourneau talked with Department of Defense representatives during his June visit he asked not only for immediate shipment of aircraft already programmed but for additional aircraft, including transport, fighter, and light bomber types. U.S. Air Force officers, however, considered that instead of more aircraft the greatest French need was to improve the utilization rate of those they already had. The French were using their C-47's only 35 hours per month whereas the United States standard was 100 hours monthly. French rates for fighters and bombers were similarly low. The Air Force therefore declined to furnish more than ten out of sixty-nine B-26's requested by the French for Fiscal Year 1953. It refused to supply ten additional C-47's until the French had developed a basis of justification for them. It turned down a request for a squadron of C-119's because Air Force officers thought the French were not prepared to maintain them. Finally, a request for jet fighters was refused on the

44. (S) Memo, DepAsst to SecDef for ISA to DepSecDef, "Indochina MDA Program," 16 Dec 52, same file, sec 2a (1952).

45. (S) Memo, Trapnell to Dir OMA, "Field Estimate of current and future effectiveness of the French Union Forces in Indochina," 22 Jan 53, same file, sec 2 (1953); (S) Memo for Rec by Ch, Liaison Div, OMA, "Conferences with Minister Letourneau and Members of His Staff, 16-17 June 1952," nd, same file, sec 2a (1952); (C) Interv, Hoare with Cummings, 1 Nov 54, in JCS HS files.

grounds that the French Air Forces were unopposed in Indochinese skies. The United States representatives agreed, however, to maintain the four French fighter squadrons by replacing worn-out F-6F's with F-8F's and by providing attrition aircraft.[46]

But these decisions were not final, even for 1952. On 14 August General Trapnell cabled that the French High Command was planning offensive operations, for the fall campaign, that required the dropping of three paratroop battalions in each operation. In order to carry out their plan, he said, the French would require additional transport planes. The Department of Defense, after careful study, decided that the French could use fifty additional C-47's. These aircraft were in short supply in the United States, but a solution to the problem was worked out in a conference among Army, Air Force, Department of State, and Department of Defense officials. Nine C-47's were provided from France, 20 were diverted from the MDAP allotment to Belgium, and 21 were lent by the U.S. Air Force for about four months on Memorandum Receipt.[47] When these transfers were accomplished, however, the French were so pinched for C-47's for crew training in France that the Department of Defense was obliged to lend them four additional planes intended for U.S. Air Forces in Europe.[48]

American Mechanics Go to Indochina

As we have seen, the offensive planned by the French High Command in Indochina was not undertaken. The fifty C-47's were nevertheless used extensively in providing airlift in support of the Na San defense. They were, in fact, used so frequently that the limited French ground

46. (S) Memo for Rec by Ch, Liaison Div, OMA, "Conferences with Minister Letourneau and Members of His Staff, 16-17 June 1952," nd, in OMA files, Indochina 2a (1952).

47. (TS) Memo, Foster to JCS, "Requirement for Additional Transport Aircraft in Indo-China," 12 Sep 52, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 34.

48. (TS) Msg, AFOMS-OP to Ch MAAG, France, AF-OUT-9100, 25 Nov 52, in OMA files, Indochina 2a (1952).

crews were unable to maintain them. The French therefore asked that 150 U.S. Air Force mechanics be sent to Indochina for one month to perform 50 and 100 hour checks on C-47's. This request was backed by both General Trapnell and Ambassador Heath. The United States Government responded by sending a mobile maintenance team of about 28 men from the FEAF to perform direct maintenance on C-47's being used by the French forces. It sought to avoid bad publicity, however, by informing "all concerned" that the action was only a temporary augmentation of the MAAG for the purpose of training French ground crews and insuring the early return of the C-47's on loan. These men were to be withdrawn at the earliest possible date.[49]

United States Offer to Train Vietnamese Forces

The question of United States participation in training of the Associated States Armies was not much discussed in the halls of government during 1952. But, for the first time, it was considered seriously. On 8 April the Service Secretaries recommended to Secretary Lovett the consideration of a program "whereby an expanded MAAG would undertake the training and equiping of a national army capable at least of preserving internal security."[50] Not long thereafter an offer of assistance in training was made. But, as Secretary of State Acheson later remarked:

> the French, always skittish over what they might regard as undue American interference, /did not take/ up this offer. Certainly it is not up to the Americans to press on the French assistance along these lines.[51]

49. (TS) Doc C-54, Msg, Heath, 1149 to SecState, 5 Dec 52, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina; (TS) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 7 Jan 53, in OMA file "Indochina Maintenance Support Exercise"; (TS) Msg, OSD to Ch MAAG Indochina, DEF 927097, 22 Dec 52, in OMA files, Indochina 2a(1952).

50. (TS) Memo, SecA, SecNav, and Actg SecAF to SecDef, "Draft State Department Paper on Indochina dated 27 March 1952," 8 Apr 52, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 28.

51. (TS) Doc C-52, Summary Mns, "Ministerial Talks in London, June 1952," 14 Jul 52, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina.

Assessment of MDAP in 1952

Although the handling of the MDA Program still left something to be desired, the United States, by the end of 1952, had given the French in Indochina equipment for ground, naval, and air forces far superior to that in the hands of the Viet Minh. Despite the hampering of air operations by shortages of planes and spare parts it would be difficult to support a contention that French forces would have done much better had those shortages not existed. Wedded to his barbed-wire entanglements, General Salan used his air force too often as a defensive arm. More French aircraft would have meant more Viet Minh casualties at Na San and the Black River. But it is doubtful, even had they all the planes they could man, that the French could have broken the Communist forces in a defensive operation. What seemed to be needed most in Indochina, and what the United States did not offer under MDAP, was guts. This is not to say that the French were cowards on the battlefield. On the contrary, their officers and men conducted themselves bravely in action. But they were not so brave at the planning board, partly, perhaps, because they felt they were not being well-supported at home.

The French Home Front Begins to Crack

Throughout 1952 France's allies were disturbed by symptoms of weakening in her determination to carry on the war. These symptoms were appearing not only in expressions of public opinion, but in parliamentary debates and even in statements by government officials.

The number of Frenchmen, including politicians, who opposed the war seemed to be growing constantly. They based their position chiefly on four arguments. Firstly, they pointed to the drain on the French treasury and the resultant effect on France's economic condition in general. Secondly, they held that France could not afford any longer the losses of manpower represented by the casualties in her armed forces (the French claimed 90,000, excluding Vietnamese, between 1945 and 1 October 1952).[52] Thirdly, maintaining the bulk of the French

52. (NATO S) Summary Record of NATO Council Mtg, Paris, 16 Dec 52, in JCS records.

Army in Indochina was holding up the development of French forces for NATO and delaying the establishment of an adequate defense organization in Europe. Finally, after the conclusion of the EDC Treaty in May, they argued that the prospect of German rearmament demanded the recall to France of the forces in Indochina. Otherwise, they said, Germany would become militarily strong while France remained weak in Europe. Such arguments appealed to segments of political opinion on the Right as well as on the Left, to conservatives who had supported the war as well as to Socialists who had opposed it. Most of all, they appealed to the almost universal French fear of Germany.[53]

French Socialists and Communists had long urged negotiations with the Viet Minh for ending hostilities. On the whole public opinion had given them little support. By 1952, however, an important part of the Radical Socialist Party favored a political agreement with Ho Chi Minh. This faction was led by a former cabinet minister, Pierre Mendes-France, who as early as 1950 had expressed his opposition to continuing the war.[54] At a Radical Socialist Congress in Bordeaux in October 1952, former Premier Edouard Daladier proclaimed that instead of wasting men and arms in Indochina France should be defending the French Union in North Africa, an area far more important for her future.[55]

The defection of a large group of Radical Socialists from the ranks of those who favored continuing the war was especially significant. The Radical Socialists had participated in the several Center-Right coalition governments that, of late years, had been carrying the burden of the struggle in Indochina. They drew their support, traditionally, from the middle class and particularly from the intellectual professions, always an important factor

53. The Economist (London), 5 Jan 52, p. 30; 5 Apr 52, pp. 4-6; 21 Jun 52, pp. 821-822. NY Times, 2 Jul 52, p. 4; 31 Jul 52, p. 1; 19 Oct 52, p. 2.

54. Journal Officiel, Assem Nat, 18 Oct 50, pp. 7003-7004.

55. L'Information Radicale-Socialiste, Oct 52, quoted in Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 309.

in French public opinion. The growth of Mendes-France's following weakened the coalition governments and was a definite indication that France's will to fight was at least beginning to deteriorate.

Early in 1952 the British began to regard the French internal situation as serious in its possible effects on Southeast Asia. In March the British Embassy in Washington sent an unofficial aide-memoire to the State Department calling attention to recent statements of M. Letourneau. The Minister for the Associated States had said publicly, in reply to a question whether or not the French were prepared to enter into discussions with the Viet Minh, that France could not on principle reject any opportunity to end hostilities. He had also indicated that France would not reinforce its troops in Indochina. This had followed a statement by Foreign Minister Schuman that France "would not refuse an accord which would put an end to the conflict under conditions which would be honorable for France."[56] The British also felt there was reason to believe that French representatives had recently been in contact with the Viet Minh and, indeed, might be seeking Russian mediation.

The United States Government, however, was not alarmed. The Joint Intelligence Committee advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff that while there was a possibility of an eventual French withdrawal, the British estimate that it might be imminent was exaggerated. Reported French approaches to the Communists, they wrote, could not be confirmed. Furthermore, the factors disturbing the British had been considered in the preparation of a National Intelligence Estimate on 3 March in which United States intelligence experts had concluded that the French effort in Indochina would continue through mid-1952. This estimate was

56. (TS) Copy of Unofficial Aide Memoire on "Indochina" handed by member of Brit Emb to Asst SecState for Far Eastern Affairs, 15 Mar 52, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 26; NY Times, 7 Jan 52, p. 4.

projected through mid-1953 in another National Intelligence Estimate of 29 August.[57]

Despite the fact that these predictions were borne out it is difficult to escape the conclusion, on the basis of hindsight, that the United States Government was overestimating the strength of French determination. American officials, while not ignoring the warning signals that were flashing, seem to have comforted themselves with repeated assurances by the French Government that France would not give up the struggle. They realized of course, that if the situation in Indochina failed to improve, the French will and ability to continue resisting the Viet Minh would eventually weaken. They thus recognized that there was a limit to the time the French government would have to win the war before being faced with a collapse of the home front. But as late as June 1953 the belief was expressed, in a National Intelligence Estimate, that the French would maintain their current troop strength (and, by implication, their position) in Indochina through mid-1954, albeit "without enthusiasm."[58] And too seldom, during 1952, did United States officials, in planning for and supporting the Indochinese war, display the sense of urgency that would have been called for had the debacle of early 1954 been foreseen.

57. (TS) Encl B to SM-762-52, Memo, Lalor to JCS, "Indochina," 22 Mar 52, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 26; (S) NIE 35/1, "Probable Developments in Indochina through mid-1952," 3 Mar 52; (S) NIE 35/2, "Probable Developments in Indochina through mid-1953," 29 Aug 52.

58. (S) NIE 91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through Mid-1954," 4 Jun 53.

CHAPTER XI

THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION AND THE NAVARRE PLAN

During 1953, while America's material support for the Indochinese war reached ever higher levels, the United States took on a large new commitment for financial aid to the French cause. It did so to give every advantage and encouragement to a program of French military operations that seemed to offer real hope of bringing the Indochina affair to a decisive conclusion. American officials acted also in awareness that the present opportunity was probably their last chance to sustain a positive French effort. The resolute support given by the incumbent French Government to its new commander in the field contrasted disturbingly with the steadily declining willingness of the French public to make further sacrifices and the talk of negotiated settlement that even the government leaders had taken up.

The Main Course of United States Policy

At the moment of the turn of the year, to be sure, policy development was in virtual suspension. France was once more without a government, until Rene Mayer won the endorsement of the National Assembly on 7 January 1953. The United States awaited the inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his new administration later in the month.

Dedicated to making a fresh and comprehensive approach to America's problems abroad, the Eisenhower Administration nevertheless faced the fact that the aims of the United States Government in Southeast Asia were hardly susceptible to fundamental revision. Reassessment would only highlight anew the national interests and purposes already set forth in the dossier of NSC papers that awaited the incoming officials. Indochina must be defended against Viet Minh domination. Unless the United States wished to assume the whole task its leaders must continue to work with and through the French.

For his part, Premier Mayer came to office in January 1953 pledged to lessen the burdens of France in Indochina by seeking greater help from the Atlantic allies. French spokesmen were intent on wringing every possible advantage from the resolution recently adopted by the North Atlantic Council. On 17 December 1952 that body had formally recognized that French resistance to aggression in Indochina made an essential contribution to the security of the free world and hence deserved "continuing support from the NATO governments." The United States had been a party to the North Atlantic Council action. When Secretary of State John Foster Dulles arrived in Paris early in February he encountered a request for larger assistance "in order that France may carry out the mission devolving upon her in the common interests of the free world."[1]

For meeting French importunities the Secretary of State had at hand one telling and quite legitimate argument. The American people had just installed an administration pledged to government economy; that administration in turn had to deal with a Congress that was even more disposed to reduce expenditures abroad and jettison unproductive programs. Therefore, to win authorization for additional American aid the French requests must in every case be backed by cogent justification and convincing performance in the field.

At the moment the French could claim little military progress in Indochina. Acquiescence in the Viet Minh initiative in October 1952 had set the pattern for the remainder of the fighting season. Thereafter the French did little more than react to each new attack. The C-47

1. (U) Doc C-55, "Resolution on Indo-China Adopted by the North Atlantic Council on 17th December, 1952," and (TS) Doc D-4, Account of SecState Conversations in Paris, 2 Feb 53, sent Saigon as A-117, 5 Mar 53. Both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953. For quotation from French Govt Communique, 2 Feb 53, see Keesing's Contemporary Archives (London), vol. IX (1952-1954), p. 12740A (hereinafter: Keesing). For Mayer statement on assuming office, see ibid., p. 12674A.

aircraft, originally gathered to permit aggressive operations involving a 3-battalion drop, were soon fully employed in supplying isolated strong points, particularly the briskly defended bastion at Na San.

While the French made much of the heavy losses their entrenched defenders had inflicted on the enemy, April 1953 brought dramatic evidence that the Viet Minh still held the initiative. In an entirely new aggression whose international repercussions nearly carried the matter to the United Nations, enemy forces invaded Laos. Overrunning the two northeast provinces and surging to within ten miles of the royal Laotian capital, they posed a threat to Thailand's border. By a major exertion the French command established strong points at the Plaine des Jarres and elsewhere in the path of the invaders. Logistical difficulties and the approach of the rainy season induced the Viet Minh to withdraw during May.

Thus the military situation during the first part of 1953 underscored the need for new measures and further effort. At the year's beginning officials in both Washington and Saigon were considering means of enlarging the forces in Indochina. Since the political conditions that denied any increase in the French manpower contribution seemed inalterable, the troops would have to be Vietnamese. A project for placing 40,000 additional natives under arms received approval from the Franco-Vietnamese Military High Committee on 24 February 1953. After training and organization into light battalions the new forces would free veteran French and Vietnamese army units for an offensive role by replacing them in static defense posts. American officials saw the further advantage that every increase in the Vietnamese forces deepened the identification of the native population with resistance to the Viet Minh and hastened the time when the National Army might take over the exclusive defense of its country.

Surveys conducted in Washington and by General Trapnell's MAAG organization in Saigon indicated that the

United States could readily find MDAP resources to provide arms, ammunition, and other unit equipment for the additional battalions.[2] The Joint Chiefs of Staff endorsed the augmentation of the Vietnamese National Army as an indispensible first step that merited American support, but they listed other necessary measures as well. Pentagon officials generally were on guard against any French disposition to view the marshalling of more forces as the sole requirement for conclusion of the war. They emphasized that plans for aggressive use of the new battalions must form part of an integrated program encompassing all military, political, economic, and psychological warfare means. From Saigon General Trapnell warned that the augmentation project would be of little worth unless coupled with a revitalization of the French training system and a genuine shift from defensive to offensive attitudes among French military planners and commanders.[3]

United States material support for the Vietnamese Army augmentation project began during March.[4] If the

2. (TS) "Report by the Ad Hoc Committee /Farrell Cmte/ to the Assistant to the Secretary for International Security Affairs on Forty Additional Vietnam Battalions," nd, Encl to (TS) Memo, Kyes, Actg SecDef, to SecArmy, Navy, and Air Force, "Forty Additional Vietnam Battalions," 19 Feb 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 37. App A to the Farrell Cmte Rpt was (TS) Ltr, Trapnell to Collins, 20 Dec 52, which had precipitated the study.

3. (TS) Memo, Collins to SecDef, "Broadening the Participation of the United States in the Indochina Operation," 13 Mar 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 38. (TS) "French Strategic Concept of Operations in Indochina with General Discussion of Current and Long-Range Plans," Tab A to (TS) OSD ISA staff study, "Conversations with M. Letourneau, 1000, 27 March 1953, nd, "Washington Talks - March '53, Indochina - Letourneau," Alden files, OMA. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to DEPTAR for DJS, MG 4482A, 17 Dec 52, DA-IN-218456, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 36.

4. (TS) Memo, Maj Gen G. C. Stewart, Dir OMA, to Asst SecDef ISA, "Augmentation of Vietnam Army," 23 Mar 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

French took the further steps that appeared necessary in American eyes, requests for additional aid were to be anticipated. American leaders were prepared to consider such requests sympathetically, but insistence had grown since the first of the year that the French must undergird the situation by presenting a comprehensive plan for termination of the Indochinese hostilities within an acceptable time period.

French spokesmen would have their opportunity later in March when Premier Mayer and his colleagues arrived in response to President Eisenhower's invitation to hold consultations in Washington. In preparation for this visit Secretary Dulles had pointedly informed the French officials of the American attitude. Continued stalemate in Indochina he termed unacceptable. The situation required increased effort under a plan envisioning liquidation of the regular enemy forces within something like 24 months. Stressing the legislative limitations on United States executive action, the Secretary declared that Administration spokesmen could forcefully present the need for appropriations to Congress only if they were convinced that a sound strategic plan for Indochina existed and would be energetically carried out.[5]

President Eisenhower was no less explicit during his first interview with Premier Mayer aboard the Williamsburg on 26 March. While he paid tribute to the valiant French defenders and reiterated the American Government's recognition that Indochina was a fighting front of prime significance in the free world's resistance to aggressive Communism, the President demanded a plan.[6] In following sessions M. Jean Letourneau, Minister in charge of Relations with the Associated States, undertook to sketch at least the military portion of the French program. A rough cost estimate was submitted in writing; the Minister offered only his oral presentation of the strategic outline.

5. (S) Doc D-5, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Paris, 4907, 19 Mar 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

6. (S) "Notes made by Assistant Secretary Frank C. Nash of Initial Meeting with the French (Mayer) Delegation," nd, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA. (TS) Doc D-7, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Paris, 4992, 26 Mar 53, in (TS) Doc Hist US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

The Letourneau Plan relied primarily on an expansion of the Vietnamese National Army during 1954 and 1955 that would add some 80,000 to the 40,000 personnel augmentation already scheduled for the current year. Completion of this program would raise the Vietnamese ground forces to at least 250,000 in 1955, exclusive of Suppletifs. Concurrently, operations would unfold in three successive steps. While the recruits were being trained, regular French and native forces would pacify the regions outside the Tonkin Delta, working generally from south to north. Later the newly formed light battalions would begin occupying the cleared areas, releasing regular units for assembly as a striking force in the Delta. The last stage of the plan would see a powerful French Union army engaging and destroying the Viet Minh battle corps, compressed by the previous operations into northern Tonkin. This final drive might culminate in the spring of 1955.

The accompanying cost data displayed important gaps, but M. Letourneau's figures at least indicated that American aid was expected in providing equipment for the expanding Vietnamese armies. In addition, for 1954 and 1955 the fiscal account contained expenditures totalling more than 500 million dollars that were not covered by the French or Associated States budgets. The French voiced no formal request that the United States plan to assume these deficits, but their intentions were clear.[7]

At his final session with Premier Mayer on 28 March the President did not mask the disappointment with which American authorities viewed the Letourneau Plan, owing

7. (TS) JCS 1992/214, 10 Apr 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 39. (TS) "Rough Cost Estimates submitted by Letourneau Group in Washington on 30 March 1953 for Indo-China Effort 1953-55," nd, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA. (TS) Doc D-12 Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Saigon, 1967, 7 Apr 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

particularly to the slowness of its timetable. But Mr. Eisenhower emphasized that the United States remained eager to help; its officials would give the plan thorough study. Premier Mayer suggested that consultations between military technicians would be helpful, particularly in establishing more precisely the catalogue of material requirements. He invited the dispatch of a United States military mission to Saigon for this purpose.[8]

In their appraisal for Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, the Joint Chiefs of Staff displayed marked reluctance to accept the Letourneau Plan as the best that could be hoped for. While they termed it "workable," the Joint Chiefs considered the plan deficient in aggressive spirit. The devotion of effort to clearing rear areas before concentrating for decisive blows against the main Viet Minh forces and supply lines in the north seemed to them rather like trying to mop up the water without turning off the faucet. Early pressure against the enemy communications with Red China would be more useful than chasing guerrillas into the hills in central Annam. Further, the extensive French reliance on operations by units of battalion-size precluded the type of coordination and concentration of power that American military authorities wished to see. Finally, the Letourneau Plan did not appear to match the expansion of the Vietnamese Army with an equal emphasis on the training of native military leaders and the prompt transfer of responsibility to their hands.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded, however, that the enlistment of larger Vietnamese forces was vital to this or any other plan for termination of the Indochinese hostilities. Hence they certified the troop augmentation phase of the program as deserving of United States material support. But the Joint Chiefs did not relax their demand for substantial improvement in the French strategic plan. They recommended that as much political pressure as appeared feasible be placed on the French to obtain a clear-cut commitment to modernize training methods, to expedite the transfer of responsibility to qualified native military leaders, and to seize the initiative and act out the

8. (S) Doc D-10, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Paris, 5040, 30 Mar 53, in same file.

plan with determined vigor, organizing where possible on a regimental and divisional basis and giving special attention to cutting the enemy supply lines.[9]

Negotiations carried on with the French by Secretary Dulles and other United States authorities a few days later disregarded the particulars but followed the spirit of the JCS recommendations. During these late April conversations in Paris the Secretary of State reemphasized the difficulties faced by Administration leaders and clearly implied that they despaired of making an effective appeal to the American Congress on the basis of the Letourneau program. But if the French offered an overall plan for an additional effort in Indochina that the military advisors of the United States Government could endorse as having every reasonable chance of success, the prospect of gaining a sizeable appropriation would brighten. It was up to the French. "You help us to help you" was the Secretary's charge. Meanwhile the American negotiators gave notice that in view of critical French requirements arising from the enemy invasion of Laos the United States would immediately advance 60 million dollars in aid from the anticipated appropriations for Fiscal Year 1954.[10]

Soon thereafter came the appointment of a new Commander-in-Chief for Indochina, Lieutenant General Henri Navarre. Although the French pictured the relief of General

9. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina," 21 Apr 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 40.

10. (S) Doc D-13, "Bipartite U.S.-French Conversations, First Session--April 22, 1953," in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953. Meanwhile the Joint Chiefs restated their reservations about the Letourneau Plan with new emphasis at a meeting with USecState W.B. Smith, who relayed their expressions to Paris; (TS) Doc D-14, Msg, Smith to AmEmb Paris, TOPSEC 9, 24 Apr 53, same file. For account of the second bipartite session in Paris, 26 Apr 53, see (S) Msgs, Amb Dillon, Paris 5672 to SecState, 26 Apr 53, "Indochinese Problems (Fall Offensive 1953-54)," Alden files, OMA.

Salan as a routine rotation of assignments, the event had a decidedly favorable import for the United States desire to see the Letourneau Plan recast as a more aggressive concept. General Navarre arrived in Saigon during the latter half of May breathing a spirit of vigor and determination reminiscent of Marshal de Lattre.

Under this encouraging sign Defense officials in Washington readied the United States military mission to Indochina suggested by Premier Mayer in March. Assignment as head of the mission went to Lieutenant General John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, whom the Joint Chiefs of Staff named on recommendation of his CINCPAC superior, Admiral Arthur W. Radford. The terms of reference given General O'Daniel in June set the task of his small joint group at something more than the mere gathering of information. By "thorough discussion" the mission members were expected to influence General Navarre and his subordinates to revise the Letourneau Plan along the more aggressive lines and with the accompanying measures that would meet the criticisms listed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thus the result of its own efforts would largely control the mission's final estimate of the adequacy of French plans for winning the war and the justification for further American aid.[11]

The outcome of the O'Daniel Mission marked it with every appearance of success. Following intensive inspections, surveys, and discussions in Indochina from 20 June through 10 July 1953 the United States group repaired to Hawaii to write its report. Already cabled to Washington was the prime result of the visit--the Navarre Plan, which General O'Daniel described as "a new aggressive concept

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11. (TS) Memo for Rec, Col E.H.J. Carnes, DSecy JCS, "Joint Political-Military Mission to Indochina," 29 May 53. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Terms of Reference for Military Mission to Indo-China," 10 Jun 53. Both in CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 42. (TS) Memo, SecDef to JCS, "Terms of Reference for Military Mission to Indochina," 12 Jun 53, same file, sec 43.

for the conduct of operations in Indochina."[12] The Navarre Plan, which seemed almost a conscious, point-by-point disposal of the previous objections of United States military authorities, called for an immediate shift to the offensive. For the remainder of the rainy season it listed a series of local operations and increasing guerrilla warfare. Next, General Navarre schemed to anticipate and disrupt the Viet Minh fall campaign by loosing an offensive of his own in Tonkin as early as 15 September 1953. During the remainder of the fighting season he intended to operate aggressively, emphasizing attacks on the flanks and rear of the enemy and drawing support from the recovery of a maximum number of units from areas not directly involved in the battle. The High Command would also apply itself to the progressive incorporation of battalions into regiments and regiments into divisions, creating new supporting units as needed. Further, General Navarre pledged to continue the development of the native armies and the transfer to their leaders of responsibility for the conduct of operations.

General O'Daniel hailed the new plan as a design that would accomplish the decisive defeat of the Viet Minh by 1955. A still more favorable outlook would result if General Navarre succeeded in the quest for additional French forces that now found him in Paris. General Navarre's personal qualities and the air of confidence and energy that appeared to surround the new high command had impressed General O'Daniel greatly. Subsidiary agreements providing for additional United States intelligence activity in Indochina, timely sharing of French operational plans with General Trapnell's MAAG organization, and a modest beginning at American participation in improvement of the French training system only deepened the impression of willing cooperation and receptiveness to advice. As a final evidence of French sincerity the mission chief noted that General Navarre and other high officers had repeatedly invited him to return in a few months "to witness the progress we will have made." General O'Daniel

12. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC sgd O'Daniel to CINCPAC, 301148Z Jun 53, readdressed by CINCPAC to CNO as 030401Z Jul 53, same file. (TS) "Report of the U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, 15 July 1953," same file, BP pt 9.

recommended that a follow-up mission under his leadership be scheduled.[13]

General Navarre and his plan inspired confidence and conviction in Paris as well. Presentations made during his July visit induced the home authorities to adopt the Navarre concept as official policy. Thus the recently invested government of Premier Joseph Laniel stood committed to enlarged effort and active pursuit of victory in Indochina. What was the more extraordinary, it backed this commitment with indications of willingness to send out additional forces from Metropolitan France, to the number of nine infantry battalions plus certain supporting units.

But all depended on increased assistance from the United States. Commanding no more secure base in the National Assembly than its numerous predecessors, the Laniel government could not face the political hazards of such a course without very substantial American support of the French budget, far exceeding the current arrangements. When Premier Laniel first broached the matter to Washington late in July he mentioned a figure in the neighborhood of 400 million dollars. The sum reflected not merely the heightened cost of the war owing to activation of the Navarre Plan but the further fact that at this very time the French military budget, of political necessity, must be reduced. France would commit more men, but less money. Before objection could be voiced the Premier turned quickly to sketching the unpalatable alternative. Unless the additional funds were forthcoming, he said, the only prospect was for eventual French withdrawal from Indochina, with the only unsettled questions being the method and date.[14]

The United States Government faced a crucial decision. Yet the very statement of the problem's conditions virtually dictated the answer. American officials recognized

13. (TS) "Report of U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, 15 July 1953," same file.

14. (TS) Doc D-36, Msg, Amb Dillon, Paris 370 to Sec State, 29 Jul 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

the Laniel government as the first in seven years that seemed prepared to make the exertion necessary to bring victory in Indochina. And if that happy outcome could be achieved, a most favorable train of consequences would follow. Leaving Southeast Asia secure against any but a major Communist aggression, the French might turn their full attention to European and domestic problems. Relief from the long drain of the Indochinese war should permit restoration of French financial stability, end the protracted vacillation over joining the European Defense Community, and allow France to assume a confident and active role in the councils of the free world coalition.

Against this bright picture American officials placed the somber conclusion that the Laniel regime was almost certainly the last French government from which a positive approach to the Indochinese conflict could be expected. If Premier Laniel's effort failed, the mounting popular and parliamentary sentiment in France in favor of some kind of negotiated peace would surely find expression in the policy of the next cabinet. Any settlement negotiated under such conditions could hardly fail to spell the eventual loss of all Indochina to Communism and confront United States policymakers with the still more momentous decision of whether to intervene with force in Southeast Asia.15

Costly though it would be and undeniably surrounded by risk, full support of the Laniel-Navarre program seemed the only course compatible with the interests of the United States. The National Security Council on 6 August 1953 agreed to recommend such a policy, providing the Department of State, the Foreign Operations Administration, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were willing to affirm that the French program held promise of success and could be implemented effectively.16

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15. (TS) Rpt by State Dept, "Further United States Support for France and the Associated States of Indochina," Encl to (TS) Memo, Exec Secy NSC to NSC, same subj, 5 Aug 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 44.

16. NSC Action No. 874, set forth in (TS) "Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its One Hundred and Fifty Eighth Meeting, August 6, 1953," CCS 334 NSC (9-25-47) sec 11.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff five days later advised the Secretary of Defense that "if vigorously pursued militarily in Indochina and supported politically in France" the Navarre Plan did offer sufficient promise of success to warrant American aid. But the record of French performance suggested caution in accepting declarations of intention at full value. The Joint Chiefs urged that American material and financial support be conditioned on demonstrated French adherence to the plan and continued willingness to receive and act upon U.S. military advice.17

During the week following their submission of the 11 August recommendations every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff except Air Force General Nathan F. Twining yielded place to a successor. Admiral Radford assumed the duties of Chairman while General Matthew B. Ridgway became Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, and Admiral Robert B. Carney appeared as the Chief of Naval Operations.

Before the month's end the new Joint Chiefs acted to head off Secretary Wilson's transmittal to the State Department of the views of their predecessors. It was not merely that they wished to add an observation on the vital need for creating a political situation in Indochina that would provide the natives with incentive to give wholehearted support to the French. Reports received from General Trapnell and the service attaches in Saigon regarding the lanquid pace of Navarre Plan implementation had convinced the new military leaders that even the qualified endorsement given by the previous JCS group had been too favorable. Given the fading hope that the French command was really going to act with energy and dispatch, their assessment of the plan's promise of success would no longer allow them to say "Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe . . . that the necessary support should be provided . . . ." The word would have to be "Nevertheless."18

17. (TS) Memo, Bradley to SecDef, "The Navarre Concept for Operations in Indochina," 11 Aug 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 44.

18. (TS) Memo, Radford to SecDef, "The Navarre Concept for Operations in Indochina," 28 Aug 53, same file, sec 45.

Among other things General Trapnell had reported profound doubt that the French had either the intention or the capability of mounting the major offensive listed for 15 September. Most successful of the well-publicized operations General Navarre had carried out so far had been the 2-battalion paratroop raid on the enemy supply center at Lang Son in July. The MAAG Chief felt that while this strike and operations in the Quan Tri and Phan Thiet areas had improved morale and helped instill an aggressive spirit, the results in terms of destroying enemy potential and wresting initiative from the Viet Minh had been negligible. All three attaches concurred in his statement that the French appeared to have no plans for a general fall offensive.[19]

These views were confirmed on 1 September when General Navarre submitted a new timetable that hardly bore out his previous vows to seize the initiative and operate aggressively. If the enemy attacked in late September or early October the French and Associated States forces would counterattack. In the event no Viet Minh drive developed, the French command would launch a diversionary operation. The general offensive against the enemy battle corps was now scheduled for October 1954. It appeared that General Navarre intended to piece out the 1953-1954 fighting season with limited-objective local offensives designed to keep the enemy off balance while waiting for French reinforcements and the activation of newly-trained Vietnamese units.[20]

Into the various U.S. Government consultations during the first days of September 1953 the Joint Chiefs of Staff carried their concern over the modest progress and apparently waning enthusiasm of the French command. But the fact remained that the Laniel-Navarre program offered a chance--and a last chance at that--of putting the Indochinese war on the right track. It could be hoped that

19. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC, MG 1442A to CINCPAC, 24 Aug 53, DA-IN-299535, "Navarre Letter - Actions Taken," vol I, Alden files, OMA.

20. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC, MG 1488A to CINCPAC, 1 Sep 53, DA-IN-1796 (2 Sep 53), "Indochinese Problems (Fall Offensive 1953-54)," Alden files, OMA.

the assurance of wholehearted support from the United States would banish General Navarre's hesitation in carrying forward his plan.[21]

On 1 September the French Government submitted its formal statement of the Indochina program and the request for U.S. assistance on which it depended. The total figure now stood at 385 million dollars. Building on its previous consideration of the matter the National Security Council on 9 September recommended to the President that the United States grant additional assistance to France in an amount not exceeding 385 million dollars, on certain conditions. The French Government must give assurances that it was determined to put the Navarre Plan promptly into effect and pursue it vigorously, without at the same time retreating substantially from its NATO commitments in Europe. The government must further undertake to provide a full record of aid expenditures and agree to take into account the comments and advice of American military authorities on campaign plans in Indochina. In the realm of political action assurance was demanded that the French would press forward with their program for granting entire independence to the three Associated States. The French must regard the 385 million as the final dollar contribution during 1954 and must recognize the right of the United States to terminate its aid upon invalidation of any of the above understandings.[22]

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21. (TS) Notes, State-JCS Mtg, 4 Sep 53, files D Secy JCS. (TS) State Dept Memo, R.B. Knight to MacArthur, "Comments on Supplementary French Material on the Navarre Plan," 3 Sep 53, Encl to (TS) Memo, Secy JCS to Twining, Ridgway, and Carney, 3 Sep 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 45.

22. (TS) Rpt by State Dept, "Assistance for Indochina," Encl to (TS) Memo, Exec Secy NSC to NSC, "Further United States Support for France and the Associated States of Indochina," 8 Sep 53, same file. NSC Action No. 897, set forth in (TS) "Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its One Hundred and Sixty First Meeting, September 9, 1953," CCS 334 NSC (9-25-47) sec 12.

Presidential approval followed, and by 29 September a formal agreement incorporating these points had been worked out between French officials and the American Ambassador in Paris.[23] In giving particular attention to accounting safeguards surrounding the actual transfer of funds from one government to the other the agreement's terms reflected American determination not to become involved again in anything resembling the Lisbon aid grant of 1952. Unsatisfactory experience and considerable Congressional criticism had followed that earlier venture, because by making an unconditional lump sum contribution to the support of the French budget U.S. officials had left themselves no means of checking the money's final disposition. This time the U.S. representatives took pains to make clear they were agreeing to finance a specific action program--the Navarre Plan--up to an agreed dollar figure. Payment would proceed in installments, taking the form of reimbursement of the French Treasury for certified expenditures as they occurred. Subsequently it took experts of the two governments until early March 1954 to work out the detailed accounting procedures the United States required.[24]

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23. (S) Doc D-46, "US-French Supplementary Aid Agreement on Indochina," and (U) Doc D-47, State Dept Press Release No. 529, "Joint Communique Issued by the Governments of the United States and France," 30 Sep 53, both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

24. (TS) Doc D-42, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Paris, 868, 9 Sep 53, in same file. Some of the sharpest criticism of Lisbon type aid appeared in the report of a survey team, sponsored by Senator Styles Bridges, that the Senate Appropriations Cmte had sent to Paris. News accounts of the report carried the heading "Senate Study Asserts France is Substituting Aid for Taxes"; NY Times, 13 Jul 53, pp. 1, 18. After a strong attempt during 1953, OMA/OSD officials gave up the attempt to identify and account for end-items purchased with Lisbon funds and shipped to Indochina by the French; (C) MR by R.N. Lind, nd /Jan 54?/, "Indochinese Problems (Fall Offensive 1953-54)," Alden files, OMA.

Even before the Paris agreement was completed Washington officials had plunged into the exacting series of resurveys, adjustments, and negotiations necessary to produce the pledged 385 million dollars. The Congress had already adjourned; in any event seeking a supplemental aid appropriation on the Hill would have introduced worrisome uncertainties and delays. The job must be done by applying executive decision to the reassignment of funds already in hand. Fortunately a previous decision had already set aside 100 million dollars from the current MDAP appropriation for just such a contingency. Other large sums could be recovered by stringent rescreening throughout the foreign assistance program, relying finally on a liberal interpretation of the President's authority to shift funds under the Mutual Security Act.[25]

Discretion no less than legal requirement imposed the necessity of informing and consulting Congressional leaders regarding the new commitments to France. The President's acceptance of the NSC recommendations involved an important change in the orientation of the foreign assistance program from what had been explained and defended before legislative committees during the recent session, and the program would undoubtedly generate large further requests for appropriations during the coming year. Consultation now might assure future support, and careful explanation might lessen discontent over the apparent discrepancies between Congressional intent and the actual purposes to which some of the funds were now assigned. Whereas a very large portion of the present grant was earmarked for the payment and rationing of Vietnamese troops, legislative leaders had hitherto insisted that U.S. aid dollars be expended primarily for "shot and shell." Administration spokesmen would also wish to explain that

25. (TS) MR by Col J.G. Anding, "Indochinese Special Program," 4 Sep 53, "Indochinese Problems (Fall Offensive 1953-54)," Alden files, OMA. Means of financing the grant and the need for clearing with Congressional leaders were discussed in Ann B to (TS) Rpt by State Dept, "Assistance for Indochina," Encl to (TS) Memo, Exec Secy NSC to NSC, "Further United States Support for France and the Associated States of Indochina," 8 Sep 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 45.

concern for proper accounting of the funds had led them to channel all the additional assistance for the Indochinese forces through the French Government. Congressional opinion in the past had strongly favored bypassing Paris to award more aid directly to the three Associated States.[26]

While these preparations and readjustments continued in Washington, the October reports of American military observers in Indochina took on a somewhat more encouraging tone. True, the intention of speeding the transfer of military responsibility to Vietnamese authorities had received a serious setback. Having taken over the occupation of the supposedly quiet Bui Chu sector in the Tonkin Delta, light native battalions experienced a severe defeat in September when regular Viet Minh units re-entered the area. Control was returned to the French command, the morale of the new national army suffered, and charges and recriminations over the affair left considerable bitterness between the French and Vietnamese. It was disturbing, too, to find General Navarre disclaiming any agreement with General O'Daniel to welcome the establishment of a small U.S. intelligence team in Hanoi.[27]

In most other respects, however, the observers reported modest progress. The activation of Vietnamese units was actually ahead of schedule, and elements of the promised French reinforcement had begun to arrive, including one battalion transferred with American assent from Korea. Unhampered by any extensive enemy activity at the opening of the fighting season, General Navarre had been able to launch Operation MOUETTE, an excursion in force southward from the Delta in the direction of Thanh Hoa. While General Trapnell discounted the French claim that MOUETTE had

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26. Ibid. (C) Memo, N.E. Halaby, DepAsst SecDef (ISA) to Stassen, Dir FOA, "Consultations with Senator Homer Ferguson in Detroit," 14 Sep 53, "Indochina Problems (Fall Offensive, 1953-54)," Alden files, OMA.

27. (TS) Msg, CH MAAG IC, MG 1766A, to CINCPAC, DA-IN-17890, 31 Oct 53. (C) Msg, USARMA Saigon, OAEMA MC 299-53, to CSUSA for G-2, DA-IN-16870, 23 Oct 53. Both in "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 80-81.

inflicted serious loss and disruption of plans on the enemy, he at least saw signs that an offensive attitude was gaining impetus at all levels of the French command.[28]

Although halting and deficient in spots, the Navarre Plan was recognizably in operation in October 1953. As the great new contributions of American aid came to bear in the approaching months, it might yet be pressed to fulfillment.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had been closely involved in the months-long U.S. endeavor to commit the French to an Indochina plan holding reasonable promise of success. But the comments and evaluations they had supplied represented only part of the Joint Chiefs' attention to the Indochina problem. Besides making numerous detailed decisions regarding the aid program, yet to be recounted, their responsibility included planning for contingencies other than the successful conclusion of the war toward which the main American effort was directed.

Late in January 1953, the Joint Chiefs of Staff set in motion a study of possible U.S. military action to prevent the overrunning of Indochina by Communist forces, should the French find it necessary to withdraw.[29] Before the final paper reached them at mid-year, the Joint Chiefs had undertaken several other broadly related considerations.

During early April 1953, the Five-Power Conference of military commanders with responsibilities in Southeast Asia, occurred at Pearl Harbor. The conference report recommended the establishment of a formal and continuous relationship among designated military representatives of the five nations, who would be charged with coordinating the plans produced by each of the parties for the defense of Southeast Asia. With the approval of the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, late in May, authorized American participation in the proposed machinery

28. (TS) Msg, CH MAAG IC, MG 1609A, to CINCPAC, DA-IN-9615, 1 Oct 53 , CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 46. (TS) Msg, CH MAAG IC, MG 1766A, to CINCPAC, DA-IN-17890, 31 Oct 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

29. (TS) Memo, Secy JCS to JSPC, "Possible Military Courses of Action in Indochina," 23 Jan 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 37.

and named Admiral Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific, as the U.S. Military Representative.[30]

The new arrangement added a further dimension to the important planning responsibilities already assigned to CINCPAC. Admiral Radford was even then completing the series of CINCPAC Operation Plans called for by the JCS directive of the previous December, and he continued to give close attention to developments in Indochina.[31] Indeed, the Joint Chiefs had completed their action on the Five-Power Conference report under strong urging from Admiral Radford that the critical situation introduced by the Viet Minh invasion of Laos made imperative an immediate start on coordinated Southeast Asia planning.[32]

Admiral Radford's grim estimates undoubtedly influenced the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral W.M. Fechteler, toward the expression of concern he made on 5 May over the danger to the security of all Southeast Asia inherent in the Laotian crisis. On that day, Admiral Fechteler asked for study of what action the United States could take to prevent spread of Communist control over the area.[33]

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30. (S) JCS 1992/218, 29 Apr 53; (S) Rpt, "Conference of Representatives from the Principal Military Authorities Representing Australia, France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States in the Southeast Asia Area, Pearl Harbor, 6-10 April 1953," nd. Both in same file, sec 40. (TS) Memo, Fechteler to SecDef, "Implementation of Measures for Coordination of Five-Power Southeast Asia Plans," 6 May 53; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 939436, 21 May 53. Both in same file, sec 41.

31. (TS) Msg, JCS 927061 to CINCPAC, 22 Dec 52, same file, sec 37. For CINCPAC Operation Plan Nos. 40-53, 40-53A, and 44-53, all issued during Jun 53, see CCS 381 (4-16-49) BP pt 2.

32. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO and JCS, 032130Z May 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 41.

33. (TS) Memo, Fechteler to JCS, "Current Situation Southeast Asia," 5 May 53, same file. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 271130Z Apr 53, same file, sec 40. Adm Radford had just completed a visit to Indochina.

The resulting paper presented a catalogue of measures for discussion rather than a single recommended course and hence ranged freely over all the possibilities, including U.S. armed intervention. It omitted previous qualifications about using "as much pressure as is feasible" and listed bluntly all the measures the United States might demand of the French to improve their capabilities in Indochina. These included transferring at least two French divisions to Indochina, expediting the revision and aggressive implementation of present campaign plans, following U.S. suggestions for expanding and modernizing training, and improving the low rate of aircraft utilization by assigning more French Air Force personnel to Indochina and hiring civilian flight and maintenance crews. As a further step short of intervention, the United States might insist on direct participation in both training and operational planning. Anticipating by more than four months the actual developments of the coming autumn, the JCS paper suggested speeding and increasing the American aid program and issuing a minority political announcement that would stress the U.S. interest in Southeast Asia and indicate concern over continued Communist moves in the area.[34]

Complementary to these brusque considerations were the plans for U.S. military action should the French withdraw, taken up by the Joint Chiefs of Staff a few weeks later.[35] Feeling assured that the Viet Minh alone did not have the military capability of driving the French out, the Joint Chiefs recognized two conditions under which withdrawal might take place. Intervention by the Chinese Communists might force an evacuation, or political deterioration in France could bring a government decision to abandon the Indochina struggle.

In the latter situation several alternatives would lie open to American decision. The United States might deploy its own and available Allied forces to Indochina in sufficient strength to take over entirely the former French objective of "reducing Communist activity to the status of scattered guerrilla bands." Or the United States might employ only enough ground forces to hold critical strong points vacated by the French, while providing air and naval support for such operations as the Vietnamese National Army might undertake. In either case, intensified

34. (TS) JCS 1992/220, 8 May 53, same file, sec 41.
35. (TS) JCS 1992/227, 22 Jun 53, amended by Dec On, 2 Jul 53, same file, sec 43.

development of the native forces would continue under strong American tutelage, and the second alternative placed reliance in the ultimate capability of the Vietnamese Army to destroy the Viet Minh.

Hopefully, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that French withdrawal might not occur until the expansion of native forces had reached an advanced stage. In that event, the United States might be able to forego the commitment of ground troops and achieve results by providing air and naval support, or logistic support, for the Vietnamese operations, always assuming U.S. participation in an intensified training effort.

The still graver possibility of intervention in force by the Chinese Communists necessarily led the Joint Chiefs of Staff into broader considerations. They could not escape the conclusion that if Red Chinese aggression drove the French to withdraw there was no feasible course of military action that the United States could take in Indochina to prevent Communist forces from overrunning the country. Military opinion held that even the extension of full U.S. and Allied counteraction to the portion of China contiguous to the Tonkin border would not suffice to halt the aggression. If it wished to succeed, the United States must contemplate applying all available coercive measures against the Chinese mainland, including naval blockade and air attack on all targets of military significance.[36]

Preventing the Far Eastern situation from reaching so serious a state as this was a prime objective of American policy. The U.S. Government had encountered continued French and British reluctance to subscribe to a joint declaration advising Red China that any further acts of aggression would call forth a united retaliation that might not observe geographic limitations such as those imposed on the Korean action. Secretary Dulles found that more general warnings were easier to arrange. Both the Franco-American communique at the close of Premier Mayer's visit in March 1953 and the public declarations of the July conference of British, French, and U.S. Foreign Ministers

36. Ibid. (TS) JCS 1992/187, 28 Oct 52, same file, sec 34.

had cautioned the Chinese Communists not to use a Korean armistice as an opportunity to gather forces for some other adventure in Asia.[37] On 2 September the American Legion Convention in St. Louis heard Secretary Dulles deliver a more pointed admonition to the rulers of Communist China. After repeating President Eisenhower's statement that "any armistice in Korea that merely released aggressive armies to attack elsewhere would be a fraud," the Secretary turned to the risk that "as in Korea, Red China might send its own army into Indochina."

> The Chinese Communist regime should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina. I say this soberly in the interest of peace and in hope of preventing another aggressor miscalculation.[38]

In issuing a unilateral U.S. warning against further incursions in Southeast Asia, Mr. Dulles discretely gave the Red rulers only an oblique view of American military strategy. Whereas the Secretary suggested that retaliatory action might not be limited to Indochina, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had concluded that such action could not be so confined.

The French and Indochinese Political Scenes

A turbulent year in the politics of both France and the Associated States opened in January 1953. During that month the election of village councils throughout the pacified areas of Viet Nam marked a first step toward the establishment of democratic institutions. Participation by 80 percent of the eligible voters indicated a high

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37. (U) Doc D-9, State Dept Press Release No. 160, "Communique on United States-France Talks," 28 Mar 53, and (TS) Doc D-32, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Paris, 158, 14 Jul 53. Both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p.79.

38. (U) Doc D-39, State Dept Press Release No. 469, "Address by the Honorable John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, Before the American Legion . . . , September 2, 1953," 1 Sep 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

level of political interest and a clear rejection of the Communist call for an election boycott. The results, however, showed no striking gain in popular support for the Vietnamese government currently sponsored by the French.[39]

In Cambodia, January found King Norodom Sihanouk dissolving the National Assembly, arresting "obstructionist" delegates, and assuming personal direction of the government. The monarch then plunged into a year-long course of unpredictable behavior that included explosive press conference statements in New York, a week of self-imposed exile in Thailand, and the filing of numerous demands and protests in Paris--all designed to win Cambodia an independence within the French Union equal to that of India within the British Commonwealth.[40]

In these circumstances the French continued their halting progress toward satisfaction of native demands for freedom and sovereignty. In February, the French command and Minister Letourneau entered agreements with Bao Dai that provided for a freer development of the Vietnamese National Army in a status distinct from the French forces.[41] In May, the Mayer government gave pledges to the Cambodians looking toward transfer of control over the native army, relaxation of economic restrictions, and French acknowledgement of the judicial integrity of the local courts. A few weeks earlier the Paris authorities had revised the form of French political representation in Indochina in a way that betokened somewhat more regard for the dignity and separate autonomy of the three Associated States.[42]

Any favor these moves may have gained was sacrificed when the French decreed a devaluation of the Indochinese currency on 10 May 1953. As a measure to end both the government scandals and the financial drain resulting from

39. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 289-291. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 74.

40. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 74. NY Times, 19 Apr 53, p. 1; 15 Jun 53, p. 1; 21 Jun 53, p. 1.

41. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 75. NY Times, 26 Feb 53, p. 3.

42. NY Times, 10 May 53, p. 1; 23 Apr 53, p. 4. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, pp. 77-78.

the extensive traffic in piastres, devaluation was long overdue, but when French officials set the new rate of exchange with only a few hours notice to the local governments they acted without regard for the pledges of prior consultation given in 1949. The event demonstrated once again how little true sovereignty the French had so far accorded the Associated States. Native protests were still resounding when the Mayer government fell on 21 May and France entered a protracted cabinet crisis.[43]

Emerging at last late in June under the leadership of Joseph Laniel, the French Government turned a new face toward Indochina. In assuming the premiership, Laniel had declared that it was essential to end the present malaise in the relations between France and the Associated States in a spirit of accommodation and understanding. In genuine dedication to this aim the new Premier began a wholesale replacement of the clique of colonial administrators, whose long tenure in Indochina had made them symbols of French arrogance and repression. His ouster of M. Letourneau also ended the curious arrangement whereby the French Commissioner-General in Saigon had held membership in the Paris cabinet as Minister for relations with the Associated States.[44]

Then, on 3 July 1953, the Laniel government invited the three Indochinese states to enter new consultations, during which France intended to "perfect" their independence and complete their sovereignty.[45] Since this new start differed little in appearance from numerous others announced by French officials over the years, native leaders approached the proposal with skepticism. But Foreign Minister Bidault soon informed Secretary Dulles that the statements of 3 July had been made in earnest. To clear up the matter of independence, France was prepared to accept virtually any terms the native states demanded, so long as Laos, Cambodia, and Viet Nam agreed to continued membership in the French Union.[46]

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43. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 300-301. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 78.

44. Keesing, p. 12995B. NY Times, 2 Jul 53, p. 3.

45. NY Times, 4 Jul 53, p. 3. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 79.

46. (TS) Doc D-33, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Paris, 180, 15 Jul 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

Thereafter, in public addresses the Secretary of State frequently referred to the 3 July declaration as having removed all basis for criticism of French policy. Since that date, he told the United Nations, "the Communist-dominated armies in Indochina have no shadow of a claim to be regarded as the champions of an independence movement."[47] This turn in French policy, coupled with the support of General Navarre evidenced by the decision to send nine battalions to Indochina, did much to convince Washington officials in September that the Laniel government deserved additional American aid.

The sincerity of the French declaration was in fact borne out during long, forebearing, and ultimately successful negotiations with the refractory Cambodians concerning the transfer of control over fiscal matters and the police, army, and judiciary. A less difficult series of exchanges with Laotian representatives brought a more clear-cut result. The negotiations culminated in October in a treaty of friendship and association that recognized Laos as "a fully independent and sovereign state" while reaffirming its membership in the French Union.[48]

In the third state of Viet Nam, however, political ructions set aside any immediate hope of orderly progress. The announcement that Chief of State Bao Dai and Premier Nguyen Van Tam were departing for Paris to open preliminary negotiations with the French touched off an outburst of nationalist agitation. Early in September an unofficial "Congress of National Unity and Peace" gathered to demand unconditional independence, domestic reforms, and the immediate election of a National Assembly. Bao Dai countered

47. (U) Doc D-44, State Dept Press Release No. 505, "Address by the Honorable John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, Made in General Debate of the United Nations Assembly, . . . September 17, 1953," 17 Sep 53; (U) Doc D-35, State Dept Press Release No. 387, "Report to the Nation by the Honorable John Foster Dulles, . . . July 17, 1953," 17 Jul 53. Immediately following the declaration the US Government sent an expression of its "great pleasure and satisfaction at realistic and forward-looking steps by new French Government in approach to Indochina problem"; (S) Doc D-30, Msg, Smith to AmEmb Paris, 64, 4 Jul 53. All in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

48. NY Times, 18 Oct 53, p. 1, 23 Oct 53, p. 1. For text of the Franco-Laotian treaty see Keesing, pp. 13230B-13231A.

by summoning his own National Congress, which he expected would define and endorse a more moderate set of terms for the Vietnamese negotiators.

When it met on 12 October, however, the second convention displayed the same fractious and uncompromising character as the first. Its members demanded that France annul the 1949 agreements and grant complete independence forthwith; then negotiations might begin toward a treaty of alliance between equals. Swept on by their nationalist ardor, the delegates next passed a declaration that Viet Nam would not participate in the French Union. By nightfall Bao Dai's lieutenants had succeeded in restoring only enough control to induce the congress to add "in its present form." Unmodified was the further resolve that the ultimate treaty with France must be ratified by a Vietnamese National Assembly elected by universal suffrage.[49]

The Vietnamese resolutions aroused outraged resentment in Paris. Even spokesmen of the political factions that most actively supported the war now demanded to know what France was fighting for if not the preservation, in some form, of her empire overseas. When seeking larger contributions from Britain and America, the government might find it useful to dwell on the front-line role of France in the defense of Southeast Asia against Communist domination, but for home consumption this honor was not enough. If France was to be repaid in ingratitude and disdain by the very people she sought to defend, her sacrifices in Indochina must end.[50]

No disavowal issued by Bao Dai or Premier Tam could entirely stitch up the damage that had been done to the fabric of French popular and parliamentary support for the war. Large areas of that support had already frayed and given way under the seven-year accumulation of weariness with the apparently endless struggle. While no other party in the National Assembly wished to be identified with the demands for French withdrawal chanted by the

49. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 304-305. Keesing, p. 13229AB.

50. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 305-306. NY Times, 21 Oct 53, p. 2; 22 Oct 53, p. 3.

Communist deputies, sentiment for a negotiated settlement in Indochina had steadily grown. By October 1953 an influential portion of the Radical Socialist Party had reached the view that a military solution was impossible without an unthinkably large commitment of francs and Frenchmen. Hence political negotiations, during which the cost of past mistakes would have to be paid, seemed the only way out.[51]

M. Pierre Mendes-France emerged as the leading spokesman for this faction among the Radicals. Aspiring to the premiership during the five-week cabinet crisis in mid-1953, he fell 13 votes short of the necessary 314. Of the six candidates who presented themselves to the National Assembly, only Mendes-France received the 105 ballots of the Socialists, who responded eagerly when he hinted of having a perfected plan for ending the war by negotiation. But the Assembly as a whole was not yet ready to entrust the future of the French Empire to his care. Besides the automatic opposition of the 100 Communists and the negative votes of various factions on the right, Mendes-France encountered massive abstentions, totaling more than 200 delegates, among the right and center parties.[52]

The following week M. Georges Bidault missed the premiership by only one vote. Undoubtedly he spoke for a large body of opinion in the Assembly when he said that the security of the Associated States must be assured "by victory if necessary, by negotiation if possible." "The only thing we cannot envisage is a retreat which would be inconsistent with the respect due to our dead, with the support we owe to our allies, and with the spirit of the achievements we have accomplished in Indochina in the past."[53] Later in June Premier Laniel came to office pledged to examine every possibility of ending the Indochinese war, including negotiation on any basis acceptable to France's allies and the Associated States.[54] No French

51. Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, pp. 307-309.
52. NY Times, 5 Jun 53, p. 1. Keesing, pp. 12933AB, 12994AB.
53. Keesing, p. 12994B.
54. Ibid., pp. 12995B-12996A.

government could any longer hope to stand that did not give the Assembly such assurances.

To most Frenchmen the case for settlement by negotiation seemed greatly strengthened when on 27 July the United Nations command completed the armistice agreement in Korea. With pardonable exaggeration Time reported that a great cry swelled across France: "Finish la sale guerre by negotiation--like the clever Americans in Korea."[55] Surely, it was argued, this event provided instruction in what to do when a military solution appeared impossible. Deputies frequently cited the Korean example during the October debates in which they also vented their bitterness over the Vietnamese Congress resolutions. Edouard Daladier favored a simple declaration to the Viet Minh: "We offer you peace; will you accept it?" He could see no dishonor in this course after seven years of war, considering that the Americans had done the same thing in Korea after only two years of fighting.[56]

At the end of a debate in which repeated calls for peace by negotiation had aroused few replies favoring continuation of the war, Premier Laniel delivered his statement. First he emphasized that there was no basis for pessimism over the military prospect in Indochina and hence no reason to seek peace merely out of despair. Yet his government stood constantly ready to undertake negotiations, whether with the Soviet Union, with Red China, or locally with the Viet Minh, on any basis that did not involve abandonment of Viet Nam's freedom. "It is true that the war in Indochina is unpopular," said the Premier. "There is, however, something which is still more unpopular in France--namely, to betray one's friends and to fail in one's duty."[57]

In the early hours of 28 October the Assembly endorsed a set of resolutions that instructed the government to continue seeking every opportunity of negotiation. It should also encourage the Associated States to take over a progressively greater share of the military responsibility

55. Time, 15 Mar 54, p. 25.
56. Keesing, p. 13231B. NY Times, 24 Oct 53, p. 3.
57. Keesing, pp. 13231B-13232A.

while completing their independence within the framework of the French Union. Finally, the resolutions called for a more equitable division of the burdens of the Indochinese war among the free nations.[58]

This last point may have been included more out of habit than conviction. A new attitude toward foreign assistance was arising. Whereas in the past American contributions had been welcomed as lifting some of the burdens of the French taxpayer, now there were expressions of fear that the acceptance of more aid only committed France to continuing the war indefinitely. When the 385 million dollar grant was announced late in September Le Monde reviewed the prospect in an article titled "Should We Take the Money?"[59]

At the same time the French continued their flat rejection of any recourse to the United Nations. During April 1953 Secretary Dulles had urged France to bring the matter of the Laotian invasion before the UN Security Council, thus giving the Indochinese conflict an international standing that would make it more readily subject to negotiation and settlement between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union. Refusing to take the action themselves, French authorities were "emphatic almost to the point of hysteria" in opposing a similar move by the Government of Thailand. They appeared to fear that United Nations debate could not be confined to Indochina and might quickly extend to other aspects of French colonial administration, particularly in North Africa. Pride in the French military tradition made equally abhorrent any internationalization of the war on the Korean pattern that would transfer control of the operations to a United Nations command.[60]

58. NY Times, 28 Oct 53, p. 2.
59. Ibid., 1 Oct 53, p. 9.
60. (S) Doc D-21, Dulles, Memo of Conv /with Mayer and Bidault7, 27 Apr 53; (S) Doc D-24, Msg, Amb Dillon, Paris 5766, to SecState, 3 May 53; (S) Doc D-27, Memo of Conv /between State Dept officials and Amb Bonnet7, "Thailand's Appeal to SC regarding Threat to Thailand from Vietminh Invasion," 22 May 53; (S) Doc D-28, Msg, Dulles 2297, to AmEmb Bangkok, 1 Jun 53. All in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

In another respect, however, the French Government saw an intimate connection between the Indochinese war and the UN action in Korea. As agreement on a Korean armistice drew near, American authorities heard increasing insistence from Foreign Minister Bidault that the political conference scheduled to follow the truce must extend its attention to Indochina. The French people, said Bidault, would be profoundly disturbed by any appearance that their Western allies regarded a diplomatic solution as proper for Korea but inadmissable for Indochina. The Korean conference must be seized as an opportunity for broader discussions aimed at achieving a general Far Eastern settlement. If for procedural reasons this conference under UN auspices could not properly add to its agenda a matter that France had always refused to submit to the United Nations, then the French would still demand that settlement of the Indochinese war be discussed with the Chinese Communist representatives outside the formal sessions.61

Adhering at first to a strict interpretation of the purposes of the coming conference, Secretary Dulles relented in response to the ceaseless agitation of the French. If the negotiations over Korea developed a favorable atmosphere, the conference, with a somewhat different slate of participants, might move on to consideration of Indochina. In his American Legion address early in September the Secretary declared that the United States wanted peace in Indochina as well as in Korea.

> . . . The political conference about to be held relates in the first instance to Korea. But growing out of that conference could come, if Red China wants it, an end of aggression and restoration of peace in Indochina. The United States would welcome such a development.62

61. (TS) Doc D-33, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Paris, 180, 15 Jul 53; (C) Doc D-34, "Text of the French Memorandum," nd; /14 Jul 537; (C) Doc D-37, French Emb, "Aide-Memoire," 31 Jul 53. All in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

62. (U) Doc D-39, State Dept Press Release No. 469, "Address by the Honorable John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, Before the American Legion . . . , September 2,

Returning to the question of negotiation two weeks after the October debates, Premier Laniel announced "in the clearest and most categorical fashion" that the French Government did not consider that the Indochinese problem necessarily required a military solution.

> No more than the United States does France make war for the sake of war, and if an honorable solution were in view, either on the local level or on the international level, France, I repeat, like the United States in Korea, would be happy to welcome a diplomatic solution of the conflict.63

American authorities could only hope that the constant emphasis they placed on the perils of negotiating from weakness was registering with proper effect in French minds. If so, the United States might still hope to see a vigorous implementation of the Navarre Plan that would materially strengthen the French bargaining position.

Main Features of the U.S. Aid Program

During 1953 the United States continued and enlarged its deliveries of arms, ammunition, and equipment to the French and native forces in Indochina, on a first priority basis. Scheduled deliveries of ground force and naval materials were met with increasing regularity, and as the Air Force supply pipeline filled, even the persistent shortages of aircraft spare parts and maintenance equipment began to yield before the massive American effort. In January 1953 the French themselves were willing to state

1953," 1 Sep 53. SecState amplified his remarks at a press conference the next day; (U) Doc D-41, State Dept Press Release No. 475, "Restoration of Peace in Indochina," 3 Sep 53. Both in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

63. Laniel address before the Council of the Republic, 12 Nov 53, translation quoted in Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 312. A less polished translation of the same remarks appeared in NY Times, 13 Nov 53, p. 1.

that no ground unit had failed to meet its activation date because of lack of MDAP equipment. By that date, too, the U.S. material aid program had worked a transformation of the French Air Force in Indochina from a conglomerate assortment of German, French and American aircraft, generally of World War II models, into a reasonably standardized organization with modern equipment of propeller-driven types.[64]

No lessening of the momentum of the American aid program was in sight. The appropriations made by Congress in 1953 exceeded the previous year and allowed the assignment of 312.3 million dollars for end-item assistance to Indochina during Fiscal Year 1954, plus 30 million dollars to be expended under the Military Support Program. In addition, Congress appropriated an unprecedented 400 million dollars for direct financial assistance to France.[65]

The general schedule of MDAP equipment deliveries, carefully screened and programmed in advance on a fiscal year basis, moved forward with relative tranquility. It was the special requests and accelerated procurements generated by the vicissitudes of war and the recurring inspirations of French military planners in Indochina that demanded unusual exertion and adjustment by American officials. One of the least trying of these exercises during 1953 resulted from the French request for an additional aircraft carrier.

During the March conversations in Washington Minister Letourneau had asked whether a loan of U.S. naval vessels could be arranged, similar to the World War II loan of fifty destroyers to Great Britain. Navy Department officials could not refrain from noting that the example cited had involved a material quid pro quo, but they agreed to explore the possibility.[66] In May the French Embassy

64. (S) Hq MAAG IC, "Field Estimate of Effectiveness of French Union Forces," 23 Jan 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

65. (S) "Implementation of the Mutual Defense Assistance Program for Indochina (Jan-June 1954)," Ann B to (TS) OCB "Progress Report on NSC 5405," 14 Jul 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 75.

66. (C) MR by Cdr W.C. Wells, "Temporary Loan of an Aircraft Carrier to France," 7 Jun 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

placed a specific request with the State Department for loan of an aircraft carrier of the same CVL type as the Lafayette (formerly the USS Langley) and the Arromanches (formerly HMS Colossus) the French already possessed.

The supporting argument was persuasive. Normally the French committed one vessel to the Indochinese operations and maintained the other in home waters, where it provided continuous training in carrier operations for replacement air units. During the current year the necessity of sending the Arromanches and the Lafayette successively to Toulon for extensive overhaul would disrupt this arrangement. Training, refitting, and combat operations could proceed without interruption only if France received a third CVL by the last quarter of the year.[67]

A hint that President Eisenhower had interested himself in the request smoothed its passage through the Washington machinery. The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 11 June endorsed the military soundness of the loan, and Secretary Wilson soon instructed the Navy Department to seek the necessary enabling legislation from Congress. On 5 September the USS Belleau Wood was formally transferred to French authorities at San Francisco.[68]

Against the remaining experience of 1953 this affair appears unusual in two respects. First, the loan was justified by recognizable need and guaranteed in effectiveness by a demonstrated French capability to man and maintain the carrier; second, the request did not involve aircraft. Far more typical was the January interview of General Salan with the U.S. Ambassador at Saigon, Donald R. Heath. The Indochina commander said it would be ideal to have another squadron each of F-84's, B-26's, and C-47's, as well as more carrier-based aircraft.

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67. (C) Fr Emb Note No. 307 to State Dept, 23 May 53, Ann to (C) JCS 1992/225, Memo by SecDef, "Temporary Loan of an Aircraft Carrier to France," 10 Jun 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 42.

68. (C) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Temporary Loan of an Aircraft Carrier to France," 11 Jun 53, same file. (C) Memo, SecDef to SecNav, same subj, 19 Jun 53. In a telephone call

At the moment, however, his only specific request was for extension of the loan of the twenty-one C-47's the United States had provided in the fall of 1952. Delaying the return of these planes to the U.S. Far East Air Force by two months or so would allow them to serve out the period of good weather in Indochina.[69]

American authorities complied by extending the loan at least until 1 April 1953. Their action likewise continued the temporary duty in Indochina of the U.S. Air Force personnel who had been assigned in December 1952 as a mobile maintenance team to service the American-owned C-47's.[70]

As the 1 April date approached, General Mark W. Clark, the U.S. Far East Commander, reported observations made during his March visit to Indochina. Convinced that an urgent French requirement for C-47 aircraft would continue until mid-May, he recommended that only eight of the twenty-one planes be returned to the Far East Air Force as scheduled, leaving thirteen C-47's on loan to the French for another two months.[71]

to SecNav on 29 May 53, Actg SecState W.B. Smith "indicated to him that the President desired favorable action on the French request"; (C) MR by Cdr W.C. Wells, same subj, 7 Jun 53. Both in "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA. NY Times, 6 Sep 53, p. 18.

69. (S) Msg, Amb Heath, Saigon 1511, to SecState, 29 Jan 53, DA-IN-232451 (30 Jan 53), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 37.

70. (UNK) OMA staff study, "Supply Action-French Forces Indochina," 28 Apr 54, "Navarre Letter - Actions Taken," vol II, Alden files, OMA. (TS) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 7 Jan 53, "Indochina Maintenance Support Exercise," Alden files, OMA.

71. (TS) Msg, CINCFE C61640, to DEPTAR for Collins, DA-IN-251110, 26 Mar 53, and (TS) Msg, CINCFE C61719, to DEPTAR for G-3, DA-IN-253811, 3 Apr 53, Ann C and D to (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina," 21 Apr 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 40. The disposition of C-47's suggested by Gen Clark coincided with a plan already submitted by the French; (S) Dept of French Air Force paper, "Reinforcement of Transport Aircraft In Indo-China," 27 Mar 53, encl to (TS) Memo, Maj Gen Thomas E. De Shazo, Ch MAAG France to Nash, 23 Apr 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

Quick approval followed in Washington, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not accept General Clark's further suggestion. While a survey team reported that the condition of forward air-strips in Indochina would not permit C-119 aircraft to be employed in their prime role as movers of tanks and other heavy equipment, the Far East Commander saw important alternative uses for their huge lift capacity. General Clark believed at least two C-119's should be sent to Indochina, but since the French Air Force had neither aircrews nor maintenance men qualified for the task, he had to recommend that a full complement of U.S. personnel accompany the planes. The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 21 April that the standing policy of non-involvement of American personnel in combat operations in Indochina barred the venture.72

General Clark had made his recommendation in rising concern over the Viet Minh invasion of Laos. Within a few days the Joint Chiefs received a call to action from another first-hand observer, Admiral Radford. Picturing the seriousness of the military situation in the strongest terms, he noted that the French had got themselves into a dispersed defensive position that laid them open to defeat in detail and left them almost entirely dependent on air transportation for supplies. Admiral Radford reported that General Salan was now saying he could arrange for pay on a contract basis if civilian pilots, crews, and mechanics could be recruited to operate the C-119 aircraft he desired. Feeling that the United States could not afford to omit any action that would improve the French capabilities, Admiral Radford urged that a minimum of six of the big transports be delivered immediately.73

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72. (TS) Msg, CINCFE C 61640, to DEPTAR for Collins, DA-IN-251110, 26 Mar 53, and (TS) Msg, CINCFE C 61982, to DEPTAR for G-3, DA-IN-258870, 18 Apr 53, Ann C and E to (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina," 21 Apr 53. (TS) Dft Msg, CSUSA to CINCFE, encl to (TS) Memo for Rec, Secy JCS, 21 Apr 53. Both in CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 40. (TS) MR by Lt Col V.W. Alden, 6 Apr 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

73. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 271130Z Apr 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 40.

Meanwhile authorities higher than the Joint Chiefs of Staff had taken the matter in hand. Secretaries Dulles and Wilson were already meeting with the French in Paris when the Laos crisis arose to dominate their discussions. Premier Mayer himself voiced the plea for several C-119 aircraft and suggested that U.S. military personnel might operate them under the cover of civilian dress and credentials. The Americans countered by offering to qualify three French crews by giving them fifteen days of training at U.S. air bases in Germany. Upon arrival in Indochina the French flight personnel would man three C-119's loaned from General Clark's command with American ground crews.74

Secretary Wilson sent authorization for implementing this arrangement to his Defense subordinates in Washington on 28 April. That same day the Joint Chiefs of Staff raised the number of C-119's to six, and State, Defense, and CIA officials concerted their efforts to find civilian pilots and flight personnel in the Far East who could operate the planes under contract with the French Government.75

With NSC approval the orders went out on 1 May. The U.S. Air Force in Europe would train six French aircrews in C-119 procedures. The Far East Air Force would immediately deliver six of the aircraft to Indochina with spare parts and maintenance crews on a loan basis, to be flown initially by the civilian contract pilots then being gathered. French airmen arriving from Europe would

74. (TS) Doc D-19, Memo of Conv, "Secretary's Meeting with M. Mayer, French Prime Minister . . . ," 26 Apr 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953. (TS) Msg, Amb Dillon, Paris 5708, to SecState, 28 Apr 53, "Additional Transport A/C for French Indochina (C-119)," Alden files, OMA.

75. (TS) Msg, SecDef to ADMINO SECDEF (Wilson to Kyes), 282012Z Apr 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 40. (S) Doc D-23, Memo, Walter S. Robertson to SecState, "Flying Boxcars (C-119's) for Indochina," 28 Apr 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

subsequently replace the civilian aircrews. Further, the orders directed postponement of the return of any of the thirteen C-47 aircraft still on loan to the French.76

Between 6 May and 1 June 1953 the C-119's logged 517 combat flying hours, made 176 sorties, and carried 883 tons, comprising an estimated one-third of the supply support given by the French Air Force to the northern operations during the period. But every American observer who offered his views emphasized that the big planes had delivered nothing that could not have been lifted more economically by C-47's, which required one-quarter as much maintenance effort. Further, the experience strongly confirmed the opinion that the heavy C-119's could be efficiently operated only from modern, all-weather airstrips. Their operations had brought on the collapse of the runway at Gia Lam, putting Hanoi's main airport out of commission.77

Still the French professed a strong desire to retain the six aircraft indefinitely. Not until early July were members of the O'Daniel Mission able to convince the French command that the nature of operations in Indochina did not justify the use of C-119's except in an emergency requiring the air drop of heavy equipment. By agreement the six planes and their U.S. maintenance crews were withdrawn to the Philippines, there to be kept in readiness for return on short notice whenever a heavy drop operation became necessary.78

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76. (TS) Memo, DepAsst SecDef (ISA) to Dir OMA, "Situation in Indo-China," 1 May 53. (TS) Msg, CSAF TS 2938, to CINCUSAFE, 1 May 53. (TS) Msg, CSAF TS 2937, to CGFEAF, 1 May 53. All in "Additional Transport A/C for French Indochina (C-119)," Alden files, OMA. (TS) Msg, OSD to CH MAAG IC, DEF 937911, 1 May 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 41.

77. (S) Msg, Sturm, Hanoi 802, to SecState, 3 Jun 53; (S) Msg, CH MAAG IC, MG 1014A, to DEPTAR for G-3, 11 Jun 53, DA-IN-276684 (12 Jun 53). Both in "Additional Transport A/C for French Indochina (C-119)," Alden files, OMA. (TS) "Report of U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, 15 July 1953," CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 9.

78. (TS) Msg, COMFEAF TS 4054, to HQ USAF for AFOOP, VC 0433 D/O, 30 Jun 53; (TS) Msg, COMFEAF TS 4178, to HQ

Concurrently the arrival of replacement aircraft from rehabilitation centers in Europe allowed a phasing out of the thirteen C-47's and their American ground crews. The last of these departed in mid-August 1953, after almost a year of service in Indochina.[79]

The Laos emergency had provided exasperating new evidence of the inability of French Air Force leaders to take a realistic view of their capabilities. When French sources released publicity to the effect that all would turn right if only the United States would deliver an armada of transport planes to the eagerly waiting French pilots in Indochina, General Trapnell's indignation exploded in a long dispatch to his Washington superiors. Time and again the MAAG Chief had counseled French authorities that the supply and maintenance facilities on which their operations depended were inadequate to support even the aircraft already on hand.

The French Air Ministry had set a limit of 10,000 on the personnel assigned to Indochina, a figure that necessarily covered some 2,500 guards and ordinary laborers. The technicians in that complement had been able to maintain the existing planes at an average monthly utilization rate of approximately 40 hours--less than half the USAF standard. A desperation effort during the Laos emergency was yielding a higher figure, but only at the cost of virtual abandonment of maintenance and overhaul at echelons above the tactical level. To talk of accommodating more aircraft with these same personnel and facilities was pure moonshine. Yet General Trapnell seemed unable to shake the incomprehension of the local French officials. In the same interview they would acknowledge the critical shortage of skilled mechanics, deplore the arbitrary ceiling imposed by the home authorities, and enter an urgent request for more aircraft.[80]

USAF for AFOOP, VC 0453 D/O, 9 Jul 53. Both in "Additional Transport A/C for French Indochina (C-119)," Alden files, OMA.

79. (S) Msg, CH MAAG IC, MG 1452D, to CSAF and COMFEAF, CAF-IN-97794, 26 Aug 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

80. (S) Msg, CH MAAG IC, MG 728A, to OSD for Stewart, 1 May 53, DA-IN-263746 (2 May 53). See also (S) Msg, USAIRA Saigon AFC-31-53, to CSAF, CAF-IN-98999, 29 Apr 53. Both

Other U.S. observers fully supported General Trapnell's view. Accordingly the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense on 20 May that the shortage of airlift capacity in Indochina was due not to lack of planes but to the inadequate manning of the French supply, maintenance, and operating organizations that prevented maximum utilization of the aircraft already on hand. Although agreeing with the repeated statements of American officers that more personnel were needed, the French had failed to correct the deficiency. The Joint Chiefs recommended that Mr. Wilson urge the Secretary of State to make representations to the French Government stressing the need for remedying the situation. The State Department complied, but the very day its instructions reached the Paris Embassy the cabinet of Premier Mayer resigned and France entered a five-week interregnum.[81]

American officials recognized that behind the flight line there were other French Air Force deficiencies that even a major increase in personnel would not cure. Supply was an unwieldy and uncertain operation. The French system suffered from faulty organization, poor location of facilities, lack of periodic inspections, and absence of the modern stock control records and procedures that would allow effective planning.

The small Air Force Section of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina had done what it could to remedy these shortcomings and instill an aggressive attitude toward the correction of malpractices. In July the effort was reinforced by the arrival on six-month temporary duty of fifty-five U.S. Air Force specialists

in "Additional Transport A/C for French Indochina (C-119)," Alden files, OMA. Gen Trapnell used the same arguments when opposing a French plan for creating a separate Vietnamese Air Force; (S) Msg, CHMAAG IC, MG 910D, to OSD for Stewart, DA-IN-271079, 25 May 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

81. (TS) Memo, Bradley to SecDef, "Aid to French Airlift Capability in Indochina," 20 May 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 41. (S) Doc D-26, Msg, Smith to AmEmb Paris, 5693, 21 May 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

in supply, maintenance, armament, communications, and other logistic functions. Assigned to French units down to the squadron level, they began providing instruction in current American procedures in matters ranging from corrosion control to depot organization.[82]

By August General Trapnell had new developments to report. French Air Force officials appeared to presume that they could make virtually unlimited calls on the bounty of the United States now that the Korean armistice had removed their only high-priority competitor in the bidding. Hence they saw a ready solution to the French logistic support and maintenance difficulties. In effect the French proposed that the United States ship spare parts and other materials in such massive quantities that maldistribution in Indochina would pass unnoticed. As a further measure perhaps used equipment might simply be returned in exchange for new models. The MAAG Chief rejected these proposals, both as being too costly and on the ground that they contravened one of the basic purposes of U.S. aid, which was to assist the recipient countries in developing the ability to sustain their own military establishments.[83]

Further, General Trapnell reported a French request that twenty-five C-47 aircraft and auxiliary equipment be provided within the next 30 days to permit the activation of a fourth transport squadron in Indochina. For the logistical support of this venture the local command planned to transfer 1,000 unskilled native troops to the French Air Force, and it had the promise that 650 technicians would be sent from Metropolitan France.

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82. (TS) "Report of U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, 15 July 1953," CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 9. NY Times, 18 Jul 53, p. 2. (S) "Air Force Section, Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indo-China, Briefing (classified) for 14 November 1953," in "Indochina Background Book," Alden files, OMA.

83. (S) Msg, CH MAAG IC, MG 1463A, to OSD/OMA, CSUSAF, and CNO, 27 Aug 53, DA-IN-593 C (28 Aug 53), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 45.

The MAAG Chief did not concur in the request, feeling strongly that no new air unit should be activated until qualified personnel to utilize and maintain the planes were actually assembled. But he also recognized that the French desire to have sufficient aircraft to mount operations involving a simultaneous drop of three paratroop battalions was justified and deserved U.S. support. Any offensive potential must be encouraged and exploited. General Trapnell therefore offered three alternative plans and mentioned a fourth only to reject it. The poor billeting facilities, health hazards, and other difficulties encountered over the past year by the U.S. Air Force personnel assigned to service C-47's in Indochina led him to advise against any further recourse to long-term loans of planes and maintenance crews.[84]

The suggestion accepted by Washington authorities involved an expansion of the C-119 arrangement the O'Daniel Mission had worked out with the French Air Force in July. Whenever the French planned an operation such as a three-battalion drop that required greater airlift than their own forces provided they could call on the MAAG organization for assistance. On 72-hour notice from General Trapnell the Far East Air Force would then loan up to twenty-two C-119 aircraft for a period not to exceed five days for each operation. The planes would be operated by French crews in the combat zone but maintained by American ground personnel.[85]

By 1 October General Trapnell was able to say that detailed arrangements for applying this scheme had been accepted by the French authorities. Twelve French aircrews stationed in Indochina were undergoing C-119 refresher training. But before October had passed the MAAG Chief was receiving new pleas for aircraft. The French still longed for the C-47's and wanted more B-26 bombers as well.

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84. Ibid. Concurrently the French advanced the same request in Washington; (TS) MR by Lt Col V.W. Alden, "French Request for Twenty-Five C-47 Aircraft for Indochina," 28 Aug 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

85. (S) Msg, HQ USAF AFOOP-OC-T 55078, to Ch MAAG IC and COMFEAF, 17 Sep 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 46.

General Trapnell wearily reissued his previous non-concurrence. He noted that the shortage of technical personnel was already resulting in substandard maintenance and low utilization rates for the very types of aircraft now requested. Adding more planes would only compound the French logistical difficulties.86

When occasion arose in November to invoke the plan for short-term loan of C-119 transports a U.S. officer on the scene urged unusual care and promptness in carrying out the American responsibility, since General Navarre would undoubtedly "use any foul up as excuse to eliminate C-119 solution in lieu of additional squadron of C-47's.87

While dealing with the French requests for aircraft seemed an endless labor, American officials found time for other aid considerations as well. Improvement and acceleration of the training given by the French to the Vietnamese forces was an objective constantly held in mind by U.S. authorities during 1953. Experience highly qualified the Americans to give advice in this field, but no real opportunity to influence the French training system presented itself.

Early in the year a high-level committee in the Defense Department recommended against seeking any direct American participation in the Vietnamese training program in the foreseeable future. Besides repeating General Trapnell's prediction that the French would vehemently oppose any such suggestion, the committee stressed the language problem that American instructors would encounter. The Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed the same view to the Secretary of Defense in March, noting further that an exchange of missions between Indochina and Korea was scheduled that should make French officers familiar with the methods used by the United States in training the ROK forces.88

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86. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC, MG 1609A to CINCPAC, DA-IN-9615, 1 Oct 53, same file. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC, MG 1713D, to CSUSAF, DA-IN-15700, 23 Oct 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

87. (TS) Msg Ch MAAG IC MG 1823A, sgd McCarty to COMFEAF, DA-IN-21074, 13 Nov 53, same file.

88. (TS) "Report by the Ad Hoc Committee to the Assistant to the Secretary for International Security

The results, however, were disappointing. In April General Trapnell reported that French observers had returned from Korea with little but a list of reasons why U.S. training procedures could not be effectively applied in Indochina. The MAAG Chief labeled these findings "completely fallacious" and asserted that French authorities had simply fabricated an argument "to justify resistance to any change or modernization of 'traditional' French methods."89

The unfavorable first report from Indochina led Secretaries Dulles and Wilson to reopen the subject during their visit to Paris later in April. Getting the French to observe and adopt the instructional methods so successfully applied in Korea had been a leading objective of Mr. Dulles from the moment he assumed office. Now, maintaining a friendly tone, he said it did not come as a surprise that the initial French reaction had been negative, for the Americans themselves had been slow to realize the capabilities of the South Koreans. But the Secretary counseled the French government leaders not to undervalue the results that could be achieved with proper effort. Secretary Wilson supported his colleague by pointing to the new faith, confidence, and unity that had flowered in the ROK Army when natives were given training and responsibility.90

Affairs on Forty Additional Vietnam Battalions," nd, Encl to (TS) Memo, Kyes, Actg SecDef to SecA, SecNav, and SecAF, "Forty Additional Vietnam Battalions," 19 Feb 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 37. (TS) Memo, Collins to SecDef, "Broadening the Participation of the United States in the Indochina Operation," 13 March 53, same file, sec 38.

89. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 619A, to ACofS G-3 and CINCFE, DA-IN-257701, 15 Apr 53, Ann A to (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Proposed French Strategic Plan for the Successful Conclusion of the War in Indochina," 21 Apr 53, same file, sec 40.

90. (S) Doc D-13, "Bipartite U.S.-French Conversations, First Session--April 22, 1953." For previous indications of SecState interest in getting French to study and adopt Korean training methods see (TS) Doc D-2, Msg, Dulles to AmEmb Saigon, 1644, 10 Feb 53, and (TS) Doc D-4, Account of SecState conversations in London, 4 Feb 53, sent Saigon as

The French response held little encouragement. M. Letourneau spoke of the Korean visits as "very useful," but he dwelled on the standing French assertion that Indochina and Korea presented entirely different problems and conditions.

During their July surveys in Indochina the members of the O'Daniel Mission gave particular attention to the French training system and facilities. Lack of centralized control and uniform standards stood out among the deficiencies they noted. The mission members also observed that many training centers were operating at far under capacity, at a time when greatly expanded instruction of Vietnamese recruits, officer candidates, and higher commanders was clearly needed. To achieve that end the Americans recommended thorough reorganization along lines that would impose real command supervision on the French training effort.

General O'Daniel felt that corrective action was assured, since General Navarre had agreed to follow the American MAAG concept and create a similar French organization to oversee all training of the native forces. Moreover the French Commander had welcomed the idea of having three U.S. officers assigned to the agency. This arrangement General O'Daniel declared would provide an excellent opportunity for continued American influence, short of direct U.S. participation in the training program.

General O'Daniel also saw encouraging evidence that lessons drawn from observation of the U.S. training procedures in Korea were already having a beneficial effect in Indochina. While French officials continued to minimize the usefulness and applicability of American methods, he found a growing interest among senior commanders in making visits to the Korean training centers.91

A-117, 5 Mar 53. All in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953.

91. (TS) "Report of U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina, 15 July 1953," CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt. 9.

Like other features of the Indochinese military situation, training seemed headed for improvement and expansion under the new direction of General Navarre. With American encouragement and assistance he might press on to important results.

Conclusion

Committed to supporting the Navarre Plan as an ultimate attempt to dispose of the Viet Minh threat to Indochina's freedom, American officials and agencies faced a period of exacting decision and increased activity as the fall campaign opened in 1953. The Mutual Defense Assistance Program under which most of the U.S. effort fell had been designed for aiding peacetime expansion of the military establishments of friendly governments. More than one observer had suggested that when applied to Indochina the aid program needed greater flexibility than the legal and institutional structure of MDAP allowed, in order to meet the urgent and rapidly changing requirements of an active theater of war.92 If, through fulfillment of General Navarre's promise to take the offensive, that theater now became more active still, the coming months would undoubtedly see the development of new, more direct, and more expeditious aid procedures to meet the special Indochinese situation.

At the moment the American aid program appeared in good order. By 31 October 1953 obligation of the funds provided for Fiscal Year 1954 had begun and just short of 75 per cent of the material programmed under the MDAP budgets for Fiscal Years 1950-1953 had been shipped. The monetary value of all items delivered to Indochina stood at 674 million dollars; deliveries during the first ten months of 1953 had accounted for nearly 44 per cent of the cumulative total.93

There were still occasional failures, such as the deficiencies in Air Force procurement that brought

92. (S) HQ MAAG IC, "Field Estimate of Effectiveness of French Union Forces," 23 Jan 53, "Indochina 1953," Alden files, OMA.

93. (S) MDAP Status Report for the Month of November 1953.

protests from General Trapnell as late as October, but in many lines the French received not only more material than they could effectively use but more than they could properly store as well.[94] The contribution of military equipment as a means of encouraging and supporting the French was already being fully exploited. In September 1953 the foremost French request was not for more direct material aid but for 385 million dollars in cash.

As the fall campaign season opened American officials anticipated that General Navarre's operations would generate further urgent demands for costly equipment. But they did not foresee the Dien Bien Phu emergency, which was to drive American agencies to an extreme exertion and almost double again the cost of U.S. support to the French forces in Indochina.

94. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 1755A, to OSD for Stewart, 30 Oct 53, DA-IN-17762 (31 Oct 53), "Indochina Operating Files," Alden files, OMA. (TS) "Summary of the French Situation Report Prepared by the Staff of French Expeditionary Forces, Far East, for General Navarre (30 Jun 53)," in "Navarre Letter - Actions Taken," vol I, Alden files, OMA.

CHAPTER XII

SUPPORT FOR THE NAVARRE PLAN
19 NOVEMBER 1953 - 14 JANUARY 1954

With the opening of the 1953-1954 fighting season French Union Forces in Indochina under the command of Lieutenant General Henri Navarre undertook to seize the initiative from the Viet Minh Army. Concurrently, the French were employing all available military and diplomatic channels to seek increased American material support. Washington, entirely aware that time was running out, was much occupied with satisfying the French needs, but also devoted attention to the problem of redrafting American policy toward Southeast Asia.

The provision of material aid in 1953-1954 was conditioned by three requirements which the United States had placed on the French in the early fall. These were (1) perfection of the political and economic independence of the Associated States, (2) adoption of a plan for dynamic military action, and (3) expansion and training of indigenous armies. While the first of these stipulations was primarily a matter for State Department concern, the other two were of direct interest to the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In order to determine how well the French were living up to the military conditions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel to return to Indochina with a small joint mission and report on his findings. The General forwarded the report on the two-week stay of his mission to the Joint Chiefs on 19 November 1953.

Basically optimistic in tone, General O'Daniel's report announced that "clear indications of real military progress by French Union Forces since our previous visit to Indochina /in July/ are evident." If General Navarre had not completely succeeded in wresting the initiative from the Viet Minh, he had at least definitely kept the enemy off balance and had established a far better military

situation than existed during the 1952-1953 campaign. The French command had recovered sufficient forces from static positions to establish a mobile combat reserve in the Tonkin Delta and had proceeded to activate native light infantry battalions as scheduled. But there were some black spots. By American standards the French continued to be over-cautious in the conduct of the war and less effective in using available means. Furthermore, progress in training native units remained unsatisfactory. Insufficient naval materiel and inadequate maintenance and logistic support for air units in Indochina were other deficiencies.

By way of conclusion General O'Daniel reiterated American policy: "we should fully support General Navarre, in whose success we have such a large stake." Yet General O'Daniel's recommendations for American action to remedy the deficiencies were limited to measures that the French would be willing to accept. As such, they fell short of introducing large-scale American influence in the planning of operations and in the training of Vietnamese forces. Specifically, the general suggested the assignment of a small number of additional officers to MAAG Indochina for liaison with French headquarters and for duty with the French command training native armies. He also recommended the continuation of existing arrangements by which the United States loaned C-119's upon call to the French. Later, when the French command developed sufficient maintenance capability, the United States might furnish C-47's on a permanent basis. Finally, more naval craft could be put to good use.[1]

Not all views of the Indochina situation were as sanguine as General O'Daniel's. Commenting on the joint

1. (TS) O'Daniel, "Progress Report on Military Situation in Indochina as of 19 November 1953," CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 50 BP pt 10. For a resume of the report see (TS) Msg, CGUSARPAC O'Daniel to JCS, RJ 68496, 190707Z Nov 53, DA-IN-22712, same file, sec 50, and (TS) App to Encl A to (TS) JCS 1992/260, Rpt by JSPC, "Report of U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina," 17 Dec 53, same file, sec 52.

mission's report, Vice Admiral Felix Stump, Commander in Chief, Pacific, concurred that considerable military progress had been made; however, he pointed out additional flaws. Political and psychological factors remained intertwined with the purely military aspects of the problem. Not enough had been done to turn these vital factors to the advantage of the West. Therefore CINCPAC thought it very important that the highest levels of the French and United States Governments reaffirm their intention of prosecuting the war to a satisfactory conclusion. Admiral Stump also stated his opinion that complete victory was unlikely until there was sufficient native troops to garrison captured areas and until the Indochinese had been won over by anti-Communist psychological warfare.[2]

Immediately following General O'Daniel's visit, the French command itself took action underscoring Admiral Stump's more reserved optimism. In a move reminiscent of the defensive concepts of previous years, French Union Forces on 20 November 1953 launched operation CASTOR to seize control of the Dien Bien Phu basin in mountainous western Tonkin, near the Laotian border. Although the objective was to consolidate a strong position from which to interdict supply routes when the Viet Minh made its annual incursion into Laos, selection of the site was dictated by the need for an airstrip. Happily, the Japanese had established a pierced-steel-planked runway at Dien Bien Phu during World War II. But since the requirements for air support received first consideration, the needs of other arms for good defensive positions were sacrificed.[3]

Dropping by parachute, the first waves of French troops easily overcame the surprised Viet Minh garrison. Repairing the runway was delayed, however, when a heavy bulldozer broke away from its canopy and crashed to the

2. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 020135Z Dec 53, DA-IN-25651, same file, sec 51.

3. Capt M. Harrison, "Dien Bien Phu," An Cosantoir (Irish Defense Journal), vol XIV, no. 6 (Jun 54), pp. 270-286.

ground. As a result, succeeding waves of troops had to drop rather than land. A substitute bulldozer was subsequently located, and the French began the work of organizing a strong defensive fortress to be manned by twelve battalions.[4]

As an immediate outcome of more active operations the French High Command increased its pressure for American material support. High on General Navarre's list were the oft-sought twenty-five additional C-47's. In October Major General Thomas J.H. Trapnell, Chief of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina, had advised against providing these planes until the French had demonstrated the capability to support and use them efficiently. However, the November visits of General O'Daniel and Vice President Nixon provided General Navarre a chance to renew his importunities. Although General O'Daniel supported the MAAG position, General Trapnell withdrew his objections to providing the aircraft when the American Ambassador pointed out that the planes might provide just the psychological lift needed to encourage French initiative.[5] The Vice President also saw the question as a political matter and carried it to President Eisenhower, who decided that political advantages outweighted military objections. Secretary of State Dulles informed Paris of the decision to provide twenty-five C-47's while Admiral Radford passed the word to Lieutenant General Jean E. Valluy, French Representative on the NATO Standing Group.[6]

4. Ibid. See also (S dg C) Msg, USARMA Saigon to CSA for G-2, OARMA MC 319-53, 231330Z Nov 53, DA-IN-23791 (24 Nov 53), CCS 092 Asia (2-25-48) sec 50, and (S) Mns, QUINTEL Mtg, 1 Dec 53, App to Encl to (S) JCS 1992/276, Memo by CNO, "Report on the Sixth QUINPART Intelligence Meeting," 11 Feb 54, same file, sec 57.

5. (S) Msg, Heath to SecState, OSD, 846, 132250Z Nov 53, DA-IN-21426 (14 Nov 53), same file, sec 49.

6. (S) Doc D-50, Msg, SecState to AmEmb Paris, 1930, Saigon, 920, 6:17 p.m., 23 Nov 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina. (S) CM-40-53, Memo by CJCS to JCS, "Additional C-47 Aircraft for French Forces Indo-China," 25 Nov 53.

The President and Mr. Dulles soon had an opportunity to discuss Indochina face-to-face with the French Premier and Foreign Minister when the tripartite French-U.K.-U.S. conference finally convened in Tuckers Town, Bermuda, 4-8 December 1953. Although the principal topics on the agenda were European security and the Soviet proposal for a four-power conference in Berlin, the Big Three did find time for one session on the Far East.

In preparation for the conference, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Joint Intelligence Committee to evaluate repetitive French reports indicating that the Chinese Communists might support the Viet Minh with jet aircraft. The committee could not find corroboration for French fears. It reported to the Chiefs that although the Chinese were capable of furnishing jet or conventional aircraft support for the Viet Minh, U.S. intelligence did not indicate either an increase in this capability or an intent by the Chinese to intervene with jets in Indochina. The Joint Chiefs agreed, and so informed the Secretary of Defense.[7] They took no other part in preparing material for use in the Indochinese phase of Bermuda discussions.

When the conference turned to Far Eastern matters, Premier Joseph Laniel was indisposed, so the French position was sketched by Foreign Minister Georges Bidault. He briefed the President and Prime Minister on the military situation, acknowledging American aid and emphasizing French Union sacrifices. Although they were making every effort to establish the Associated States as truly independent nations, the French were handicapped by the lack of native leaders capable of governing the people. For example, when the French had asked Bao Dai whether the transfer of all authority with real independence was enough, this question "had brought him to the Riviera like Galatea to the willow."

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7. (TS) JCS 1992/254, 25 Nov 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 50. (TS) Memo, CJCS for JCS to SecDef, "Support of Viet Minh Forces in Indochina by Chinese Communist Jet Aircraft," 1 Dec 53, same file, sec 51.

The most significant of M. Bidault's remarks dealt with the prospects for negotiations. France, he asserted, would not make peace except under conditions that would respect the individual liberty of the Indochinese people. However, he did think that a five-power conference, including China, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union, called in a specific framework for a discussion of Southeast Asian problems, might be acceptable to France, provided the Associated States could be present. In reply Mr. Churchill praised the French efforts. President Eisenhower seconded his war praise but added that the United States viewed a Five-Power Conference "with a jaundiced eye."[8]

A major accomplishment of the Bermuda talks was the drafting of a reply to the Soviet Union agreeing to the convocation of a four-power foreign ministers meeting at Berlin in early January 1954. Taking note of a Soviet proposal that the foreign ministers should discuss the possibility of holding a five-power conference including Red China, the West agreed only that the participating governments could state their views on this topic at Berlin.[9] M. Bidault had made it clear that France could not turn its back on an opportunity to negotiate a settlement of the Indochinese war; thus, the agreement to go to Berlin and to talk about China was not without danger to the West.

The Bermuda conversations did not resolve questions about the provision of additional American aid to Indochina. The twenty-five planes approved for transfer in late November represented only a portion of total French needs. General Navarre was in a difficult position; he had to produce military success in very little time. And he saw success threatened by material shortages. He had gleaned the impression in recent months from highly-placed American military and civilian visitors to Indochina that the United States was determined to undertake an extensive effort in providing material aid. Yet MAAG and stateside agencies did not seem to be quite the cornucopia General Navarre visualized.

8. (S) Mns, 5th Plen Tri Mtg of Heads of Government, Bermuda, 5:30 p.m., 7 Dec 53, CCS 337 (4-19-50) BP pt 2.
9. (U) Tri US-UK-Fr Note to USSR, 8 Dec 53, State Dept, Bulletin, 21 Dec 53, pp. 852-853.

Rather than sitting down with General Trapnell for a frank discussion of the problem, in mid-December General Navarre dispatched a strong letter to MAAG contrasting promise and performance. Not only had MAAG screened French requests but Washington agencies had further reduced agreed programs. The French Commander stated that the discrepancy between means in personnel and means in material threatened to necessitate a complete re-examination of his 1954 operational plan. He wanted Washington to speed deliveries of material programmed in earlier years and to inform him when he could expect 1954 items. In addition, he asked for reconsideration of the reductions applied to the 1954 program.[10]

Since the Office of Military Assistance suspected that this complaint was an attempt to establish an alibi in advance for failure to achieve military success, it provided General Trapnell with the information for a polite but firm protest against delaying operations. End-items programmed in earlier years were on the way, and within budgetary limitations the 1954 program was being met.[11]

General Trapnell's courteous answer opened the door for American consideration of French battle needs on an ad hoc, emergency basis. On 18 December the Chief of MAAG wrote General Navarre:

> I have been advised that the military requirements for Indochina have the highest MDAP priority, and that although the military departments did not expect to make deliveries of FY 54 programmed items in time for use during the current dry season, urgent action had been taken to provide items critically in need during this season.

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10. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to OSD for OMA for Stewart, MG 1988-B, 091500Z Dec 53, DA-IN-27610 (10 Dec 53), "Navarre Letter, Actions Taken," vol I, Alden files, OMA.

11. (S) Memo, Col J.G. Anding, Actg Dir OMA, to Asst SecDef (ISA), "Indochina FY 1954 MDAP," c. 11 Dec 54; (S) Msg, OSD sgd Ruffner to Ch MAAG IC, DEF 954347, 142329Z Dec 53; (S) Msg, OSD sgd Nash to Ch MAAG IC, DEF 954441, 162145Z Dec 53. All in "Navarre Letter, Actions Taken," vol I, Alden files, OMA.

In addition, he invited the French Staff to work with MAAG in readying lists of critical items. These lists would be submitted to Washington and delivery expedited to meet operational requirements.[12] Requests went forward on this basis and General Trapnell was able to assure Admiral Radford during their Christmas conference at Manila that no deficiencies in the American aid program or deliveries would cause any embarrassment or change in French plans in the immediate future.[13]

Perhaps one of the concerns contributing to General Navarre's petulance had been a new political crisis in Viet Nam. The world learned on 27 November 1953 that Ho Chi Minh had informed the Stockholm newspaper Expressen of Viet Minh willingness to negotiate with France for an armistice. His terms were cessation of hostilities and real respect for the independence of Viet Nam.[14] Coincidentally, President Auriol of France announced on 27 November a liberal formula by which the Associated States could be independent, yet remain members of the French Union. By this announcement France moved to carry out the 3 July declaration and to satisfy American pressure for granting Indochina its independence.[15] The effect of the Ho interview and President Auriol's statement was to stir up anew nationalistic feelings in Viet Nam. In early December Premier Nguyen Van Tam tried to capitalize on nationalistic sentiments by demanding that Chief of State Bao Dai establish an anti-Communist coalition government to negotiate peace with the Viet Minh and work out the terms of association with France. Then, having failed to win popular support, on 17 December Van Tam handed his government's resignation to the Chief of State. While the resignation may have been little more than the normal

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12. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to SecDef for OMA for Nash, MG 2057 B, 180907Z Dec 53, DA-IN-29482 (18 Dec 53), same file.

13. (S) Msg, CJCS to OSD for Nash, 250935Z Dec 53, DA-IN-31007 (29 Dec 53), same file.

14. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 83.

15. (U) "Summary of statement of President Auriol on Free Association of States within the French Union," Tab D to State Dept (S) Bermuda Conf preparation paper, BM D-10d, "Indochina," 2 Dec 53, CCS 337 (4-19-50) sec 10.

Indochinese political machination, it did nothing to improve the situation.[16]

Against the background of somewhat more vigorous French military and political action and a Vietnamese domestic crisis, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave considerable attention to Indochinese affairs in December 1953. They had to decide what disposition to make of General O'Daniel's recommendations. In addition, the National Security Council Planning Board was rewriting the statement of American policy toward Southeast Asia and the Chiefs had to provide military guidance on this subject.[17]

First on the agenda was a report by the Joint Strategic and Logistics Plans Committees on General O'Daniel's mission. The committees had arrived at six conclusions which paralleled those of the joint mission. On the asset side of the ledger they found that there was no indication of French or Vietnamese disposition to envisage negotiations with the enemy and that there was evidence of real military progress in the implementation of the Navarre Plan. As liabilities, the committees incorporated in their conclusions four deficiencies found by General O'Daniel: lack of sufficient naval small craft, and inadequacies in the training of native forces, in the operation of the joint amphibious command, and in the maintenance and supply capability of the French air arm.

The committees recommended that the report submitted by the O'Daniel Mission be accepted by the Joint Chiefs as the basis for further planning and seconded the

16. NY Times, 17 Dec 53, pp. 1 and 3; Hammer, Struggle for Indochina, p. 306. The crisis was not resolved until 11 Jan 54 when Bao Dai appointed his cousin, Prince Buu Loc, Prime Minister.

17. (TS) JCS 1992/256, 3 Dec 53; (TS) Memo, Maj Gen J.K. Gerhart to DJS, Lt Gen F.F. Everest, "Review of U.S. Policy Toward Southeast Asia," 9 Dec 53; (TS) DM-72-53, to JCS, 14 Dec 53. All in CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 51.

general's principal suggestions. These recommendations included the assignment of two Army officers to MAAG for duty with the French training command and the assignment of four officers, one from each Service and one from the Marine Corps, for liaison duties between MAAG and the French headquarters. The committees' report also incorporated General O'Daniel's recommendation that the Chief of Staff, USAF, continue the arrangements for French use of up to twenty-two C-119's from the Far East Air Command. Finally, they suggested that the Chief of Naval Operations expedite delivery of naval craft programmed for 1954 and in the meantime lend the French four LSM's or their equivalent.[18]

Before approving the committees' conclusions and recommendations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff amended them at the Army's suggestion to reflect more completely Admiral Stump's comments. Qualifying remarks were added to the two more roseate conclusions. As amended, the report indicated that the French had made limited progress in carrying out the Navarre concept, but that the military situation had not yet altered significantly in their favor. To the opinion that the French or Vietnamese did not contemplate negotiations with the enemy the Chiefs added the thought that a seemingly plausible offer from the Viet Minh might lead to a parley, expecially in the absence of any real French Union military progress. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote in a new conclusion, as follows: "Primary military requirements for a French Union victory in Indochina include the development of large and effective indigenous forces and the effective utilization of psychological warfare among the natives."

The Chiefs, however, did not develop this new conclusion into recommendations for implementing action. Instead they accepted the recommendations from the committees' report and added only General O'Daniel's suggestion that French Union officers be invited to inspect U.S. training methods in the Republic of Korea.

18. (TS) JCS 1992/260, 17 Dec 53, same file, sec 52.

As amended, the report became a basis for further planning, and the recommendations became directives to appropriate Service Chiefs on 31 December 1953.[19]

Even before the Chiefs had approved the recommendations, General O'Daniel in Honolulu was urging early implementation. The French Government had now authorized General Navarre to accept a few additional American officers for intelligence work, for duty with the training command, and for liaison with French services. This authorization, commented General O'Daniel, offered a splendid opportunity for the United States to influence French planning and training. Two days later, however, General O'Daniel suggested that the invitation for French Union officers to inspect Korean training installations be held up until the end of the fighting season. Implementation of the recommendations approved by the Chiefs went forward on the basis of these amplifying comments.[20]

While the Joint Chiefs of Staff were dealing with the O'Daniel report the Planning Board of the National Security Council had been redrafting the 18-month old statement of American objectives and courses of action in Southeast Asia.[21] The Board took up this task because in the interim the French situation in Indochina had further deteriorated.

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19. (TS) Memo by CSA, "Report of U.S. Joint Military Mission to Indochina," /Army ditto/, c. 30 Dec 53, same file. (TS) JCS 1992/264, 30 Dec 53, same file, sec 53. (TS) JCS 1992/260, Dec On, 31 Dec 53, same file, sec 52.

20. (S) Msg, CGUSARPAC O'Daniel to CSA, RJ 68589, 262125Z Dec 53, DA-IN-30757 (26 Dec 53); (S) Msg, CGUSARPAC to SecDef for Nash, RJ 68591, 282242Z Dec 53, DA-IN-30971 (29 Dec 53). Both in same file, sec 53.

21. (TS) NSC 124/2, 25 Jun 52 (circ to JCS as Encl B to (TS) JCS 1992/168, 2 Jul 52), same file, sec 32.

A major problem was the assessment of the probable consequences of a French defeat in Indochina. In June 1952 the Security Council had agreed that the loss of any Southeast Asian country would have critical consequences for the United States and would probably lead to the relatively swift realization of Communist domination over the whole area. But in November 1953 the Central Intelligence Agency would go no farther than to say: "A Viet Minh victory in Indochina would remove a significant military barrier to a Communist sweep through Southeast Asia, expose the remainder of that region to greatly increased external Communist pressures, and probably increase the capabilities of local Communists . . . ." However, the Deputy Director for Intelligence of the Joint Staff registered a dissenting view: "The establishment of Communist control over Indochina by military or other means would almost certainly result in the Communization of all of Southeast Asia . . . ."[22]

In Planning Board sessions Major General J. K. Gerhart, Special Assistant to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Security Council Affairs, argued convincingly in support of the Joint Staff estimates.[23] Accordingly, when the Planning Board submitted its redraft to the appropriate agencies at the end of December 1953, the principal change in the new policy statement was increased emphasis on the dangers present in the Indochinese situation. The starting point was the same statement that had appeared in NSC 124/2: "Communist domination, by whatever means, of all Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short term, and critically endanger in the longer term, United States security interests." The redraft, thanks to General Gerhart's pleading, pointed out that the loss of Indochina would

22. (TS) SE-52, CIA Sp Est, "Probable Consequences in Non-Communist Asia of Certain Possible Developments in Indochina Before Mid-1954," 10 Nov 53, p. 1, JIG files.

23. (TS) Interv, Samuel A. Tucker with Lt Col J.W. Vogt, Office of the Spec Asst to JCS for NSC Affairs, 4 Jan 55, memo in JCS HS files. (TS) "An Account of the Events and Decisions Leading to the Loss of North Indochina," prepared for the record by the Office of the SpecAsst to JCS for NSC Affairs, 1st Draft, 25 Oct 54, pp. 26-27. (Hereinafter cited as Gerhart "Account.")

have "the most serious repercussions on U.S. and Free World interests in Europe and elsewhere." The loss of a single country might lead to loss of the entire area, with grave economic consequences; it might seriously jeopardize U.S. security interest in the Far East, and subject Japan to severe economic and political pressures making it difficult for the United States to prevent Japan's eventual accommodation to Communism.

Two agents could transform these threats into reality. First, there was the new, stronger, hostile, aggressive China. Overt Chinese attack on Southeast Asia would require the extensive diversion of American strength from other areas. However, the Chinese Communists were more likely to continue their efforts to dominate the region covertly through subversion and armed rebellion. The second potential source of disaster was France itself. Although the Laniel Government was committed to seeking the destruction of the Viet Minh forces, the Planning Board warned that a successor government might well accept an improvement in the military situation short of Viet Minh defeat as the basis for serious negotiation within the next year. If the Laniel-Navarre Plan should fail, or appear doomed to failure, the French might seek to negotiate for the best possible terms, irrespective of whether these offered any assurance of preserving Indochina for the free world.

In coping with Communist expansion in Asia to date the United States had issued its warning to China, participated with other interested nations in military talks on measures which might be taken in the event of open aggression, and increased the flow of military and economic aid to France and the Associated States. The Board cautioned that, in planning for the future, the United States Government should bear two considerations in mind. It was necessary to coordinate actions affecting one country with actions for the region as a whole, and to accommodate those actions to the individual sensibilities of the governments, social classes, and minorities of Southeast Asia.

Having sketched the problem, the Planning Board rephrased the general objective of the United States thus: "To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit; to persuade them that their best interests lie in greater cooperation and stronger affiliations with the rest of the free world; and to assist them to develop toward stable, free governments with the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world."

Following the format of the June 1952 statement, the Planning Board recommended generalized courses of action for the area as a whole. Both words and acts--in the form of technical assistance, economic aid, and the encouragement of economic cooperation--should be employed to persuade indigenous governments that their best interests lay in close cooperation with the free world. Further, it was essential that the United States encourage and support the spirit of resistance among southeast Asians to Chinese Communist aggression in all its forms. But this was only one side of the street, and working both sides was obviously required. To this end the United States should continue its actions to make China aware of the grave consequences of aggression. Words were not enough; it was necessary to promote the coordinated defense of Southeast Asia, "recognizing that the initiative in regional defense measures must come from the governments of the area." Finally, the American people at home should be made aware of the importance of the region so that they would be prepared to support the proposed courses of action.

The Planning Board continued by taking up the individual countries of Southeast Asia. And of course Indochina led all the rest. Actions toward that bloc of nations were grouped under two assumptions: one, that Communist China would not overtly intervene in the war; the other, that it would. Should China remain a silent partner of the Viet Minh, the main targets for U.S. action would continue to be the French and the Indochinese. And in dealing with them America was forced to carry water on both shoulders. The United States had to build up the independence of Indochina,

which could only occur at the short-range expense of France, while inducing the French to fight vigorously for the longer-range interests of the free world.

This dilemma was implicit in the statements of specific actions. Suggesting first action primarily in the military field, the Planning Board proposed that, while recognizing France's basic responsibility for the defense of the Associated States, the United States should expedite or even increase its aid to French Union Forces. The objective would be to foster an aggressive military, political, and psychological offensive, including covert operations designed to eliminate organized Viet Minh forces by mid-1955. At the same time, American aid would help in the development of native forces that could eventually be capable of maintaining internal security. On the diplomatic and political front the United States would assure the French that America appreciated the sacrifices being made in the common interest of the free world. But it was also necessary to encourage and support steps by both France and the Associated States in the development of a working relationship between them based on equal sovereignty within the French Union.

A further series of proposed actions dealt with the possibility that France might sue for peace. To offset this contingency, the United States should employ every feasible means for influencing the French Government and people against a conclusion of the war on terms inconsistent with American objectives. France should be allowed no illusions about being able to obtain acceptable terms in advance of achieving a marked improvement in the military situation. It would be equally illusory for the French to consider establishing a coalition Viet Nam government with Ho Chi Minh. Drawing upon Korean experience, the Planning Board also recommended that the United States flatly oppose any idea of accepting a cease-fire prior to opening negotiations because of the probable result--irretrievable deterioration in the French Union military position. One means by which the United States could block undesirable negotiations was to insist that the French obtain Vietnamese approval of all actions taken in response to any Viet Minh offers. Finally, if the French persisted in opening talks with Ho Chi Minh, the American Government should seek to influence the outcome of the negotiations by demanding that France consult with U.S. officials.

The Planning Board recommended as a final course, assuming that the Chinese did not intervene, that the United States prepare for taking the actions set forth under the contrary assumption. Turning to this assumption of Chinese intervention, the board rephrased those paragraphs of NSC 124/2 which also dealt with the possibility of China's entering the war. It did not significantly alter the substance of those earlier proposals. First, an appeal should be addressed to the United Nations for action against aggression; at the same time the United States would seek maximum international support and cooperation in whatever military action might be necessary. America itself should furnish naval and air assistance, as practicable, to French Union ground troops, provide major forces for interdicting Chinese Communist communication lines, and supply logistic support needed by other participating states. Other military action, as appropriate, might include a blockade of China, providing the French and British concurred; covert operations to aid guerrillas in China; utilization of Chinese Nationalist forces where desirable and feasible; assistance to the British in Hong Kong; and evacuation of French Union military and civilian personnel from the Tonkin Delta if required. Finally, if the United States, the United Kingdom, and France determined that expanded action against China was needed, the three powers should take naval and air action against military targets in China which directly contributed to the Chinese effort in Indochina; however, targets near the Soviet border would not be attacked unless absolutely necessary. The United States might even consider taking action against China unilaterally if the other two powers would not come along.[24]

The courses of action recommended by the Planning Board in NSC 177 reflected an assumption that France would continue to fight. However, the Board had recognized the possibility that a successor government might sue for peace. Therefore, General Gerhart proposed that the Board

24. (TS) NSC 177, 30 Dec 53, Encl to (TS) JCS 1992/265, 4 Jan 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 53.

also draft recommended courses of action to be adopted in the event that France gave up the struggle. The Board concurred, subject to the restriction that the study receive even more limited distribution than normal, because if the French were to get wind of the existence of American planning for such a contingency they might slacken their efforts.[25]

Since the Board needed military advice, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Joint Strategic and Logistic Plans Committees to review the validity of another study of this same contingency that the Chiefs had noted in July 1953.[26] As in the earlier study, the committees accepted certain basic assumptions. These were as follows: (1) the United States could take over French responsibilities in an orderly manner at the invitation of the Associated States; (2) Korea would remain quiescent so that two American divisions could be withdrawn from there; (3) elsewhere U.S. commitments would remain undisturbed unless the return home of French forces from the Orient permitted American withdrawals from Europe; and (4) Communist China would not overtly intervene in the war.

The committees reaffirmed the conclusion that the successful defense of Indochina was essential since loss of the area would have critical psychological, political, and economic consequences for the United States. Should the American Government determine to participate with military forces in this defense, it should commit sufficient strength to insure military success. The course of action offering the United States the greatest assurance of such success was to support and step up the development of native troops and to deploy American and Allied forces to Indochina for operations that would have the objective of reducing Communist strength to scattered

25. (TS) Interv, Tucker with Vogt, 4 Jan 55, memo in JCS HS files. (TS) Gerhart "Account," p. 31.

26. (TS) Memo, Gerhart to DJC, "Review of U.S. Policy Toward Southeast Asia," 9 Dec 53; (TS) DM-72-53, to JCS, same subj, 14 Dec 53. Both in CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 51. (TS) JCS 1992/227, 22 Jun 53, amended by Dec On, 2 Jul 53, same file, sec 43.

guerrilla bands. A second course, which would be acceptable as a temporary measure provided the United States were prepared to follow through with more vigorous action if necessary, was supporting and developing native forces and deploying sufficient strength to hold critical strong points evacuated by the French. Such holding operations would require air and naval support until the native armies could themselves take effective operations against the Communists. The committees rejected two additional courses, requiring less extensive American intervention, as insufficient and likely to result in military defeat.[27]

Although the Joint Chiefs did not consider this report immediately, the Services were in general agreement with its conclusions. Therefore, General Gerhart and the Planning Board drew upon it in drafting their study of additional courses of action that could be adopted in the event of French withdrawal from Indochina.

The board foresaw that the threat of French withdrawal might take two forms. There was, first, the possibility that France might seek peace unless America offered to participate in the war with military forces. Should this contingency arise, two choices would be open to the United States. Either the American Government might do nothing to prevent the loss of Indochina or it might provide the forces needed to keep France in the war. The logistic implications of this latter action were spelled out by the Planning Board in some detail.

The second threat foreseen by the Board was even more ominous. The French Government might refuse to continue the struggle even if the United States did agree to commit troops. Under these circumstances again America might write off Indochina. On the other hand, it could

27. (TS) JCS 1992/262, 24 Dec 53, same file, sec 53.

consider taking one of the four alternative courses that had just been evaluated by the Joint Staff. The Board submitted this study for NSC consideration in December 1953 as the Special Annex to NSC 177.[28]

Meanwhile, the military situation in Indochina had not been improving. On Christmas Day, 1953, the Viet Minh launched its annual invasion of Laos, which compelled the French to divert troops for its defense. In early January General Trapnell gloomily reported that the situation bore a striking similarity to the pattern of last year's campaign in which sizeable French Union Forces were widely dispersed and in defensive attitudes. The French had been surprised, moreover, to find that the Viet Minh units surrounding Dien Bien Phu were supplied, for the first time, with antiaircraft artillery that could successfully knock down fighter bombers. Only light bombers (B-26's) could now be used, and General Trapnell warned Washington to expect requests for additional aircraft of this type and for U.S. personnel both to maintain the C-47's, B-26's, and C-119's and to fly C-119's on missions to non-combat areas.

Although Admiral Stump had thought General O'Daniel too optimistic, he now believed General Trapnell was unduly pessimistic. He recommended to Washington that all possible assistance be given to General Navarre. It was CINCPAC's belief that "timely assistance by the U.S. in this critical period through which Gen. Navarre and the French Union Forces are now passing will be instrumental in bringing about ultimate victory."[29]

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28. Since the Special Annex was subsequently withdrawn and destroyed, no copy exists in JCS files. The above material was drawn from the author's interview with Lt Col Vogt, 4 Jan 55, JCS HS files, and from (TS) JCS 1992/267, 4 Jan 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 53. See also (TS) Gerhart "Account," p. 33.

29. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology, p. 84. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to CINCPAC, MG 8 A, 020730Z Jan 54, DA-IN-31633 (2 Jan 54); (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to DA, MG 9 A, 020926Z Jan 54, DA-IN-31639 (2 Jan 54); (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 040139Z Jan 54. All in CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 53.

These reports from the field arrived in Washington at about the same time the Joint Chiefs were asked to review the two Planning Board studies, NSC 177 and the Special Annex. CINCPAC's comments pointed up the need for early action along lines outlined in NSC 177, which assumed the French would fight if America continued its aid programs. Accordingly, on 6 January 1954 the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that they were in general agreement with the Planning Board draft.[30]

General Trapnell's message emphasized the importance of having plans ready for the possibility of French failure and withdrawal. Such plans, incorporated in the Special Annex to NSC 177, came before the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval on 6 January 1954. However, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee had reported that this Planning Board study was not sufficiently explicit. Admittedly, the United States would suffer critical consequences if Indochina fell; therefore, reasoned the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, the United States should not accept the alternative of writing off the area if the French proposed to quit in the absence of American military participation. Instead, the committee recommended that the Chiefs press for a decision on whether the United States should intervene, if necessary, to preserve Indochina. Such a decision would provide definitive policy for the development of further national diplomatic and military plans.

The Joint Strategic Survey Committee recognized that if the French withdrew in spite of American intervention the world-wide situation might oblige the United States to accept the loss of Indochina. Nevertheless, the American Government should be prepared to do what it could to offset such a development. Therefore, the committee recommended that the Special Annex be revised to reflect the following views:

30. (TS) Memo, CJCS for JCS to SecDef, "NSC 177 - United States Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia," 6 Jan 54, same file, sec 54.

> Should the French make an arbitrary decision to withdraw from the conflict in Indochina despite all offers of United States assistance, the United States should in any event, and as a minimum urge the French to phase their withdrawal over a protracted period and to take all practicable measures to prepare the indigenous forces better to assume the responsibilities of their own defense. Additionally, the United States, preferably in conjunction with its Allies, should provide such military assistance to the indigenous forces of Indochina as is determined to be advisable and feasible in the light of conditions then prevailing, and as is consistent with United States objectives both with respect to Southeast Asia and world-wide. The level of military assistance which might be advisable and feasible cannot be predetermined, but might encompass anything from a continuation of materiel aid as a minimum to Alternative A (vigorous intervention) as a maximum.[31]

The Chief of Naval Operations suggested further amendments. He wished to write in the thought that if U.S. forces were to participate in the war, they should do so in sufficient strength to insure an early and lasting military victory. Admiral Carney also wished to strengthen the arguments in favor of the most vigorous alternative course, supporting native troops while deploying American and Allied forces for operations which would reduce the Communist to scattered guerrilla bands. However, he recommended adding one qualification to the acceptable courses: "precautionary reservations are necessary by reason of the fact that circumstances under which the French forces withdraw, and other related strategic circumstances cannot be accurately predicted."[32]

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31. (TS) JCS 1992/267, 4 Jan 54, same file, sec 53.

32. (TS) JCS 1992/268, 5 Jan 54, same file, sec 54.

At their meeting on 6 January 1954 the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the JSSC report and Admiral Carney's recommended amendments without reaching final decision.[33] On the following day at a meeting of the Armed Forces Policy Council Admiral Radford indicated that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had hastily prepared some comments on the Special Annex to NSC 177, but needed more time for proper study of the paper. The Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Roger M. Kyes, then attacked the accuracy of the logistical requirements set forth under the alternative courses of American intervention. He did not address himself to the principal problem at hand--that of being prepared for a French request for U.S. intervention. This was the very problem which the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed should receive timely examination. Nevertheless, Secretary of Defense C. E. Wilson supported Mr. Kyes and decided to request that the Special Annex be withdrawn from further consideration. In addition, the Department of Defense suggested to the Security Council that, in the future, requests for military advice, such as that contained in the Special Annex, should be addressed to the Secretary of Defense, not to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[34]

When the National Security Council met on 8 January President Eisenhower sustained the objections of Secretary Wilson and ordered the withdrawal and destruction of the Special Annex to NSC 177. However, the council did touch upon the question of how far the United States would go

33. The (TS) Gerhart "Account," p. 34, indicates that the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 January 1954 approved a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense calling for immediate decision on whether or not the United States would intervene in Indochina if necessary to prevent the French from seeking to conclude the struggle on terms likely to result in the loss of the area to the Communists. Furthermore, this memorandum rejected as an unacceptable course of action the alternative of refusing to commit U.S. forces to the French military effort. However, official records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff available to the Historical Section do not indicate that this memorandum was formally adopted.

34. (TS) AFPC Advice of Action, "U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia (NSC 177)," 11 Jan 54. (TS) Interv, Tucker with Vogt, 4 Jan 55, memo in JCS HS files. (TS) Gerhart "Account," p. 35.

to stave off French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Admiral Radford pointed out that the United States had a large share at stake and suggested that U.S. pilots, trained to suppress anti-aircraft guns, could do much even in one afternoon's operations to save the situation at Dien Bien Phu. Although President Eisenhower did not rule out U.S. air and naval intervention, he did oppose committing U.S. ground troops. He favored maximum aid short of intervention, including even volunteer air operations such as the Flying Tigers had provided in China prior to World War II.

At Admiral Radford's suggestion, the council decided that General O'Daniel should be stationed continuously in Indochina under appropriate liaison arrangements and with sufficient authority "to expedite the flexible provision of U.S. assistance to the French Union forces." It was not intended that General O'Daniel should concern himself with the Military Assistance Advisory Group but rather that he would provide the means through which the United States might exercise more influence on military strategy and the training of native troops. The council, additionally, requested the Department of Defense, in collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency, to study and report on all feasible further steps, short of the overt use of American forces in combat, which the United States might take in achieving the success of the Laniel-Navarre Plan.35

Six days later the National Security Council moved to adopt the Planning Board statement of policy toward Southeast Asia, NSC 177. After the President approved the study, it was circulated as NSC 5405 and referred to the Operations Coordinating Board for coordinated implementation.36 It was the charter for American action in the months to come, assuming the French fought on. However, the Secretary of Defense and the council had sidestepped the question, raised by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, of what the United States would do if France gave up the struggle.

35. (TS) NSC Action 1005, 8 Jan 54, CCS 334 NSC (9-25-47) sec 13. (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 955317, 082226Z Jan 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 54. (TS) Gerhart "Account," pp. 36-38.

36. (TS) NSC Action 1011-a, 14 Jan 54.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BERLIN CONFERENCE AND ITS AFTERMATH 15 JANUARY-15 MARCH 1954

The forthcoming Berlin Conference presented the United States with a dual-edged problem: how to counter the expected Soviet demand for a five-power conference including Communist China "to consider measures for the relaxation of international tension," and how to persuade France that it should attain a position of strength before negotiating a settlement of the Indochinese war. Admission of Communist China to a conference would automatically be a long step toward general recognition, which the United States was particularly anxious to avoid. The stated purpose of the Berlin Conference was to bring about a settlement of the German and Austrian questions and there was no reason why the Far East should be touched upon. Korea and Indochina were the major sources of tension in the Orient and so far Communist China had shown no disposition to accept a settlement in either area that would preserve the interest of the free world.[1]

1. (U) Unofficial Trans of Soviet Note, 26 Dec 53; (U) Tri U.S.-U.K.-Fr. Note to USSR, 1 Jan 54; (U) Unofficial Trans of Soviet Note, 4 Jan 54. All atchd to State Dept Background Paper, BER D-8/50, 12 Jan 54, CCS 337 (4-19-50) BP pt 2A. (S) State Dept Paper, PREP D-1/2, "Revision of Tactics Section (pages 1 and 2) of Report of Tri-partite Working Group, Paris, October 21 - November 2," 12 Dec 53; (S) State Dept Psn Paper, BER D-1/2, "Tripartite Draft Re Anticipated Soviet Request for Five-Power Conference Including Communist China," 15 Jan 54. Both in CCS 337 (4-19-50) BP pt 2. (S) State Dept Rebuttal Paper, D-8/17a, "Indochina," 11 Jan 54, same file, BP pt 2A. (S) State Dept Talking Paper, PTB D-3/2, "Bilateral Discussion in Berlin with the French, Indochina," 19 Jan 54, same file, BP pt 3.

The United States Government had to persuade France that it would be disastrous to open negotiations with the Communists before improving her military position in Indochina. Moreover, America had to provide the wherewithal for France to make such improvements. The new statement of policy toward Southeast Asia, NSC 5405, had reaffirmed that the United States would furnish the French all aid short of actual military participation and would even consider direct military support if the Chinese Communists intervened. On the basis of that policy the American task was to strengthen France's hand to the point where she would hold out for a settlement that protected United States security interests in the Far East.

NSC

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not participate extensively in direct preparations for the Berlin Conference, they had been asked by the National Security Council what the United States should do to improve the French position in Indochina. Forwarding their reply to the Secretary of Defense on 15 January, the Chiefs repeated many of the suggestions that had come to them recently from General O'Daniel and Admiral Stump.

Several of the JCS recommendations reaffirmed courses of action to which the United States was already committed. For example, the Chiefs recommended that the United States Government should place renewed emphasis on vigorous French prosecution of the Navarre Plan and that equal emphasis should be placed on American measures in support of French efforts. Specifically, the Joint Chiefs suggested that the three Services expedite items programmed for Indochina during the 1950-1954 period but still undelivered, and revise programs in accordance with combat needs. Such revision might call for additional funds for the 1954 MDA program. The Chiefs also recommended that the American Government re-examine national strategy toward Indochina, with a view to developing a unified effort in Southeast Asia to counter Communism on a regional basis--the basis on which the Communists fought. Further, the United States might consider scaling down French commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in order to permit deployment of additional forces to the Orient. The Chiefs also recommended that both France and the United States increase their political warfare activities.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to recent French requests for additional airpower by proposing that the United States provide material and financial support while France augmented her air force in Indochina with maintenance and air crew personnel already available. America should restrict its contribution of manpower to certain specialists, but should also examine the idea for establishing unofficial, volunteer air units composed of United States personnel.[2]

Before the Secretary of Defense took any action on the JCS recommendations, the question of assisting France had again moved up to the highest governmental levels. At a White House meeting on 16 January the President, Secretary Dulles and Under Secretary W. B. Smith of the State Department, Deputy Secretary Kyes and the Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Vice Admiral A. C. Davis, of the Department of Defense, and Mr. C. D. Jackson, White House adviser on cold war strategy, discussed what the United States should do about Indochina.

General Smith opened the discussion by setting the problem in somewhat the same framework as the Joint Chiefs. He felt that a comprehensive plan for dealing with Southeast Asia as a whole was necessary. Mr. Kyes, however, protested that planning for comprehensive assistance to the entire area could lead to a relaxation of the belief that Indochina should be saved at almost any cost. Siding with Mr. Kyes, President Eisenhower on the one hand indicated that the United States would have to continue the gamble that present efforts would be effective, but emphasized, on the other hand, that everything possible should be done to improve the situation.

The group recognized that a major problem arose from French reluctance to accept American assistance in training native soldiers and in improving the conduct of operations. Searching for a way to combat this reluctance, the President suggested the appointment of an experienced

2. (TS) Memo, DJS for JCS to SecDef, "Steps which the United States Might Take to Assist in Achieving Success of the Navarre Plan," 15 Jan 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 54.

American officer, such as General J. A. Van Fleet, either as Ambassador to the Associated States or as a member of the Ambassador's staff. As the upshot of the discussion, President Eisenhower appointed a Special Committee to develop a detailed program for securing military and political victory without United States overt participation in the war. This committee was composed of the Director of Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles; General Smith; Mr. Kyes; Admiral Radford; and Mr. Jackson.[3]

While the Special Committee undertook its study, events did not stand still. During the middle of January Premier Laniel formally requested additional material aid and United States maintenance personnel for the French air force in Indochina. This request was substantially the same as General Trapnell had forewarned Washington to expect; the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the United States provide aircraft but not personnel.[4] Specifically, the Premier asked for eighteen B-26's so that the two light-bomber squadrons in Indochina could be equipped with twenty-five planes each. Other advice from Saigon and Paris, however, indicated the French would need only ten additional B-26's to bring the two squadrons up to a total strength of fifty planes. In addition, the Premier requested twenty-five more B-26's for a third squadron. The French also wanted an assurance that General Navarre could continue to use the twelve U.S. C-119's for long-distance transportation. This grant would mean that the four C-47 squadrons could concentrate on operational support. France likewise asked that the United States supply spare parts in ample quantities and on regular consignments for the C-47's, B-26's and C-119's.

3. (TS) Memo, C.D. Jackson to A. Dulles, Kyes, Radford, & Smith, "Indo-China and Southeast Asia," 18 Jan 54; (TS) Uniden Memo (Gen G.B. Erskine to Radford), "Proposed Procedure for Implementation of the President's Decision Regarding Indo-China," 18 Jan 54. (TS) Uniden Memo for Rec, "Meeting at White House - 16 January 1954," nd, "Navarre Letter, Actions Taken," vol I, Alden file, OMA.

4. See Ch XII, pp. 20-21, and above pp. 2-3.

Not limiting its requests to material requirements, the French Government requested that the United States ship 400 technical maintenance specialists to Indochina, to service U.S.-provided aircraft. Premier Laniel emphasized the temporary nature of this assignment and promised to replace Americans with Frenchmen as soon as possible.[5]

The French request gave added emphasis to the need for further information in Washington. Accordingly, Admiral Radford urged CINCPAC to speed General O'Daniel on his way to Indochina. The general's mission was two-fold. First, he was to try to win consent from the French High Command for the idea that he remain in Saigon indefinitely, and, second, he was to evaluate the adequacy of the American assistance program and tabulate additional requirements. However, because of French sensitivity, CINCPAC was asked to provide General O'Daniel with cover by ordering him to make an inspection tour of all MAAG's in Southeast Asia.[6]

When the National Security Council met on 21 January, it considered the new French request for aid and the JCS recommendations for improving the French position. In presenting these suggestions, Admiral Radford observed that some of the recommendations might be referred to the Special Committee for further study. Others, however, should be put into effect immediately. Specifically, the United States should at once render maximum material support, and train French Union Forces in the use of American equipment. To this end the United States should expedite the shipment, in conformance with JCS priorities,

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5. (TS) Msg, Achilles (AmEmb Paris) to SecState, 2668, 2 p.m., 19 Jan 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 55. (TS) Msg, Achilles to SecState, 2663, 11 a.m., 19 Jan 54. See also: (S) Msg, Heath (Saigon) to SecState, 1151, 9 a.m., 3 Jan 54, DA-IN-31713 (3 Jan 54); (TS) Msg, Achilles to SecState, 2629, 2 p.m., 15 Jan 54; (TS) Msg, Achilles to SecState, 2642, 1 p.m., 16 Jan 54.

6. (TS) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC, JCS 955862, 202345Z Jan 54.

of undelivered items programmed during 1950-1954, make changes in the current program as requested by MAAG Indochina, make deliveries in accordance with the changes, and, if necessary, do all this without prior approval of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In addition, funds should be found so that current Indochina MDA programs could be adjusted to satisfy the additional training and material requirements submitted by MAAG. Since the Department of Defense was already acting on these recommendations, the National Security Council took no formal action.

Admiral Radford also discussed with the Security Council the French request for B-26's and American maintenance personnel. While favoring the provision of aircraft, he felt that the French could themselves, from resources available in France, find the necessary flight and maintenance personnel for an expanded air force. If necessary, United States Air Force personnel in NATO units could be utilized temporarily to replace and release French ground, maintenance, and supply personnel for service in the Far East. The United States could also train these French personnel in Europe.[7]

The National Security Council agreed that Admiral Radford should explore directly with Lieutenant General Jean E. Valluy, French representative to the NATO Standing Group in Washington, the problems of providing immediate aid to the French air forces. After discussing the matter with Air Force and OSD officials, Admiral Radford was able to inform General Valluy that ten B-26's would soon be on their way to Indochina and that the United States would also consider providing aircraft for the third B-26 squadron when the French could furnish flight and maintenance personnel. The admiral also assured General Valluy that spare parts would arrive as needed. However, it did

7. (TS) Dft Statement by Radford to NSC, "Report on 'steps which the U.S. might take to assist in achieving the success of the Navarre Plan' in Indochina," 20 Jan 54. (TS) Interv, Tucker with Vogt, 14 Jan 55, memo in JCS HS files.

not seem feasible for the United States to provide maintenance crews. Problems of language and accommodations, unfamiliarity with French methods, and the time factor all militated against using Americans.[8]

Even while these matters were under discussion, the French command in Saigon was pleading for immediate help. Viet Minh forces surrounding Dien Bien Phu were expected to attack soon, or to move against Luang Prabang in Laos. To counter either course the High Command needed aircraft and personnel.[9] Therefore Paris instructed its military representative in Washington to seek American help again.

General Valluy thanked Admiral Radford for the two B-26's already programmed for Indochina and the ten additional aircraft that had been promised. But he announced that France had been able to locate and ship only ninety maintenance specialists. Drawing French personnel from NATO wings would not solve the immediate problem, for these technicians would still need training on American-type craft. Therefore, he renewed the request that the United States provide 400 ground crewmen. Fortunately, providing additional flight crews did not present as great a problem; the French Government was working out arrangements with General A. M. Gruenther, Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, for USAF units on the Continent to train French aviators in the use of B-26's.[10]

The French soon reported, however, that twelve B-26's were only enough to take care of the past year's attrition. They still needed ten more to bring squadron strength up to twenty-five each. Admiral Radford then ascertained that ten more used B-26's might be transferred from the Far East

8. (TS) Memo for Rec, Capt G.W. Anderson, 21 Jan 54.

9. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to OSD/OMA, MG 146 A, 210350Z Jan 54, DA-IN-34719-C, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 55. (TS) Msg, USAmb Saigon to SecState, NIACT 1307, 4 p.m., 23 Jan 54, same file, sec 56.

10. (TS) Memo, Valluy to Radford, "U.S. Military Aid to Indochina," DFM(54) 16, 26 Jan 54. (TS) Msg, USNMR Paris sgd Gruenther to CSA, ALO 189, 011610Z Feb 54, DA-IN-36621, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 56.

Air Force to Indochina. When the Admiral asked General Valluy to give assurances that Americans, if sent to Indochina, would not be exposed to capture, the general gave a categorical statement to this effect. He further assured the admiral that United States personnel could be brought home at the end of the fighting season, about 15 June.[11]

Admiral Radford took up the French request for B-26's and United States personnel with other members of the Special Committee. Since France apparently had no more trained mechanics for the Orient, General Smith favored sending 200 USAF crewmen to Indochina. Mr. Kyes objected that this action would commit the United States to such an extent that it would have to prepare for complete intervention. In reply General Smith distinguished between mechanics and combat troops; he did not think the United States was taking on any commitment to provide the latter. However, he felt, and Admiral Radford concurred with him, that Indochina was so important to the United States that America should intervene with naval and air forces if worst came to worst.

Confronted with Mr. Kyes' reservations, the Special Committee agreed that final decision should be left to the President. However, the members of the committee did recommend that the United States should provide the ten additional B-26's (making a total of twenty-two) and could send 200 USAF maintenance personnel to Indochina. They felt the government should defer a decision on the third light bomber squadron and on the second contingent of 200 ground crewmen, pending the results of General O'Daniel's talks with General Navarre and the outcome of further French efforts to provide the additional mechanics themselves. President Eisenhower accepted all three

11. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, 26 Jan 54; (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, 27 Jan 54.

recommendations. Accordingly, General Twining ordered the Far East Air Force to carry out the President's decisions.[12]

Meanwhile, on 25 January, Secretary of State Dulles met with his French, British, and Soviet counterparts at Berlin. As anticipated, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov utilized his first chance to speak by proposing that "a conference of the Ministers of foreign affairs of France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the U.S.S.R., and the Chinese People's Republic should be called in May-June 1954 for the purpose of considering urgent measures for easing the tension in international relations."[13] Mr. Dulles agreed that the conference might consider the Soviet suggestion.[14] And the conference did, for five days, before Mr. Dulles succeeded in sidetracking the matter for later discussion.[15]

While the conference was still considering the Soviet proposal, the fact that the United States had agreed to send maintenance personnel to Indochina was divulged by Joseph and Stewart Alsop. The leak occasioned considerable furor in France and the United States.[16] Finally President Eisenhower found it necessary to intervene personally calm the uproar. At his press conference on 3 February,

12. (TS) Memo for Rec, Brig Gen C. H. Bonesteel, III, OSD, "Meeting of the President's Special Committee on Indochina, 29 January 1954," 30 Jan 54. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to SecAF, 29 Jan 54, circ as Encl B to (TS) JCS 1992/340, 21 Jun 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 72. (TS) Msg, Hq USAF to COMFEAF & Ch MAAG IC, AFOOP-OC-C TS 7323, 302339Z Jan 54, "Navarre Letter, Actions Taken," vol I, Alden files, OMA.

13. State Dept, Foreign Ministers Meeting (Washington, GPO, 1954), pp. 13-24, 220.

14. Ibid., pp. 24-29.

15. Ibid., pp. 29-54.

16. Joseph and Stewart Alsop, "Where is Dien Bien Phu?" Washington Post and Times Herald, 27 Jan 54. (S) Msg, Achilles (Paris) to SecState, 2758, 1 p.m., 27 Jan 54. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, 27 Jan 54; (U) Ltr, Sen John Stennis to Radford, 1 Feb 54.

he acknowledged that USAF technicians were on their way to Indochina, but implied that they would be part of the MAAG group training the French in the use of American equipment.[17]

A week later, permitting direct quotation, he informed newspaper correspondents that "no one could be more bitterly opposed to ever getting the United States involved in a hot war in that region than I am. Consequently, . . . every move that I authorize is calculated, so far as humans can do it, to make certain that that does not happen." Nor could he conceive of a greater tragedy for America than to become heavily involved in an all-out war in any of those regions, particularly with large units. He told the correspondents of French guarantees that Americans would not be subject to capture, and the French Government publicly repeated the guarantees for the benefit of American audiences. When both Republican and Democratic Senators endorsed the President's remarks, officials in the Executive Branch breathed a sign of relief.[18]

In Indochina, meanwhile, the Viet Minh divisions surrounding Dien Bien Phu had not yet attacked. Instead, General Giap withdrew some of his forces and at the end of January moved again in the direction of Luang Prabang, royal city of Laos. Further depleting their combat reserves in the Tonkin Delta, the French moved to counter the Viet Minh thrust. But they bemoaned their lack of the troops and aircraft that could have decisively defeated the Viet Minh invasion.[19]

This new indication that the initiative lay with the Viet Minh and not with the French brought another somber report from Saigon. Severely indicting General Navarre's defensive concepts, the United States Military Attache to Viet Nam likened Dien Bien Phu to another Na San. He reported that the Viet Minh command had concentrated its battle

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17. Unofficial Transcript of Eisenhower News Conference, 3 Feb 54, NY Times, 4 Feb 54. Congressional Record, vol 100, no. 3, p. 1470. (UNK) Memo for File, Radford, 27 May 54.

18. NY Times, 10 Feb 54, p. 2; 11 Feb 54, pp. 1, 6, 16; 4 May 54, p. 4.

19. (S) Msg, Heath (Saigon) to SecState, 1360, 31 Jan 54, DA-IN-36566, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-54) sec 145. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology. (S) D/A, G-2, Background Paper GI-D-33, "History of Indochina War," 7 Apr 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 62.

but in the absence of any genuine offensive plan, it appeared that they had little intention of moving decisively toward the defeat of the Viet Minh battle corps.[21]

General Trapnell's comments contrasted strikingly with those of General O'Daniel, who had returned to Washington following his visit to Indochina. General O'Daniel pointed out that since the French were bound by treaty to protect Laos, they had no choice but to counter the Viet Minh invasion by committing their reserves. However, he was confident that General Navarre would carry out his planned offensive and achieve military success during the 1954-1955 season. Agreeing that more than American supplies was needed, General O'Daniel had arranged for the assignment of five United States liaison officers to General Navarre's headquarters where they would have the opportunity to help correct French weaknesses.[22]

These comments reflected General O'Daniel's satisfaction with the results of his third visit to Indochina. Although General Navarre had not agreed that it would be desirable for the American general to remain at his elbow, he had consented to short visits from General O'Daniel every four to six weeks. The agreement to station the five liaison officers in Saigon also was an encouraging step toward increasing American influence in French councils. Although General Navarre in his conversations with General O'Daniel had stressed his needs for further supplies and equipment, he did agree to consider suggestions that the United States also provide help in psychological warfare activities and in training native troops.

General O'Daniel's inspection of Dien Bien Phu and the Tonkin Delta caused him to be optimistic about the immediate military situation. Although he recognized that the Viet Minh forces could make Dien Bien Phu untenable if they had medium artillery, he estimated that the French Union Forces could withstand any attack the Viet Minh was capable of launching there. The French were receiving reinforcements, and native troops were being raised and trained. General O'Daniel was confident that these additional units, supplied with American equipment, would permit the French Union to dominate all areas and bring the Viet Minh army to battle by

21. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to DA, MG 318A, 090950Z Feb 54, DA-IN-38234 (10 Feb 54), same file.
22. (S) Gen O'Daniel's comments on cable MC 39-54.

the fall of 1954. One additional step the United States might take, provided the French and Vietnamese agreed, was to assign American reserve officers to train the natives. On the whole, the future looked bright.[23]

Admiral Stump, however, again sounded a note of caution. He did not believe the five liaison officers and occasional short visits by General O'Daniel were an adequate substitute for the continuous assignment of a high-ranking American to Indochina. While he agreed with General O'Daniel that there was no immediate danger of the French Union's suffering a major military reverse, he viewed with grave concern French failure to launch an offensive.[24]

Admiral Radford shared CINCPAC's concern and was anxious to have General O'Daniel permanently assigned to Indochina. The French agreed to accept General O'Daniel to replace General Trapnell as head of MAAG if he would surrender one star so that he would not be senior to General Navarre, and provided that he would have no greater authority or responsibility than had General Trapnell.[25]

General Navarre's terms meant that General O'Daniel would still not be able to exercise any substantial influence upon French strategy and training. General Ridgway protested that a distinguished senior officer was being demoted and the United States was losing prestige in the Far East without gaining compensating advantages.

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23. (TS) Msg, ALUSNA Saigon /O'Daniel/ to CINCPAC, readdressed CINCPAC to CNO, 280815Z Jan 54; (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC /O'Daniel/ to CINCPAC readdressed CINCPAC to CNO/JCS, MG 250A, 020130Z Feb 54. Both in CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 56. (TS) Rpt of U.S. Sp Mission to Indo-China, 5 Feb 54, same file, BP pt 10. (TS) Encl C to (TS) JCS 1992/300, 27 Apr 54, same file, sec 64.

24. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO/JCS, 042114Z Feb 54; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO/JCS, 072308Z Feb 54. Both in same file, sec 57.

25. (TS) Mns Mtg of Sp Cmte (Indochina), 9 Feb 54. (C) Memo, Ely to Radford, 13 Feb 54. (S) Msg, Heath (Saigon) to SecState, 1501, 5 p.m., 21 Feb 54, CCS 092 Asia.

corps in western Tonkin, but the French, with their forces dispersed throughout Indochina, were not in position to take advantage of the opportunity for offensive operations to destroy the enemy. Although the French Union Forces outnumbered the Viet Minh two to one and had overwhelming fire power and air transport capability, their tactics remained defensive. Patrolling was the exception, not the rule, for French units. Likewise, French Union Forces were not maintaining contact with the Viet Minh army, but were waiting to be attacked.

In Laos, also the French had failed to demonstrate tactical initiative. Instead they had been content to let six Viet Minh battalions tie down twenty French Union battalions rather than capitalize on the chance to defeat the Viet Minh forces decisively. The attache gave as his opinion that General Navarre had been directed by his government to conduct a minimum-casualty holding operation, improving his position where feasible, with a view to eventual negotiations. The Viet Minh, on the other hand, seemed to be fighting a clever war of attrition with time running in its favor. In conclusion, the attache reported that "informed United States military opinion here" considered the greatest deterrents to successful French action to be lack of energetic support from Paris, inadequate training of combat units and staffs, and a defensive philosophy. These defects could not be remedied by the unlimited provision of modern United States military equipment.[20]

Secretary Dulles and Mr. Nash in Berlin were so concerned about this report that they asked General Trapnell for his comments. According to the Chief of MAAG, General Navarre was revealing an increasing tendency to seek "miracle" solutions instead of forthright and energetic action according to "universally accepted principles of war." General Trapnell considered that the French had adequate supplies and equipment for large scale sustained operations,

20. (S) Msg, USARMA VN to CSUSA for G-2, MC 39-54, 032355Z Feb 54, DA-IN-37222 (4 Feb 54), same file, sec 57.

At JCS instigation, France was again asked to consider increasing the scope of MAAG's authority. When France again refused, the Department of Defense on 12 March announced General O'Daniel's new assignment and his change in rank and let it be known that no amendments had been made in the terms of reference for MAAG Indochina.[26]

At the same time Washington was examining General O'Daniel's status, it was also considering another piece of the Indochinese puzzle. In December, when the Viet Minh forces invaded Laos, the Laotian Government had issued a call for help. This appeal brought a response from an unexpected quarter and created a new question for consideration by the National Security Council. On 2 February President Syngman Rhee of the Republic of Korea informed General John E. Hull, Commander in Chief, Far East, that, if the United States desired, his country would send one division to fight the Viet Minh invaders in Laos. President Rhee felt that this act would encourage many anti-Communist elements in Southeast Asia and also make manifest Korean appreciation for the aid that the United Nations had been providing since 1950. General Hull thanked the Korean President for his offer and promised to take it up with Washington. In addition, he advised that the suggestion be kept secret until the United States Government had replied. In spite of this advice, Korea announced its offer before Washington acted.[27]

General Ridgway forwarded the Korean offer to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 16 February. He suggested that the Joint Chiefs obtain governmental approval for

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26. (TS) JCS 1992/284, Memo, CSA to JCS, 4 Mar 54; (TS) Memo, CJCS for JCS to SecDef, "Reappraisal of General O'Daniel's Status with Respect to Indochina," 5 Mar 54; (C) Msg, OSD sgd Davis to CINCPAC DEF 958261, 122158Z Mar 54. All in same file, sec 59. NY Times, 13 Mar 54.

27. (TS) Msg, CINCFE to JCS & CSA, C66980, 021000Z Feb 54, DA-IN-6799 (2 Feb 54); (S) Msg, CINCFE to JCS & CSA, KCG 2-4, 05100Z Feb 54, DA-IN-37583 (6 Feb 54); (S) Msg, Amb Briggs (Seoul) to SecState, 759, 101045Z Feb 54, DA-IN-38292 (10 Feb 54). All in CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 145. NY Times, 12 Feb 54, p. 1.

advising President Rhee that the United States interposed no objection to sending the division to Laos if the French approved, and that United States commitments to support ROK troops would remain unchanged.[28]

The National Security Council did not reject the offer and the Joint Strategic Survey Committee tended to favor it. However, General Ridgway now had second thoughts. He was alarmed lest the presence of ROK troops in Laos provide the Chinese Communists with an excuse for active intervention. A similar consideration led Admiral Carney to point out that no matter how the ROK intervention was disguised or described, it would appear to world opinion as a manifestation of American policy.[29] Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense they thought the United States should commend President Rhee for his determination to fight Communists even outside of Korea, but tell him that the offer did not appear to be in the best interest of the free world. They reasoned that President Rhee might have the ulterior purpose of hoping renewed hostilities in Korea would ensue. They also recognized that it would be difficult to justify keeping American and Allied contingents in Korea while ROK troops were fighting Communists in Indochina. Furthermore, it was extremely unlikely that the French would be willing to run the risk of courting Chinese intervention by accepting the offer. Taking up the matter again at its 4 March meeting, the National Security Council agreed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the offer should be declined. The President felt that the transcending objection to the offer was the fact that American public opinion would not stand for having United States troops tied up in Korea

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28. (TS) JCS 1776/432, 16 Feb 54, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 145.

29. (TS) NSC Rec of Action 1043 a, 17 Feb 54. (TS) JCS 1776/433, 17 Feb 54; (TS) JCS 1776/434, 19 Feb 54; (TS) JCS 1776/435, 19 Feb 54: All in CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 145.

while the ROK forces were fighting elsewhere. This consideration was stressed in the American reply rejecting the offer.[30]

While Washington had been attending to General O'Daniel's assignment and President Rhee's offer, the Berlin Conference had resumed consideration of the Soviet proposal for a five-power meeting. The United States had to recognize the very real pressures on the French Government to give at least the appearance of willingness to negotiate peace for Indochina. And the French had an unassailable argument: the United States itself had agreed to an armistice in Korea and had consented to meet with the Chinese to negotiate a political settlement. Moreover, Mr. Dulles had publicly stated that if the Korean political talks went well and "the Chinese Communists show a disposition to settle in a reasonable way such a question as Indochina, we would not just on technical grounds say no we won't talk about that."[31] Since the French seemed determined to open negotiations, the

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30. (TS) JCS 1776/437, 24 Feb 54; (TS) Memo, CJCS for JCS to SecDef, "Consideration of the ROK Offer to Send a Division to Indochina," 1 Mar 54. Both in same file, sec 146. (TS) JCS 1776/444, 5 Mar 54, same file, sec 147. (TS) NSC Rec of Action 1054 b, 4 Mar 54.

31. (U) DOC D-41, State Dept Press Release No. 475, 3 Sep 53, in (TS) Doc Hist of US Pol toward Indochina, 1940-1953. (UNK) Msg, SecState Berlin to State Dept, 177, 18 Feb 54, as summarized in App to (TS) JCS 1992/286, 11 Mar 54, JCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 59. Article IV of the Korean Armistice Agreement, signed 27 Jul 53, read as follows: "In order to insure the peaceful settlement of the Korean question the military commanders of both sides hereby recommend to the governments of the countries concerned on both sides that, within three (3) months after the armistice agreement is signed and becomes effective, a political conference of a higher level of both sides be held by representatives appointed respectively to settle through negotiation the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, etc." State Dept, Bulletin, 3 Aug 53, p. 139.

question facing the United States was whether to let the French go their own way and thereby destroy Western unity, or to attend the conference and seek to influence the terms of settlement. The latter course seemed preferable. Nevertheless, the United States wanted to avoid any implication that, by agreeing to negotiate, it recognized the People's Republic as the de jure government of China.

With these considerations in mind Mr. Dulles opposed any portmanteau-type conference with Communist China, such as the Soviets had proposed. Instead, he and the other Western Foreign Ministers worked for an agreement that the five-power conference would limit itself to settlement of the Korean and Indochinese wars, and that other powers participating in the two conflicts might also be invited to attend. French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault proposed that two conferences be held, one for each war, but the Soviet Union held out for a single meeting. The Foreign Ministers compromised by agreeing that a conference would be called to consider the Korean problem and that Indochina would also be discussed.

Foreign Minister Molotov labored long and hard to strike down Mr. Dulles' proposed statement for inclusion in the final joint communique to the effect that no power would be recognizing Communist China by meeting with Chinese representatives. But the West rallied to support the United States. The United Kingdom's Anthony Eden, for example, stated that his government recognized the People's Republic, but did not "seem to recognize them much." The American language was allowed to stand.[32]

The final communique, released on 18 February 1954, announced that the five powers and other countries that had participated in Korean hostilities would meet in Geneva on 26 April for the purpose of reaching a peaceful settlement of the Korean question. The four Foreign Ministers further agreed "that the problem of restoring peace in Indochina will also be discussed at the conference, to which representatives of the United States,

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32. (TS) Mns 1st-6th Restricted Sessions of Foreign Ministers Mtg, 8-18 Feb 54, in State Dept HD files.

France, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Chinese People's Republic, and other interested states will be invited."[33]

In public, American officials expressed satisfaction with the results of the conference. Under Secretary Smith congratulated the French for resisting pressure to settle the Indochinese war on Communist terms. Secretary Dulles emphasized particularly the fact that the United States would not be recognizing China by sitting down with its representatives at Geneva. Acknowledging the primary responsibility of France for Indochina, he told the American people of the agreement to discuss peace for this area at Geneva. He added that the United States had a vital interest in Indochina and would continue helping the French Union Forces to defeat Communist aggression there.[34]

Even in private discussions with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, State Department officials emphasized the positive achievements of the United States at Berlin. They praised the vigor and skill of M. Bidault in helping to preserve western unity in the face of Molotov's blandishments. They ignored the possible consequences of the Indochinese phase of Geneva and stressed only that the Korean phase would be conducted along the lines desired by the United States. The agreement to discuss Indochina, they stated, represented the minimum needed by the French Government to satisfy public clamor at home for peace.[35]

Within the privacy of the National Security Council, however, Secretary Dulles admitted that the United States had little to gain at Geneva although it probably would lose nothing. It was unlikely that the Geneva Conference would reach an agreement for a free and united Korea.

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33. "Quadripartite Communique, Issued at Berlin, February 18 [1954]," State Dept, Foreign Ministers Meeting, p. 217.

34. Smith, "Progress Toward Solving Current International Problems," (Address before Chicago World Trade Conference, 23 Feb 54), State Dept, Bulletin, 8 Mar 54, pp. 358-360. Dulles, "Report on Berlin," (Radio-TV Address, 24 Feb 54), ibid., pp. 343-347.

35. (TS) Summary of Notes Recorded by DepSecy, JCS at JCS-State Mtg, 26 Feb 54.

Further, there was some danger that the French might accept a settlement in Indochina contrary to United States interests. Yet French domestic political difficulties were so great that the United States had been unable to dissuade the Laniel Government from agreeing to the Geneva meeting.[36]

The prospects of going to Geneva to negotiate a settlement were indeed welcomed by the French National Assembly when it debated Indochina on 5 March 1954. Some members of the opposition called on the government to accept Prime Minister of India Nehru's proposal for an immediate cease-fire and negotiations, but both the opposition and the government seemed to be pleased that the Berlin Conference had opened the door for peace. Premier Laniel, however, ruled out an early cease-fire by proposing conditions that were designed to be unacceptable to the Viet Minh. Before concluding a cease-fire, he announced, France would require: (1) total Viet Minh evacuation of Laos and Cambodia; (2) creation of a no-man's land around the Tonkin Delta and withdrawal of Viet Minh units from the delta under a controlled evacuation; (3) withdrawal of Viet Minh forces in central Viet Nam to delimited zones; and (4) withdrawal or disarmament of Viet Minh troops in southern Viet Nam. The Premier also stated that the French Union Forces could not relax their military efforts prior to Geneva, since successful French military operations had obliged the Viet Minh to negotiate in the first place.[37]

On 2 March the President's Special Committee submitted its recommendations for further United States action to preserve Indochina for the free world. The committee had originally only considered steps short of military intervention. However, the group recognized that the

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36. (TS) Interv, Tucker with Vogt, 14 Jan 55, memo in JCS HS files. (TS) "An Account of the Events and Decisions Leading to the Loss of North Indochina," prepared for the record by the Office of the SpecAsst to JCS for NSC Affairs, 1st dft, 25 Oct 54, p. 44.

37. (S) Msg, Amb Dillon (Paris) to SecState, 3238, 6 p.m., 6 Mar 54. (U) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 3240, 6 Mar 54, DA-IN-868537, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 59.

United States might wish to consider taking direct military action if the situation drastically deteriorated or if the French rejected a broad program of American advice and aid. But military action had to be considered in its full context, that is, in relation to American Southeast Asian policy as a whole.

The Special Committee reiterated the conclusions of NSC 5405 that Indochina was the keystone of the Southeast Asian arch and that, consequently, the Associated States must not be allowed to fall under Communist domination. To prevent such a debacle, the French had to defeat Communist military and quasi-military forces and to develop native resistance to Communism. The United States should help the French, but help had to be consistent with the United States own and allied programs for all of the Far East. The committee felt that the United States had already taken all feasible actions to furnish the assistance that would aid the French to win the coming battle at Dien Bien Phu. The twenty-two B-26's were, of course, a major example. By March 1954 the Defense Department had expended $123,600,000 beyond the funds allocated in 1950-1954 appropriations for aid to Indochina to the detriment of programs for other areas. In addition, it appeared that at least another 100 million dollars would be needed to meet French Union requirements.[38]

Little else could be done to affect the tactical situation. Even the French staff itself had acknowledged to General Navarre that there was more American equipment in Indochina than could be put to immediate use. Therefore, the Special Committee concluded, delivered and programmed American aid to Indochina, plus the potential manpower of the French Union, was sufficient to defeat

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(S) Memo, Asst SecDef (ISA) to DepSecDef, "Developments in U.S. Military Assistance for the French and Associated State /sic/ Forces in Indochina," 8 Jan 54, I-10134. (C) Memo, Dir OFMA Davis for AsstSecDef (ISA) to DepSecDef, "Implementation of Indochina MDA Programs to Assist in Achieving Success of the Navarre Plan," 2 Mar 54.

the Communists eventually. However, the French would have to use their resources properly and hold the military situation relatively stable so that they would have time to develop native resistance to Communism, and to organize and train effective fighting units. To date the French had not been able to utilize Indochinese manpower effectively. It was up to the United States to take the initiative in persuading France and Viet Nam to overcome this deficiency. Yet America had to be wary lest the French exploit United States aid for unilateral advantage. Likewise, the United States had to be careful not to be drawn into combat involuntarily.

The Special Committee incorporated in its report three JCS recommendations that had not yet been fully implemented:

1. France should augment its air force in Indochina with flight and ground-crew personnel drawn from military and/or civilian resources already available. The United States should help the French accomplish this task, explore the possibilities for establishing a volunteer air group, and make arrangements for relieving USAF technicians temporarily assigned to Indochina.

2. The United States should arrange with France for the assignment of additional Central Intelligence agents to Indochina.

3. The Department of Defense should find funds to replace the 124 million dollars taken from other programs to meet Indochinese MDA needs.

The committee further recommended that the United States obtain formal or informal French acceptance of an increase in the strength of MAAG Indochina to provide additional aid to the French in operational planning and in the training of native troops. They should also be urged to use more American help in unconventional warfare, and encouraged and assisted to increase the Foreign Legion in Indochina. Furthermore, the United States purpose of helping the Indochinese people to achieve independence should be duly stressed. Bao Dai and possibly the King of Cambodia should be encouraged to take a more active role in leading their countries.

The Special Committee recommended that the Chief of the Advisory Group, once the French agreed to an increase in his authority, should attempt to get the French High Command to develop and carry out a sound concept and operational plan for intensified operations in order to win a significant, tactical victory soon so that success could be exploited politically. The High Command should adopt the use of native defense groups and local civilian administrators to pacify French-Vietnamese occupied areas. It should also train and properly equip Vietnamese units, with particular emphasis on training officers, non-commissioned officers, and technical personnel. The French Command badly needed to improve its intelligence and security agencies and to expand unconventional warfare activities.

The Special Committee concluded that if these political and military reforms were carried out with full French support at an early date, the unfavorable situation in Indochina would be reversed. Significantly, however, the committee added the suggestion that the Department of Defense be asked to develop a "concept of operations and considerations involved in the use of U.S. armed forces in Indochina should such involvement be determined upon."

A week later the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) directed the appropriate agencies to begin implementation. The Special Committee, thereafter, turned its attention to studying military intervention and to examining the position the United States should take at the forthcoming Geneva Conference. The conference was only seven weeks away; much had to be accomplished in little time if Indochina was to be saved.39

39. (TS) JCS 1992/290, 24 Mar 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 60. (TS) Memo for Rec, Gen G.B. Erskine, Dir of Sp Opns, OSD, "Terms of Reference for Subcommittee on Indo-China, Related Southeast Asian Matters, and the Geneva Conference," 4 Mar 54.

CHAPTER XIV

PRELUDE TO GENEVA
15 MARCH-7 MAY 1954

Against its best interests the United States had acceded at Berlin to French demands that the Geneva Conference discuss the Indochinese question. The problem then became one of preparing France for the diplomatic struggle awaiting her. The only method likely to bolster the French at the bargaining table was to concentrate on actions to strengthen the French Union's military position in Indochina.

American estimates of the military situation were optimistic in their long-range forecasts. There was no theoretical reason why the French should not be able to crush the Viet Minh, provided they had the will to do so and the material assistance with which to accomplish it. Provision of material aid was a relatively simple matter for the United States. The equipment was available and the pipelines were already established and functioning.

It was in the more nebulous sphere of psychology that the United States encountered real difficulties. Because the United States wished to stop short of actual intervention with its own armed forces, the fighting and the winning had to be done by the French. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were convinced that, with an aggressive plan for a military offensive, good staff planning, and well-trained native troops, the French would have the situation in hand within a year or two. But French leadership had shown slight inclination and little ability to tackle its basic military problems with energy and foresight. Moreover, the French High Command, jealous of its traditions and prerogatives, displayed scant desire to accept American assistance in other than a solid and tangible form.

Well knowing the thankless task they were undertaking, the Americans made a concerted effort after Berlin to convince the French that the highroad to victory would open before them if they would only allow the United States to increase its aid in training,

planning, and unconventional warfare. Even while America was attempting to persuade the French to accept help, the political climate in France and the military situation in Indochina were deteriorating rapidly. The will to fight is a thing of the heart, and the French had no heart for the fight. The United States, therefore, had to decide whether it should commit its own military forces and under what conditions intervention should take place.

The Berlin agreement to discuss peace for Indochina at Geneva was a signal to the Viet Minh to improve its military position. General Giap directed his forces to strike vital communications lines between Hanoi and Haiphong, to attack the main French airfields in the Tonkin Delta, and to cut the Savannakhet-Quang Tri highway in Laos. At the same time, Viet Minh irregulars in southern Viet Nam stepped up guerrilla operations.[1]

During the night of 13-14 March the Viet Minh launched the long-expected assault on Dien Bien Phu. Concentrating on one sector at a time, General Giap sent two regiments against the northern and northeastern French positions, each held by one French Union battalion. Employing horde tactics, the Viet Minh forces overran the first French battalion outpost shortly after midnight. Two days later the Viet Minh battle corps captured the second position. Although the French managed to drop two battalions of paratroops to replace personnel losses, they were not able to recover the two lost redoubts. With the capture of these positions the Viet Minh forces threatened directly the airfield upon which the entire isolated fortress depended.[2]

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1. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology.
2. (S) Geneva Conf Background Paper, Indochina Chronology. Harrison, "Dien Bien Phu," pp. 270-286. (S) Uniden Intel Briefing, "Current Military Situation, 21 March 1954."

The Viet Minh had not yet been able to capitalize on its new position when General Paul Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff, arrived in Washington on 20 March 1954. He had come at Admiral Radford's invitation to summarize his impressions drawn from a recent inspection tour of Indochina and to listen to American suggestions for increasing the scope of U.S. assistance.[3]

Admiral Radford attempted to convince General Ely of the vital importance of winning in Indochina by pointing out that France's position as a world power depended upon what France did in the Far East. The admiral also presented arguments for increasing American help along the lines proposed in recent months by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President's Special Committee. He suggested forming an international volunteer air group and improving maintenance practices to augment French airpower. He invited the French to accept American participation in unconventional warfare activities. He offered to send additional American officers to assist the French in training the natives. General Ely, however, after admitting the need for improvements, agreed only to consider and investigate the American offers but declared that increasing the numbers of U.S. personnel in Indochina would jeopardize French prestige in Indochinese eyes.[4]

General Ely showed no such reluctance about accepting American material aid. In fact, the general had come to

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3. (C) Msg, CJCS to Ch MAAG IC for Ely, JCS 956829, 101951Z Feb 54; (S) Memo, Anderson to Radford, 1 Mar 54. (TS) Memo, [Radford?] to Valluy, "Discussions with General Ely," 18 Mar 54.

4. (TS) Aide Memoire, Radford to Ely, 8 Nov 54. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, "Conversation with General Ely, Chairman, French Chiefs of Staff, on 22 March," 22 Mar 54. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, "Discussions with General Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff on Indo-China in the Afternoon of 24 March," 24 Mar 54. (TS) Memo of Conv, Dir CI Cabell, Ely, et al., 23 Mar 54. (TS) Notes of JCS-State Mtg, 26 Mar 54.

Washington with a long list of additional emergency requests for airplanes, naval craft, guns, small arms, ammunition, and other supplies. He asked again for the third squadron of twenty-five B-26s and entered a new request for twelve F-8-Fs, fourteen C-47s, and twenty-four L-20s to replace combat losses, and for twenty helicopters to evacuate the wounded at Dien Bien Phu. He also asked for eighty U.S. maintenance personnel to service the helicopters. The United States felt that the real problem was not lack of aircraft, but French failure to make efficient use of what they had. However, President Eisenhower did not want the United States to be in the position of denying any aid critically needed in Indochina. Therefore the Department of Defense loaned a third light-bomber squadron to the French and gave them all the other aircraft General Ely had requested except the C-47s and the helicopters which were simply not available. As a quid pro quo, Admiral Radford obtained General Ely's consent for the U.S. Air Force to send a team to Indochina for the purpose of investigating the reasons for the low French aircraft-utilization rates. The Department of Defense also found twenty LSMs, parachutes and drop containers, arms and ammunition, and the other equipment requested by General Ely. The United States even agreed that the French air force could use U.S. C-119s to drop napalm on Dien Bien Phu, providing no American crews were aboard.[5]

Dien Bien Phu was foremost in General Ely's thoughts. The general acknowledged that undoubtedly the Viet Minh's objective was to obtain a military victory that could be exploited politically and diplomatically at Geneva. And he gave the French Union only a fifty-fifty chance of staving off defeat. Yet he shrugged off American suggestions that a

5. (TS) Memo, Ely to Radford, 22 Mar 54; (TS) Memo, Ely to Radford, 24 Mar 54; (TS) Memo, Anderson to Col Brohon /Gen Ely's aide/, "French requests for equipment for French forces in Indo-China," 24 Mar 54; (S) Memo, SecDef to SecAF, "Transfer of Additional B-26 Aircraft to Indo-China," 25 Mar 54; (TS) CM-74-54, Memo, Radford to President's Special Committee on Indochina, "Discussions with General Paul Ely," 29 Mar 54. (TS) Notes of JCS-State Mtg, 26 Mar 54.

relief column be sent overland to the besieged fortress. Of course, if the French lost, only five per cent of their troops in Indochina would be captured, whereas the Viet Minh would suffer far heavier casualties. Nevertheless, General Ely admitted that a military defeat at Dien Bien Phu would be a serious blow to morale both in the field and at home. If the fortress fell, Foreign Minister Bidault might not be able to hold out at Geneva for terms that would be acceptable to the United States.[6]

The French Government was apprehensive not only about the outcome at Dien Bien Phu, but also about the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention and instructed General Ely to find out what the United States would do if Red planes appeared over Indochina. General Ely raised this question in an interview with Secretary of State Dulles. Refusing to be drawn into a negotiation, Mr. Dulles indicated that American reaction would depend upon the circumstances. But the United States would certainly not be willing to participate in the war except on a partnership basis that would insure the patriotic cooperation of the Indochinese people.[7]

General Ely also took up his question directly with Admiral Radford. He asked not only whether American aircraft would intervene to counter Chinese planes but also how American intervention would occur. He suggested that precise staff agreements be concluded between CINCPAC and the French command in Indochina "with a view to limiting the air risk which characterizes the present situation."[8]

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6. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, "Conversation with General Valluy, French Military Mission to the U.S., on 19 March," 19 Mar 54; (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, "Conversations with General Paul Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff, on the subject of Indo-China," 21 Mar 54; (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, "Discussions with General Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff, on Indo-China in the afternoon of 24 March," 24 Mar 54. (TS) CM-74-54, CJCS to President's Special Committee on Indochina, "Discussions with General Paul Ely," 29 Mar 54.

7. (TS) Memo of Conv, SecState, Radford, Ely, et al., 23 Mar 54.

8. (TS) Memo, Ely to Radford, 23 Mar 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 60.

Admiral Radford assured General Ely that considerable advanced planning for limited U. S. participation in the war had already been completed and that CINCPAC had worked out procedures for employing carrier aircraft in Indochina. However, before the United States would commit these forces it would have to have firm agreements with the French on such questions as command and organizational arrangements, the duration of American support, and basing facilities in Indochina. Admiral Radford asked whether the French Government was prepared to request American air support, if the Communists intervened or if, for other military reasons, the French needed more airpower than they could muster. The admiral pointed out that if General Ely considered such a request likely, then "prudence dictated that the matter should be explored on a higher level in order to be ready for such emergency." General Ely replied that since he had been instructed by the French Defense Minister to raise the question of American intervention, it was obvious that France contemplated making such a request if necessary to prevent defeat.

General Ely also asked about American constitutional processes governing the commitment of aircraft. He informed Admiral Radford that the French Parliament would have to consent to the request for help. Admiral Radford replied that the President had also committed himself to take such a question up with Congress;[9] there was no North Atlantic Treaty for Southeast Asia that would permit the President to act without consulting the legislature. Thus, it would take time to arrange for American intervention, and it would have to be done at the governmental level.

Next General Ely asked what would America do if the French needed help to avert a disaster at Dien Bien Phu. Admiral Radford stressed that the United States would have to consider the whole Far Eastern situation and the probable Chinese Communist reaction before deciding to commit its planes. However, he did tell the general that if the French

9. On 10 March 1954 President Eisenhower had replied to a question about American activities in Indochina as follows: "There is going to be no involvement of America in war unless it is a result of the Constitutional process that is placed upon Congress to declare it." NY Times, 11 Mar 54, p. 14; 4 May 54, p. 4.

requested aid, and the American Government granted it, as many as 350 fighters operating from carriers could be brought into action within two days. It would be more difficult, however, to arrange for bringing U.S. medium bombers into the fight. General Ely concluded the discussion by saying that he was certain his government would ask for American air support if the Chinese intervened. However, Paris was so fearful of provoking the Chinese that the general would not hazard a guess whether his government would ask American help to save Dien Bien Phu.[10]

Before returning home, General Ely obtained Admiral Radford's signature on the following minute of their discussion:

> In respect to General Ely's memorandum of 23 March 1954, it was decided that it was advisable that military authorities push their planning work as far as possible so that there would be no time wasted when and if our governments decided to oppose enemy air intervention over Indo-China if it took place; and to check all planning arrangements already made under previous agreements between CINCPAC and the CINC Indo-China and send instructions to those authorities to this effect.[11]

The Chief of Naval Operations informed Admiral Stump of the terms of this agreement and notified him that General Ely's aide was on the way to Indochina to tell General Navarre of the Ely-Radford conversations. The aide's arrival would provide CINCPAC with a suitable occasion to renew any liaison with General Navarre which seemed necessary.[12]

The bare bones of this minute were apparently less than General Ely had hoped for. He had presented Admiral Radford with a version that included this paragraph: "There was complete agreement on the terms of General Ely's memorandum, dated 23 March, dealing with intervention by US aircraft in Indochina in case of an emergency, it being understood that

10. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, "Discussions with General Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff, on Indo-China in the afternoon of 24 March," 24 Mar 54.

11. (TS) Mns of Mtg between Radford and Ely, Friday, 25 Mar 54, sgd "Arthur Radford" and "P. Ely."

12. (TS) Msg, CNO to CINCPAC, 312313Z Mar 54.

this intervention could be either by Naval or Air Force units as the need arises, depending on the development of the situation."[13] In spite of the fact that Admiral Radford refused to initial this statement, General Ely went away from Washington feeling that a request from the French for American intervention would receive a prompt and affirmative reply.

The talks with General Ely confirmed Admiral Radford's opinion that the United States faced a critical situation. The admiral informed President Eisenhower of his fear

> that the measures being taken by the French will prove to be inadequate and initiated too late to prevent a progressive deterioration of the situation. The consequences can well lead to the loss of all of S.E. Aisa to Communist domination. If this is to be avoided, I consider that the U.S. must be prepared to act promptly and in force possibly to a frantic and belated request by the French for U.S. intervention.[14]

Admiral Radford's warning came to the President just as another chain of events culminated in bringing this same question before the National Security Council. The starting point of this second sequence of developments was the agreement at Berlin to hold the Geneva Conference.

The Berlin communique had triggered military action by the Viet Minh to strengthen its hand for Geneva; the agreement also moved the United States to weigh the stakes. How much could the French lose to the Viet Minh without losing the game? In early March 1954 the Secretary of State posed such

13. (UNK) Dft Mns, Mtg of Radford and Ely, 26 Mar 54.
14. (TS) Memo, Radford to Pres, "Discussions with General Ely Relative to the Situation in Indo-China," 24 Mar 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 60.

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They felt that, if this eventuality occurred, the United States should refuse to associate itself with the terms and should seek ways and means of continuing the struggle directly with the Associated States and other allies. They recommended that the National Security Council should immediately consider the extent to which the United States would be willing to commit its military resources in Indochina in concert with the French, or, if the French withdrew, in concert with other allies or unilaterally.[18]

These JCS views were confirmed by the subcommittee of the President's Special Committee on Indochina. If France insisted upon negotiating a peace that jeopardized the political and territorial integrity of Indochina, then the United States should pursue measures for continuing the war with the help of the Associated States and other allies, particularly Britain. The subcommittee further agreed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the matter deserved National Security Council consideration. The Council should examine what political pressures the United States could apply to keep the French in line; it should study actual intervention with American "air, naval and ultimately ground forces"; and it should determine whether it was possible to develop another base of operations in Southeast Asia as a substitute for Indochina, even though such a step would require much time and money.[19]

The JCS and subcommittee recommendations were punctuated by the Viet Minh capture of the two French redoubts at Dien Bien Phu on 15 March. The deteriorating military situation emphasized anew how much had to be done before the Geneva Conference began on 26 April. In December 1953, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff had tried to get the question of possible American intervention before the National Security Council, Deputy Secretary Kyes had quashed the JCS recommendations on the grounds of logistical inaccuracies. In March,

18. (TS) JCS 1992/287, 11 Mar 54 (as amended by Dec On, 12 Mar 54), same file, sec 59.
19. (TS) Memo, Gen G.B. Erskine to Sp Cmte, "Military Implications of the U.S. Position on Indo-China in Geneva," w/encl, same subj, 17 Mar 54, OSD 092.31, Admin Secy, OSD files.

however, the military and political situation had changed and the Secretary of Defense approved both the JCS and the subcommittee recommendations and forwarded them to the Secretary of State.[20]

Mr. Dulles also recognized that a very serious situation was developing. Not only was the French military position potentially dangerous, but the political climate within France boded ill for preserving Indochina at Geneva. On 9 March Radical-Socialist Deputy Pierre Mendes-France called upon the French Government to stop the Indochinese war immediately by negotiating directly with the Viet Minh; it should not wait for an international conference that would prolong for some months "the massacre and anguish of /the/ entire nation."[21] Although this statement represented the views of the non-Communist leftist opposition, Mr. Dulles also had reason to be concerned about the attitude of the French Government itself. French hopes were growing that the United States would recognize Red China or at least lighten the trade embargo as a quid pro quo for a satisfactory settlement of the Korean and Indochinese wars. Premier Laniel expected his government to fall if it returned empty-handed from Geneva. And a successor regime would be likely to sell out not only Indochina but also the European Defense Community. Ambassador Dillon in Paris put bluntly the question facing the United States: how far was America prepared to go to prevent further Communist expansion in Southeast Asia, either by fighting or by making the concessions sought by China?[22]

Confronted by the Ambassador's question, which had been partially reiterated by General Ely, Mr. Dulles took up with the National Security Council on 25 March the recommendation by the Department of Defense that the United States Government

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20. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 23 Mar 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 60.

21. (U) Msg, Amb Dillon (Paris) to SecState, 3312, 11 Mar 54.

22. (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 3294, 9 p.m., 10 Mar 54; (S) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 3313, 7 p.m., 11 Mar 54; (S) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 3315, 8 p.m., 11 Mar 54.

study immediately the question of military intervention. Mr. Dulles pointed out that the United States must have answers to some fundamental questions before the Geneva Conference opened in late April. The questions were: what would the United States do if the French attempted to sacrifice the position of the Free World in Indochina by accepting terms unacceptable to the United States, and what would the United States do if the French decided to get out of Indochina? Mr. Dulles stated that the United States had to be prepared either to write off its interests in Indochina or to assume responsibility there if the French relinquished their hold.

In reply President Eisenhower listed four conditions to be met before U.S. military intervention might take place. The Associated States would have to request assistance; the United Nations should sanction the response; other nations would have to join the United States in answering; and Congressional assent be given. Mr. Dulles thought that the United Nations might give sanction to the call for assistance, but believed that more work would have to be done by the Executive Branch before it presented the case for intervention to the Congress.

After discussing the possibility of developing the Australia-New Zealand-United States pact as an instrument for united action, the Council directed the Planning Board to make recommendations on "the extent to which and the circumstances and conditions under which the United States would be willing to commit its resources in support of the Associated States in the effort to prevent the loss of Indochina to the Communists, in concert with the French or in concert with others or, if necessary, unilaterally."[23]

23. (TS) NSC Rec of Action 1074-a, 25 Mar 54. (TS) Gerhart "Account," pp. 44-46.

Secretary Dulles also began to prepare the American people and world opinion for possible U.S. intervention in Indochina. After enumerating ways short of open aggression by which the Chinese Communists were aiding the Viet Minh, the Secretary clarified the American position as follows:

> Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now if we dare not be resolute today.[24]

The Secretary, with the support of Admiral Radford and Mr. Kyes, also sounded out Congressional majority and minority leaders on the conditions to be met before Congress would sanction American participation in the war. Above all else the Congressmen stipulated that the United States should not intervene unilaterally, but only as a member of an international coalition. In addition, Congress would want assurances that France was granting full independence to the Associated States, that it had developed an effective training program for native troops, and that it would not withdraw its own forces but would prosecute an aggressive plan for military action.[25] It became obvious from this meeting with the Congressmen that the government had not yet succeeded in carrying out a task set forth in 1952 and reaffirmed in 1954, namely, making clear to the American people the importance of Southeast Asia to the security of the United States.

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24. (U) J.F. Dulles, "The Threat of a Red Asia," (address to Overseas Press Club, 29 Mar 54), State Dept Bulletin, 12 Apr 54, p. 540.

25. (TS) Msg, SecState to USecState (Geneva), TEDUL 37, 9:35 p.m., 6 May 54. (TS) Interv, Tucker with Vogt, 26 Jan 55, memo in JCS HS files. (TS) Gerhart "Account," pp. 51-52.

Secretary Dulles' resolute call for united action did not deter the Viet Minh forces from pressing their advantage at Dien Bien Phu. At the end of March General Giap's troops assaulted the main bastions of the fortress. By 3 April they had reduced the French stronghold to a triangle with sides of about 2,500 yards, and had captured the northern side of the airfield, making it extremely difficult for the French command to reinforce and supply the fortress, even by parachute.[26]

This critical situation brought a new spate of emergency requests for American help. Could the United States airlift two battalions of paratroopers from North Africa to Indochina? Would the United States provide some carrier planes to be flown by French naval aviators? Could the United States furnish eighteen C-47s to transport a reserve paratroop battalion from Hanoi to Dien Bien Phu? And could six more C-119s be loaned to the French Air Force? The Department of Defense found ways to meet these new French requests after President Eisenhower reiterated that he wanted to give the French all possible assistance short of outright intervention that would truly improve the situation.[27]

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26. (S dg C) Msg, USARMA Saigon to CSUSA for G-2, MC 106-54, 291030Z Mar 54, DA-IN-48138 (30 Mar 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 61. Harrison, "Dien Bien Phu," pp. 270-286.

27. (TS) Msg, Dillon (Paris) to SecState, NIACT 3692, 030002Z Apr 54, DA-IN-49168, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 61. (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 3693, 8 p.m., 2 Apr 54. (UNK) Memo, CJCS to Pres, 2 Apr 54. (S) Msg, CINCFE to JCS, CX67593, 020300Z Apr 54, DA-IN-48943 (2 Apr 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 61. (S) Msg, CINCFE to JCS, CS 67604, 030319Z Apr 54, DA-IN-49215 (3 Apr 54); (S) Msg, CNO to CINCPACFLT, 051951Z Apr 54. Both in same file, sec 62. (TS) Msg, CJCS to CHMAAG Indochina (Trapnell), JCS 959547, 071700 Apr 54.

071700 Apr

The United States acted promptly to cope with the emergency, but the French Government suddenly decided that material aid would not be enough and put forward the "frantic and belated" request for American intervention that Admiral Radford had advised the President to anticipate. At 2300 on Sunday, 4 April 1954, Premier Laniel and Foreign Minister Bidault told Ambassador Dillon that "immediate armed intervention of US carrier aircraft at Dien Bien Phu is now necessary to save the situation." Two considerations moved the French to make this request. First, the Viet Minh was throwing fresh troops into the battle at a faster rate than the French could reinforce the garrison with paratroops. Second, General Ely had told his government that Admiral Radford had promised to do his best to obtain American help if Dien Bien Phu required U.S. naval air support. The French leaders further justified their request on the ground that, in all but name, Chinese Communists had already intervened in the battle. Premier Laniel admitted that American naval support might bring on Red air attacks against the Tonkin Delta, but his government was ready to accept this risk. Emphasizing that speedy American intervention was essential since the Viet Minh forces were expected to renew their attack within a week, M. Bidault observed that the Geneva Conference would be won or lost at Dien Bien Phu.[28]

After conferring with the President, Secretary Dulles reaffirmed to the French Government that it was not possible for the United States to commit belligerent acts in Indochina before reaching a full political understanding on the formation of a coalition with France and other countries, particularly the British Commonwealth. In addition, he pointed out again that the President was committed to consult with Congress before going to war. In the meantime, however, the United States was giving all aid short of active belligerency and was preparing the public and Congress for intervention in accordance with constitutional processes.[29]

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28. (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, NIACT 3710, 1 a.m., 5 Apr 54.

29. (TS) Msg, SecState to Dillon, 3482, 9:29 a.m., 5 Apr 54.

Although M. Bidault remarked to Ambassador Dillon that unfortunately the time for forming coalitions had passed, the French Cabinet received the American reply with good grace. The Ministers continued to feel, however, that a relatively small commitment of airpower would save the day. Therefore, they asked the United States to provide ten to twenty B-29's to be flown by French pilots from U.S. bases in the Philippines. Ambassador Dillon seconded the request, pointing out that if America failed to help and Dien Bien Phu were lost, the disaster would strengthen the already powerful grip of the Ministers in the French Government who wished for peace at any price.30

Yet both political and military logic ran counter to using B-29's at Dien Bien Phu. It would take time and finesse to obtain consent for using Philippine territory as a base for French operations against Asians. It would also take more time than was available to train even experienced pilots to operate B-29's. Even if time were available, however, medium bombers were not a suitable weapon to use against troops in foxholes. After informing General Valluy of these reasons for not loaning the B-29's, Admiral Radford offered to provide additional fighter bombers, which the French command gratefully accepted. Later, General Ely himself claimed that the request for B-29's had been generated by the politicians, not by soldiers and airmen.31

The French Government put forward its request for B-29's in lieu of a carrier strike on the same day that the National Security Council met to consider a Planning Board report recommending that "the United States should now reach a decision whether or not to intervene with combat forces, if that is necessary to save Indochina from Communist control, and, tentatively, /on/ the form and conditions of any such intervention." The board further recommended that "The timing

30. (TS) Msg Dillon to SecState, NIACT 3729, 8 p.m., 5 Apr 54; (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, NIACT 3738, 1 p.m., 6 Apr 54; (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, NIACT 3740 4 p.m., 6 Apr 54.

31. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, /Conv with Gen Valluy, 7 Apr 54/, 7 Apr 54; (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, /Conversation with Col Brohon, 9 Apr 54/, 9 Apr 54. (TS) Msg, CJCS to CHMAAG IC, JCS 959547, 071700 Apr 54.

for communication to the French of such /a/ decision, or for its implementation, should be decided in the light of future developments." Setting forth steps which the government should begin to take if the United States planned to intervene at some later time, the board suggested the following actions: (1) obtain Congressional approval for intervention, (2) initiate military and mobilization planning, (3) make and publicize moves to ready U.S. air and naval forces for action on short notice, (4) make it clear that no acceptable settlement could be reached without far greater Communist concessions, (5) explore with the British Commonwealth and with Asian nations the formation of a regional coalition, and (6) exert maximum diplomatic pressure on France and the Associated States to resolve the question of the future status of Indochina and prepare the French and Indochinese for inviting the United States and other nations to participate in the war. [32]

Although the National Security Council did note and discuss the report, it "postponed decision on the recommendation" that the United States should determine now whether or not to intervene. This action reflected the views of President Eisenhower, who reiterated his opposition to unilateral American intervention: congressional approval would have to be won and, as a minimum, the Associated States would have to request American participation in the struggle.

Secretary Dulles reported on his conversations with Congressional leaders, and also indicated that his discussions with ambassadors of major U.S. allies had not been encouraging. There was little disposition among the allies to take a strong stand on Indochina. Yet the Secretary rejected the recommendation by the Planning Board that the United States decide whether to intervene. Rather, the Council's discussion focused on the tangential issue of the Southeast Asian coalition. There was apparently some feeling,

(TS) Msg, CNO to CINCPACFLT, 071709Z Apr 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 62. (TS) Msg, SecState to AmAmb Paris, 3534, 8:25 p.m., 7 Apr 54.

32. (TS) NSC Plng Bd Rpt, "NSC Action No. 1074-a," 5 Apr 54, CCS 334 NSC (9-25-47) sec 14.

shared by the President, that bringing the coalition into existence would so strengthen the bargaining position of the West at Geneva that intervention would become unnecessary. In addition, the coalition could bolster the political strength of other countries in Southeast Asia to resist Communism and thus prevent the loss of the entire area should Indochina fall. Although both Secretary of Defense Wilson and Admiral Radford opposed the partition of Indochina and pointed out the likely psychological impact on France of the loss of Dien Bien Phu, the Council decided only to direct U.S. efforts prior to the Geneva Conference towards organizing an alliance composed initially of ten nations. These ten were the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippine Islands. In addition, the Council agreed that the United States should attempt to win British support for American objectives in the Far East and should press the French to accelerate their program for granting independence to the Associated States. At the same time President Eisenhower directed the Department of Defense to obtain Congressional approval for increasing the number of U.S. maintenance technicians in Indochina and for extending the tour of duty of personnel already there. If Congress approved these steps, then the United States could send the French additional aircraft suitable for employment against the Viet Minh.[33]

The National Security Council's action allowed the Department of Defense to intensify its efforts in assisting the French to save Dien Bien Phu, but only by providing material aid. Yet there was very little more material aid that would help. The Air Force inspection team and General Trapnell both reported that the factors limiting French utilization of American aircraft were the lack of flight crews and inadequate base facilities, and not shortage of aircraft or maintenance deficiencies. Most maintenance

33. (TS) NSC Rec of Action 1086, 6 Apr 54. (TS) Interv, Tucker with Vogt, 26 Jan 55, memo in JCS HS files. (TS) Gerhart "Account," pp. 51-54.

problems had largely been solved by the efficient performance of U.S. Air Force technicians. General Trapnell informed Washington that the B-26 situation was the most critical. The French had only thirty-four flight crews to fly forty-three operational aircraft. Loaning additional B-26's to the French air force would hardly alleviate this unbalance. However, the French air force did have flight crews for the naval Corsairs which the United States had just agreed to provide, and it could use American maintenance personnel to keep these planes flying. The U.S. Navy obliged by ordering a few of its ratings to Indochina to service the twenty-five carrier planes.[34]

The critical situation in Indochina had at last produced a change of heart in General Navarre. He finally agreed to use more fully the American officers on his staff and to accept some twenty-five to fifty U.S. personnel for helping with the training of native forces.[35] On the whole, however, French military authorities were doing little to improve Franco-American relations. Although Admiral Radford had stayed up all night to obtain governmental approval for airlifting paratroops from North Africa to Indochina, after the arrangements were completed the French announced that the troops would not be ready to leave for almost two weeks. In addition, the French navy sent the aircraft carrier Belleau Wood, which had been loaned to France by the United States, to the Far East with a cargo of planes for sale to the Indian Government. The carrier would therefore arrive in Indochinese waters at a crucial time without aircraft. Finally, General Ely persisted in his misinterpretation of his March conversations with Admiral Radford. On 7 April he complained to the admiral that

> The diplomatic exchanges of views stemming from the conditional answer made by the U.S. Government to our request for emergency intervention of the U.S. Air Forces /sic/ in support of our forces at Dien Bien Phu cause me to fear that this intervention would be subject to time lag which would be too long.

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34. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC to CJCS, MG 968A, 091015Z Apr 54, DA IN-50634 (9 Apr 54); (TS) Msg COMFEAF to CSUSAF, V-VC0173, 120721Z Apr 54, TS: 8374 (12 Apr); (TS) CM-84-54, Memo, CJCS to SecDef, 12 Apr 54.

35. (TS) Memo, CJCS to SecState, "Conversations with Col Brohon, Assistant to General Ely, Chairman of the French

> . . . I . . . wish that requested emergency intervention should not remain subordinated to political exchanges of views which will not fail to take a lot of time, in view of the fact that they must be conducted with several other governments.[36]

Admiral Radford replied by giving his version of the conversations. He and the Secretary of State had made it absolutely clear

> that the decision to employ U.S. forces in combat was one that could only be made at the highest governmental level and in the light of constitutional processes and congressional action. I did state that no such participation by U.S. forces was possible without a formal request by the French Government, and that I was certain that such a request, if made, would receive prompt and thorough consideration by the United States Government.
>
> Events connected with the request have proved my prediction to be true. The Secretary of State is moving with great urgency to cope with the situation. It is receiving the continuing attention at the highest levels of the United States Government. Meanwhile, every possible effort is being made to take all action, short of actual intervention by U.S. armed forces, to assist in the defense of Dien Bien Phu until international arrangements involving the nations who are so directly affected, can be completed.[37]

The Secretary of State was coping with the situation by attempting to bolster sagging French morale. He pointed out to Foreign Minister Bidault that even if the battle of

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Chiefs of Staff," 10 Apr 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 62. (TS) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC for Gen O'Daniel, JCS 959753, 101700Z Apr 54.

36. (S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3541, to Saigon, 1886, 1:35 p.m., 8 Apr 54. (TS) Msg, Ely to Valluy for Radford, c. 7 Apr 54, incorporated in (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, 7 Apr 54.

37. (TS) Ltr, Radford to Ely, 12 Apr 54.

Dien Bien Phu were lost, France would not have lost the war and he explained again that the United States could not become a belligerent until the American people had been prepared for such a step. His efforts were only partially successful. The French Government could recognize the realities of American politics, but it could not overlook French political considerations. M. Bidault felt compelled to reply that if Dien Bien Phu fell "it would be most unlikely that either /the/ Associated States or France would be willing to continue /the/ war even with full American military support."[38]

Secretary Dulles, as directed by the National Security Council, was also laboring to build the ten-nation Southeast Asian security coalition. The French were in general sympathy with the idea, but they did not agree that building such an alliance would of itself induce the Communists to lighten their terms for settling the war. They only saw that the coalition would not be formed in time to save Dien Bien Phu.[39]

To speed the process of organizing the regional defense organization, Secretary Dulles resorted to personal diplomacy. He flew to Europe on 10 April, announcing that he was going "to consult with the British and French Governments about some of the very real problems that are involved in creating the obviously desirable united front to resist Communist aggression in Southeast Asia." His purpose, he told the American people, was not to extend the fighting, but to end it. He did not intend to prevent the Geneva Conference from arriving at a peaceful settlement; instead, he wanted to create the unity of free wills that was needed to assure a peaceful settlement.[40]

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38. (TS) Msg, SecState to Amb Paris, NIACT 3512, 7 p.m., 6 Apr 54; (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, NIACT 3756, 11 a.m., 7 Apr 54.

39. (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 3774, 7 p.m., 7 Apr 54.

40. Dulles, "Consultations with United Kingdom, France, regarding Southeast Asia," WH press release, 10 Apr 54, State Dept Bulletin, 19 Apr 54, p. 590.

The Secretary's trip was reasonably successful. From London Mr. Dulles and Foreign Minister Eden announced that "we are ready to take part, with the other countries principally concerned, in an examination of the possibility of establishing a collective defense, within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, to assure the peace, security and freedom of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific." A day later Secretary Dulles and Foreign Minister Bidault issued a similar joint declaration. In addition, during early April the Department of State obtained Thai and Philippine acceptance at least in principle for the idea of a regional defense organization.[41]

Mr. Dulles had no more than returned to Washington, however, when the British reneged on their agreement to form the regional defense organization before Geneva. Foreign Minister Eden later explained that Commonwealth politics had dictated the change in British policy. The Colombo Powers, which included three Commonwealth members, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon, were to convene on 26 April and Mr. Eden felt that it would be "most undesirable" for Britain to give any public indication of membership in a program for united action until the Colombo Conference had ended. Furthermore, the establishment of the working group of ten nations, which did not include the three Asian Commonwealth members, would produce criticism that Mr. Eden felt would be "most unhelpful" at Geneva. Secretary Dulles privately attributed the reversal of position to British fear that intervention would bring on overt Chinese participation in Indochina and lead to World War III.[42]

Although the State Department had been unsuccessful in arranging for united action, the first prerequisite for American intervention, the Department of Defense was pushing

41. "U.S.-U.K.-French Discussions on Indochina and Southeast Asia," State Dept press releases 194, 197, and Statement by Secy Dulles at Syracuse, 15 Apr 54, State Dept, Bulletin, 26 Apr 54, pp. 622-623.

42. (TS) Msg, SecState (Paris) to ActgSecState, DULTE 3, 8 p.m., 22 Apr 54; (TS) Msg, SecState (Geneva) to ActgSecState, DULTE 7, 2 p.m., 26 Apr 54; (TS) Msg, SecState to USecState (Geneva), TEDUL 37, 9:35 p.m., 6 May 54.

ahead with military planning and preparations. CINCPAC's representative arrived in Saigon to confer with General Navarre on plans for American air support, should it be authorized. A few days later the Department of Defense publicized the move of a carrier task force, including the Essex and the Boxer, into the South China Sea between Indochina and the Philippines. In Washington the JCS planning machinery was thrown into high gear to recommend policies for the guidance of CINCPAC, CINCFE, and COMSAC in preparing operational plans for meeting possible Chinese Communist aggression in Indochina or Korea. The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 April accepted the outline plan for Indochina. This plan was based on the assumption that the French Union would continue to supply ground troops while the United States furnished air and naval support.[43]

Although the Joint Chiefs in 1953 and 1954 had repeatedly approved the concept of limited American intervention in Indochina if circumstances required, in early April 1954 General Ridgway suggested that they consider a broader course of action. Returning to a position the Chiefs had held in 1952, he recommended that the United States concentrate its strength against Communist China, the true source of Viet Minh military power. If the United States determined to use armed force to hold Indochina and Southeast Asia, it should line up allied support and warn the Communists that it would take military action to neutralize the sources of Viet Minh strength. It should also initiate mobilization and other supporting measures after enlisting the fullest possible allied military support.

General Ridgway supported his recommendation by pointing out that there were few if any decisive targets in Indochina itself. Although American intervention might result in local successes, it would "consititute a dangerous diversion of limited U.S. military capabilities, and could commit our armed forces in a non-decisive theater to the attainment of non-decisive local objectives." Nothing would please the Communists more.

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43. (TS) Msg, CINCPACFLT to CNO, 020202Z Apr 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 61. NY Times, 16 Apr 54, p.2. (TS) JCS 1776/462, 22 Apr 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 63.

The other Joint Chiefs of Staff did not immediately accept General Ridgway's analysis. Without approving or disapproving the substance, they noted the views and forwarded them to the Secretary of Defense. Later, noweve after the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the deterioration of the French position at Geneva, the Chiefs came back to General Ridgway's proposal.[44]

With the Army Chief of Staff calling for action against China, and with the Southeast Asia coalition foundering on British shoals, the Vice President of the United States took action of his own to test public opinion. Asked what the country should do if the French withdrew from Indochina, Mr. Nixon replied "that:"

> there was no reason why the French could not stay on and win, but on the assumption they did withdraw--an assumption he did not accept--Indochina would become Communist in a month.
>
> The United States as a leader of the free world cannot affort further retreat in Asia. It was hoped that the United States would not have to send troops there, but if this Government could not avoid it, the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch forces.

Public reaction was so unfavorable that the Department of State took pains to point out that the Vice President had been addressing himself to a hypothetical question. Mr. Nixon also had to wipe out the impression he had created that the Administration was bent on war. He said, "The aim of the United States is to hold Indochina without war involving the United States, if we can," and, "The purpose of our policy is to avoid sending our boys to Indochina or anywhere else to fight."[45]

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44. (TS) JCS 1992/296, 26 Apr 54, and Dec On, 26 Apr 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 62. (TS) Memo, CJCS for JCS to SecDef, "Indochina," 22 Apr 54, same file, sec 63. For a discussion of later development of General Ridgway's ideas, see Ch XV.

45. NY Times, 4 May 54, p. 4. J. Parker (State Dept press officer), "U.S. Policy Toward Indochina," 17 Apr 54, State Dept Bulletin, 26 Apr 54, pp. 623-624.

With public opinion and the Congress obviously still unready for unilateral American action and the British unwilling to internationalize the war, the only course open to the Administration was the use of moral suasion to keep the French from selling out at Geneva. There was still a measure of hope that the situation could be saved since the Viet Minh had adopted "nibbling" tactics at Dien Bien Phu, reducing the perimeter progressively, but not overwhelming the defenders.[46]

Still hoping that he could salvage the Southeast Asian coalition and thereby establish a French bargaining position, Secretary Dulles left for Paris and Geneva on 20 April. Three days later Admiral Radford journeyed to Paris and London to discuss the military aspects of the situation with the French and British.

Mr. Dulles found the French Government believing it would have to throw in the sponge when the enemy knocked out Dien Bien Phu. Foreign Minister Bidault and General Ely reported that the situation at the fortress was virtually hopeless; nothing would help short of "'massive' air intervention which the US would have to supply." Recalling that Mr. Dulles thought U.S. participation impracticable without British cooperation, M. Bidault belittled the amount of help that the United Kingdom would give. He urged that the American Government should give the "most serious consideration to armed intervention promptly as the only way to save the situation."

Turning the conversation to the idea of a coalition, the Secretary of State argued "that this was essential to give some cards to work with at Geneva so as to have a chance of obtaining acceptable peace." If Dien Bien Phu were lost, M. Bidault answered, the French people would regard the coalition as nothing more than a trick to keep them fighting, whereas their desire would probably be to pull out of Southeast Asia entirely.[47]

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46. Harrison, "Dien Bien Phu," pp. 270-286.
47. (TS) Msg, SecState to ActgSecState, DULTE 2, 2 p.m., 22 Apr 54.

General Navarre, growing ever more panicky, told the American Charge d'Affaires that he needed not only airpower but also U.S. ground forces[48] and informed his government that if American air intervention did not arrive promptly he would have to conclude a cease fire, not just at Dien Bien Phu, but throughout Indochina. M. Bidault placed General Navarre's request before Secretary Dulles. Admitting that U.S. help might come too late to save Dien Bien Phu, the Foreign Minister pleaded for the United States to intervene anyway. With Americans at their side, he argued, the French would feel honor-bound to go on fighting. Intervention would thus save the war, if not the battle. In a formal reply Mr. Dulles reminded the French that Congressional authorization was required and that this authorization would be predicated on an international coalition. Mr. Dulles' military advisers had informed him that air intervention would no longer save Dien Bien Phu, so the real question was what to do next. He advised the French to "react vigorously to temporary setbacks and to surmount them. That can be done in relation to the present situation if our nations and people have the resolution and the will. We believe that you can count upon us, and we hope that we can count on you."[49]

General Ely renewed with Admiral Radford the discussion of America's role. Talking as one military man to another, the general asked for intervention. Admitting that airpower could have no direct bearing on the outcome at Dien Bien Phu, he said its effect would be psychological; it would keep the Laniel government in office and France in the war. The admiral could only reply that the Secretary of State had already made the U.S. position clear to the French Government.

In reporting the Ely-Radford talk, Ambassador Dillon commented that the inevitable result of American failure to intervene would be the prompt overthrow of the French

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48. (TS) Msg, McClintock to SecState, 2098, 241200Z Apr 54, DA-IN-53782 (24 Apr 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 63.

49. (TS) Msgs, SecState to ActgSecState, DULTE 9, 6 p.m., 23 Apr 54; DULTE 10, 2400, 23 Apr 54; DULTE 1, 2400, 24 Apr 54.

Government and its replacement by a cabinet pledged to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh and to withdraw from Indochina. Such a government would probably not accept U.S. intervention even if it were freely offered.[50]

Ambassador Dillon did not persuade the Secretary of State that the time had come for intervention. Since the security of the United States was not directly threatened, Mr. Dulles believed that the President should not commit forces by executive action. He also thought that intervention was not in the best long-range interests of the country. Pointing out that a successor French government might come to power and repudiate American help, he advised against taking a step that would gravely strain relations with the British, Australians, and New Zealanders. He preferred to risk dealing with a successor government rather than to intervene unilaterally.[51]

The French were no more successful in obtaining American intervention than the Americans were in winning British agreement to establish the Southeast Asia coalition in time to affect the Geneva negotiations. Mr. Eden repeated that Britain could not sit with a working group to draft terms of reference until the Colombo conference had met. Even if the coalition were formed, he doubted gravely that Britain would agree to take part in fighting to save Indochina. Nor did the British Government want the United States to intervene without consulting it. Mr. Eden

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50. (TS) "Resume of Conversations with French and British Representatives by Admiral Radford, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Paris and London, 24-26 April 1954 on the Subject of Indochina," 28 Apr 54. (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, NIACT 4060, 251600Z Apr 54, DA-IN-53954 (25 Apr 54), CCS 210.482 (3-18-48) sec 4.

51. (TS) Msg, SecState to ActgSecState, DULTE 3, 8 p.m., 25 Apr 54.

did recognize that if the French lost Indochina, the Communists would threaten Burma and Malaya. He was therefore prepared to recommend to his government that a secret military group composed of American, British, Australian, New Zealand, and Thai representatives should meet to consider actions for strengthening the buffer state of Thailand. Mr. Dulles suggested that this idea be held in abeyance until there emerged a clearer picture of what the French were going to do. He and the French Government succeeded in persuading Mr. Eden to consult further with the British Cabinet.[52]

The British, however, would go no farther than to agree that they were prepared to hold the secret military talks with the United States. They remained adamantly opposed to intervening in Indochina or to entering negotiations for the establishment of a coalition for intervention. Her Majesty's Government based its position on an estimate by the British Chiefs of Staff that airpower alone would not be sufficient to save Dien Bien Phu. The British Chiefs thought that the only way to cope with the situation was to commit a strong force in the Tonkin Delta. These troops, in Mr. Dulles' words, would "generally work outward concentrically consolidating their position as they go with loyal natives." The British Chiefs admitted that such an operation would be a tremendous project involving lots of time and considerable forces.[53]

Admiral Radford discussed this estimate with the British Chiefs of Staff and with Prime Minister Churchill. The admiral found that the British military leaders agreed with the American appreciation of the probable serious consequences that would follow the loss of all or part of Indochina. Even after hearing the admiral's views, however, the British Chiefs continued to feel apprehensive about the

52. (TS) Msg, SecState to ActgSecState, DULTE 3, [illegible] p.m., 22 Apr 54; (S) Msg, SecState to ActgSecState, SECTO 6, 11 a.m., 23 Apr 54; (TS) Msg, SecState to Actg SecState, DULTE 10, 2400, 23 Apr 54.

53. (TS) Msgs, SecState to ActgSecState, DULTE 18, 11 p.m., 24 Apr 54; DULTE 5, 2400, 25 Apr 54; DULTE 7, 2 p.m., 26 Apr 54.

likelihood of Chinese intervention if the allies lifted a finger to save the Associated States. Moreover, they were thinking in terms of large-scale ground operations. Their principal concern seemed to be holding Malaya. The Prime Minister's thinking was also concentrated on British interests. If Britain had freely given India its independence, how could the English people be asked to participate in an exercise to save Indochina for the French Empire? Sir Winston seemed to think that the way to halt the spread of world Communism was to hold talks "at the summit."[54]

The day following his conversation with Admiral Radford, the Prime Minister made the British position crystal-clear in a public announcement to the House of Commons.

> Her Majesty's Government are not prepared to give any undertakings about United Kingdom military action in Indochina in advance of the results of Geneva. Her Majesty's Government have not entered into any new political or military commitments. My Right Honorable friend /Eden/ has, of course, made it clear to his colleagues at Geneva that if settlements are reached at Geneva, Her Majesty's Government will be ready to play their full part in supporting them in order to promote a stable peace in the Far East.[55]

Confronted with a British statement that gave no hope of strengthening the French bargaining position, Mr. Dulles and the National Security Council turned their thoughts toward establishing a regional coalition without the United Kingdom.[56] The Secretary of State conferred in Geneva

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54. (TS) "Resume of Conversations with French and British Representatives by Admiral Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Paris and London, 24-26 April 1954, on the Subject of Indochina," 28 Apr 54; (UNK) Memo for Rec, /Adm Radford/, 27 Apr 54; (TS) COS(54) 47th Mtg, Mns of Mtg of BCOS and CJCS /with additions and amendments by Capt Anderson/, 26 Apr 54.

55. Quoted in (TS) Msg, SecState DULTE 51, to ActgSec State, 7 p.m., 5 May 54.

56. (TS) Msg, SecState DULTE 21, to ActgSecState, 10 a.m., 29 Apr 54. (TS) NSC Rec of Action 1104 b, 29 Apr 54.

with the Foreign Ministers of Australia and New Zealand under the terms of the ANZUS pact. He stressed the necessity for a common stand by all countries in Southeast Asia. The Australians indicated willingness to hold military talks immediately, without making any commitments. They preferred, however, that the discussions take place within the framework of the Five-Power Staff Agency, of which Britain was a member. New Zealand was also willing to begin the talks without awaiting the end of the Geneva Conference. Neither country objected to the inclusion of Thailand.[57]

When the Americans began preparing for talks with the Dominions, the British Foreign Minister reversed his field. He told Mr. Dulles that he was ready to recommend that "Her Majesty's Government should take part at once with the United States, France, Australia, and New Zealand in an examination by the Five Power staff agency of the Indochina and Southeast Asia situation, both now and subsequent to the Geneva conference, . . . including the implications of any Geneva settlement." The British, however, would remain opposed to intervention. Mr. Dulles felt that the staff talks opened an avenue of hope and that they would have a good effect at the conference and on public opinion.[58]

Any good effect an announcement of the talks might have had was completely eclipsed two days later when the French Union defenders of Dien Bien Phu capitulated. The surrender came the day before the Indochinese phase of the Geneva Conference began. The French had been saying for weeks that they could not avoid negotiating peace if they lost Dien Bien Phu. The British, also, were prepared to accept a cease-fire. America, unprepared to intervene unilaterally, stood alone.

57. (S) Msg, SecState SECTO 73 to Actg SecState, 10 a.m., 3 May 54.
58. (TS) Msg, SecState to DULTE 51 to Actg SecState, 7 p.m., 5 May 54.

CHAPTER XV

THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

When the Indochinese phase of the Geneva Conference opened on 8 May 1954, the main outlines of America's task during the critical days to come were reasonably clear. The French had to be supported, as much as they themselves and harsh reality would permit. There were three areas in which United States support could be effective: at the conference table, in Indochina, and on the international scene. The nature of the problem, and the nature of the ally, were such that support could not be unqualified. What was, in spite of its gravity, largely a matter of internal affairs to France, was to the United States a major move in its global strategy. There was the risk that in holding France's chin above the quicksand, America might become inextricably mired in a series of commitments inimical to her own national interests. The position of the United States at Geneva was, from the start, difficult and delicate.

The difficulty sprang from the magnitude of the material, psychological and moral changes the United States wished France and the Associated States to accomplish in order to meet its minimum conditions for really effective support and participation; the delicacy lay in convincing them without alienating them. On the eve of the conference, Ambassador Dillon cabled from Paris that, since the U.S. Government had been unable to respond to French requests for military assistance to save Dien Bien Phu, the only available course now was to support fully negotiation of the best possible settlement at Geneva. The Ambassador claimed that it would appear utterly illogical to all Frenchmen were the United States to refuse to associate itself unreservedly with the settlement, and that a refusal would seriously affect our already damaged prestige and have adverse repercussions on NATO and EDC.[1] But the National Security Council had

1. (TS) Msg, Dillon 4267 to SecState, 8 May 54.

already established a number of conditions under which the United States would not associate itself with an agreement.

French Armistice Proposal and U.S. Reaction

At its meeting of 8 May, the Security Council decided that the United States ought not to associate itself with any proposal, from any source, directed toward a cease-fire in advance of an acceptable armistice agreement under international controls. Although the Council felt that the United States could concur in the initiation of negotiations for such an armistice, it urged that France and the Associated States should continue to oppose the Viet Minh with all resources at their disposal. In the meantime, to strengthen the position of France and the Associated States during the negotiations, the United States should continue its program of aid and its efforts to organize a southeast Asian regional grouping to prevent further Communist expansion into that area.[2]

The Security Council was also informed by the Secretary of State that he intended to indicate to the French Government the willingness of the United States to discuss at any time the conditions under which the Indochinese conflict might be internationalized. The French had already been advised that American intervention depended upon their fulfillment of three prerequisites: real independence for the Associated States, an aggressive military plan, and an effective program for the training of native troops. In explaining the Administration's position on intervention to leading members of Congress on 5 May, Mr. Dulles stated that the prerequisites had not been fulfilled and that, therefore, conditions did not exist for a successful conclusion of the war. Under these circumstances, intervention was not advisable and, in any event, the United States would not intervene unless other interested nations joined in.[3]

2. (TS) Rec of Act, NSC, 196th Mtg, 8 May 54, 1110, "Position of the US with Regard to the French Proposal for Negotiating an Armistice in Indochina."
3. (TS) Msg, Dulles TEDUL 37 to Smith, 6 May 54.

American intervention was the only ace the two nervous partners had between them. The nature of the original French armistice proposals at Geneva was conditioned by incertitude of American intentions, while American support depended upon the nature of the proposals. Four days before the conference, M. de Margerie, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, admitted to Under Secretary of State Smith that the French had not advised the United States of their ideas about possible armistice proposals because they had not been able to agree among themselves. He said that the near impossibility of preventing the Communists from profiting by a cease-fire or armistice arrangement was fully realized, but that in a thoroughly bad situation it was necessary to seek the course with least evil consequences. To his expression of hope that the French proposals would receive American support, Under Secretary Smith replied that United States policy still was that anything short of prosecution of the Navarre Plan to victory was not good enough. M. de Margerie observed that that was a "large order" but that he believed the United States would not be "too unhappy" over the French proposals when they emerged. He added that if the United States did not like them, it would not be in too good a position to object, unless prepared to intervene militarily.[4]

When finally communicated to the United States, the tentative French proposals, not yet authorized by the Cabinet, were better than had been expected. They took the line that the problem of Viet Nam was purely Vietnamese, with no question of partition, and that it was only a military struggle for control of the government. Laos and Cambodia were placed in a totally different category, as victims of external aggression. According to the Berlin Agreement, the purpose of the Geneva Conference was to establish peace in all three countries. To this end, there should be a cease-fire guaranteed by adequate military and administrative controls under supervision. Cease-fire would take effect only when such guarantees had been embodied in armistice conventions, which might be different for all three States, and when control machinery had been established and was in place. Controls would be based upon Premier Laniel's March 5th conditions. When cease-fire occurred, regular

4. (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 89 to SecState, 4 May 54.

troops would be regrouped into delimited areas and all other forces disarmed. The control machinery would be international and would require a considerable body of personnel. After peace had been re-established by the cease-fire, political and economic problems could be examined.[5]

M. Chauvel, the French delegate, said that the French assumed the Soviets would propose an immediate cease-fire, to be followed by a political settlement based on coalition and immediate elections. Such a maneuver would force the West into the position of opposing cease-fire. In spite of the strong emotional desire of the French public for cease-fire, the Government would be able to defend its proposal on the ground that the conditions demanded were essential for the safety of the troops themselves. Compliance with those conditions would, in effect, delay any cease-fire for a long time, if not indefinitely. In response to the inquiry whether by "international" the French meant "United Nations" supervision, M. Chauvel stated there was no firm position on the question. Subsequent discussion, however, indicated that the French were continuing to oppose the use of UN machinery for fear it would establish a precedent that could be used against them in North Africa and elsewhere. It was also gathered that the British definitely shared this view.[6]

One of the most frantic proponents of cease-fire was none other than General Navarre, to whom had been entrusted the dynamic prosecution of an aggressive strategy made possible by millions in American aid. His fixation with the need to save Dien Bien Phu blinded him to the fact that there was still hope in the over-all military situation. More rugged and courageous, High Commissioner De Jean vigorously opposed the idea of a cease-fire and urgently recommended that Foreign Minister Bidault ignore Navarre's importunities. As the American Charge d'Affaires in Saigon observed, it was the irony of war that the general wished to surrender, while the diplomat wished to forge ahead.[7]

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5. (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 106 to SecState, 5 May 54; SECTO 132, 7 May 54

6. (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 106 to SecState, 5 May 54.

7. (TS) Msg, McClintock NIACT 2242 to SecState, 6 May 54.

Although the tentative French terms were not an outright request for a cease-fire, the United States delegate cabled that "unless or until we have firm support in the United States for some other solution we are not in a position in Geneva to prevent the French from making such a proposal, which is far below a successful prosecution of the Navarre plan." He doubted whether the French would, in fact, remain firm in negotiations for satisfactory controls. It was his belief that they would slide rapidly toward the almost inevitable Communist counter-proposal of immediate cease-fire without controls. An important element in blocking French capitulation, as the French themselves observed, would be the degree to which the United States could strengthen the French hand by increasing Communist uncertainty of the possibility of American intervention. In the opinion of the United States delegate, success in organizing some form of Southeast Asian coalition would also help to bolster the French.[8]

The comments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were even more somber. They thought the French proposal would be regarded by the people of Asia as a Communist victory, particularly in the light of the then-current military situation. In their opinion, an armistice under the proposed conditions would lead to a political stalemate attended by progressive deterioration of the French-Vietnamese military position, ultimately resulting in the loss of Indochina to the Communists.

The Joint Chiefs reasoned that even if the Communists were to agree to undertake negotiations pursuant to the French proposals, such negotiations could be expected to result either in rapid capitulation of the French to obtain a cease-fire, or in a protracted wrangle characterized by steadfast Communist adherence to an inflexible position on important issues and by substantial concessions by the French. Moreover, experience in Korea had indicated it was certain the Communists would flagrantly evade, circumvent and violate any agreement to suit their ultimate purpose of subjugating all of Indochina, regardless of what military and administrative controls were embodied in the armistice

8. (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 110 to Sec State, 5 May 54.

conventions. Even though the Communists should agree to international control machinery, their practices would render it impotent, as in Korea.

Judging from past performance, the Joint Chiefs were skeptical that the Communists would enter into a preliminary agreement to refrain from new military operations during the course of negotiations. It was much more likely that they would intensify their operations to improve their bargaining position, whereas the French would be under a strong compulsion to avoid casualties.

The Joint Chiefs warned that if the United States associated itself with the initial French terms, it would in all likelihood be confronted subsequently with the painful alternatives of continuing to support the French in successively weakened positions, or of extricating itself at some point along the way. The Chiefs agreed that it was no longer realistic to insist that the French continue aggressively to prosecute the Navarre Plan. At the same time, they adhered to the view that no satisfactory settlement was possible without a substantial improvement in the military situation of the French Union. In the absence of a settlement that would reasonably assure the political and territorial integrity of the Associated States, any armistice entered into would inevitably lead to eventual loss of the area to the Communists.

Therefore, in the light of the current situation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that the United States should adopt the following as its minimum position:

> . . . The United States will not associate itself with any French proposal directed toward cease-fire in advance of a satisfactory political settlement. The United States urges the French Government to propose that negotiations for a political settlement be initiated at once. During the course of such negotiations, French Union Forces should continue to oppose the forces of the Viet Minh with all means at their disposal in order to reinforce the French negotiating position. In the meantime, as a means of strengthening the French hand, the United States will intensify its efforts to organize and promptly activate a Southeast Asian coalition for the purpose

of preventing further expansion of Communist power in Southeast Asia. If the French Government persists in its intention of entering armistice negotiations or accedes to immediate cease-fire negotiations, the United States will disassociate itself from such negotiations in order to maintain maximum freedom of action in taking whatever measures may be feasible for opposing extension of Communist control into Southeast Asia.[9]

To make clear the reason for United States refusal to associate itself with a cease-fire in advance of a political settlement, the President inserted the phrase "Because of the proof given in Korea that the Communists will not be bound militarily by the terms of an armistice." He also added a clause to the effect that the United States would continue its aid program to strengthen the French.[10] The influence of the Joint Chiefs' recommendations, in their revised form, upon the National Security Council position of 8 May is apparent at a glance.

The rather uncompromising position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff contained several internal contradictions that carried over, in more attenuated form, into the stand of the Security Council. As General Ridgway pointed out, the United States had to support some French proposal, after having agreed at Berlin to discuss the problem. From the military point of view, no position was acceptable that would lead to the loss of Indochina, and it was almost inevitable that a settlement based on either partition or coalition government could have no other result. An agreement assuring, within reason, the political and territorial integrity of the Associated States would have been highly desirable, but no such settlement had been proposed. The Army Chief of Staff felt that the French would automatically reject any American attempt to force them to propose a political settlement that did not take into account the realities of the military situation. In that event, The Joint Chiefs' position would oblige the United States to disassociate

9. (TS) JCS 1992/308, 6 May 54 (as amended by Dec On, 7 May 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 64.
10. (TS) JCS 1992/323, 24 May 54, same file, sec 68.

itself from France prior to any discussions on Indochina. Such action would jeopardize the Franco-American alliance, accelerate French settlement for a cease-fire, and open the way for new aggressions in southeast Asia.

General Ridgway believed it would be to the advantage of the United States to support a proposal along the lines of Premier Laniel's conditions because they held out the greatest hope of France's continuing the war. These conditions were: (a) total evacuation of Laos and Cambodia by the Viet Minh; (b) evacuation of the Tonkin delta by the Viet Minh, and creation of a no-man's land around the periphery; (c) withdrawal of Viet Minh troops from central Viet Nam to certain specified and restricted areas; (d) disarmament or evacuation of Viet Minh forces in south Viet Nam; and (e) measures of security and control to prevent any build-up of enemy forces during armistice discussions. If, however, the French began to negotiate without these guarantees, the United States should not be a party to the talks. General Ridgway was convinced that the French people would endorse continuation of the struggle only after it had been demonstrated that an honorable settlement was impossible.[11]

The American attitude was hardly helpful to the French Government, which was at that very moment fighting desperately for the right to negotiate at Geneva at all, instead of trying to reach an agreement with the Viet Minh immediately. Wits in Paris had prognosticated that the Assembly would allow the Government "to keep its head above water but not show its neck." In the words of the American Embassy, "its neck emerged" when it won a vote of confidence by a better margin than had been expected. But the Government's victory was clearly subject to an implicit caveat: should it fail to find a solution at Geneva along the lines indicated by Laniel on 5 March, it would be faced with almost insurmountable pressure to reach an immediate

11. (TS) Memo, CSUSA to JCS, "Minimum French Negotiating Position for Indochina Which French Will Support," (8 May 54?), same file, sec 65, For Laniel Conditions, also (U) Msg, Dillon 3240 to SecState, 6 Mar 54.

settlement with the Viet Minh on the best terms obtainable. Those terms would presumably be considerably less than Laniel's conditions.[12]

The French tabled their proposal, now couched in looser terms, on the opening day of the Indochinese conference:

I - For Viet Nam:

1. The grouping of regular units in zones of assembly, to be determined by the conference on the basis of proposals from the commanders-in-chief.
2. The disarmament of elements which do not belong either to the Army or to forces in charge of maintaining order.
3. The immediate liberation of war prisoners and civilian internees.
4. The control of the execution of these clauses by international commissions.
5. Cessation of hostilities with the signing of this agreement.

The re-assembly of troops and the disarmament cited above, provided for in the five points, would begin, at the latest, /number of days/ after the signing of the accord.

II - For Cambodia and Laos:

1. Evacuation of all regular and irregular Viet-Minh forces which have invaded the countries.
2. The disarmament of elements which do not belong either to the Army or to forces in charge of maintaining order.
3. The immediate liberation of war prisoners and civilian internees.
4. The control of the execution of these clauses by international commissions.

12. (C) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 4248, 6 May 54, DA-IN-58003 (13 May 54); (S) Msg Dillon to SecState, 4258, 7 May 54, DA-IN-56901 (8 May 54).

III

These agreements shall be guaranteed by the States participating in the Geneva Conference. Any violation would call for immediate consultation among these States with a view to taking appropriate measures individually or collectively.[13]

The American delegate pointed out that the proposal was an armistice, and not a simple cease-fire, because it provided for cessation of hostilities only after the first four conditions of Section I had been complied with. Nevertheless, he drew attention to a major loophole: inasmuch as assembly and disarming of troops would unavoidably follow, rather than precede, cessation of hostilities, it was possible to make a simple cease-fire out of a paper armistice agreement. He noted that the French had retained the good bargaining position offered by the distinction between the case of Viet Nam and that of Laos and Cambodia.

Under Secretary Smith reported, however, that the French had not thought through much of their proposal. Their tentative thinking on regrouping, for instance, was that the framework would be established by the conference, and that commanders in the field would work out the details, which would then be submitted to the conference for approval. "There was no answer to Allen's remark that Eden did not wish to spend the next two years in Geneva," stated the Under Secretary. An even more serious possibility was that on-the-spot technical conversations between the combatants could develop into a substitute for formal agreements and circumvent the conference proceedings.

The French had no definite idea on the composition of control commissions, other than their not necessarily having to be of the same nationalities as the guarantors mentioned in paragraph III. The French appeared to be showing less opposition than previously to United Nations' responsibility for control and selection of commissions.

It was on the question of guarantees that the American delegate showed most reservation. He stressed

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13. State Dept, Bulletin, 24 May 54, "French Proposal of 8 May," (Unofficial translation), p. 784.

the need for clarification on this point and for very careful consideration lest it amount to an obligation by the United States to underwrite a settlement that, at best, would be highly unstable. On the other hand, the American response to this part of the proposal would have an important bearing on how firm the French would feel they could be in negotiating the other conditions of an armistice.

While recognizing the amorphous nature of the proposals, and the risks to the United States they involved, the Under Secretary of State felt there was more to lose than gain by not supporting them at this stage of the negotiations. Among other things, the United States would probably be in a better position to win Britain, Australia, and New Zealand over to a more active role in a southeast Asian defense.[14]

The Joint Strategic Survey Committee displayed little enthusiasm for the French proposals. They observed that there were no provisions or safeguards to remove or reduce hazards to United States security interests involved in the acceptance of any armistice with the Communists that was not preceded by a satisfactory political settlement. If there were good faith on both sides, the French terms, subject to the addition of certain safeguards, appeared to constitute a satisfactory basis for negotiation. But there was every reason to expect the characteristic bad faith of the Communists. Hence, in the absence of subsequent strong and positive action by the Western Powers, an armistice would almost certainly lead to the subjugation of Indochina and, eventually, to the loss of all southeast Asia to the Communists. However, in view of the decision of the United States Government to concur in the initiation of negotiations, the committee interposed no further objections, providing the French incorporated provisions for international control machinery, to be established,

14. (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 155, to SecState, 9 May 54. (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 157 to SecState, 9 May 54. (Both State Dept cables).

in place, and ready to function prior to actual cease-fire, and a provision that representatives of the international control commission be guaranteed unrestricted movement in, and free access to, all Indochina.[15]

The recommendations of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee appeared at the head of the list of principles furnished the American delegate to guide him in evaluating proposals offered to the conference. At this time, these principles were considered basic to any acceptable settlement of the Indochinese question:

1. The establishment of international control machinery in place and ready to function prior to an actual cease-fire.
2. Representatives of the international control commission should be guaranteed unrestricted movement in, and free access to, all of Indochina.
3. Such a commission should have sufficient military personnel and logistic support to discharge its responsibilities in connection with the armistice terms.
4. Provision for UN assumption of responsibility for supervision of the international control commission. (Some other form of effective international control might well be a satisfactory substitute for UN supervision.)
5. Measures to provide for the security of troops and populations, and guarantees against abuses of the cease-fire by either party.
6. Provisions for the humane and orderly liberation of POW's and internees.
7. Evacuation of Viet Minh forces from Laos and Cambodia.
8. Provision for the examination of political and economic problems following an armistice agreement.

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15. (TS) Memo, Col Thackston for JSSC to JCS, "Negotiations with Respect to Indochina," 8 May 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 65. Official records do not indicate that JCS approved these JSSC recommendations. However, their substance seems to have been provided to, and accepted by, the Department of State.

9. No provisions in the armistice of a political nature, such as for early elections, or for troop withdrawals that would clearly lead to a Communist take-over.[16]

United States acquiescence in armistice negotiations represented abandonment of the demand for a political settlement first. It was a self-inflicted defeat. The United States had taken too extreme a stand in the beginning by insisting that the French hold out for a political settlement before considering an armistice. On 6 May, Admiral Davis had cabled, "General Smith requests I make clear to you his conviction that it is now certain French will not take any negotiating position, even initially, as strong as persistence in Navarre plan."[17] Since the Berlin Conference, it had become increasingly apparent that the French people were in no temper to throw themselves into an all-out effort to win the war if conference negotiations failed. And, in essence, the United States position had been a deliberate invitation to such failure, in order to give free scope for vigorous prosecution of the war. This approach was based on American strength and confidence and good will; it was incomprehensible to the Americans that the French should lack all three.

In addition to the specific principles governing armistice negotiations, the Under Secretary of State, as head of the United States delegation, was provided with a set of basic instructions, approved by the President. General Smith was instructed not to deal with delegates of the Chinese Communist regime, or any other regime not then recognized diplomatically by the United States, on any terms that implied political recognition or which conceded to that regime any status other than that of a regime with which it was necessary to deal on a de facto

16. (S) Msg, SeeState TOSEC 152 to AmCon (Geneva), 13 May 54, DA-IN-58225 (14 May 54).
17. (TS) Msg, Adm Davis (Geneva) to OASD(ISA), 060905Z May 54, DA-IN 56296 (6 May 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 64.

basis in order to end aggression, and to obtain peace. The position of the United States in the Indochinese phase of the conference was defined as that of an interested nation which, however, was neither a belligerent nor a principal in the negotiation. The United States was participating in the conference to assist in arriving at decisions that would help the nations of that area peacefully to enjoy territorial integrity and political independence under stable and free governments, with the opportunity to expand their economies, to realize their legitimate national aspirations, and to develop security through individual and collective defense against aggression, from within and without. This was meant to imply that these people should not be amalgamated into the Communist bloc of imperialistic dictatorships.

General Smith was informed that the United States was not prepared to give its express or implied approval to any cease-fire, armistice, or other settlement that would have the effect of subverting the existing lawful governments of the three Associated States or of permanently impairing their territorial integrity or of placing in jeopardy the forces of the French Union in Indochina, or that would otherwise contravene the principles under which the United States was participating. If, in the judgment of the U.S. delegate, continued participation in the conference appeared likely to involve the United States in a result inconsistent with the above-stated policy, he was instructed to recommend withdrawal or limitation of the United States' role to that of observer.[18] These instructions had been cleared with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee.[19]

The United States delegate was authorized "to support in general terms French initiative looking toward an armistice agreement incorporating effective and

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18. (C) Msg, SecState TOSEC 138 to USecState, 12 May 54, [illegible] cables.

19. (C) Msg Dulles TOSEC 137 to USecState, 12 May 54, DA-IN-57085 (13 May 54), same file.

adequate safeguards and under international supervision." He was also to remind the French of the NSC policy concerning the objective of assuring independence and freedom to the Associated States. As far as guarantees were concerned, he was to make it clear that the United States would reserve its position until more was known about the nature of the settlement to be guaranteed and the obligations of the guarantors.[20]

There were few illusions about the nature of any agreement that would come out of Geneva. The United States was just marking time until France realized fully that she was facing virtual surrender.

Conditions for American Intervention

The obvious answer to Geneva was American military intervention, but the French seemed to dread the cure fully as much, if not more, than the complaint. Twice during April the French Government had sought American intervention to save Dien Bien Phu and twice had shown itself unwilling to pay the going price--independence for the Associated States and allied, rather than U.S. unilateral, participation in the war. British unwillingness to take united action had also blocked allied participation. However, in early May Secretary Dulles persuaded the National Security Council and the President that the United States should now concentrate on winning Australian and New Zealand consent for united action, gambling on later British participation.[21] In spite of the need for prompt decisions on internationalizing the war, Secretary Dulles was extremely cautious about imparting to the French the full set of conditions under which the United States would be willing to intervene.

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20. (S) Msg, SecState TEDUL 49 to USecState, 9 May 54.

21. (TS) Gerhart "Account," p. 63.

He feared that a proposal to internationalize the war would be rejected if the issue were raised before the French were thoroughly convinced that their only choice was between intervention and what amounted to surrender. Moreover, the British would be more likely to support, or at least acquiesce in, intervention once Geneva had been shown to offer no prospect of a solution. The Australian Government would almost certainly not take a position until after the elections at the end of May. Nevertheless, it appeared desirable for Premier Laniel to know, in general terms, the American conditions because of their influence on current French military decisions in Indochina and political decisions in Geneva. Accordingly, Mr. Dulles informed Ambassador Dillon that the President would ask Congress for authority to use the armed forces of the United States in the Indochinese area to support friendly and recognized governments against aggression or armed subversion fomented from without, providing he could then state that the following conditions had been, or would be, met:

(a) That US military participation had been formally requested by France and three Associated States;

(b) That Thailand, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and United Kingdom also had received similar invitations and that we were satisfied that first two would also accept at once; that next two would probably accept following Australian elections, if US invokes ANZUS Treaty; and that UK would either participate or be acquiescent;

(c) That some aspect of matter would be presented to UN promptly, such as by request from Laos, Cambodia, or Thailand for peace observation commission;

(d) That France guarantees to Associated States complete independence, including an unqualified option to withdraw from French Union at any time;

(e) France would undertake not to withdraw its forces from Indochina during period of united action so that forces from the US - principally air and sea - and others would be supplementary and not in substitution;

(f) That agreement was reached on training of native troops and on command structure for united action.

The United States would require all these conditions to be accepted by the French Cabinet and authorized or endorsed by the French National Assembly, because of the uncertain tenure of any French Government. Once it had agreed to intervene, the United States would be fully committed and would have to be able to rely upon any successor French Government to adhere to the conditions. Mr. Dulles characterized the conditions as "absolutely indispensable as a basis for our /United States/ action."[22]

The Secretary of State authorized the communication of these views, orally, to Premier Laniel unless, in the opinion of the Ambassador, it would result in the immediate resignation of the French Government or hasten its capitulation at Geneva.[23]

On the whole, Premier Laniel and Maurice Schumann appeared to be well pleased by this clarification of the United States position, according to the Ambassador. They were particularly impressed and pleased by the indication that actual participation by the United Kingdom was no longer a prerequisite to action by the United States. They pointed out that France had no control over compliance by Thailand, Australia, etc., with the conditions stipulated for them, and asked to be kept informed of United States progress along those lines.

As was to be expected, the one serious objection was to the condition that France publicly accord to the Associated States the right to withdraw from the French Union. They stressed the fact that even the Viet Minh looked toward the possibility of joining the French Union.[24] When Ambassador Dillon reported that American insistence upon this point might discourage even the strongest supporters of continued French action, Mr. Dulles replied:

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22. (TS) Msg, SecState to Paris, rptd Geneva as TEDUL 54 (approved by Pres), 11 May 54.
23. (TS) Msg, SecState 4071 to Dillon, 14 May 54.
24. (TS) Msg, Dillon NIACT 4383 to SecState, 14 May 54.

> . . . /I/ firmly believe that it is essential /to/ remove any taint of colonialism in order to attract vital Asian support and forestall opposition by other Asian and Middle Eastern countries. . . . you should emphasize this concern of ours and our belief that the only way to achieve these results would be through provision of this right of withdrawal.[25]

M. Laniel and Schumann observed that it might be helpful with Nehru but that French public opinion would never understand why it was necessary to make such a statement when it had never been requested by any of the three Associated States.[26] It also threw into question the whole concept of the French Union as an association of free and independent peoples, and cast doubt upon the honor and veracity of France, who had recently stated that Viet Nam had been granted independence and had chosen to remain in the Union.

It seemed to Ambassador Dillon that the matter of independence had been taken care of satisfactorily by the pending treaties between France and Viet Nam, but that the situation was obscured and complicated by the existence of a state of war. Much of the difficulty was caused by the presence of a large French expeditionary corps on Vietnamese soil, by the necessity for a French supreme military commander, and by the absence of a truly powerful Vietnamese national army. Solution of the problem appeared to hinge on the creation of a real national army. The Ambassador recalled that Korea, once regarded as a U.S. puppet, became a demonstrably free and independent nation as soon as its own army was built up. Therefore, suggested the Ambassador, the United States should press for a publicized agreement with France giving the United States prime responsibility for training and equipping the Vietnamese army. There were manifold advantages: Vietnamese independence

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25. (TS) Msg, SecState NIACT 4064 to AmEmb (Paris), 13 May 54.
26. (TS) Msg, Dillon NIACT 4383 to SecState, 14 May 54.

would no longer be questionable; doubts about the ability and good faith of the French military command to accomplish the task would be circumvented; and the French would be able to withdraw the Expeditionary Corps after cessation of hostilities. Withdrawal of non-Asian troops would also most probably have a salutary effect upon the Chinese Communists.[27]

While recognizing the virtues of the foregoing solution, Mr. Dulles rejoined that "We cannot wait for the abolition of all deep-rooted abuses and extra-territorial privileges in times like these." He continued to explore means of obtaining a public, and preferably international, declaration on the subject of Vietnamese independence, and to press for prompt signature of the draft treaties between France and Viet Nam.[28]

Both Ambassador Dillon and Under Secretary Smith were as anxious as Mr. Dulles to see the basic treaties signed. Until that event took place they were forced to occupy an uncomfortably false position at Geneva. Moreover, it was probable that, following signature, Bao Dai would return promptly to Viet Nam and, to the extent his energy and ability permitted, to attempt to assume national leadership.[29]

Premier Laniel and Buu Loc initialled the Franco-Vietnamese treaties of independence and association on 4 June.[30] Mr. Dulles lost no time in cabling the American Ambassador to inform the French that "initialling" the treaties did not conform to the United States condition concerning independence.[31] M. Schumann explained that this initialling was far more important than the usual initialling of a treaty. He may have been referring to the fact that the act permitted Buu Loc to return to

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27. (TS) Dillon 4402 to SecState, 17 May 54.
28. (TS) Msg, SecState 4272 to Dillon, 26 May 54.
29. (TS) Msg, Smith DULTE 109 to SecState, 25 May 54.
30. (C) Msg, Dillon 4723 to SecState, 4 Jun 54.
31. (TS) Msg, SecState 4398 to Dillon, 4 Jun 54.

Viet Nam without the appearance of being empty-handed. Schumann nevertheless gave assurances that the French were ready to sign, but from the Vietnamese Charge it was learned that conclusion and signature of the related convention, to which treaty signature was subordinated, had bogged down.[32] The treaties still had not been signed by the end of the Geneva Conference, and Bao Dai remained in France.

If the French wanted to use the possibility of United States intervention primarily as a card to play at Geneva, it was to their advantage not to come to a firm decision until the conference had run its course. Mr. Dulles tried to impress upon them that, from the point of view of the United States, the practicability of intervention was constantly subject to "consideration in the light of day-to-day developments." While the United States was anxious to bolster the French position, the impression was growing that Laniel might be using the U.S. conditions to create an alibi for himself or his successor. Capitulation could be blamed on the United States for having presented terms so rigorous as to be unacceptable. This suspicion was shared by American representatives at the conference but, as General Smith pointed out, there was good reason to believe the French were as confused about the real intentions of the United States as the Americans were about France's.[33]

Confusion there certainly was. It would be useless to deny that France was loathe to carry out, in any circumstances, the sweeping political changes in Indochina demanded by the United States. France was angling for a United States commitment to intervene, without having to reverse overnight a century of ingrained colonial practices. But confusion also arose from other directions.

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32. (TS) Msg, Joyce, Paris 4765, to SecState, 9 Jun 54.

33. (TS) Msg, SecState to Amb, Paris, and USecState, 4117, TEDUL 78, 17 May 54; (TS) Msg, Smith DULTE 162 to SecState, 9 Jun 54.

On the other hand, as a prominent member of the Defense Department observed, it was evident that the French military thought there had already been an agreement, on the governmental level, to the U.S. conditions. Hence, they could not understand why the United States did not proceed with its commitments. For instance, based on the statement of the United States that it would commit principally air and sea forces if it intervened, the French asked for 20,000 Marines, and then raised it to six divisions. When Ambassador Bonnet reported there were not six Marine divisions in existence, Paris replied that there had to be some kind of contribution. And "then they piled it on," commented a State Department representative.[34] M. Schumann was "excited and dismayed" when informed that Admiral Radford had said there was no question of using Marines in Indochina. According to the French Ambassador, this answer conflicted with what the French Government had hitherto understood to be the intentions of the United States in this respect.

This imbroglio, coinciding with several other instances of serious misunderstanding, made it very evident how correct General Smith had been when he cabled from Geneva that "the US position is not understood here."[35] The Secretary of State attempted to bring the undesirable state of affairs to an abrupt halt. He told the French Ambassador that the U.S. position had been clear from the start, and that the United States was not willing to make in advance a commitment the French could use for internal political maneuvering or for negotiating at Geneva. It would, he said, represent a kind of permanent option on United States intervention, to be used as best suited French purposes. The American stand was "all or nothing." M. Bonnet expressed surprise that the United States thought the French Government had not made up its mind to internationalize the war. He considered

34. (TS) Notes of JCS-State Mtg, 9 Jun 54.
35. (TS) Msg, Dillon 4343 to SecState, 13 May 54.

"We make strong statements, and then qualify them," said General Smith. Qualification is always necessary where there is not identity of purpose and intent. And the national interests of the United States and France at Geneva were not the same. The French, beaten, tired, and disgusted, wanted an end to the war, whereas United States security interests were best served by continuation of the war on U.S. terms. Therefore, the attitude of the United States at Geneva was basically negative. The American Government knew precisely what it did not want France to do at the conference, because a settlement of any kind represented at least a partial defeat for the United States. Geneva was an impediment to the positive contributions the United States had to offer. From the French point of view, United States support was of a type that would have been a boon to a fighter in the first few rounds. France was in the tenth.

Another likely source of misunderstanding was French unfamiliarity with American constitutional processes. There is a certain amount of evidence that high French officials were not acquainted with the relationships between the President of the United States and the Congress. Moreover, at least partly through their misconceptions about the machinery of American government, the French had a tendency to pay too much attention to the pronouncements of individual Americans, while disregarding the official statements of the Government itself.

French Attempts to Secure Unconditional Intervention

Much confusion stemmed from the fact that the French turned immediately to a detailed consideration of exactly what military support they would receive as a result of intervention, instead of first complying with the political prerequisites upon which intervention itself depended. They thus created the definite impression that they were attempting to "piecemeal us to death" and maneuver the United States into a position where it could be accused of having haggled over minutiae instead of coming to their aid. Once in that position, the United States would have had to enter the war under conditions more suitable to the French, or bear the blame for capitulation.

the request had already been made![36] At the same time, Under Secretary Smith, in Europe, was still patiently explaining to MM. Bidault and Chauvel that the President could not ask Congress to sanction intervention until the basic conditions has been fulfilled by France.[37]

A month earlier, when apprising Premier Laniel of the U.S. conditions, Ambassador Dillon had been at pains to make clear that they represented high-level thinking in Washington and did not constitute, at that time, any commitment on the part of the United States Government. This did not deter M. Laniel from requesting definite assurance, preferably in writing, that American aviation would immediately come to the aid of French forces in the Delta if they were attacked by MIGs.[38] In March, General Ely and Admiral Radford had made arrangements for the preparation of plans to cover the eventuality of Chinese air attack, so that there would be no time wasted if an attack came and the United States decided to intervene. Presumably on the basis of those arrangements, it was not long before Premier Laniel, Maurice Schumann, General Ely, and other high French officials were talking as though the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had made a commitment of immediate United States retaliation in the event of overt Chinese Communist aggression. The French leaders did seem to realize that any action would require political approval, but they wanted to be sure that assistance would come rapidly. On 1 June, their inquiries were brought to the attention of President Eisenhower, who expressed himself very strongly on the subject. He said that the United States would not intervene in China /sic/ on any basis except united action. He would not be responsible, he asserted, for going into China /sic/ alone unless a joint Congressional resolution ordered him to do so. He made it very plain that united action was a condition related not merely to regional grouping for the defense of Southeast Asia, but also to United

36. (TS) Msg, SecState TEDUL 178 to USecState, 9 Jun 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 71.
37. (TS) Msg, Smith DULTE 165 to SecState, 10 Jun 54.
38. (TS) Msg, Dillon NIACT 4383 to SecState, 14 May 54.

States intervention in response to overt Chinese aggression.[39]

On the day after the President had stated his position, and observed that it did not differ from that of Mr. Dulles, General Valluy asked Admiral Radford whether it would be possible for the President to obtain some sort of "blank check" from the Congress against such a contingency, so that U.S. aid could be provided in a minimum of time. He also wanted to know whether the French could count on U.S. assistance, which might involve the landing of Marines, in case the French were forced to evacuate Hanoi and withdraw to the Haiphong redoubt. The Admiral gave no direct answer to either question. He stated that U.S. intelligence did not indicate the Chinese Communists were making any preparations for air intervention. He also carefully reiterated the U.S. policy of united action. General Valluy was not satisfied. He likened the French situation to that of a man on a sinking ship. Seven or eight destroyers at a distance were little help; what he needed was an airplane to come and rescue him.

Admiral Radford explained that the matter was obviously beyond his control, since it involved a political decision of grave importance. Concerning the Marines, the Admiral reminded General Valluy that any landing could only be pursuant to a political decision to intervene, which in turn depended upon fulfillment of the conditions already transmitted to the French Government. In the event of intervention, the United States force contribution would consist of "principally sea and air forces," although, the Admiral admitted, that would not necessarily rule out the possible use of Marines.

Turning to a survey of other resources, Admiral Radford broached the question of possible use of Korean or Nationalist Chinese troops. General Valluy was quite

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39. (TS) Memo of Conv, Pres with SpAsst Cutler, 1 Jun 54.

sure the latter would be highly unwelcome in Indochina, where some of the less pleasant aspects of Chinese occupation had not yet been forgotten.[40] It was the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves that, even if the conflict were internationalized, the introduction of Chinese Nationalist troops would be inadvisable. Their ostensible reason was that it would provide such excellent justification for Chinese Communist intervention. Despite their ultimate recommendation that President Rhee's offer of three divisions and essential corps troops be held in abeyance, the Joint Chiefs gave serious consideration to the merits of employing Korean troops. In addition to their fighting qualities, American equipment, organization and training, and relative proximity to Indochina, there were the psychological advantages deriving from the use of Asiatic troops in an Asian war. Unfortunately, Korean troops would have to be accompanied by their American advisers. The presence of the Americans, no matter how few in number, could be construed as an act of overt intervention.[41] The offer was given further study by the Joint Chiefs toward the end of June. They again recommended that, although the offer should not be rejected, no action should be taken on it at that time. Their views were influenced by the fall of the Laniel Government, the election of Mendes-France on a peace platform, and the progress of the Geneva Conference. Furthermore, the initial reaction of the French Government to the suggestion had been adverse.[42]

At the time Admiral Radford first brought the matter up with General Valluy for exploration, the General said the French had never given any thought to using Korean troops and that he would have to think it over. In his report to General Ely, however, he represented Admiral Radford as having <u>insisted</u> upon the utility of the Koreans, and as having made the manifestly impossible claim that

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40. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, 3 Jun 54.
41. (TS) JCS 1992/339, 15 Jun 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 72.
42. (TS) Memo, CJCS to JCS to SecDef, "ROK Forces for Employment in Indochina," 1 Jul 54, same file, sec 73.

the United States could transport all three divisions from Korea to Indochina in one week![43]

The discussions between Admiral Radford and General Valluy were in the nature of preliminary conversations in anticipation of bilateral staff talks under cover of the Five-Power Military Conference then in session in Washington. General Valluy availed himself of the opportunity to brief Admiral Radford on the military situation in Indochina following the fall of Dien Bien Phu. It was a gloomy report, based on the observations of Generals Ely and Salan after their visit to the theater of operations in May.

Dien Bien Phu, said General Valluy, had left its mark on both civilians and military, particularly in the Tonkin Delta. The troops were tired and their morale visibly low. Effectiveness of the military commands had markedly decreased; there was controversy between Generals Navarre and Cogny, and between their respective staffs; there was no close agreement between higher headquarters and commanders of the mobile groups; there was conflict between General Navarre and the French Air Force; there were differences among the Air Force commanders themselves, and among their staffs. French and Vietnamese troops had lost confidence in one another. Mobilization measures instituted by Bao Dai were a failure. The Vietnamese Government was discredited. The situation in Cochinchina was not good; there was conflict between the Vietnamese troops and the population of the area.

General Valluy admitted that Viet Minh losses at Dien Bien Phu had been considerably less than the French had hoped for. The Viet Minh battle corps was still effective, and within ten days their battle-hardened divisions would reach jump-off positions around the perimeter of the Tonkin Delta. There were prospects of a hard battle for Hanoi toward the end of June.

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43. (TS) Msg, McClintock 2770 to SecState, 14 Jun 54. (TS) Memo for Rec, RADM G.W. Anderson, ExecRtgCJCS, 3 Jun 54.

Extraordinary measures were required to make the best of the situation. General Valluy explained that the French were regrouping their forces in order to place the Vietnamese in the static defense of the perimeter, while using French troops as mobile groups. The Viet Minh were capitalizing on the delicacy of the regrouping operation to deal hard blows at some of the Vietnamese units.

The mobile forces were being positioned to retain control of the most useful area of the Delta along the Hanoi-Haiphong axis; there were six "task forces" available in the area. The French hoped to build this force up to nine or ten mobile groups. While each group theoretically consisted of 5,000 men, it was actually maintained at a strength of 3,000 and 4,000. An individual group corresponded roughly to a U.S. regimental combat team, with diminished service and signal support.

Although it was the object of the French to hold the Tonkin redoubt at all costs, they were not assured of success. General Valluy claimed the enemy was building up to a strength of 100 battalions, with high morale, exulting in victory, and with the civilian population leaning more and more in their favor. The French were apprehensive about possible intervention by the Chinese Communist Air Force.

The seriousness of the situation sent General Ely back to Paris begging for reinforcements. According to General Valluy, France was planning to send two more parachute battalions to Indochina during the summer, and a mobile group of Algerian troops was being prepared for shipment. Four additional battalions of colonial troops in North Africa had been alerted for movement in July, September, and October. Three new divisions were being activated in France. Each division, of 12,000 to 13,000 men, would be composed of conscripts and cadres from "couverture" divisions then in Germany. General Valluy did not hide the fact that provision of the cadres would "shatter" the NATO divisions, nor that attempting to send conscripts to Indochina would present the French Government with a very ticklish political problem.[44]

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44. (TS) Memo for Rec, RAdm G.W. Anderson, Exec to CJCS, 2 Jun 54.

Admiral Radford had already been advised by General Gruenther of the plan to form the new divisions.[45] What General Valluy did not mention was that the United States was going to be asked to equip them. Later, at a meeting between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of State, it was agreed that the United States ought to do everything possible to help the French, but that the probable initial expenditure of $310,000,000 plus $250,000,000 annually for maintenance, as well as the possible effect on NATO, called for a very careful examination of the whole idea before any commitment should be made.[46]

The State Department was particularly anxious to communicate to the French an agreement in principle, to maintain their will to continue the struggle in Indochina. Moreover, the creation of the new divisions had an important bearing on the forthcoming EDC debates, by providing an example of the flexibility of the European situation, and by demonstrating the ability of the French to withdraw troops as necessary to cope with urgent situations elsewhere in the French Union.[47]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff favored the idea. They recommended that, if a formal request were entered by the French, the United States should agree in principle to equip the three additional divisions, subject to certain provisos. The Joint Chiefs felt that the French should first of all exhibit sufficient determination to implement the plan in time to deploy experienced French Union troops from elsewhere in Indochina to the Tonkin Delta, and prevent its loss. Also, the French ought to implement their conscription decree immediately and accelerate the training of conscripts. Thereafter, the Joint Chiefs wanted the United States to establish an emergency fund

45. (TS) Msg, Gruenther exclv for Radford, ALO 481, 011715Z Jun 54, DA-IN-62357.
46. (TS) Notes of JCS-State Dept Mtg, 11 Jun 54.
47. (TS) Ltr, Dep USecState Murphy to Dep SecDef Anderson, 8 Jun 54, App B to Encl to JCS 1992/341, 21 Jun 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 72.

to assure reimbursement to the service concerned of the cost of the initial equipment, the cost of a year's maintenance in combat, and the cost of a year's ammunition. The same fund would also be used for the replacement of critical major items taken from U.S. Army mobilization reserves and stocks then earmarked for other programs. The rate of production of ammunition would have to be increased immediately. On the fiscal side again, FY 55 Army and/or MDAP funding programs would have to be increased for replacement of equipment and ammunition of the divisions in combat, and for establishing a production rate to support the units.[48]

Available records do not reveal the receipt, before the end of the Geneva Conference, of a formal French request of the type specified by the Joint Chiefs. The United States did concur in a request by the French Minister of Defense to permit movement of the 11th French Infantry Division to Indochina with TO&E equipment.[49] In any event, the whole question became academic following the settlement arrived at through the Geneva Conference.

In the meantime, however, the French military did not hide their desire for American participation, which was the real topic of interest behind the Radford-Valluy talks. On 4 June, three days before his last talk with Admiral Radford, General Valluy had favored the Five-Power Military Conference with his own evaluation of the situation in Indochina.

General Valluy stated that it was not his intention to dramatize, but "only to be realistic among soldiers." The truth, he said, could not be disguised. If the Tonkin were lost, the military line would not be re-established anywhere. The Laos bottleneck or the eighteenth parallel had the tactical characteristics that should permit

48. (TS) JCS 1992/345, 22 Jun 54, as amended by Dec On, 24 Jun 54, same file.

49. (TS) Memo for COL Forney, NATO Standing Gp, by LTC C.F. Heasty, 12 Jul 54; (TS) Msg, Jt SD/DD to AmEmb, Paris, MAAG and CINCEUR (note on msg: msg essentially as this dispatched 16 Jun 54). Both in Alden file, OMA.

re-establishment of a line, but General Valluy affirmed that there would be no forces to man that line. He was not speaking of French forces; he meant to indicate that there were no southern Vietnamese who could oppose northern Vietnamese.

Ho Chi Minh's objective was the Tonkin, to be attained either by negotiation at Geneva, or by assault on Hanoi. He wished to entangle the French in negotiations by admitting now, for the first time, that there is a Communist northern state and a non-Communist southern state, and by saying that both might be incorporated in the French Union. Although, admitted General Valluy "among military men," Ho was finding receptive French ears across the negotiating table, he was preparing for military action if it were called for. And his chances of success were good.

"It has been said at this Conference," recalled General Valluy, "that if Tonkin is lost, we will fight in the south." "However," he asserted, "the French will not fight nor will Viet Nam." The General maintained that the conferees would have to provide their own men for the line in the south. Moreover, it would be an artificial line, toward whose defense Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand could contribute nothing. The decisive point was this: if the other conferees did not underwrite the battle for Tonkin, they would fight tomorrow without the French in Saigon and Bangkok. If Tonkin were lost, no Vietnamese would fight against another Vietnamese, and sooner or later (probably sooner) the whole of Viet Nam would become Communist.[50]

From General Smith in Geneva to Charge McClintock in Saigon, there was no American who chose to contest General Valluy's estimate seriously. McClintock cabled that "General Valluy's appreciation of the situation . . . is exceedingly good--in fact almost too good." It was

50. (TS) Msg, SecState TEDUL 171 to AmCon, Geneva, 7 Jun 54.

McClintock's impression that Valluy had made his statement under instructions, less with military considerations in mind than with a political objective; he was probably looking as much at the French Parliament as at the Tonkin Delta. General Ely, announced McClintock, had twice in his presence stated that it was his keenest desire for the United States to enter the war. It was McClintock's belief that the purpose of Valluy's statement was either to bring the United States, and if possible the other powers at the conference, into the conflict or, failing that, to prepare before history an excuse for an armistice the French would then request of the Viet Minh.[51]

General Valluy's presentation of the French plight in Indochina was another in the series of incidents around 9 June that led to emphatic restatement of the United States basic position. To Valluy the answer was the same: fulfill the preliminary conditions and the United States will intervene. Moreover, the United States was well prepared militarily for intervention. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had already drawn up, or were in the process of putting the finishing touches to, plans to cover almost every contingency. They had the strategy worked out, the command structure, the force contributions, plans for training native troops. They waited only the political agreement.

US Military Plans for Intervention

On 20 May, in discussion between the French and the Department of State, the United States had specified that, if intervention were to be undertaken, France would have to agree not to withdraw its forces from Indochina during the period of united action. Thus, the U.S. forces, principally air and sea and other, would be supplementary and not in substitution. An agreement would also have to be reached on the training of native troops and on command structure for united action. In formulating a Department of Defense position on command structure, and on the size

51. (TS) Msg, Smith DULTE 161 to SecState, 9 Jun 54; (TS) Msg, McClintock 2714 to SecState, 10 Jun 54.

and composition of United States force contributions, the Joint Chiefs had been guided by several factors: the limited availability of U.S. forces for military action in Indochina; the current numerical advantage of French Union forces over the enemy (approximately 5 to 3); the undesirability of basing large numbers of U.S. troops in Indochina; the primary need for an expanded and intensified training program; the difficulty of superimposing U.S. air forces upon existing facilities in Indochina; the implications of a Chinese Communist reaction to United States intervention; and, finally, the fact that atomic weapons would be used when it was to military advantage.

The Joint Chiefs considered that no command structure was acceptable that did not permit the United States to influence future strategy in Indochina. To solve the problem of over-all strategic guidance, they suggested a Military Representatives Committee, with a steering or standing group along the lines of NATO. The group would be patterned after the U.S. Joint Staff and would be composed primarily of American and French officers. The Committee would draw its membership from those nations contributing the principal forces of the coalition.

Although the Joint Chiefs felt that the Allied Commander in Chief should be French, there also had to be an American Deputy and a U.S. Air Adviser. The Deputy should provide liaison with the French and would coordinate U.S. activities with the over-all operations. The Joint Chiefs were well informed of the complete subordination of the French Air Force to the Army, hence the Air Adviser to see that United States air power was not misused.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were convinced that the best military course for eventual victory in Indochina lay in the development of effective native armed forces. Therefore, a firm commitment by the French, and firm requests from the governments of the Associated States, for the training and development of those forces were felt to be prerequisites of United States participation.

United States force contributions, as recommended by the Joint Chiefs, would be limited primarily to a fast carrier task force and supporting elements, and to U.S. Air Force units operating from existing bases outside Indochina. It was believed that committing larger naval forces,

or basing substantial air forces in Indochina, would reduce readiness to meet probable Chinese Communist reaction elsewhere in the Far East. From the point of view of the United States, with reference to the Far East as a whole, Indochina was devoid of decisive military objectives and the allocation of more than token armed forces to that area would be a serious diversion of limited United States capabilities.

This observation coincided with the Joint Chiefs' central philosophy that the real solution to Far Eastern difficulties lay in the neutralization of Communist China. They noted that the principal sources of Viet Minh support were "outside Indochina," and that the destruction or neutralization of those outside sources would materially reduce French military problems in Indochina.[52]

It was unlikely their strategic thinking in this direction would find acceptance at the political level unless the Chinese Communists intervened overtly in the Indochinese struggle. In that event, the Joint Chiefs' strategic concept and plan of operations called for destroying effective Communist forces and their means of support in the Indochinese action, as well as reducing Chinese Communist capability for further aggression, in order to create conditions under which the forces of the Associated States might assume responsibility for the defense of Indochina. This meant offensive air operations, employing atomic weapons whenever advantageous, as well as other weapons, against military targets in China proper, Hainan, and other islands being used by the Communists in direct support of their operations, or threatening the security of the Allied forces. Simultaneously, French Union forces, augmented by U.S. naval and air units, would exploit whatever success had been achieved as a result of the massive air operations. Should this not suffice to assure victory, the attack against China would have to be stepped up. It would require an enlarged, but highly selective, atomic offensive, in addition to attacks with other weapons systems. The atomic onslaught would

52. (TS) Memo for SecDef, CJCS for JCS, 20 May 54, Encl to JCS 1992/316, 18 May 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 66.

be accompanied by a blockade of the China coast. Consideration was also given to instituting the blockade from the outset, and increasing it steadily, as required. Hainan would be seized or neutralized, and operations against the Chinese mainland would be undertaken by the Chinese Nationalists.

All American forces engaged in these operations would be under the unified command of the Commander in Chief, Pacific. He would insure the coordination of all operations in southeast Asia and provide for the necessary ground-air coordination between French Union forces and U.S. naval and air forces. He would also select targets and conduct air operations against military targets in Indochina and against those in China which directly supported Chinese Communist aggression. The Commander, Strategic Air Command, would support CINCPAC in these operations and would, in addition, conduct air operations as directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff further to reduce the Chinese Communist war-making capability.

The Joint Chiefs were by no means oblivious to the possible consequences of their strategy. They recommended that it be accompanied by an appropriate degree of mobilization to provide for the greater risk of a general war, so that the United States might be prudently prepared. Immediate action would have to be taken to strengthen America's allies. However, due to the overriding mobilization requirements of U.S. forces, such aid would have to be limited to those allies who could directly support the United States strategic concept of a general war. This aid would further have to be limited to combat-essential materiel, essential replacements, and spare parts beyond the capabilities of the individual countries.

Initially, there would be no requirement for materiel and equipment over and above current MDAP for France and other allied forces in Indochina. Within approximately six months, MDAP would have to be increased to take care of three new ROK-type native divisions, and thereafter would have to be increased as new divisions were developed. But whether or not the United States intervened in Indochina, the Joint Chiefs considered it vital that the war there be financed by methods separate and distinct from the world-wide MDAP.53

53. (TS) JCS 1992/321, 20 May 54, as amended by Dec On, 26 May 54, same file, sec 67.

Preparation and involvement on quite such a vast scale would not be necessary, of course, if the Chinese Communists did not project themselves openly into the war. In that case, the Joint Chiefs recommended a more restricted but equally aggressive, hard-hitting plan of operations. This plan assumed that the USSR also would not enter the conflict openly, but that it would defend Soviet-controlled areas, and might covertly supply air and naval forces. The plan further assumed that hostilities in Korea would not be resumed; that French Union forces would continue to resist in Indochina with U.S. military assistance; and that atomics might be used by both sides.

Granted those assumptions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that, regardless of the nationality of the forces engaged, the major courses of action would remain relatively unchanged. Enemy supply lines would have to be interdicted, while sufficient friendly forces were regrouped in the north to conduct coordinated offensive operations in that area. Territory liberated from the enemy would have to be pacified, following which coordinated ground, air and naval operations would be undertaken in central Viet Nam and north Laos to destroy enemy forces therein. Finally, attention would be turned to south Viet Nam and Cambodia to complete the destruction of the enemy. Throughout, psychological and unconventional warfare operations would be carried out. Basic to all these activities was the building-up, training and equipping of regular and guerrilla indigenous forces.

Initial operations would be devoted to the defense of vital areas until sufficient forces were available for an attack out of Tonkin with the prime objective of destroying organized Viet Minh military forces. Their lines of communications would be interdicted, their supply depots destroyed, and their troops prevented from escaping over the Chinese, Thai and Burmese borders. Concurrently, increased support by the natives would have to be developed, to assure effective local leadership in liberated areas, and internal security.[54]

54. (TS) JCS 1992/325, 24 May 54, as amended by Dec On, 2 Jun 54, same file, sec 68.

From the military standpoint, the foregoing plan was a good and feasible one for the French themselves to follow, granted continued assistance by the United States as in the past. Could they carry it out without active intervention by American forces?

After a careful estimate of the military situation in the Tonkin Delta, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that the French probably would not be able to hold Hanoi, even though it was within their military capabilities to hold along the Sept Pagodes-Hai Duong-Ninh Giang line for at least sixty days. The Joint Chiefs could see no reason why they could not hold the Haiphong redoubt for the foreseeable future, except for the deterioration of their will to fight.

It was the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, in the face of the rapidly crumbling military situation, support by United States air and naval forces, as envisaged, and limited to action within the boundaries of Indochina, would not insure decisive military results. Benefit to the French would be mainly psychological. For the United States, however, it would probably mean that involvement, although initially limited, would continue and expand until it would ultimately require additional naval and air forces, and extensive ground forces to prevent the loss of Indochina. Eventually, this could lead to full United States responsibility for the outcome of the war.

Again the Joint Chiefs warned that involvement in Indochina, even on a limited scale, increased the risk of a general war. Accordingly, if the United States Government decided to intervene, the armed forces should be placed in a more suitable state of readiness to meet such an eventuality. Decisions would have to be made on mobilization and logistic, fiscal and other supporting measures. Although there were no logistic implications that would prevent commitment of the forces envisaged, large-scale diversion of forces, equipment and supplies from the Far East or the United States would necessitate corresponding replacement of units and personnel, and increases in production. For a time, there would be a drain on logistic reserves. Construction of air bases, port and storage facilities, roads, railroads and communications systems in Indochina would be required. A major supply base in south

Indochina, and at least one advanced base near Haiphong would be needed to support United States ground forces. Lift capabilities of MATS and MSTS would have to be expanded and logistical pipelines, separate from those for Korea, would have to be maintained. A major increase in the armed forces, beyond that planned for FY 55, would be required, as well as an expanded draft and recall of some National Guard and Reserve units.[55]

Training of Native Troops

Salient in every American plan for intervention was the stress placed upon the importance of building up the native armies. It is significant that training of indigenous forces, although a military stipulation, appeared in the basic political, as well as military, conditions for intervention presented to France by the United States. Originally, there had been no intention on the part of the United States to conduct the training itself. The language barrier alone would have sufficed to stifle the idea, even if the United States had not sedulously been attempting to restrict its activities entirely to supplying the French with the wherewithal to fight their own war. But as time wore on and the French displayed no more ability than desire to produce an efficient native fighting force, the Americans became more and more impatient. As early as April, 1952, the three Service Secretaries suggested, in a joint memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, that an expanded MAAG undertake the training and equipping of a national army capable at least of preserving internal security, while international support, encouragement and cooperation were sought and brought to bear in developing Indochinese political self-reliance and independence.[56] Nevertheless, almost a year later, the Joint Chiefs, when asked to re-examine the question, rendered the opinion that "in view of their experience and the language difficulties involved, . . .

55. (TS) JCS 1992/334, 7 Jun 54 (as amended by Dec On, 23 Jun 54), same file, sec 71.

56. (TS) Memo, Secys Pace, Kimball, Gilpatric to SecDef, "Draft State Department Paper on Indochina dated 27 March 1952," 8 Apr 54, same file, sec 28.

the French are better qualified to conduct the training of the indigenous forces than United States personnel would be." They did suggest, however, that the French might learn some useful techniques from American experience in Korea.[57]

More time passed, and still no worthwhile results. Reluctantly the Americans came to the conclusion that if the job were ever going to be done, and done properly, they would have to do it themselves. Eventually, they sounded the French out about increased United States assistance in training the Vietnamese army, even though they did not expect the French to receive the suggestion very favorably. Their surmise was justified.

Less than two months before the fall of Dien Bien Phu, General Ely frankly admitted to Admiral Radford that he had been embarrassed by press reports to the effect that he was amenable to such assistance. Basically, he said, the reason for his opposition to the proposal was that increased numbers of Americans in Indochina would jeopardize French prestige in the eyes of the natives and would result in loss of native confidence in the French High Command. In spite of tactful arguments to the contrary advanced by Admiral Radford, General Ely would do no more than grudgingly agree to consider the matter very informally.[58] As for General Navarre, the United States missed a fine double opportunity when he threatened to "turn in his suit" if the Americans gained any active part in the training of native troops.[59]

Ho Chi Minh proved to be considerably more persuasive than the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The harder the battle corps of the Viet Minh surged against the Tonkin perimeter, the more virtue General Ely began to see in

57. (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/202, 3 Mar 53, same file, sec 38.
58. (TS) Memo for Rec, Anderson, "Discussions with General Ely, Chairman of the French Chiefs of Staff on Indo-China in the afternoon of 24 March," 24 Mar 54.
59. (TS) Msg, Lacy (Manila) 2670 to SecState, 25 May 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 68.

American offers of instructor personnel. By July, he had so succeeded in revising his original opinions that he was able to complain that "the United States was late once more."[60]

Repeated American efforts, on the governmental level, to impress upon the French the necessity of raising strong native armies have already been recorded. General O'Daniel's permanent assignment to Indochina in April, 1954, marked the beginning of intensive attempts, on the military side, to sell the French the notion of requesting American assistance in the task. And as their military situation worsened, the French gave ground more and more before American concepts. Really effective assistance, however, amounted to nothing less than assuming full responsibility for all phases of training. Once committed on that scale, the United States would find itself sharing the blame if the war turned out badly. Hence, responsibility without some control over combat employment of native troops and, therefore, a voice in strategy and operational planning, would be unacceptable. The French had anticipated this eventuality and feared its consequences, which accounted for much of their reluctance to ask for American help. By the time American arguments and the military situation had softened the French to the point of urgently requesting assistance, the United States was no longer willing to provide it, unless the French complied with all the other conditions upon which full intervention was contingent. By then, it was "all or nothing."

General O'Daniel had tackled his job with enthusiasm and optimism. By the middle of May he had won from Generals Ely and Navarre a considerable degree of acquiescence. General Ely said that he accepted the concept of American training from the Vietnamese army and he agreed that United States advisers should be placed in Vietnamese units. He also said, "The sooner you get into this war, the better we will like it." On the other hand, he did not give open assent to General O'Daniel's insistence upon the necessity of creating light divisions (rather than

60. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 1566A to CSUSA, 010205Z Jun 54, DA-IN-62459 (2 Jun 54), same file, sec 69.

battalions), and he emphasized strongly that command would remain in French hands and that there would be no U.S. participation in operational planning.[61] General O'Daniel had indicated that he thought it possible to create nine Vietnamese and three Cambodian divisions by October. The American Charge sounded a note of caution:

> I have the greatest admiration for General O'Daniel's faith, tenacity, and bull-dog courage. I fear, however, he may be over sanguine as to possibilities of making an effective Vietnamese fighting force in 6 months time. Irrespective of General O'Daniel's abundant military virtues, there are many obstacles in his path. Not least of these is complete apathy of Vietnamese populace coupled with increasing tendency of fence-sitters to go over to enemy, absolute break-down of mobilization plan, internecine rivalries between few men capable of showing leadership, and lack of leadership from Bao Dai and his Ministers. I do not say the job cannot be done but that we should take a close look at its dimensions before we come in.[62]

The Assistant Military Attache in Saigon also had his reservations about the advisability of plunging in before looking at the rocks. General Ely was insisting that there be French officers in the training groups. Past experience in Indochina had shown that French pride would not allow them to accept American advice. It was doubtful that these officers would be much more than roadblocks. The Assistant Attache also drew attention to the unsound political base. There was the Mendes-France peace-at-any-price government in France, and Diem, the probable new President of Viet Nam, "did not know the facts of life." The Attache even suggested that French agreement to the training proposal might have the

61. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 1447A to CSUSA, 191201Z May 54, DA-IN-59456 (19 May 54), same file, sec 67; (S) Msg, McClintock 2468 to SecState, 19 May 54.

62. (TS) Msg, McClintock 2299 to SecState, 9 May 54.

objective of getting the United States into a position where it would share more of the blame, seeing that the French had apparently already decided to give up Indochina.[63]

Undaunted, General O'Daniel had pushed on with his mission and by 24 May he was able to present Secretary of Defense Wilson with a somewhat revised training plan, to a substantial portion of which General Ely had given tacit assent. In brief, the plan called for readying nine divisions in the south, and two in the north, by 1 December. The divisions would be reduced strength (approximately 12,000 men), less heavy equipment. They would be under over-all French command but the United States would have a major voice in their employment and would have counterpart staff representation similar to the Van Fleet solution in Greece. The whole plan could only be brought off if the United States were given a free hand, with full Vietnamese support.[64]

While concurring with the plan as such, the Commander in Chief, Pacific, pointed out that General O'Daniel's hands would be tied if he attempted to arrive at other than preliminary arrangements before firm prior agreements had been concluded on the governmental level. The entire programs for Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam would have to be completely under U.S. control (although still under French over-all command) to ensure full support of the indigenous authorities. "Nor will present French apathy toward these forces be improved should control of training remain in French hands," added Admiral Stump.[65]

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63. (TS) Msg, Asst USARMA Saigon NR 1788 to G-2, 20 Jun 54.

64. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 230909Z May 54; (TS) Msg, Lacy, Manila 2670 to SecState, 25 May 54. Both in CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 68.

65. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 022358Z Jun 54, same [illegible], sec 70.

General Ely had come a long way since March. He now favored the principle of forming native troops into divisional units, although he still felt an American division was not the answer. He also agreed that American advisers should be placed at various levels within a division. On the question of United States participation in operational planning, however, he felt there was need for clarification. There could not be any discussion at that time of the United States sharing responsibility for planning operations. There could be only one commander, and he must be a Frenchman. On the other hand, providing an agreement was reached on intervention, U.S. officers would be integrated into French planning staffs. General Ely was prepared to discuss in Washington the details involved in such integration. Although now actively favoring United States training, his basic position was that questions relating to training were only one part of an over-all plan that would concern itself with fixing the conditions and the nature of United States intervention. They would only become pertinent once an agreement to intervene had been arrived at, and such an agreement would only take place if the Geneva Conference failed.[66]

General Ely's position was, of course, diametrically opposite that of the United States Government. Nevertheless, acting on his own premises, he summoned General O'Daniel and, through him, requested the United States to organize and supervise the training of Vietnamese divisions, and to do the same for all other Vietnamese training. This request was promptly transmitted to Washington by General O'Daniel on 9 June.[67] On the same day there arrived in Washington a cable from General Ely himself, in which he said:

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66. (TS) Msg, Dillon and Trapnell 4613 to SecState and JCS, 312000Z May 54, DA-IN-62247 (31 May 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 69. (TS) Msg, Dillon 4662 to SecState, 2 Jun 54.

67. (S) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 1651 DA to CSUSA, 091515Z Jun 54, DA-IN-64188 (9 Jun 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 71.

"I have not yet made a survey of the military situation, especially in Tonkin. However, it seems to me that the decisions I will have to take regarding the operations will rest on the US intentions, in the present situation, as well as those they anticipate in the future.

Therefore, I would very much like to have, either in Paris, where I expect to be possibly on the 19th June, or here in Saigon, as soon as possible, an exchange of view with a qualified representative of Adm RADFORD, in order to know what I can expect on the part of the U.S.A."[68]

These two messages, the mix-up over the use of Marines, and a number of other incidents indicating the French were ignoring the manner in which the United States had conditioned its offer of intervention, precipitated the crisis of 9 June. Both the Joint Chiefs and the State Department felt it was time to call a halt until the French realized it was "all or nothing." While Mr. Dulles was laying down the law to Ambassador Bonnet, Admiral Radford informed General Valluy that he was not in a position at that time to respond to General Ely's request for conversations on the subject raised in his message. The official position, as communicated to Ambassador Dillon in Paris was:

Prior to French decision to request internationalization, we consider undesirable to start yet another series conversations which would inevitably provoke on French side all kinds hopes and interpretations with regard basic issue US intervention which would only cause further confusion. In other words, it is our feeling that we should not be eased into a series of piecemeal commitments resulting from collateral military conversations in the absence of an understanding with the Fr Gov based on our general proposal /Paris 4023/ described in TEDUL 54 . . . .

68. (TS) Msg, Ely to /Valluy?7, Saigon, 9 Jun 54.

> With regard to US training Vietnam troops, we feel that situation VN has degenerated to point where any commitments at this time to send over US instructors in near future might expose us to being faced with situation in which it would be contrary to our interests to have to fulfill such commitment. Our position accordingly is that we do not (repeat not) wish to consider US training mission or program separately from over-all operational plans on assumption conditions fulfilled for US participation was Indochina.[69]

To keep him from trying to push more requests for aid, General O'Daniel was informed that any agreement on training would have to be made on a governmental level.[70] However, General Ely had already promised to give him the request in writing. But when it arrived, it turned out to be a statement of agreed principles, not a request for aid, and it came by way of Buu Loc, Vietnamese Prime Minister. General O'Daniel, commenting on the unexpected channel of communication, said:

> Ely gave Bu Loc the copy of the ltr knowing that I had no authority to act. He either misunderstood what I wanted, which is possible, or he may in disappointment failure obtain tng assistance desire show Vietnamese he is trying obtain aid for them and undesiring be placed in asking position himself had suggested Bu Loc ask for tng assistance by US.[71]

A less charitable explanation is also possible.

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69. (TS) Msg, Murphy TOSEC 392 to AmEmb (Paris), 10 Jun 54.

70. (TS) Notes of JCS-State Mtg, 11 Jun 54.

71. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 1951A to DA, 200915Z Jun 54, DA-IN-66760, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 72.

The decision to defer the training program was a drastic one. General O'Daniel protested vigorously: "To wait for a package agreement is sound theoretically but time is running out and no matter what the package deal may be, if action here is delayed any longer nothing short of actual UN-US troop intervention will have a chance of saving the situation."[72] General Smith, viewing the matter in the light of Geneva, advanced some cogent reasons for reconsidering the decision. While fully appreciating the desirability of concluding an agreement on an over-all operational plan for intervention, he pointed out that negotiations at Geneva were reaching a stage where any indication of U.S. support strengthened the French position. A decision to train Vietnamese troops, being a positive action that could be taken during the course of the conference, would be particularly good. French military discussions with the Viet Minh at Geneva had made no appreciable progress, and General Smith thought commitment of a training mission might lend the French negotiators some support. Inasmuch as it looked as though a settlement would result in partition, a national army was going to be needed to protect what was left of Viet Nam. A training mission would still be needed to strengthen the defenders. General Smith also felt that it would not be illogical to treat the matter of training separately from that of over-all intervention because the United States had discussed the possibility of training long before any question of intervention had arisen.[73]

As Ambassador Dillon remarked, the French, too, had always considered training a separate problem, for the same reason. Therefore, if the United States was no longer interested in helping with the training of the Vietnamese Army except within the framework of united action in Indochina, the Ambassador felt that the French should so be informed, to prevent any misunderstanding. He also said, tactfully, that he assumed the State Department had considered the fundamental political psychological importance of the decision. The French

72. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 1691 to CSUSA, 130601Z Jun 54, DA-IN-65099 (13 June), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 71.
73. (TS) Msg, Smith DULTE 174 to SecState, 12 Jun 54.

Government would most probably consider it meant the definite and final write-off of Indochina by the United States and might therefore use it as an excuse for accepting the Viet Minh's terms. There was also the probability that opponents of the United States in France might, in the future, describe the decision as an attempt to influence the French forcefully to request internationalization of the war. Last, but not least, there was the question of Vietnamese morale.[74]

In replying to Ambassador Dillon, Secretary of State Dulles commented on an apparent discrepancy. The Ambassador had, in one cable, reported General Ely as stating that the question of United States training of native forces was but one part of an over-all plan for intervention. But in his cable protesting the dropping of training, the Ambassador had asserted the French had always considered training as a problem separate from possible united action. Mr. Dulles then continued:

> At the same time, Ely's position seems clear that the French have been opposed to giving US responsibility for training unless US agreed to intervention. It may be that in effort to draw US into conflict without having US conditions on intervention met, French military may now seek US training in advance of US commitment to intervene with own combat forces. . . . we are resolved not to get drawn into training program when due to deteriorating conditions and lack of overall program to reverse situation training program has virtually no chance of success. If French are not going to agree to only kind of armistice which now seems possible at Geneva, but are going to fight for more than protection of expeditionary corps, possibility may exist for development of some program to reverse present downhill trend. But this seems unfortunately most unlikely to us.
>
> Under present circumstances, and particularly in view of three points you make in Emtel 4812, believe you

74. (TS) Msg, Dillon 4812 to SecState, 11 Jun 54.

should clarify US position only if you are forced to do so and should in interim reply to French that we are in agreement with Ely's position expressed in Embtel 4662.75

Mr. Dulles' personal opinion was that the United States should try to carry the situation along, avoiding either a formal refusal at that time to train the Vietnamese, or a massive commitment of some two to three thousand MAAG personnel. Such a commitment could not help carrying strong political overtones and might raise Congressional complications. The French "want and in effect have an option on our intervention," said Mr. Dulles, "but they do not want to exercise it and the date of expiry of our option is fast running out."76

Time was running out in Indochina, too. General O'Daniel entered plea after plea for a reversal of the decision on training. While the Chief of Staff, Army, told General O'Daniel it was imperative he comply strictly with his previous orders not to negotiate a training agreement, General Ridgway absolved the armed forces of blame for the delay. In Washington it was apparent that the French military were not completely aware of the situation and were laboring under the misapprehension that governmental agreements had been reached, and that the United States military were responsible for the delay. General Ridgway wanted General O'Daniel to make clear to the French in Indochina that the delays were in no way an indication that the United States was pulling back.77

Unsatisfied, General O'Daniel on 26 June wired an appeal directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for permission to go ahead with the training of six divisions. He sketched his outline plan for accomplishing the task, and asked that it be passed along to "the highest authority." The Chairman of

75. (TS) Msg, SecState 4551, TEDUL 191, to Amb (Paris), 12 Jun 54.
76. (TS) Msg, SecState TEDUL 197 to AmCon (Geneva), 14 Jun 54.
77. (TS) Msg, CSUSA to Ch MAAG IC, DA-IN-963165, 162246Z Jun 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 72.

the Joint Chiefs informed him that, regrettably, more positive action was impracticable at that time in view of the obscure situation, but that his message had been passed to the highest authority, as requested.[78]

Thus, at least temporarily, came to an end the concerted effort of the United States to build up the indigenous forces of the Associated States. Frustration of this attempt imperiled more than the immediate future of the Indochinese peninsula; it was a body-blow to one of the salient features of United States strategy toward the Far East as a whole.

United States Strategy in the Far East

In the grand strategy of the United States for developing a position of military strength in the Far East, fostering the growth of the military forces of the Associated States and other non-Communist countries in the Orient was second in importance only to building up the war potential of Japan, Korea and Nationalist China. Indigenous military power was the heart of America's prime objective in the East: to develop the purpose and capability of the non-Communist countries to act collectively and effectively in opposing the threat of Communism. Once this objective had been achieved, the United States might then be able to bring about the establishment of a comprehensive regional security arrangement of these countries, with which the United States, the United Kingdom, and possibly France, would be associated. By the united action of the coalition, the power and influence of the Soviet Union in the Far East could finally be reduced, primarily through the containment and curtailment of Communist China's relative position of power.

This strategy had not existed, as such, in April when the Security Council called upon the Department of Defense to determine means for strengthening the military position of the United States in the Far East. Highly pertinent to an understanding of United States history in this period was the opening comment of the Joint Chiefs in their reply:

78. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG IC MG 1824A to JCS, 260930Z Jun 54, DA-IN-68393 (26 Jun), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 73; (TS) Msg, CJCS JCS 963796 to Ch MAAG IC, 302300Z Jun 54.

> Since the United States military objectives and programs with respect to a specific country or region stem from approved United States policy as it affects such country or region, the development of United States military objectives toward the Far East should, in the usual course, be within the context of an over-all United States policy respecting that area. Although the United States policy toward Communist China does set forth certain general objectives to be sought in the Far East vis-a-vis that country, the United States has not formulated a comprehensive policy in which the Far East is reviewed as a strategic entity and which would provide definitive direction for the development of a position of military strength in the Far East. Rather, our present policy addresses itself to the individual countries within the area or, as in the case of Southeast Asia, to a segment of the area. . . . Taken in the aggregate, expressions of policy /toward individual countries/ make it clear that the United States, from the standpoint of its security interests, attaches major importance to the Far East area and would be prepared to react with military force against an armed aggression by the USSR or Communist China in that region.[79]

In order to furnish a meaningful answer to the problem posed by the Security Council, the Joint Chiefs were themselves constrained to isolate American objectives in the Far East, relate those objectives to a coherent policy, and then provide courses of action for their attainment. The Joint Chiefs realized that the United States could not play Atlas forever, supporting the entire world. The non-Communist Far East had to stand on its own two feet, with the confidence that comes from solidarity, and the strength that comes from self-reliance. It was the task of the United States to develop the will and the strength to oppose further Communist aggression.

The policy of the Joint Chiefs was essentially political and psychological. The development of native armies was only

79. (TS) JCS 1776/452, 9 Apr 54, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 149. Underlining added.

a means toward the greater end of joining the entire non-Communist Orient into a solid bloc, based upon the very real economic interdependence of the various regions within the area. Recognizing the magnitude of the undertaking, the Joint Chiefs advocated approaching it by easy stages. The grand coalition should be formed out of units that the United States would be able to knit together by bilateral and multilateral treaties as time went on. America should be the integrator and the guide.

The security treaties with Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand all fitted into the pattern. But this was only a beginning. The impending crisis in Indochina naturally sharpened United States desire to hasten the process. Furthermore, Secretary Dulles hoped that the mere knowledge that multilateral talks on mutual defense were being pursued might tend to moderate Communist demands at Geneva. Beside stressing the necessity for a common stand by all the countries in the area, Mr. Dulles reminded the Foreign Ministers of Australia and New Zealand that no agreement on a position toward the Indochinese phase of the conference existed among the Western Powers. It was, therefore, unclear just what the West would not tolerate from the Communists.[80]

On the basis of the Eden compromise of 5 May, Great Britain had indicated her willingness to participate in a five-power discussion of the subject. There was, however, still serious disagreement over the manner in which the talks should be conducted. The British wished to use the medium of the Five-Power Staff Agency, and widen the discussions to include political and economic problems. Moreover, the British proposal for the talks was couched in terms that involved underwriting the Geneva settlement before it was arrived at.[81]

The United States had no intention of committing itself to defending a settlement that might well be against its own national interests. Furthermore, the Five-Power Staff Agency,

80. (S) Msg, Dulles, Geneva SECTO 73 to Actg SecState, 3 May 54.

81. (TS) Msg, DULTE 51 to SecState, 5 May 54.

alone or with other nations, was not a satisfactory substitute for a broad political coalition including the Southeast Asian nations to be defended. Even more pertinent, the Staff Agency was composed entirely of Western nations, and the United States could not agree to a "white man's party" to determine the problems of Asian nations.[82]

Accordingly, the United States announced that it would be willing to participate in an examination of the military situation in Southeast Asia, providing the purpose was to explore, through secret and existing channels in Washington, the means by which the United States, Great Britain, France, New Zealand and Australia might assist the countries of Southeast Asia to defend themselves. The United States stressed the fact that this examination was considered supplementary to continue efforts by the United States to organize a regional grouping, and that it was neither a substitute for, nor the nucleus of, such a grouping.[83]

The British accepted the American viewpoint that their two countries should move forward concurrently on parallel lines. They were prepared to start immediately with the military staff talks.[84] Although the United Kingdom yielded to pressure by the United States, as well as by Australia and New Zealand, there were valid reasons for reluctance. Her Majesty's Government were being played upon by Nehru to back his neutralist proposal for what amounted to a sell-out to the Communists at Geneva; the British public was terrified at the thought of the H-Bomb; and there was a widespread feeling in Britain that somehow or other the Geneva Conference was going to settle all the problems of Asia. The British proposal for staff examinations by an already constituted agency was a matter of common prudence, according to Under-Secretary of State Smith. If Geneva succeeded, the talks would not be important but, if Geneva failed, there

82. (TS) JCS 1992/324, with Encl, Memo from SpecAsst to Pres Cutler, 7 May, 24 May 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 68.
83. (TS) Rec of Acts by NSC at 196th Mtg, 8 May 54. (TS) Gerhart "Account," pp. 63-64.
84. (TS) Msg, Smith DULTE 66 to SecState, 13 May 54.

would be inevitable criticism that staff examinations and long-range planning should have been under way long ago.[85] Presumably, because the talks were secret, the public would not know how long they had been going on.

The United States was not without its own dilemmas. On the one hand, there was the desire to establish a collective defense for Southeast Asia as quickly as possible. On the other hand, there was the desire, apparently not shared by the United Kingdom, to avoid planning during the Geneva Conference, because it would imply that the Associated States had been written off. To counter with the argument that France would speak for the Associated States at Geneva would merely underline the already-present skepticism in Asia about their true independence. The problem of the United States was to move rapidly toward the creation of a minimum coalition to cover the possible loss of Indochina, while avoiding the impression that the Associated States had already been given up as lost.[86]

Secretary Dulles therefore conceived of forming a Southeast Asian community that probably would not include Viet Nam but that might, with luck, embrace Laos and Cambodia. By skirting any discussion of actual inclusion or exclusion of the three states, he hoped to side-step giving the impression they had been written off in advance. Charge d'Affaires McClintock, in Saigon, respectfully but firmly dissented against this course. "Most regrettably," he wrote, "there is no human resource in Cambodia nor Laos, on which to build a bulwark against Communist infiltration or aggression. Furthermore, in the case of Cambodia, there is no geographic barrier against such aggression. Furthermore, once the communists have possession of the complex of modern airfields in Vietnam, there is no barrier to the successful use of airpower against all of Southeast Asia."[87]

85. (TS) Msg, Smith DULTE 53 to SecState, 7 May 54.
86. (TS) Msg, Dulles TEDUL 48 to Smith, 9 May 54.
87. (TS) Msg, McClintock 2374 to SecState, 13 May 54.

In discussing the matter of regional grouping with Mr. Dulles, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff discovered that the Secretary envisaged making Thailand a position that the Communists could not take either by military action or subversion without triggering off unified action by the coalition against Communist China itself. He was even considering putting token U.S. military forces into Thailand to make the incident absolutely clear, if and when it happened. By coincidence, the United States Ambassador to Thailand on the same day cabled in a suggestion to deploy one F-84G wing to that country to strengthen its defenses. The Joint Chiefs rejected the suggestion as being a fruitless dispersion of air power. On a different occasion, one of the molders of American strategy had referred to Thailand as "the last place in the world" where the United States wanted to become involved with military operation.[88] At this time, however, Admiral Radford remarked only that in his opinion the Thais could not be depended upon. He observed that the Chinese Communists already had a nucleus for a Thai Government, that Thai leadership was at best uncertain, that their recent history showed they would jump to the other side quickly if to their apparent advantage, and that Ambassador Donovan had no confidence in their ability to hold Thailand in the event Indochina were taken over.

The Admiral also felt that there was not much likelihood of an incident in Thailand of the type anticipated by Mr. Dulles. It was more probable, the Admiral thought, that Thailand, Malaya, and Indonesia would be undermined by subversion. Such would probably be the fate also of Laos and Cambodia, even if they were salvaged at Geneva. The Chairman of the Chiefs believed that once the Indochinese incident was settled, there would be no further opportunity to cope with another military adventure on the part of the Chinese, at least until the Communists were ready for the "big show." Admiral Radford pointed out that the United States had not, at the National Security Council level, faced up to the problem of what to do about countries that were taken over

88. (TS) Memo for Rec, CJCS, 10 May 54. (TS) Msg, Donovan (Bangkok) 2242 to SecState, 10 May 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 65; (TS) Notes on JCS-State Mtg, 23 Jul 54.

by the Communists by legal means. The possibility of legal assumption of power by the Communist Party existed in many lands. Because the United States could not use the same tactics for gaining power, its position vis-a-vis the Communists in the Far East would become progressively disadvantageous with the passage of time.

From the purely military standpoint, there were a number of advantages in carrying the action to Communist China itself, but everyone, the Admiral observed, recognized the political disadvantages of such a solution.[89]

Mr. Dulles found himself facing political disadvantages of a different sort in trying to weld Asian and European powers together for concerted action. The issue of colonialism and fear of Communist China acted as a deterrent upon most of the Colombo nations. Although Nehru failed to dominate the conference of Prime Ministers at Colombo in early May, and indeed encountered vigorous opposition from Pakistan in particular, he did succeed in vitiating any strong effect the conference might have had in supporting the stand of the Western Powers at Geneva. The Colombo meeting issued a recommendation that, if Geneva stopped the war, the UK, USSR, China and the United States should agree to prevent resumption of hostilities. Notably, the Colombo conference gave no indication of the intentions, much less of any commitments, on the part of the five south Asian powers as a group, or individually, in regard to future policy toward the Indochinese crisis.[90]

In spite of failing to take any definite and constructive position, the Colombo powers, together with the other countries in south and southeast Asia, displayed growing apprehension that Western attempts to solve the Indochinese problem might lead to World War III. They showed increasing resentment and frustration over the thought that such a development

89. (TS) Memo for Rec, CJCS, 10 May 54.
90. (S) Msg, SecState TOSEC 79 to AmCon Geneva, 5 May 54, DA-IN-56239 (6 May).

might be thrust upon them without their having been given an opportunity to express themselves or take collective action. They therefore began to indicate some willingness to help in carrying out an agreed settlement. Mr. Dulles was eager to enlist their services. As the nations most immediately threatened, he felt they should have every opportunity to make their contribution to a settlement. He felt that their participation would help mitigate their fears, nurture their self-confidence, increase their prestige, help to educate them better about Communist intentions, and eventually make them more receptive to the idea of cooperation with the United States and other Western nations. Inasmuch as Communist China could ill-afford to have them united in opposition to it, Mr. Dulles hoped for a more reasonable Chinese attitude at Geneva if the Colombo powers could be organized.[91] But by the end of the Geneva Conference Mr. Dulles had discovered that the East moves in its own inscrutable way. Nor is there any indication that the other half of the "parallel approach," the Five-Power Staff Agency talks in Washington, had the slightest effect upon the tactics or demands of the Communists at Geneva.

The Five-Power military conference lasted from 3 June to 11 June. The conferees agreed that the situation in Indochina was critical, and that retention of the Tonkin Delta was of the greatest importance to the defense of Southeast Asia. They also agreed that stabilization of the situation in the Delta would require outside assistance on the order of three divisions and 300 aircraft. The French representative indicated that "the psychological impact of those reinforcements would be enhanced if they were drawn from the Western Powers." And all five representatives concluded that "the arrival of reinforcements from the Free Nations, other than France, would be an important factor in the restoration of Vietnamese confidence." It had, of course, been understood

91. (s) Msg, Dulles (Murphy) TOSEC 240 to AmCon Geneva, 22 May 54.

that the conclusions of the conferees did not in any way imply a commitment of the Governments. And none of the Governments moved to provide the reinforcements that their military representatives had concluded were necessary.

The conference also studied the situation that would occur should the Tonkin Delta be lost to the Viet Minh. The conferees recognized: (a) the necessity of considering the establishment of a recovery line in the south; (b) the fact that land forces immediately available would not be sufficient to hold a Chinese advance, should the Chinese choose to move, and that, therefore, defensive positions in Thailand and Burma should be considered as well as the recovery line in Indochina; and (c) the fact that maintenance of internal security in Southeast Asia depended upon the support of the people therein. The final conclusion related to a possible cease-fire and called for a guarantee by nations other than those directly involved that they would intervene if the agreement were broken.[92] The United States later ignored this conclusion by refusing to do more than "respect" the cease-fire agreement.

United States military thinking was evident in the acceptance by the conference of the conclusion that overall Allied Strategy should be defensive in Southeast Asia in the event of a global war, and that nuclear attacks should be launched against China if war ensued with her. Acceptance of the concept of blockade also reveals United States influence.[93]

The Chief of Staff, Army, after studying the conclusions of the military representatives at the conference, recommended

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92. (TS) Rpt of the Five Power Military Conference, 11 Jun 54, Encl to (TS) JCS 1992/337, 14 Jun 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-58) BP pt 11.

93. (TS) Encl B to (TS) JCS 1992/350, 3 Jul 54, same file, sec 74.

to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that they not accept these conclusions because they did not conform precisely, in either language or scope, with previously approved positions of the Joint Chiefs. Although his recommendation was not accepted,[94] it does in fact appear that his criticism was not without foundation.

Consistent with their thinking over a long period of time, the Joint Chiefs, on 21 May, informed the Secretary of Defense that they considered a static type of defense for Southeast Asia unsound from a military viewpoint. The Chiefs declared there were two basic military concepts for defense of the area: the static, or Korea, type; or an offensive against the source of Communist military power being applied in Southeast Asia. So long as Burma and Thailand were not under Communist control, the geography of the area and the lack of Chinese Communist capability for a major overseas attack rendered Malaya secure from external threat. Should Burma and Thailand be lost prior to an Allied decision to hold a line in Southeast Asia, the defensive position would have to be established in Malaya. A study of the force requirements and logistic implications of this concept revealed extensive and damaging weaknesses. It was estimated that it would take a minimum of twelve months to build up the base complex and facilities required to support the forces that would be involved. Those forces would have to remain over an extended period of time, and the commitment of manpower and material to maintain them would be unacceptable from the over-all viewpoint. The presence of large numbers of United States, Commonwealth, and French troops in the area would provide the Communists with excellent material for anti-Western propaganda. Dissipation of Allied strength on such a scale would be a gift to USSR. Finally, execution of a static defense plan would result in maldeployment, and less flexibility in employment of U.S. forces. The capability of supporting existing war plans logistically would be seriously

94. (TS) Memo, CSUSA to JCS, "Final Report of the Five-Power Military Representatives Conference of June 1954," c. 9 Jul 54, same file, sec 75. Actually, it was not necessary to approve or disapprove, because the conclusions of the representatives did not imply commitment by their respective governments.

jeopardized. The United States should, therefore, adopt the concept of offensive action against Communist China, rather than that of reacting locally at the point of attack.95

Neither these plans, nor America's strident efforts to organize a regional grouping, nor the implied threat of the Five-Power Staff meeting served to mar the equanimity of Vyacheslav Molotov, "the smiling log," in Geneva.

The Viet Minh Terms

Molotov could well afford to smile. As an American representative later remarked to an unhappy Vietnamese, "You can expect no more at the conference table than you have won on the field of battle." And there was no doubt about who held victory in the field.

The Viet Minh's terms were victor's terms, and they were hard. Either openly or by implication they demanded every concession the United States had sworn was unacceptable. The Viet Minh presented its proposal for the re-establishment of peace in Indochina at the second plenary session of the Geneva Conference on 11 May. The rest of the conference consisted of the vain thrashings of the hooked victim as the Viet Minh steadily reeled in the line under the skillful coaching of two experts at fishing in troubled waters.

The terms are sufficiently important to be set out in full:

> 1. Recognition by France of the sovereignty and independence of Vietnam throughout the territory of Vietnam and also of the sovereignty and independence of Chmer and Pathet Lao.
>
> 2. Conclusion of an agreement on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territory of Vietnam, Chmer and Pathet Lao within the time-limits to be

95. (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/312, 21 May 54, same file, sec 65.

agreed upon between the belligerents. Pending the withdrawal of troops the dislocation of French troops in Vietnam shall be agreed upon, particular attention being paid to limit to the minimum the number of their dislocation points. Provision shall be made that the French troops should not interfere in the affairs of local administration in the areas of their dislocation.

3. Holding of free general elections in Vietnam, Chmer and Pathet Lao. Convening of advisory conferences of the representatives of the governments of both sides in Vietnam, Chmer and Pathet Lao, in each of the states separately and under conditions securing freedom of activity for patriotic parties, groups and social organizations in the preparation and the holding of free general elections to establish a unified government in each country; while interference from outside should not be permitted. Local commissions will be set up to supervise the preparation for and the carrying out of the elections.

Prior to the establishment of unified governments in each of the above-mentioned states, the governments of both sides will respectively carry out their administrative functions in the districts which will be under their administration after the settlement had been carried out in accordance with the agreement on the termination of hostilities.

4. The statement by the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on the readiness of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to examine the question of the entry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam into the French Union in conformity with the principle of free will and on the conditions of this entry. Corresponding statements should be made by the governments of Chmer and Pathet Lao.

5. The recognition by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as well as by Chmer and Pathet Lao of the economic and cultural interests of France existing in these countries.

After the establishment of unified governments in Vietnam, Chmer, Pathet Lao the economic and cultural relations of these states with France should be subject to the settlement in conformity with the principles of equality and mutual interests. Pending the establishment of the unified governments in the three states the economic and cultural relations of Indochina with France will temporarily remain without a change such as they exist now. However in the areas where communications and trade ties have been broken off they can be reestablished on the basis of understanding between both sides.

The citizens of both sides will enjoy the privileged status to be determined later, in matters pertaining to domicile, movement and business activities on the territory of the other side.

6. The belligerent sides undertake not to prosecute persons who collaborated with the other side during the war.

7. Carrying out mutual exchange of prisoners of war.

8. Implementation of measures referred to in paragraphs 1-7, should be preceded by the cessation of hostilities in Indochina and by the conclusion to this end of appropriate agreements between France and each of the three states which should provide for:

a. Complete and simultaneous cease-fire throughout the whole of the Indochina territory by all armed forces of the belligerent sides:

Ground, naval and air. Both sides in each of the three states of Indochina for the purpose of strengthening the armistice will carry out a necessary settlement of territories and of the areas occupied by them, and it should also be provided that both sides should not hinder each other during the passage, for the purpose of the above mentioned settlement, by the troops of the other side over the territory occupied by the other side.

b. Complete termination of transportation into Indochina from abroad of new ground, naval and air units or personnel, or any kind of arms and ammunition;

c. To set up control over the implementation of the terms of agreement on the cessation of hostilities and to establish for this purpose in each of the three states mixed commissions composed of the representatives of the belligerent sides.[96]

When asked by reporters whether the Viet Minh armistice proposal was acceptable to the United States, Mr. Dulles replied that it was certainly unacceptable in its totality. It followed the same pattern applied in the past to Germany, Austria, and Korea; namely, to compel withdrawal of the forces that sustain free society and to set up a system under which the Communists can grab the whole area.[97]

To Under Secretary Smith, it seemed that the proposals would result in a rapid turnover to the Communists. Linking of the cease-fire to the other measures was tantamount to rejecting the French proposal, yet because the Viet Minh proposal mentioned conclusion of an agreement on general political questions prior to cessation of hostilities, there could not be an accusation of a demand for immediate cease-fire with no conditions. There was no provision for international control. Elections "without interference" followed the pattern in Korea. The proposals were also cunningly designed to appeal to the French public. The not unfriendly references to the French Union and arrangements for retention of French economic and cultural interests were obviously designed to win French support. There was reason to believe that the Communists might seriously envisage a Communist state within the French Union. It would probably benefit the French as much as the Poles and Czechs benefited from the Soviet accords respecting their cultural and economic interests.

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96. (U) Msg, Smith SECTO 162 to SecState, 110525Z May 54, DA-IN-894542 (11 May).

97. (U) "U. S. Policy in Southeast Asia," news conference statements by Dulles, press releases 241, 244, 245, 11 May 54, State Dept, Bulletin, 24 May 54, pp 781-782.

The entire proposal made it clear that the DRV would determine the question of association with the French Union and would presumably handle other pertinent problems. It was also logical and obvious that the Viet Minh would organize the elections and win them quickly. In any event, it would gradually convert Viet Nam into a Communist state.[98]

Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos all tabled armistice proposals of their own, to which very little serious attention was paid. The Vietnamese proposed, in effect, that the Viet Minh dissolve their government and army under terms of a general amnesty. Later, Viet Minh soldiers could be integrated into the Vietnamese army, and internationally supervised elections, at an unspecified date in the future, would solve the political questions. The Vietnamese were certainly aware their terms were unacceptable but they were concerned primarily with avoiding loss of territory or any settlement endangering their position as the legal and effective government of Viet Nam. The French objective, on the other hand, was to terminate hostilities with more or less satisfactory guarantees, because of the depth of their military involvement.[99]

Knowledge of the serious military situation in the Delta was just becoming public about the time the Viet Minh offered its proposal. The political situation in the French Cabinet and particularly in Parliment was deteriorating rapidly. There was an increasing desire for peace at any price. The American Ambassador felt that pressure to accept the Viet Minh terms as a basis for negotiation would be irresistible unless some new element entered the picture. It was just at this time, it will be recalled, that the United States insisted upon the right of the Associated States to withdraw from the French Union. The Ambassador was not sure that public retraction of this condition by the United States would stop Parliament from forcing the French Government to accept the

98. (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 174 to SecState, 120830Z May 54, DA-IN-57672 (12 May).

99. (U) Msg, Smith SECTO 190 to SecState, 130530Z May 54, DA-IN-895604 (12 May); (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 163 to SecState, 111030Z May 54, DA-IN-57368 (11 May; (S) Msg, Smith SECTO 197 to SecState, 132350Z May 54, DA-IN-58186 (14 May).

Viet Minh terms, but he did think that retraction would greatly help to clarify America's position to the French public and, presumably, to the rest of the world.[100]

There was really little that could help the Laniel Government. Improved prospects for EDC in this period so stirred up the opposition that it made a concerted effort to overthrow Laniel, using Indochina as a pretext.[101] The Government fell on 12 June. The decline of its Radical Socialist support, while also indicating a long-term trend to the left, was due to a grass-roots feeling that more must be done to finish the war. De Gaullist opposition was largely motivated by EDC, plus general opposition tactics and a desire to punish the Government for weakness regarding Indochina. The Ambassador pointed out that the successor Government, no matter what it said, and although Bidault might remain as Foreign Minister, would be under implicit instruction to end the war, even at the cost of major concessions. As far as Geneva was concerned, said the Ambassador, the French bargaining position was so weak, and recently had become still weaker as the United States grew more reluctant to intervene in Indochina, that the fall of the Government actually would not make much difference.[102]

Pierre Mendes-France accepted the premiership under a four-week "contract" to bring about an honorable settlement of the Indochinese war. In spite of repeated assertions that he would not in any event accept a peace that was a surrender to the Viet Minh, nor even accept a disguised capitulation, Mendes-France was, from the start, identified with peace-at-any-price.

The change in government, for which the United States must bear some of the responsibility, if only through its failure to support sufficiently the previous one, cannot be regarded as advantageous to the United States. Although not advocating outright capitulation, it was a foregone conclusion

100. (TS) Msg, Dillon to SecState, 13 May 54.
101. (S) Msg, Dillon 4735 to SecState, 5 Jun 54.
102. (C) Msg, Dillon 4833 to SecState, 14 Jun 54.

that the new Government would not take as strong a stand at Geneva as had Bidault up to that time. Moreover, the new government was opposed to ex-High Commissioner de Jean's coming to Geneva as an advisor. De Jean's removal in Indochina was depicted by Charge McClintock as a serious blow to the furtherance of U.S. policy in that area. "Not only has he been the most courageous French official here," said McClintock, "but also the only one with a clear-eyed view of what stakes we are fighting for, not only in Southeast Asia but likewise in Europe against international Communism." The new Minister of Associated States was reported to be entirely new to the problem. Mendes-France himself was poorly informed. Finally, the composition of the new Cabinet showed an even more far-reaching break in continuity of French governments since the war than had been expected. It had deprived itself to a great extent of the "continuity men", such as Bidault, Pleven, Marie, etc. Some of the new Ministers, such as Koenig, in Defense, boded trouble for the United States. Koenig was expected to open wide the pressure-valve of army opposition to EDC upon which Pleven had been sitting.[103]

However, it has already been observed that there was little that any French government could do at Geneva. It quickly became evident that, in working out the details of cease-fire and regroupment of forces, the negotiators were edging closer and closer toward an inevitable partitioning of Viet Nam. It was also clear that even though the Viet Minh relaxed enough to pay lip service to international supervision of the armistice, the French were in no position to secure a set of controls that would guarantee the effectiveness of such supervision.

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103. (S) Msg, Johnson SECTO 498 to SecState, 21 Jun 54; (C) Msg, Dillon 4972 to SecState, 21 Jun 54 DA-IN-67069 (22 Jun); (TS) Msg, Johnson SECTO 534 to SecState, 26 Jun 54; (TS) Msg, McClintock 2676 to SecState, 6 Jun 54; (C) Msg, Dillon 4909 to SecState, 18 Jun 54.

Final US Position toward Settlement

On 26 June the United States and the United Kingdom received the following aide-memoire from the French Government:

> . . . Following his conversation with Mr. Chou En-Lai, the head of the French Government has instructed M. Chauvel to approach M. Phan Van Dong with a view to carrying on with him directly negotiations to ascertain whether a basis can be found, in his opinion, for a territorial settlement in Vietnam or not.
>
> The objective of the French Government is to arrive at a regrouping which will assure the State of Vietnam a territory as solid as possible. . . .
>
> It is difficult to predict the result of this negotiation in which the French authorities must face two sorts of difficulties: on the one hand it will be most difficult to obtain concessions from the Viet Minh in the north; and on the other hand the negotiations risk causing, if the agreement is concluded, dangerous reactions by the Vietnamese Government whose citizens are serving at the present time under the orders of the French command, comprising a major portion thereof.

The message continued by noting that the Communists undoubtedly were afraid of the conflict spreading. The French Government, therefore, felt it would be very useful if the British and American Governments, who were at that time conducting talks in Washington, were to issue a final communique from the talks, in which they stated that a serious aggravation of international relations would result, if it were not possible to reach a reasonable settlement at Geneva. The French also strongly hoped they could count on the United States to counsel wisdom and self-control to the Vietnamese, to dissuade them from refusing an agreement. Conversely, the United States was begged not to do anything that might even implicitly encourage a Vietnamese outburst.[104]

104. (TS) Msg, Dulles 4852 to Amb (Paris), 28 Jun 54.

The British and American Governments drafted an answer to the aide-memoire in the hope of stiffening the French position. The two governments informed the French that they would be willing to respect an agreement that:

1. preserves the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia and assures the withdrawal of Vietminh forces therefrom;

2. preserves at least the southern half of Vietnam, and if possible an enclave in the Delta; in this connection we would be unwilling to see the line of division of responsibility drawn further south than a line running generally west from Dong Hoi;

3. does not impose on Laos, Cambodia or retained Vietnam any restrictions materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-Communist regimes; and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and to employ foreign advisers;

4. does not contain political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control;

5. does not exclude the possibility of the ultimate unification of Vietnam by peaceful means;

6. provides for the peaceful and humane transfer, under international supervision, of those people desiring to be moved from one zone to another of Vietnam; and

7. provides effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement.[105]

Besides pointing out that the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the joint statement seemed to contradict each other, the French inquired about the meaning of "respect" which struck them as a very weak and unclear word.[106]

105. (S) Msg, Dulles 4853 to Amb (Paris), 28 Jun 54.
106. (S) Msg, Dillon 50 to SecState, 6 Jul 54.

Secretary Dulles explained that the United States realized that even an agreement seeming to meet all seven points could not guarantee that Indochina would not one day pass into Communist hands. The apparent contradiction was merely an attempt to get the best conditions under the circumstances. He further explained that "respecting" the agreement meant that the United States would not oppose a settlement that conformed to the seven points. It did not, of course, mean that the settlement would be guaranteed or necessarily supported in public. "Respect" also meant that the United States would not seek directly or indirectly to upset the settlement by force.[107] Mr. Dulles hastened to add that M. Mendes-France should be under no illusion that observance of the seven points would in itself suffice to elicit a public statement by the United States that it would respect the agreement, unless the Associated States had assented to the settlement.[108]

In a personal message to M. Mendes-France, Secretary Dulles himself gave an excellent analysis of the United States position, and of the Geneva Conference as a whole, up to that time:

> . . . We doubt very much that the Communists will in fact accept this seven-point position unless they realize that the alternative is some common action upon which we have all agreed. So far, there is no such alternative.
>
> Under these circumstances, we greatly fear that the seven-points which constitute a minimum as far as the US is concerned will constitute merely an optimum solution so far as your Government and perhaps the UK are concerned, and that an armistice might be concluded on terms substantially less favorable than those we could respect.
>
> We gather that there is already considerable French thinking in terms of the acceptability of departures from certain of the seven-points. For example: Allowing Communist forces to remain in

107. (S) Msg, Dulles 77 to Amb (Paris), 7 Jul 54.
108. (S) Msg, Dulles to Amb (Paris), no. unk, 8 Jul 54.

Northern Laos; accepting a Vietnam line of military demarcation considerably south of Donghoi; neutralizing and demilitarizing Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam so as to impair their capacity to maintain stable, non-Communist regimes; accepting elections so early and so ill-prepared and ill supervised as to risk the loss of the entire area to Communism; accepting international supervision by a body which cannot be effective because it includes a Communist state which has veto power.

These are but illustrations of a whittling-away process, each stroke of which may in itself seem unessential, but which cumulatively could produce a result quite different from that envisaged by the seven-points. . . .'.[109]

The possibility of complete United States disassociation from the final stages of the conference so deeply disturbed M. Mendes-France that Secretary Dulles found it expedient to confer with him personally in Paris on 13 July. The most immediate problem for the French Premier was the refusal of the United States to renew its representation at the conference on the ministerial level. The five Foreign Ministers recessed on 19 June, leaving the working out of armistice details to the military negotiators. The American delegation was reduced in size and concept, and reverted to an advisory or observer role. Its basic instructions were withdrawn and it proceeded to function on an ad hoc basis, in order to be more responsive to "realities as we see them, not only at Geneva but also in US and Indochina."[110]

M. Mendes-France pointed out that this would be the first time since the war that the United States had not been represented at a level equal to that of other powers at an important conference. He felt certain it would have catastrophic effects in the Far East and Europe. There would be no one to take a strong personal position with Molotov.

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109. (TS) Msg, Dulles 127 to Amb (Paris), 10 Jul 54.
110. (TS) Msg, SecState, TOSEC 480 to AmCon (Geneva), 25 Jun 54.

The Communists would surely increase their pressure to deepen the obvious rift between the Western powers, whereas, with the Secretary present, the United States would in effect have a veto power on the decisions of the conference.[111]

In spite of the Premier's arguments, Mr. Dulles was more impressed by the probably disastrous effect of a sudden and dramatic severance from the conference at the last moment. Nevertheless, after consultation with President Eisenhower, he went to Paris to thrash the matter out with M. Mendes-France. From their meeting came an agreed Franco-American position on Indochina:

> 1. France and the Associated States of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are recognized to be those which, on the non-Communist side, are primarily interested in the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference. The United States is interested primarily as a friendly nation which desires to assist, where desired, in arriving at a just settlement, but who will not seek, or be expected, to impose its views in any way upon those primarily interested.
>
> 2. The attached seven-points constitute a result which France believes to be obtainable by negotiation at Geneva and which would be acceptable to France and, France believes, to the Associated States. The United States, while recognizing the right of those primarily interested to accept different terms, will itself be prepared to respect terms conforming to the attached. The United States will not be asked or expected by France to respect terms which in its opinion differ materially from the attached and it may publicly disassociate itself from such differing terms.
>
> 3. If the settlement is one which the United States is prepared to "respect," its position will be expressed unilaterally or in association only with non-Communist states in terms which apply to the situation the principles of non-use of forces which are embodied in Article 2 (4) & (6) of the Charter of the United Nations.
>
> 4. The United States is prepared to seek, with other interested nations, a collective defense

111. (TS) Msg, Dillon 134 to SecState, 11 Jul 54.

association designed to preserve, against direct and indirect aggression, the integrity of the non-Communist areas of Southeast Asia following any settlement.

5. If there is no settlement, the United States and French Governments will consult together on the measures to be taken. This will not preclude the United States, if it so desires, bringing the matter before the United Nations as involving a threat to peace as dealt with by Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

6. France reaffirms the principle of independence for the Associated States in equal and voluntary association as members of the French Union.[112]

The seven points referred to were those of the joint British-American reply to the French aide-memoire, previously discussed. Following the issuance of the position paper, an exchange of letters took place between Mr. Dulles and M. Mendes-France, in the course of which the French Premier refuted the pro-abstention arguments. "In a situation as difficult as this," he wrote in part, "only the unity of the western diplomatic front, supported by the immense potential which we have in common, can bring about the very military and strategic unity which we should seek eventually to establish in that part of the world. It is in this spirit that the French Government envisages, aside from the assurances which the conference itself could furnish, the establishment of a collective guarantee by virtue of which the signatories would declare themselves prepared to intervene if, in Indochina, one of the three states was a victim of aggression."[113]

Whether or not, as he claimed, M. Mendes-France was responsible for changing Mr. Dulles' mind,[114] the decision

112. (S) Agreed Fr-US position paper on IC, following mtg Sec Dulles and Mendes-France, included in (S) Msg, Dulles (Paris) 179, to SecState, 14 Jul 54.

113. (S) Ltr, Mendes-France to Dulles, in (S) Msg, Dulles (Paris) 179, to SecState, 14 Jul 54; (S) Ltr, Dulles to Mendes-France, in (S) Msg, Dulles (Paris) 179 to SecState.

114. Speech of Mendes-France to Nat Assem, 22 Jul 54, in Journal Officiel, Assem Nat, p. 3536.

to resume participation at the ministerial level was taken, following talks with Britain's Anthony Eden and consultation with President Eisenhower. Under Secretary of State Smith left for Geneva on 16 July.

The United States performed another service requested by France in the 28 June aide-memoire. Ambassador Heath, in Saigon, was instructed to inform the Vietnamese Premier, Diem, of the probability of a compromise at Geneva that would slice his country in half. It was Ambassador Heath's unhappy task to make Diem see the futility of resisting the settlement. He was to tell the Premier that President Eisenhower and Mr. Dulles, in conference with Prime Minister Churchill and Mr. Eden, had made clear their strong opposition to any settlement that might be made on terms leading to permanent division of his country. The Ambassador was also to advise Diem of the seven-point British-American note to France. Finally, still speaking in Mr. Dulles' name, he was to state that "while we recognize that settlement along these lines imposes hardships on Vietnam, we fear that deteriorating military situation and separate negotiations in progress with Vietminh and Chinese Communists could lead to something still worse."[115] The intent of this demarche was not entirely altruistic. The United States had established the fact that the French were not keeping the Vietnamese adequately informed. Beside trying to avert a violent reaction by the bitterly disappointed Vietnamese, the United States wished to place its relations with Diem on a more realistic and confidential basis, if it were later to play a more useful role in Viet Nam.[116]

The 26 June aide-memoire from the French had also asked that the final communique from the British-American conversations in Washington contain a statement to the effect that the issuing governments would take a serious view of unacceptable Communist demands at Geneva. President Eisenhower and Sir Winston Churchill who headed the British delegation,

115. (S) Msg, SecState TOSEC 529, to AmCon (Geneva), 10 Jul 54.
116. Ibid.

obliged by inserting, at the end of the press release covering their discussions, a statement that, "We are both convinced that if at Geneva the French Government is confronted with demands which prevent an acceptable agreement regarding Indochina, the international situation will be seriously aggravated."[117]

Anglo-American Discussions

The Anglo-American discussions were carried on in Washington from 25 to 29 June by President Eisenhower, Mr. Dulles, Sir Winston, and Mr. Eden. There was no formal agenda but among the topics covered was that of Indochina and the Geneva Conference. Sir Winston had indicated previously his preoccupation with the need to establish a firm front in Southeast Asia. He favored a Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and a Middle East Treaty Organization to match NATO.[118] The Americans were less convinced that the answer, at least for the time being, was a NATO-type entente. Diversity of opinion did not stop here. It appears that the main reason for these extraordinarily high-level talks was that divergence between American and British basic policies in a number of spheres was reaching serious proportions. Certainly the concept of regional grouping, and attitude toward acceptable conditions at Geneva were two such areas. Moreover, the French were not the only ones to be bewildered by America's schizo-diplomatia. "Sometimes it is awfully difficult," said Mr. Attlee, "to understand what the American line is, as between what members of the Government say and what Senators say, and sometimes what generals and admirals say."[119] In spite of bland assurance of solidarity and "intimate comradeship," the 29 June declaration issued by the White House gives no real indication of how much true mutual understanding had been achieved.

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117. Eisenhower & Churchill, "Anglo-American Discussions on International Situation," WH press release of 28 Jun 54, State Dept, Bulletin, 12 Jul 54, p. 49.

118. (TS) Notes of JCS-State Mtg, 25 Jun 54.

119. (C) Msg, Butterworth (London) 5939, to SecState, 24 Jun 54.

As a follow-up to the Eisenhower-Churchill meeting, a United States-United Kingdom Study Group on Southeast Asia was established. Three sessions had been held by 16 July and some of the main lines of thought were beginning to emerge. The British view was that a collective security arrangement for Southeast Asia should be considered in two contexts: (1) on the basis of a settlement in Indochina, and (2) on the basis of no settlement. In the event of a settlement that posed no immediate military problem, the British preferred a generalized arrangement, designed to bring in as many states as possible, including the Colombo powers. On the other hand, if there were no settlement at Geneva, the British agreed to the immediate establishment of an organization to meet the military threat. This organization, presumably, was to be limited to the powers making military commitments.

One thing was clear: the British had no intention of pressing forward with any kind of security organization until the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference had terminated. The United Kingdom considered that the principal problem in dealing with Southeast Asia after an Indochinese settlement would be large-scale economic assistance. Although there was no discussion of support for this program, there was little doubt who the chief contributor would be.

On a number of occasions, the British representative referred to military force to repel overt Communist aggression, but his attitude about countering subversion and infiltration remained vague. The Americans pointed out that the principal danger in the future would probably come about through infiltration and subversion, and that the security organization should be in a position to deal with the situation effectively. Also, the organization should be established immediately, to deal with the probable adverse military and political repercussions of an unsatisfactory settlement at Geneva.[120] Even if a pact were signed within a month or so, there would be a time-lag of six to twelve months for ratification by the various

120. (TS) JCS 1992/358, 16 Jul 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 75.

countries. There had, therefore, to be some kind of interim machinery.

The Americans felt that it was too early to set up machinery like NATO, because it was not yet known whether a NATO-type organization was what was wanted. Instead, they were toying with the idea of an interim council. By making the American Ambassador the U.S. representative, and supplementing his staff with political and military advisers, day-to-day business could be conducted without large, and possibly unnecessary, staffs. The biggest problem still remained that of deciding upon the nature of the basic treaty organization.

General Bedell Smith, echoing the Joint Chiefs of Staff position, argued strongly for viewing the matter in the light of the whole Far East, and not just Southeast Asia. Any organization sponsored by the United States should make room for the inclusion of Japan, the Philippines, and other Asian allies of America. As long as she remained "neutral" and, to a large extent unpredictable, United States military men were leery of including India. They feared, and probably with much reason, that India would wreck more military plans than ever she abetted. Indian obstructionism could be especially effective in the type of organization the British favored, composed of three elements: a council including all participants; and economic and political council, with as many members as possible; and a military organization. Luckily, India would unquestionably not wish to participate in the military aspects, per se, but would still be able to do much harm in the other councils.[121]

121. (TS) Notes of JCS-State Mtg, 23 Jul 54. (TS JCS 1992/358, 16 Jul 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 75; (TS) Notes of JCS-SD Mtg, 9 Jul 54. (TS) Ann 15, "Policy with Respect to the Colombo Powers," to Memo, CSUSA, "JCS Positions in Connection with the Meeting between President Eisenhower & Prime Minister Churchill," CCS 337 (7-23-48) sec 5.

A side issue of note on the military organization was that the British were reported to be thinking of proposing that the entire command structure in the Pacific, including Southeast Asia be American. In return, however, they would suggest complete British control in the east Atlantic, including IBERLANT; unqualified assignment of U.S. fleet strike forces to CINCEASTLANT; the assignment of Strike Force South to CINCAFMED; and probably, in due time, the appointment of a British officer as SACLANT. From the United States point of view, there would be certain disadvantages to such an arrangement.122

When the Colombo powers were sounded out by the British on their attitude toward the proposed organization, Indonesia replied that its position was one of strict neutrality. Burma also protested neutrality, but let it be known that she was not adverse to the idea. Ceylon took a very similar stand. The Indian attitude was assumed to be negative, but it was thought that if the others took a reasonable approach with time, India might not care to be left in an isolated position.

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff has pressed hard, for a long time, for some type of Southeast Asian security organization that could be tied in with other Far Eastern alliances with the United States, it was the military who sounded a note of caution just after the signing of the Geneva settlement. The situation had now changed radically. In April, it had been assumed that the power of Viet Nam would be a factor. But as the situation was developing, it appeared that there was much talk of a military defensive arrangement where there were no military forces to speak of. Except for the British police in Malaya, and negligible Thai and Burmese forces, the only military power available was in Korea and Formosa. The cost of developing military might in the area would be tremendous.

It was one thing to make promises, and quite another to carry them out. Consequently, the armed forces wished to subject the undertaking to very close scrutiny to make sure that a great mistake was not being made. With limited

122. (TS) Memo, CNO to CJCS, 8 May 54.

funds for defense and MDAP programs, commitment of huge sums of money in Southeast Asia would mean cutting somewhere else, without generating any real strength. Thailand, for example, had produced a plan for an 81,000-man force which would cost the United States 400 million dollars. Adequate for internal security, this force would contribute nothing to real mutual defense. The Burmese had a similar plan. Led along to think in these terms, Asian peoples would only end up disappointed and the United States would have enemies instead of friends. Military aggression would not be counteracted by the United States in Thailand; it would be cut off at the roots, in China, to the north. Aid and materiel poured into Thailand would only weaken the places where the United States might actually have to fight.

For this reason, consideration had to be given to the type of defense the countries of Southeast Asia would be asked to engage themselves to. A NATO-type of defense was out of the question; each country could not be guaranteed one hundred per cent protection. Moreover, that would require building up the armed forces of each country in the area, a task of staggering proportions and of dubious military value. As it was, military aid programs were bleeding the United States heavily. Turkey received 100 million dollars; the Thais, 25 million dollars; the Philippines were asking for six destroyers and five wings of jets; and so it went on. The aid programs were beginning to get out of hand.[123]

One of the worst features of aiding weak or indefensible nations was the very great possibility of ending up aiding the enemy instead. Indochina itself was an excellent case in point. In April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, anticipating an unsatisfactory settlement at Geneva, advised the National Security Council that shipments of military materiel should be suspended if fighting halted before a controlled armistice could be put into effect. They also suggested that an attempt should be made to

123. (TS) Notes of JCS-SD Mtg, 23 Jul 54.

recover or destroy equipment already in Indochina.[124] They followed up this suggestion by pointing out that the United States would be justified, despite the fact that the French legally held title to the equipment, in insisting upon its return if no longer employed in the defense of Indochina. They recommended, however, that in the event of partition, units suited to guerrilla operations should not be disarmed.[125] CINCPAC was directed to prepare plans for salvaging or destroying American materiel. He, in turn, assigned the responsibility for these operations to MAAG Indochina.[126]

When the diplomats at Geneva formally agreed on 21 July to partition Viet Nam, the Defense Department immediately suspended all shipments of materiel to Indochina, and diverted all shipments en route to Indochina to Japan and Title III countries.[127] Although within two days France gave her assurance that American equipment would be evacuated to South Viet Nam, CINCPAC and MAAG continued to collaborate on measures to safeguard the materiel. At the instigation of the State Department, however, MAAG was directed not to press plans for recovery and destruction until France had been given sufficient time to determine her course of action in Indochina.[128] Since the French were already engaged in evacuating equipment and personnel from the Hanoi area to South Viet Nam, American concern was primarily confined to U.S. Air Force personnel and B-26 and C-119 aircraft on loan to the French Air Force.

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124. (TS) JCS 1992/301, 28 Apr 54 /as amended by Dec On, 30 Apr 547, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 64; (TS) JCS 1992/302, 29 Apr 54, same file; (TS) Note to Holder of JCS 1992/301, 17 May 54, same file.

125. (TS) JCS 1992/336, 8 Jun 54 /as amended by Dec on, 16 Jun 547, same file, sec 71.

126. (TS) Msg, JCS 963958 to CINCPAC, 021338Z Jul 54, same file, sec 74; (TS) Msg, AMINO, CINCPAC 6871 to MATS Andrews AFB, COMSTS, CINCFE, 070255Z Jul 54, same file.

127. (C) Msg, Dulles 261 to AmAmb (Paris), 21 Jul 54.

128. (S) Encl, Memo, Asst SecDef, ISA to USecys Army, Navy, AF, "Suspension of Shipments of Military Aid to Indochina," 2 Aug 54, to (S) JCS 1992/373, 6 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 77A.

The Commander, Far East Air Force, had been concerned throughout the spring and summer for the safety of the American Air Force mechanics in Indochina. Early in July he stated that the French C-47 capability was sufficient to meet operational requirements and recommended that the sixteen C-119's and supporting personnel be withdrawn by 10 July. General O'Daniel opposed this suggestion, and instead recommended that half of the C-119's and Air Force mechanics be withdrawn on 10 July and the remainder at a later date. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported General O'Daniel's viewpoint, and eight C-119's with maintenance support crews were retained in Indochina.[129]

The American desire to withdraw the cargo planes on loan irritated General Ely, who protested that C-119's were needed more than ever in view of the redeployment from the Delta to South Viet Nam. General O'Daniel reported that General Ely interpreted the United States action as an expression of displeasure with French agreement to a cease-fire. General Ely remarked that France was not alone in suffering reverses, as the United States knew from its own experiences in China and Korea. To dispel this impression, General O'Daniel advised that the B-26's be withdrawn on 11 August and the C-119's within thirty days thereafter. This would permit the French to retain the use of the planes during the peak of the redeployment.[130] The Joint Chiefs considered the question on 6 August, and as a result COMFEAF was directed to withdraw the B-26's on 11 August and the remaining C-119's on 1 September. The American maintenance personnel were to be withdrawn as no longer needed to support the aircraft.[131]

Subsequent to Geneva, the United States adopted an interim policy on aid to the Associated States and to the French in Indochina. Pending further examination of the

129. (S) JCS 1992/352, 7 Jul 54, same file, sec 74.
130. (TS) Msg, Ch MAAG Indochina MG 2079A to CINCPAC, 200835Z Jul 54, DA-IN-75488, same file, sec 76.
131. (TS) JCS 1992/337, 6 Aug 54, same file, sec 77A.

problem, only common-use items directly alleviating suffering, preventing disease, and assisting in the evacuation of military forces and refugees from north Viet Nam were to be programmed for Indochina. Each case was to be considered individually, as it arose, on its own merits.[132]

It was the American intention to use as much as possible of the materiel rescued from northern Viet Nam to help equip the native forces of the Associated States. This disposition of the equipment was in line with the idea that the non-Communist nations in the area would have to build up their own forces for internal security, while leaving the main fighting to the United States and its more powerful allies. Corollary to that idea was, of course, the conception that the significant fighting would take place elsewhere. If at all possible, United States strategists wished to avoid becoming involved deeply in the militarily unimportant area of Southeast Asia. Hence, they tended to oppose the British, who, for economic and political reasons, preferred a NATO-type of security organization, with its implications of limited area defense. Viewed realistically, as undoubtedly the British did view it, such an organization was greatly to their benefit, provided they could induce the United States to pay for it. By late July they had not yet succeeded in doing so, either through the Eisenhower-Churchill conversations nor the subsequent U.S.-U.K. Study Group.

US Unilateral Declaration on Geneva

Although there was still much ground to cover in smoothing out the difficulties standing in the way of a security organization the Study Group accomplished its second purpose more quickly. It had been charged also with preparing recommendations on "the terms on which our two countries /Great Britain and the United States/ might be willing to be associated with an agreement which might be reached in Geneva."[133] In non-diplomatic language, the task of the

132. (S) Memo, AsstSecDef, ISA to USecys Army, Navy, AF, "Suspension of Shipments of Military Aid to Indochina," 2 Aug 54, Encl to (S) JCS 1992/373, 6 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 77A.

133. (S) Msg, Dulles 125 to Paris, Geneva 530, 10 Jul 54.

Study Group was to find a satisfactory solution to the vexing question of a declaration in the event of a settlement. It has already been pointed out that the policy of Great Britain was much more flexible than that of the United States in this respect. Although both countries had subscribed to the seven criteria for an acceptable settlement, the United Kingdom had all along been willing to associate itself with terms falling considerably short of the ideal established by the criteria. Moreover, Great Britain preferred a multilateral declaration including Australia, New Zealand, and, if possible, India and other interested nations in the area. Nor did Britain exclude the possibility of the declaration's bearing Communist signatures. The United States made it plain that it would not participate in any declaration that included Communist China, and that it would not compromise with the seven-point statement.[134] President Eisenhower accordingly announced publicly that the United States had not itself been a party to, nor was bound by, the decisions taken by the conference, and that the United States was, therefore, issuing a statement to the effect that it was not prepared to join in the conference declaration.[135] Instead, the following unilateral declaration was presented by Under Secretary Smith to the last plenary session of the conference on 21 July:

> The Government of the United States being resolved to devote its efforts to the strengthening of peace in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations takes note of the agreements concluded at Geneva on July 20 and 21, 1954 between (a) the Franco-Laotian Command and the Command of the Peoples Army of Viet-Nam; (b) the Royal Khmer Army Command and the Command of the Peoples Army of Viet-Nam; (c) Franco-Vietnamese Command and the Command of the Peoples Army of Viet-Nam and of paragraphs 1 to 12 inclusive of the declaration presented to the Geneva Conference on

134. (TS) JCS 1992/358, 16 Jul 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 75.

135. Statement by President, WH Press Release, 21 Jul 54, State Dept, Bulletin, 2 Aug 54, p. 163.

July 21, 1954 declares with regard to the aforesaid agreements and paragraphs that (i) it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them, in accordance with Article 2 (4) of the Charter of the United Nations dealing with the obligation of members to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force; and (ii) it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security.

In connection with the statement in the declaration concerning free elections in Viet-Nam my Government wishes to make clear its position which it has expressed in a declaration made in Washington on June 29, 1954, as follows:

'In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly.'

With respect to the statement made by the representative of the State of Viet-Nam, the United States reiterates its traditional position that peoples are entitled to determine their own future and that it will not join in an arrangement which would hinder this. Nothing in its declaration just made is intended to or does indicate any departure from this traditional position.

We share the hope that the agreements will permit Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations, and will enable the peoples of that area to determine their own future.[136]

Secretary Dulles, in a statement two days after the conference, did not let the French go unscathed. Without naming names, he maintained that one of the lessons of Geneva was that resistance to Communism needs popular support, and that this in turn meant the people should feel they are defending their own national institutions.

136. "U.S. Declaration on Indochina," USecState W. B. Smith, 21 Jul 54, State Dept, Bulletin, 2 Aug 54, pp. 162-163.

One of the good aspects of Geneva, claimed Mr. Dulles, was that it advanced the independent status of the Associated States. He had been assured by the President of France that French representatives in Viet Nam had been instructed to complete by 30 July precise projects for the transfer of authority that would give reality to the independence France had promised.[137]

Both Mr. Dulles and President Eisenhower had admitted that the Geneva settlement contained undesirable features. The President philosophically observed, however, that a great deal would depend upon how they worked out.[138] It was not long before the Planning Board produced an estimate of how they probably would work out, and what it would mean to the United States.

The board pointed out that, regardless of the fate of South Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia, the Communists had secured possession of a salient in Viet Nam from which military and non-military pressures could be mounted against adjacent and more remote non-Communist areas. The board predicted that the loss of prestige in Asia suffered by the United States, as backer of France and the Bao Dai government, would raise further doubts about United States leadership and about the ability of the United States to check future Communist expansion in Asia. Also, United States prestige would inescapably be associated with subsequent developments in Southeast Asia. The Communists, on the other hand, had increased their military and political prestige, and with it, their capacity for extending Communist influence without resorting to armed attack. They were now in an even better position to exploit the economic and political instability of the free countries of Asia.

The Planning Board also brought out the fact that the Communists were in a better position for propaganda attacks on the United States. By having adopted an appearance of moderation

137. Statement by Secy Dulles, 23 Jul 54, Press Release 400, State Dept. Bulletin, 2 Aug 54, p. 163.

138. Statement by President, WH press release, 21 Jul 54, State Dept, Bulletin, 2 Aug 54, p. 163.

at Geneva, and by having taken credit for the cessation of hostilities in Indochina, they could exploit their political strategy of imputing to the United States motives of extremism, belligerency, and opposition to co-existence. The Communists thus had a basis for accentuating sharply their peace propaganda and peace program in Asia to allay fears of Communist expansionist policies. They now had a better opportunity to alienate the United States from its Asian friends and allies, while at the same time establishing for themselves closer ties with the free nations of Asia.

One very alarming feature of the loss of Southeast Asia, the board warned, was that it would imperil the retention of Japan as a key element of the off-shore island chain. In this connection High Commissioner de Jean, of Indochina, who had once been the French Ambassador to Tokyo, had predicated back in May that a Communist victory would so enhance the prestige of Communist China that the whole balance of power in the Pacific would be affected, and the Japanese policy would tend toward rapprochement with a new and powerful Peiping.[139]

The situation was serious, yet, in the words of the Department of Defense representative at Geneva, it was no better or no worse than could be expected "under existing circumstances wherein French unable and/or unwilling pursue war to military conclusion, and in light of United States decision apparently made some time ago that it would not intervene militarily to save Indochina from Communist encroachment. . . ."[140]

As Anthony Eden remarked in the House of Commons, "I think everyone will agree that the proceedings of this Conference have been of unparalleled complexity."[141] They were also of momentous long-range significance to the world at large.

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139. (TS) NSC 5429, "Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East, 4 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 77A; (S) Msg, McClintock 2356 to SecState, 12 May 54.

140. (TS) Msg, Lt. Col. J. E. Dwan to OSD, c. 21 Jul 54, quoted in (TS) Gerhart "Account," p. 71.

141. Statement by Eden before House of Commons, 22 Jul 54, U.S. News and World Report, 30 Jul 54, pp 88-89.

CONCLUSIONS

Why was it that a small and seemingly insignificant insurgent movement was able to defeat a major power of Western Europe? One obvious reason was the formidable fighting qualities of the Viet Minh soldier, combined with the ability and ruthlessness of his leadership. But a number of other factors played equal or more important parts in thwarting France's postwar ambitions in Indochina.

For example, it would be fair to say that France's gross mishandling of the political side of the conflict played directly into the hands of the communists. The French Government and its representatives in Vietnam never conceded to that country the political sovereignty upon which a viable national government could be based. Had the French at any time between 1946 and 1951 conferred upon a noncommunist Vietnamese Government the degree of independence contemplated in the treaty negotiations of early 1954, the outcome might have been entirely different. But any Vietnamese regime depended upon the sufferance and support of French colonial administrators could not satisfy the aspirations of Vietnamese nationalism. Political concessions came "too little and too late," and leadership of the independence movement passed into the hands of Ho Chi Minh and his communist colleagues.

An observer can hadly fail to be struck by the contrast between the colonial policies of France and of the United Kingdom after World War II. The one country sought to regain its postwar position, the other came to terms with rising nationalism. Even as French leaders were attempting to turn back the clock in Indochina, a neighboring British colony--Burma--assumed a position of full independence, departing the Empire with the blessing of Whitehall. Other imperial dependencies--notably India, once turbulent and rife with anti-British feelings--became partners in a commonwealth of sovereign equals.

The US role in the dispute between France and her Indochinese colonies blended sentimental and practical considerations. Their own history and tradition disposed Americans to a ready sympathy for Indochina's aspirations to independence; at the same time, US self-interest

would be served by the creation of stable, democratic governments in Indochina, linked with France by ties of friendship and serving as a source of strength rather than a drain on French military and economic resources. Moreover, observing the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and in North Korea, US policymakers saw no reason to believe that the peoples of Indochina would improve their lot if Marxist dictatorship were substituted for French colonial rule. These considerations guided the decisions of President Truman and of his successor, President Eisenhower.

It might be asserted that the United States could have sought its objectives in a more forceful manner. Such criticism amounts to stating that the United States should have made stronger efforts to induce France to grant political concessions that would have undermined the appeal of the communist movement in Vietnam. Several considerations led the United States Government to pull its punches, so to speak, in dealing with France. Extreme pressure might have led to the fall of any one of the shaky French Cabinets, besides possibly alienating French public opinion. Either effect would have seriously handicapped the attempt to build a coordinated Western European defense--a major objective of US foreign policy.

Another important factor in the Viet Minh victory in 1954 was the conquest of China by the communists under Mao Tse-Tung. The insurgents in Vietnam thus acquired a powerful base of support--an "inviolable sanctuary," such as has proved necessary for the success of most (though not all) guerrilla movements in modern times. Chinese assistance in materiel and training aided the conversion of guerrilla units into an army able to fight French regulars on equal terms. Moreover, the constant threat of overt Chinese intervention, though it never materialized, helped to paralyze the French high command.

Still another important element of defeat was the general weakness--political, economic, and military--of France after World War II. Unstable governments lacked the strength and self-confidence to make the concessions necessary to grant independence to the Associated States. The constant turnover of cabinets precluded long-range, well-considered planning for victory in Indochina. After committing itself to reconquest, the nation lacked the

resources in men, money, and materiel that were necessary for victory. The inadequacy of France's military leadership--so glaringly evident in World War II--was demonstrated anew by the nation's inability to find aggressive and competent generals to conduct the war; the sole exception--General de Lattre--stands out conspicuously. Finally, the deterioration of public support for the war, becoming evident in 1952, assured the eventual outcome.

Beginning in 1950 the United States, through the MDAP, undertook to supply France with materiel resources that, it was hoped, would provide the margin of victory. The aid program for Indochina had to compete with those for other countries (especially Western Europe) and with the demands of the Korean War. Nevertheless the flow of US supplies contributed in no small degree to the success enjoyed by Franco-Vietnamese forces while de Lattre was in command. Thus by early 1952 the military situation in Indochina seemed favorable for a decisive stroke against the Viet Minh. But de Lattre was removed by an untimely death, and his successor, reverting to defensive warfare, forfeited whatever opportunity existed.

By the time the Eisenhower Administration came into office, the deterioration of the Indochina situation was obvious. Unless the military stalemate could be broken, growing French disgust for the war would force France to seek a settlement on almost any terms. For the first time, US intervention began to be seriously considered. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pressed for a decision on the matter, but for the moment, the Administration merely enlarged the scale of the aid program.

By the time of the Berlin Foreign Ministers' Conference in 1954, it was clear that the public demand for a peace settlement could no longer be resisted by the French Government. The United States still sought to induce France to carry the war to victory. But it was clear that undue pressure on France might alienate public opinion in that country and jeopardize the status of negotiations for the European Defense Community. Necessarily, therefore, the United States agreed to the convening of the Geneva Conference.

During the weeks that followed the Berlin meeting, the French political and military situation continued to

deteriorate. Viet Minh forces, seeking to improve their bargaining position, opened an attack against the exposed French outpost of Dien Bien Phu, which had attained a symbolic importance out of all proportion to its military value. The fall of this bastion, on the eve of the discussion of Indochina at Geneva, was a shattering blow to France's diplomatic position.

The one remaining hope of retrieving the situation was through the use of US military forces in Indochina. This grave step was weighed both before the Geneva Conference and while it was in session, by the President and the National Security Council. President Eisenhower proceeded with great caution, making it clear that if any intervention were to take place, it must be based on a sound political foundation, including international support. When it became evident that this support would not be forthcoming, there was no choice for the United States but to acquiesce in the peace terms worked out at Geneva. Given these conditions, one can accept as final the judgment pronounced by General Walter Bedell Smith, that the results of the conference were "the best that we could possibly have obtained in the circumstances."

APPENDIX I

SUMMARY OF THE AID PROGRAM

Between the outbreak of the Indochinese war in 1946 and the close of the Geneva Conference in the summer of 1954 France spent a total of 7 billion dollars to prosecute the war. The American contribution to the French war effort, begun in the spring of 1950 with an allocation of 15 million dollars, had mounted to a total of 2.7 billion dollars by July 1954. Almost half of this amount was spent in Fiscal Year 1954 alone. After the Pau Conference in December 1950 the Associated States began providing financial support to the extent of their abilities, and by the end of the fighting had expended 250 million dollars. Thus the financial cost of the Indochinese war from 1946 to 1954 amounted to almost 10 billion dollars.[1]

Throughout the course of the war the United States had administered several types of aid programs that contributed directly or indirectly to combating the Viet Minh. The most important in terms of results was the program of military assistance. French Union Forces fighting in Indochina received under MDAP large quantities of military end-items, components and spare parts. The Defense Department programmed this material for Indochina, and the United States bore the cost not only of the equipment itself but also of delivery and distribution. The cumulative program for Fiscal Years 1950-1953 amounted to 773 million dollars. The Fiscal Year 1954 program, with its supplemental allocations necessitated by the Dien Bien Phu crisis, totalled 535 million dollars. Thus under the Fiscal Years 1950-1954 MDA Material Program an aggregate of 1.3 billion dollars was made available to the Defense Department to program equipment for Indochina.[2]

1. (TS) "Congressional Presentation FY 1955 Indochina MDA Material Program," sec, "Questions and Answers," Alden Files, OMA.

2. The summary figures used in this section are based primarily upon (TS) "Congressional Presentation FY 1955 Indochina MDA Material Program," sec, "Questions and Answers," Alden Files, OMA. Since the "Congressional Presentation"

Closely approaching the military assistance expenditure was the total of 1.29 billion dollars made available to France in financial support (Direct Forces Support Program). This program began with the grant of 200 million dollars made to France at Lisbon in February 1952, and hence it has generally been defined as Lisbon-type aid. The main vehicle for expenditure in financial support was the Offshore Procurement Program (OSP). By purchasing items in France for Indochina the United States helped alleviate the French dollar shortage, underwrote military expenditures that otherwise would have seriously damaged the French budget, and enabled France to meet her NATO obligations more readily. The United States appropriated 500 million dollars in Lisbon-type grants in Fiscal Years 1952-1953 and subsequently agreed to support the French budget to the extent of 785 million dollars in Fiscal Year 1954.

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was prepared early in 1954, some of the figures for that year are only tentative; others are rounded off in such a manner that the cumulative effect is not in the interest of close accuracy. The sums given in the present study are computed from several sources but do not differ materially from the summary figures given in the Alden Files. Throughout the course of the aid story, the figures given by various sources reveal serious conflict. Great difficulty was encountered in attempting to reconcile these differing views to obtain an accurate year-by-year record of allocations, as distinct from general summaries. Other sources used in arriving at the totals in this study follow: (TS) Encl, Memo, SecDef to Secys Army, AF, Nav, "Adjustment of FY 1953 Programs for Indochina, Formosa, and France," 7 Mar 52, to (TS) JCS 2099/179, 11 Mar 52, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec 70; (TS) NSC 148, 6 Apr 53, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 40; (C) App, "Estimated Expenditures in Connection with U.S. Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," to (TS) NSC 5405, 16 Jan 54, same file, sec 55; (C) JCS 2099/369, 21 Apr 54, CCS 092 (8-22-46) sec 110; (S) GI D-30a, "Geneva Conference, April 1954, Indochinese Phase - Background Paper, Summary of US Aid Program for Indochina," 25 Mar 54 CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 60.

The Fiscal Year 1954 program, however, was interrupted by the Geneva settlement. Processing of OSP contracts was suspended in August until the problem could be re-examined. At this point 200 million dollars had already been covered by contract, 300 million dollars was in the pipeline, and an unencumbered balance of 285 million dollars remained.3

In 1953 the Military Support Program (MSP or Milsup) was initiated. Funds allocated to this account were used to provide so-called "common-use" items inadmissible under MDAP screening criteria. Examples of this kind were roads, transport facilities, communications centers, water supply systems, and machine tools that contributed directly to the war effort but could not be classified as military equipment. An initial sum of 30 million dollars was set aside for use in Fiscal Year 1953, and the total Fiscal Year 1953-1954 MSP expenditure amounted to 75 million dollars.

Under the Defense Support Program (DSP) almost the same purposes were accomplished. Funds appropriated for economic aid to the Associated States were administered under DSP, and in Fiscal Years 1951-1954 totalled 95 million dollars. Expenditure of DSP funds was supervised by MSA, and its successor FOA, through STEM in Indochina. DSP was designed to help stabilize the economies of the Associated States, but in so doing it assisted greatly in supporting the military effort. Examples of STEM projects were power developments, introduction of advanced agricultural techniques, and expansion and improvement of transportation networks.

The monetary contribution of the United States to the war against the Viet Minh over the four-year period aggregated 2.753 billion dollars and may be summarized as follows:

3. (S) Memo, MG G. C. Stewart, Dir OMA, to Radford, "Status of the $785 million FY 1954 Direct Forces Support Program for Indochina," 24 Sep 54.

Military Assistance	$1,308 million
Financial Support of French Budget	1,285 million
Military Support Program	75 million
Defense Support Program	95 million
Total Cost to U.S. of Indochina War	2,763 million

Perhaps a better conception of the magnitude of American help to France and the Associated States can be obtained from a survey of equipment actually delivered in the four years during which MDAP operated in Indochina. When the United States entered the picture in 1950 French Union Forces were indifferently armed with largely obsolescent World War II equipment. Long and hard usage in the humid climate of Indochina, together with improper and inadequate maintenance, had made much of this equipment nearly unserviceable. Between 1950 and 1954 the French and native troops were almost completely re-equipped with modern weapons and vehicles.

During this period French Union ground troops received under MDAP 1,880 tanks and combat vehicles, 30,887 motor transport vehicles, 361,522 small arms and machine guns, and 5,045 artillery pieces. Spare parts and maintenance apparatus for these items were likewise supplied. The United States also furnished a continuing supply of ammunition, and during the four-year period shipped over 500 million rounds of small arms ammunition, and over 10 million artillery shells. The French Navy received 438 vessels, mostly small patrol craft and landing ships, together with seventy naval aircraft. Two World War II aircraft carriers (CVL) were transferred to the French Navy for Indochina service. The French Air Force, flying a few worn-out World War II planes in 1950, was developed into a comparatively strong, modern Air Force. A total of 394 Hellcat fighters, B-26 bombers, and C-47 cargo planes were transported to the French Air Force in Indochina. By July 1954 over one and a half million measurement tons of military end-items had been dispatched to Indochina, not including aircraft and vessels delivered under their own power. Seventy-two per cent of the material was lifted by American commercial shipping.[4]

4. (S) MDAP Status Report for the Month of July 1954.

The Fiscal Years 1950-1952 programs alone provided equipment for three French infantry divisions, six Vietnamese divisions, four Laotian and five Cambodian infantry battalions. By the middle of 1952 the French Air Force had made important gains in the process of expansion and modernization. It already operated four fighter squadrons equipped with F8F and F6F naval fighter planes, two light bombardment squadrons flying B-26 bombers, and three squadrons of transport planes. The latter as yet had not been completely modernized, and consisted of mixed C-47 and German JU-52 transports.5

By the spring of 1954, however, the French Army in Indochina consisted of fifty infantry battalions, eighteen AAA battalions, and four armored battalions largely equipped by the United States. The new and growing Vietnamese native army had twenty-nine infantry battalions, twenty-seven light infantry battalions, and two AAA battalions almost entirely equipped through MDAP. The French Air Force now possessed 140 F8F fighters, fifty-five B-26 bombers, 106 C-47 cargo planes, and 164 MO500 light liaison planes for observation and medical evacuation, all furnished through American aid. The French naval air arm operated sixteen F8F fighters, twelve SB2C Helldivers, twenty-five Corsair fighters, eight Privateers for reconnaissance work, and nine Grumman Goose scout planes. Added to this were twenty-four C-119 cargo planes and twenty-five B-26 bombers loaned by the American Far East Air Force (FEAF) during the defense of Dien Bien Phu. Almost three hundred USAF maintenance personnel were temporarily assigned to Indochina to provide maintenance support for the C-119's, C-47's, and B-26's.6

5. (S) Memo for Rec, "Status of Major Items as of 31 December 1951 Based on Preliminary Data. Indo-China," nd (c. Feb 52), Indo-China 2a (1952), Alden Files, OMA; (TS) Encl, Ltr, Col J. S. Driscol, USAF, to LTG L. C. Craigie, DCS/D, USAF, 9 Oct 52, same file.

6. (TS) Encl B, Intel Data, "The Current French Capability of Holding Hanoi and the Tonkin Delta with Forces Available to Them," to (TS) JCS 1992/334, 7 Jun 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 71.

Conclusions on Aid Program

Despite the great quantity of arms the United States provided from 1950 through 1954, the aid program never functioned entirely to the satisfaction either of France or the United States.

Defense Department officials recognized a basic fallacy in the use of MDAP to support an active war. Combat operations require a smooth flow of material and the immediate availability of equipment to meet unforeseen contingencies. MDAP simply could not meet these requirements. It had been designed to build up the defensive forces of free world nations over a long period of time and was never intended to supply armies engaged in actual fighting.

Supply procedures called for the French to submit requisitions to MAAG for screening. MAAG officials eliminated all items not meeting JCS screening criteria and considered the remainder in light of their own knowledge of whether the French actually needed the items, whether they could employ them efficiently, and whether they could maintain them properly. MAAG then forwarded the revised list to Washington for screening by the military services. The services further revised the list on the basis of funds available for Indochina support. By the time the material had been programmed, procured, and delivered to Indochina, the need may have passed and some other type of equipment might be in urgent demand to meet the current situation.

Defense authorities concerned with the Indochinese program recognized this fault. In presenting the Fiscal Year 1955 Indochina program to Congress, OMA officials repeatedly stressed the fact that MDAP was being used to support a war, a purpose for which it was never intended.[7] The Joint Chiefs of Staff studied the problem in January 1954 and concluded: "The furnishing of material and other types of aid to France through the medium of MDAP has proved to be too time-consuming and cumbersome because of all the criteria and administrative procedures involved. Experience

7. (TS) "Congressional Presentation FY 1955 Indochina MDA Material Program," Sec, "Questions and Answers," Alden Files, OMA.

indicates that MDAP is not adaptable to or effective in providing support to our Allies during an active war." The Chiefs recommended that a special fund for Indochina be placed under the direct supervision of the Secretary of Defense. Within this framework, they declared, "criteria and procedures can be developed to satisfy the particular needs involved in supporting the French effort in the war."[8] Sentiment in favor of a solution of this type was growing, but the Geneva settlement in July made further discussion pointless.

Despite the drawbacks inherent in employment of MDAP in wartime the program undoubtedly would have operated more smoothly had the French command and staff functioned efficiently. The High Command, however, was burdened by pre-World War II staff thinking and a cumbersome logistics apparatus that resulted in waste of material and unrealistic equipment requests. MAAG officers found that the French supply organization lacked an efficient and centralized stock control system and hence had no provision for lateral redistribution. The French would submit requisitions for a given item on the basis of a shortage existing at one installation. Investigation would reveal an oversupply of the same item at another installation. These operating procedures placed a heavy burden on the American logistics system.[9]

The whole problem was concisely summarized in February 1954 by the Army attache in Saigon:

> Fact possibly not apparent to those who do not have daily contact with French military here is that their staff thinking and procedure is vintage 1935-1939. Although Navarre demands that his requirements (for United States logistical support) be filled without further screening fact that his staff not capable of accurately generating and evaluating these requirements. Acceptance these requests without detailed screening by United States military supply agencies would result waste millions of dollars.

8. (TS) Encl B to (TS) JCS 1992/270, 12 Jan 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 54.

9. (TS) "Congressional Presentation FY 1955 Indochina MDA Material Program," Sec, "Questions and Answers," Alden Files, OMA.

> Staff action are often uncoordinated and there is no rpt no evidence of detailed long range planning. Striking examples of this is the continuing request for additional aircraft without making a coordinated effort to obtain maximum utilization of those already available. French seem to unconsciously feel that the arrival of large quantities of new type equipment . . . will somehow allow them to conduct operations without commitment of manpower. In their planning they completely overlook requirements for operation, maintenance and storage of these items.[10]

Often MAAG's refusal to approve certain French requests was based upon the fact, known to MAAG but rarely recognized by the French, that the desired items could not be properly maintained or utilized with existing facilities and personnel. The French were wasteful and haphazard in their maintenance practices and were sensitive to criticism and offers of technial advice. Although MAAG was charged with insuring proper care of equipment supplied by the United States, French commanders barely concealed their reluctance to accept MAAG inspection, and they carefully controlled the conditions under which MAAG officers were permitted to examine their units. The French Air Force was a particularly consistent offender. Rarely did American inspectors find proper maintenance of aircraft or utilization rates approaching those of the USAF. As an OMA official told Congressmen, "The problem of supporting French units in Indochina with U.S. equipment is not concerned so much with procurement and delivery of equipment as it is with the ability of the French to support it after it is placed in their hands. . . ."[11]

Further complicating the situation was a lack of coordination between the French High Command in Indochina and the General Staff in Paris. Never throughout the war did Paris support the armies in Indochina properly, and successive French commanders found it impossible to get personnel from

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10. (S) Msg, USARMA Saigon Vietnam MG 39-54, to CSUSA for G-2, 032355Z Feb 54, DA-IN-37222 (4 Feb 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 57.

11. (TS) "Congressional Presentation FY 1955 Indochina MDA Material Program," Sec, "Questions and Answers," Alden Files, OMA.

Metropolitan France in sufficient numbers to maintain American material received. Further, authorities in Paris frequently submitted requests through diplomatic channels or the Paris MAAG for material that French Union Forces could not use or support and, indeed, did not want.

The use of MDAP to support a war, together with inefficient French staff and supply practices, inevitably resulted in what came to be known as "crash basis supply," a type of operation that reached its peak during the Dien Bien Phu crisis. Equipment vitally needed for projected combat operations became the subject of urgent requests for immediate delivery. American programming, procurement, and shipping agencies were consequently placed under an intolerable strain, and it was frequently necessary to divert funds from the programs of other countries to the Indochina program in order to meet the increased financial demands. The occasional inability of the United States to comply with these requests led to criticism by the French that the United States was not properly supporting the war effort.

Another problem that developed, partly from American difficulty in meeting recurring crash basis requests, was that of out-of-channel communications. When the United States did not produce needed equipment promptly, or when MAAG eliminated items particularly desired, the French resorted to channels other than MAAG to obtain results. The situation was aggravated by high American officials leading the French to expect more than MAAG or the Defense Department felt could be efficiently used. When an item deemed essential was deleted from a program, the French protested through diplomatic channels. These agencies were entirely unacquainted with the merits of the argument and basis for the MAAG decision, but they generally transmitted the protest anyhow. The United States repeatedly asked France to confine MDAP business to liaison with MAAG, but the French discovered that they normally got what they wanted by using improper channels and continued to do so throughout the war.

These various factors combined to interfere with an expeditious flow of material throughout the four years during which the French received American aid in Indochina.

The demands for American aid arising from the Dien Bien Phu battle brought the whole problem into focus. It demonstrated the need for a thorough modernization of French supply organization, a more cooperative and understanding French attitude toward MAAG, and an American aid structure geared to the specific situation in Indochina. The Geneva Accords in July 1954, however, obviated the need for such a reappraisal.

APPENDIX II

TEXT OF FINAL DECLARATION - GENEVA CONFERENCE

(Unofficial translation)

Final declaration, dated July 21, 1954, of the Geneva Conference on the problem of restoring peace in Indochina, in which the representatives of Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, France, Laos, the People's Republic of China, the State of Viet-Nam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of American took part.

1. The Conference takes note of the agreements ending hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam and organizing international control and the supervision of the execution of the provisions of these agreements.

2. The Conference expresses satisfaction at the ending of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreements on the cessation of hostilities will permit Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam henceforth to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty in the peaceful community of nations.

3. The Conference takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and of Laos of their intention to adopt measures permitting all citizens to take their place in the national community, in particular by participating in the next general elections, which, in conformity with the constitution of each of these countries, shall take place in the course of the year 1955, by secret ballot and in conditions of respect for fundamental freedoms.

4. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet-Nam prohibiting the introduction into Viet-Nam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions. The Conference also takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and Laos of their resolution not to request foreign aid, whether in war material, in personnel, or in instructors except for

the purpose of effective defense of their territory and, in the case of Laos, to the extent defined by the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Laos.

5. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet-Nam to the effect that no military base at the disposition of a foreign state may be established in the regrouping zones of the two parties, the latter having the obligation to see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military alliance and shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy. The Conference also takes note of the declarations of the Governments of Cambodia and Laos to the effect that they will not join in any agreement with other states if this agreement includes the obligation to participate in a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the charter of the United Nations or, in the case of Laos, with the principles of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos or, so long as their security is not threatened, the obligation to establish bases on Cambodian or Laotian territory for the military forces of foreign powers.

6. The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet-Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Viet-Nam.

7. The Conference declares that, so far as Viet-Nam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity, and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot.

In order to insure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the member states of the International Supervisory Commission referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from April 20, 1955, onwards.

8. The provisions of the agreements on the cessation of hostilities intended to insure the protection of individuals and of property must be most strictly applied and must, in particular, allow every one in Viet-Nam to decide freely in which zone he wishes to live.

9. The competent representative authorities of the northern and southern zones of Viet-Nam, as well as the authorities of Laos and Cambodia, must not permit any individual or collective reprisals against persons who have collaborated in any way with one of the parties during the war, or against members of such persons' families.

10. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that it is ready to withdraw its troops from the territory of Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam, at the request of the governments concerned and within a period which shall be fixed by agreement between the parties except in the cases where, by agreement between the two parties, a certain number of French troops shall remain at specified points and for a specified time.

11. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that for the settlement of all the problems connected with the reestablishment and consolidation of peace in Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam, the French Government will proceed from the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam.

12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity, and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned states, and to refrain from any interference in the internal affairs.

13. The members of the Conference agree to consult one another on any question which may be referred to them by the International Supervisory Commission, in order to study such measures as may prove necessary to insure that the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam are respected.

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM

1954 - 1959

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AUTHORITY

This volume has been prepared by historians in the Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat in accordance with professional standards of historiography. Inasmuch as the content of the volume has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is to be construed as descriptive only and not as constituting the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

J. K. BRATTON
Brigadier General, USA
Secretary, JCS

FOREWORD

This volume is the second in the series entitled The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, which is being prepared by the Historical Division in accordance with the memorandum by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, dated 5 April 1963 (attachment to JCS 2343/231).

The first volume of the series describes the beginning of US involvement in Indochina. It chronicles the efforts of the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations to prevent the fall of Indochina to communism by supporting the French forces in the war against the Viet Minh. The account of the collapse of the French Government's will to fight, and the formalization of that collapse in the Geneva Agreements of July 1954, closes the first volume and sets the stage for the present study.

Little attempt has been made in this volume to recapitulate events covered in the first of the series. While not forced to enter in the middle of a major development, the reader will nevertheless find himself at the beginning of the second act. Occasionally, therefore, reference to the earlier volume may be necessary to fully identify an important personality or to understand an action in the context of its antecedents.

The documentary sources that provide the basis for this history are almost exclusively contemporary with the events described. Similarly contemporary are the terms, titles, abbreviations, etc., used by the authors. Thus a reader accustomed to thinking of the enemy in South Vietnam as the Viet Cong should not be surprised to find that throughout most of the period covered herein the enemy is referred to as the Viet Minh.

At times it may appear that the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in developments in Vietnam during this period is submerged in the description of foreign relations, political developments, economics, and other areas having little to do with military matters. Nevertheless, it was developments in

such areas, and particularly in these years, that provide the context in which the greatly increased military activity of the 1960s is to be understood. For this reason, also, a detailed account of the evolution of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) has been included. However, because its scope extends beyond the Indochinese area, and in order not to detract from the volume's focus on Vietnam, it has been placed at the end, as an appendix.

The second volume of the Vietnam series is, like the first, the product of a collaborative effort by many members of the Historical Division. It has been revised and brought to its present form by Mr. Willard J. Webb of the Special Projects Branch.

WILBER W. HOARE, JR.
Chief, Historical Division
Joint Secretariat

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NOTE ON PARAGRAPH CLASSIFICATION

The security classification of all information contained in this volume is derivative. The classification of any particular paragraph is that of the most highly classified document cited in the footnote indicating the source of the information.

CHAPTER I

THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND ITS AFTERMATH--1954

In the summer of 1954 the conclusion of the Geneva Conference placed the final stamp of failure on the attempt by the French to regain from communist-led native Vietnamese the control over Indochina that they had lost during World War II. To a lesser extent, but, unmistakably, this defeat was shared by the United States.

Although, in the years immediately following the war, the United States had denied to the French any assistance in restoring their colonial rule, by the end of 1949 the communization of mainland China led the United States to a general reassessment of its policy toward Indochina. The resulting decision to assist noncommunist governments in Asia against further Red encroachment was strengthened, and its implementation hastened, by the attack on South Korea in June 1950.

By the spring of 1954, the untoward events in Indochina had crystallized US concern for Southeast Asia, consumed US assistance to the extent of almost $3 billion, and diminished, though not yet greatly, US prestige. As the French faltered, the US Government contemplated military intervention, but the refusal of the British to lend their support, which President Eisenhower saw as a necessary condition, closed that option. The alternative chosen, in the hope of saving the remainder of Southeast Asia, if not Vietnam, was the development of a regional pact. Since, however, preliminary negotiations on a regional pact moved slowly, the United States went to the Geneva Conference in mid-1954 isolated, in a sense, by the collapse of the French will to fight and the reluctance of the British to support immediate military action. The US representatives were somewhat in the position of minority stockholders at a bankruptcy proceeding, trying not to be identified with the old management but,

while having little influence on the outcome, hoping to salvage enough to start a new company, with new capital and perhaps some new stockholders.[1]

The Geneva Background

In early 1954 the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union agreed to meet at Geneva for the purpose of reaching a peaceful settlement of the Korean question. The Government of Communist China was invited to attend and agreed to do so. The United States reluctantly acceded to French demands that the participants also discuss "the problem of restoring peace to Indochina." Accordingly, representatives of the five powers assembled in Geneva on 26 April 1954, and after two weeks of futile discussions on Korea, turned to the Indochina question. In addition to the "Big Four" and Communist China, the three Associated States--Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam--and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) also participated in the sessions on Indochina.

The Geneva deliberations on Indochina proved long and difficult, but finally, in mid-July, the Conference produced three separate agreements--one each concerning Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam--and a Final Declaration of the Conference.[2]

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1. A detailed account of the US involvement in the Indochina war is contained in (TS-GP 1) JCS Hist Div, History of the Indochina Incident, 1940-1954.

2. Terminology for the agreements and final declaration rapidly became confused, both in news media and in official documents and public statements. Geneva Agreements, or Agreement, and Geneva Accords, or Accord, were used indiscriminately to designate all three agreements together; all three plus the final declaration; the agreement on Vietnam only, plus the final declaration; etc. In this volume Geneva Agreements applies to the three agreements concerning Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. When only the agreement concerning Vietnam is addressed, it will be described as the agreement on Vietnam or the Vietnam Agreement. The Final Declaration of the Conference will always be identified as the final declaration, distinct from the Geneva Agreements. Exceptions occur in quoted material, where the above-mentioned variable usage is often found. For the texts of of the Geneva Agreements and the Final Declaration of the

The agreements, signed on 20 July 1954, provided fo the cessation of all hostilities in the three states. They prohibited the establishment of new military bases throughout the territory of the three states and called for the liberation and repatriation of all prisoners of war and civilian internees. In addition, the three agreements contained, in varying degrees, restrictions on foreign armed forces in the territory of the Indochinese states.

The agreement on Vietnam was the most complex of the three. It provided for a provisional military demarcation line (PMDL), generally following the 17th Parallel and dividing Vietnam approximately in half, and a five-kilometer demilitarized zone (DMZ) on either side of the PMDL to serve as a buffer area. After the cease-fire, the combatant forces were to be regrouped on either side of the PMDL, with the Viet Minh forces, the People's Army of Vietnam, to the north of the line and the French Union forces to the south. In addition, the agreement on Vietnam forbade the introduction of any troop reinforcements or additional military personnel, and reinforcements "in the form of all types of arms, munitions and other war material." The agreement allowed, however, rotation and replacement of forces already in-country and the replacement, piece for piece and of the same type, of materials, arms, and munitions destroyed, damaged, worn out, or used after the cessation of hostilities.

The agreement on Vietnam also provided for the creation of a Joint Commission, composed of equal representation from the two contending sides, to facilitate execution of the agreement. Further, the agreement established an International Commission to supervise and control its implementation. This commission, composed of representatives of India (presiding), Canada, and Poland, would make use of fixed and mobile inspection teams to verify that the terms of the agreement were being carried out and would inform the conference members in the event of violations.

The Final Declaration on Indochina, issued on 21 July 1954 by all the conference participants except the United States and the State of Vietnam, noted the provisions of the Geneva Agreements and expressed satisfaction at the ending

Conference see Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954 (1955), pp. 283-314.

of hostilities. With regard to Vietnam, the Final Declaration stated that the "essential purpose" of the agreement was to end hostilities, and that "the military demarcation line should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary." Following the expressed conviction that the execution of its provisions and those of the agreement on Vietnam would create "the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Vietnam," the Final Declaration called for general elections in Vietnam during July 1956, under the supervision of an International Commission composed again of India, Canada, and Poland.

The Declaration concluded with a pledge by the signers of the Geneva Agreements to respect "the sovereignty, the independence, the unity, and the territorial integrity" of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam; to refrain from any interference in internal affairs of the three states; and to consult together on any question referred to them by the International Commission in order to study such measures as might be necessary to assure that the agreements were respected.

The delegation of the State of Vietnam would not agree to the division of Vietnam and, consequently, refused to sign the Final Declaration of the Conference. Objecting to both the manner and conditions of the agreement on Vietnam, the Government of Vietnam reserved to itself "complete freedom of action to guarantee the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to territorial unity, national independence, and freedom."[3]

The United States took the position that primary responsibility for the settlement in Indochina rested with the nations that had participated in the fighting. Since it had not been a belligerent in the war, the United States did not sign the Geneva Agreements or the Final Declaration, and it did not consider itself bound by the decisions of the Geneva Conference. The United States did, however, issue on 21 July 1954 a unilateral declaration, promising to refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb the Geneva Agreements and stating that it would view any renewal of

3. Protest by the Vietnamese Delegation against the Geneva Conference Agreements, 21 July 1954, Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, pp. 315-316.

aggression in violation of these Agreements "with grave concern," as a serious threat to international peace and security. With regard to free elections in Vietnam, the US declaration reaffirmed the policy of seeking to achieve the unity of divided nations through free elections supervised by the United Nations. The United States also noted the protest by the State of Vietnam to the agreement and reiterated the US policy "that peoples are entitled to determine their own future." It stated that it would not join in an arrangement which would violate this principle.[4]

The Situation in Vietnam

The political situation in Vietnam changed significantly during the course of the Geneva Conference. The French Government of Premier Joseph Laniel had promised in a declaration of 3 July 1953 to grant independence to the three Associated States of Indochina, and in pursuit of this pledge, France and the Vietnamese Government of Premier Buu Loc had initiated negotiations in Paris in early 1954. Differences over the definition of independence stalemated the negotiations at first, but in an effort to present a united Franco-Vietnamese front at Geneva, France gave into Vietnamese demands. Consequently, on 28 April, two days after the first session of the Geneva Conference, Premier Laniel and Vietnamese Vice Premier Nguyen Trung Vinh issued a joint declaration agreeing to the subsequent signature of two treaties, one granting Vietnam independence and the other establishing "a Franco-Vietnamese association within the French Union."[5]

Five weeks later, on 4 June, France and Vietnam formally initialed the two treaties in Paris. In the independence treaty France recognized Vietnam "as a fully independent and sovereign State invested with the jurisdiction recognized by international law." In addition, the treaty abrogated all "earlier and contrary acts and dispositions," and France transferred to Vietnam "all jurisdictions and public services

4. Declaration by the United States Regarding Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, 21 July 1954, Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, pp. 316-317.
5. Joint Franco-Vietnamese Declaration of 28 April 1954, Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, pp. 269-270.

still held by her on Vietnamese territory." In the association treaty, France and Vietnam pledged to maintain "in friendship and confidence" the ties which united them and to associate "freely within the French Union . . . ."[6]

Although the initialing of the two treaties ended 70 years of French "presence," the event sparked no outburst of joy in Vietnam. In fact, it is doubtful that the Vietnamese people recognized the treaties for what they were. Between 1949 and 1954 there had been 17 French declarations granting various degrees of independence, and understandably the Vietnamese greeted this latest action with some skepticism.

Meanwhile, even as the conferees were meeting in Geneva, Premier Buu Loc resigned on 15 June 1954, and Chief of State Bao Dai called upon Ngo Dinh Diem to form a new government. Diem, who came from a prominent mandarin family, had held no public office in Vietnam for twenty years, but he was ardently anticommunist and a dedicated nationalist with a reputation for scrupulous honesty and moral uprightness. A militant Catholic, Ngo Dinh Diem was aloof, courageous, stubborn, and diligent.[7]

Diem, who was in France, returned immediately to Vietnam and set about forming his government. On his arrival in Vietnam, he declared that he was "destined to open the way to national salvation and to bring about a revolution in all fields," adding that he would seek to "eliminate the last vestiges of foreign domination."[8]

Diem formally constituted his government on 7 July 1954, which as Double Seven (seventh day, seventh month) would be celebrated as a national holiday in coming years. The new government was nationalistic, youthful, and small,

6. Heads of Agreement on Vietnamese Independence and Vietnamese Association in the French Union, Initialed by France and Vietnam at Paris, 4 June 1954, Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1954, pp. 270-272.

7. Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), The United States in World Affairs, 1954 (1956), p. 243. NY Times, 26 Jun 54, p. 4; 27 Jun 54, p. IV, 6.

8. NY Times, 26 Jun 54, p. 4.

with nine ministries (Agriculture, Economics and Finance, Education, Foreign Affairs, Health, Interior, Labor and Youth, National Defense, and Public Works) and eight state secretariats. Diem retained for himself the two important ministries of National Defense and Interior, and several other members of the new government were related either to Diem or his family: Tran Van Chuong, the Minister of Economics and Finance, was the father-in-law of Diem's brother Ngo Dinh Nhu; Tran Van Do, the brother of Chuong was named Foreign Minister; Tran Van Bac, a Diem relation, was appointed Minister of Education; and Diem's brother Ngo Dinh Luyen was designated as a roving ambassador for the government. This reliance on his family was a trait characteristic of Diem.[9]

Diem assumed office to face a number of serious and pressing problems, and the most immediate was the impending Geneva settlement. Diem and his new government adamantly refused to sanction, even temporarily, the partition of Vietnam into communist and noncommunist states. But, heedless of the opposition of the State of Vietnam, the major powers pushed on to a final agreement truncating Vietnam at the 17th Parallel. In one fell swoop the State of Vietnam lost more than half of its territory and population.

With a multitude of obstacles to surmount, the Diem government began its tenure with little popular appeal. Diem himself had lived abroad for the previous four years and had no following in Vietnam. Bao Dai, who had abdicated as Emperor in 1945 and been restored by the French in 1949 as Chief of State, tarnished the image of the new government. Since his restoration, Bao Dai had manifested less and less inclination to participate in the affairs of government. He avoided Saigon altogether and lived in luxury either at the Vietnamese mountain resort of Dalat or on the French Riviera, accumulating a vast personal fortune and surrounded by corrupt friends.

In addition to the lack of popular support, the Diem government did not have the institutions, the administrative machinery, nor the experience, especially at the

9. NY Times, 6 Jul 54, p. 4. Bernard B. Fall, "The Cease-Fire in Indochina--An Appraisal," Far Eastern Survey, Sep 54, pp. 137-138.

local level, that are requisites of an independent state. The State of Vietnam had no constitution or elected assembly; instead, it had only decrees and ordinances and a Provisional National Council. Bao Dai had established this Council by ordinance in July 1953. Its members were appointed and its powers strictly advisory. There had been elections for municipal and provincial councils in 1953, but these elections were limited to areas and villages under government control and restricted to those who had registered in the 1951 census. As a result, only one village in three had been permitted to vote and only about one million out of a population of approximately twenty-seven million had participated in the elections. Thus in 1954 only a small fraction of the people of the State of Vietnam had participated in the processes of self-government.

The State of Vietnam also began its independent existence lacking control of large areas of its territory. Even though the Geneva settlement provided for the withdrawal of all Viet Minh forces from Vietnam south of the 17th Parallel, large areas remained under Viet Minh influence. In many areas of the South Vietnamese countryside, the village administration was openly in the control of Viet Minh elements. In village after village where the government sent its officials, they found that the business of government and administration of justice was carried out behind the scenes by the Viet Minh. Although the Viet Minh were evacuating large numbers of their uniformed troops to the north, they retained their clandestine administrative and propaganda network in the south, and it was impossible to tell how many of the evacuating forces were young people sent north for Viet Minh training and indoctrination or to estimate how many soldiers remained behind in civilian dress to pursue guerrilla activities. Even in Saigon and the other cities of the south, where government control had always been the strongest, the Viet Minh had many sympathizers among the poorer classes as well as among the intellectuals and professional people, and Viet Minh-sponsored parades and rallies were frequent.

The US Government was well aware of the Viet Minh threat in the remnant State of Vietnam. A National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of early August, on the post-Geneva outlook in Indochina, predicted that the communists would continue their efforts to secure control of all of Indochina, resorting to psychological and "paramilitary" means rather than armed invasion, and avoiding violation of the armistice.

The NIE stated that the Viet Minh would seek to retain "sizable military and political assets" in South Vietnam, noting that many of both regular and irregular Viet Minh soldiers currently in the south were natives of the area and would probably remain there. In addition, the restrictions of the Geneva Agreements on the importation of arms and military equipment, foreign military personnel, and new military bases and alliances would increase the already severe problem of establishing and maintaining security in South Vietnam. The Viet Minh were almost certain to attempt to discredit any new South Vietnamese administration, to exacerbate Franco-South Vietnamese relations, and to appeal to the strong feeling for national unification extant in Vietnam. Finally, if the scheduled national elections were held in 1956, and if the Viet Minh did not prejudice its political prospects, the Viet Minh would almost certainly win.[10]

Not only did Ngo Dinh Diem and his new government face the danger of the externally controlled Viet Minh, but they were also opposed by certain noncommunist groups in South Vietnam--the "sects" and the Binh Xuyen. The two politico-religious sects, the Cao Dai and the Hoa-Hao, and the Binh Xuyen, a group of former river pirates who had extensive vice and gambling monopolies and who controlled the Saigon-Cholon police, were the major political forces in South Vietnam at this time. All three groups maintained their own private armed forces, totaling about 40,000 men. They controlled large areas of the South Vietnamese countryside and collected tolls and taxes from the local population in such areas. Naturally, a strong central government would pose a challenge to their privileged positions, and the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen all viewed Diem with great suspicion, if not hostility.

Confronted with both the Viet Minh and the private armies of the sects and the Binh Xuyen, Diem also lacked the confidence of the exiting French. Because of his strong anti-French sentiments, the departing French officials had no great affection for Diem. They did not initially oppose him outright, but neither did they support him. They

10. (U) NIE 63-5-54, "Post-Geneva Outlook in Indochina," 3 Aug 54, Pentagon Papers (a study prepared by the Department of Defense, "United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967"), vol. 10, pp. 692-698.

concentrated their energies instead on salvaging some remnant of their position and influence in Vietnam. Bao Dai and his clique, under French pressure, showed themselves increasingly disenchanted with Diem. They saw in his penchant for honesty and diligence a threat to their perquisites.

The French Government was quite frank in disclosing to the United States that it did not consider Diem qualified to head the new government in Vietnam. Although the French praised Diem's "high moral character" and felt that he should be a member of any future Vietnamese government if he could make peace with the sects, they held that Diem did not fully represent the population in the south, that he would be unable to carry out necessary agricultural reforms promptly, and that he would not be prepared to depose Bao Dai and create a republic when it became appropriate.[11]

To cope with the forces arrayed against him, Diem needed a strong national army. This he did not have. Fearing that a Vietnamese national army would turn against them, the French had delayed its formation until 1951, the year that Vo Nguyen Giap formed the first regular Viet Minh division. In 1954 the Vietnamese National Army (VNA) was still in its formative stages and, although it was numerically equal to the forces of the DRV, one observer termed it "organizationally only a miscellaneous conglomeration of ill-sorted battalions."[12] In addition, the military victory of the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu, and its diplomatic confirmation at Geneva, had seriously undermined the morale of the VNA. Not only was the VNA disorganized, poorly trained, and demoralized, but many of the high-ranking officers, including Chief of Staff General Nguyen Van Hinh, were opposed to Diem.

In addition to the political chaos in South Vietnam the Diem government had major economic, financial, and social problems to solve. The Geneva partition had divided an economically balanced country, separating the agricultural south from the industrial north, and leaving South Vietnam

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11. (U) Msg, Paris 481 to State, 4 Aug 54, Pentagon Papers, vol. 10, pp. 699-700.

12. Peggy Durdin, "There Is No Truce in Vietnam," Reporter, 30 Dec 54, p. 26.

with a scarcity of skilled labor. The war had destroyed approximately 60 percent of South Vietnam's roads, many bridges, and one-third of the railroads. Further, there existed serious administrative and technical problems in transferring control of foreign trade, banking, and currency from French to Vietnamese hands. South Vietnam did have economic assets in its rice and rubber producing capacity, but there remained the tremendous task of building and orienting a self-sufficient economy.

Some of the major economic and social problems arose from the fact that, in the months following the Geneva settlement, thousands of North Vietnamese refugees fled south. Crowded into tent cities without even the basic necessities of life, and with growing antagonisms between them and the native southerners, the refugees presented yet another challenge to the efficiency and resources of the government.

Closely related to the question of refugee settlement was the matter of land reform. Various land reform proposals had been considered in Vietnam, dating back to 1949, but even though Premier Nguyen Van Tam had decreed a program in 1953, nothing had yet been done. In a country where a large part of the population consisted of landless peasants tilling large estates and plantations, and where small tenant farmers labored under high rents and usurious interest rates, land reform was essential, especially if the government was to compete with the land reform propaganda of the Viet Minh.

Beleaguered on all sides by political insecurity and chaos, and confronted with immense economic and social problems, it was obvious that the State of Vietnam would require outside assistance if it was to survive. Weary after seven years of war in Vietnam, and having severed its formal ties with the three former Associated States, France no longer possessed the inclination to provide this assistance. The United States recognized the importance of Vietnam and realized that the West could ill afford the loss of all of Vietnam to the communists. Not only was the existence of South Vietnam threatened, the US Government believed, but so too was that of all of Indochina and, ultimately, all of Southeast Asia. Earlier in 1954, President Eisenhower had enunciated his belief in the "falling domino" principle, likening Indochina's position, relative

to the rest of Southeast Asia, to the first in a row of dominos set on end; if the first fell, the rest were certain to follow.[13]

Reassessment of US Policy

In the summer of 1954 the results of the Geneva Conference, and the perilous situation in South Vietnam, prompted the United States to undertake a wide ranging reassessment of its policy for the Far East. Recognizing that France would no longer be responsible for Indochina, the United States had to decide to what extent it would commit itself to prevent further communist encroachment there. Moreover, the relationship of Indochina to the entire surrounding area made it mandatory that the United States reconsider its policy toward all the nations and regions of the Far East, particularly Communist China. In the short space of five years, Communist China had driven the Nationalist Government of China from the mainland, waged war impressively in Korea, and contributed significantly to the victory of the Viet Minh in Indochina. It had also forged a strong alliance with the USSR, gained great prestige and respect among the Asian and African nations, and menaced the arc of small and generally weak neighboring nations.

NSC 5429

The US Government began a formal reassessment of its policy immediately after the Geneva Conference, with a draft statement of policy toward the Far East, circulated to the National Security Council on 4 August 1954 as NSC 5429. This policy statement had been prepared by the NSC Planning Board, whose members represented the various executive departments and agencies charged with responsibility for the development of national security policy.

Prefaced with a section on the consequences of the Geneva Conference for the United States, the draft statement

13. Presidential News Conference, 7 Apr 54, transcript in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954 (1960), pp. 382-383.

included four sections: (1) courses of action to increase the security of the Pacific offshore island chain; (2) general political and economic measures for the Far East; (3) courses of action for Southeast Asia; (4) policy toward Communist China. It was the latter two sections that were to give US policymakers the most trouble. The Defense, JCS, and Office of Defense Mobilization (ODM) representatives of the Planning Board believed that US policy toward China (the fourth section) should be determined first, with policy toward "the peripheral areas" being established in light of that determination. They also proposed that the section on Communist China be made the first section of the policy statement.

The section on Southeast Asia called for a new initiative there to protect the US position and restore US prestige. According to the draft statement, the situation in that area had to be stabilized to prevent further losses to communism through either "creeping expansion" and "subversion" or overt aggression. As a major objective, the United States should negotiate a Southeast Asia security treaty with the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France, the Philippines, Thailand, and other free South and Southeast Asian countries willing to participate. The United States would continue to provide limited military assistance and training missions, wherever possible, to friendly Southeast Asian states in order to bolster the will to fight, stablize legal governments, and control subversion.

In a following paragraph entitled "Action in the Event of Local Subversion," NSC 5429 presented two alternatives for NSC consideration. The first, recognizing that "the above-mentioned economic and military measures" might be inadequate to cope with communist expansion and subversion in Indochina, called for the issuance "at the earliest practicable moment" of a declaration to the Chinese Communists that further communist expansion on the mainland of Southeast Asia would not be tolerated. Additionally, such a declaration should warn that continued communist expansion would "in all probability" lead to the application of military power "not necessarily restricted to conventional weapons against the source of the aggression (i.e. Communist China)." The second alternative proposed that, in addition to the negotiation of a Southeast Asia security treaty, the United States prepare, either unilaterally or under the terms of the Southeast Asia treaty, and if

requested by a legitimate local government, to assist that government with military force, if required and feasible, to defeat local communist subversion or rebellion not constituting external armed attack.

For Indochina, NSC 5429 recommended the following political and covert actions: (1) making every effort, not openly inconsistent with the US position on the Geneva Agreements, to defeat communist subversion and influence, to maintain and support friendly noncommunist governments in Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam, and to prevent communist victory through all-Vietnam elections; (2) urging France to recognize promptly and deal with Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam as independent sovereign nations; (3) strengthening of US representation in, and dealing directly with, the governments of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam; (4) working through the French only insofar as necessary, assisting Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam to maintain military forces necessary for internal security and economic conditions conducive to the maintenance of strong noncommunist regimes; (5) aiding emigration and resettlement of peoples unwilling to remain under communist rule in North Vietnam; (6) exploiting available means to make more difficult the control of North Vietnam by the Viet Minh; (7) exploiting available means to prevent North Vietnam from becoming permanently incorporated in the Soviet bloc, using consular relations and nonstrategic trade as feasible and desirable, or, alternatively, treating North Vietnam as already permanently incorporated into the communist bloc with the application of economic controls similar to those applied to Communist China; (8) conducting covert operations on a large and effective scale in support of the foregoing.

The last section of the draft statement of policy, dealing with the policy and courses of action for US relations with Communist China, proved the most difficult on which to reach agreement. In this section, the Planning Board offered four alternative general policies with appropriate implementing courses of action. The four alternative policies, enumerated as Alternatives A through D, were : putting US relations with Communist China on the same footing as those with the Soviet Union; reducing, by means short of war, the relative power of Communist China in Asia; reducing the power of Communist China in Asia even at the risk of, but without deliberately provoking, war; and initiating "an increasingly positive policy toward Communist China

designed to confront the regime with a clear likelihood of U.S. military action against China proper," unless Communist China took public action to change its belligerent support of communist expansion.[14]

The Views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Since the draft policy statement was to be considered at a NSC meeting on 12 August 1954, the Joint Chiefs of Staff undertook an immediate study of the statement. In a memorandum of 11 August 1954, they informed the Secretary of Defense that NSC 5429 did not represent a comprehensive policy statement for the Far East. It did not delineate US objectives for the whole area or courses of action that would logically flow from the establishment of such objectives. They reaffirmed their proposal of the previous April that the United States formulate a comprehensive policy treating the Far East as a strategic entity. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, therefore, that NSC 5429 be returned to the NSC Planning Board with appropriate guidance for derivation and exposition of US objectives in the Far East and the development of broad courses of action to achieve these objectives.

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed on the general inadequacy of NSC 5429, they differed on certain specific provisions of the policy statement. The Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant, Marine Corps, concurred in the view of the Defense, JCS, and ODM representatives on the Planning Board that US policy toward Communist China should be determined first, with policy for "the peripheral areas" following that determination. Consequently, they recommended that, in the final version of NSC 5429, the section on Communist China be made the first section of the statement.

The Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant, Marine Corps, then proceeded with detailed comments on individual portions of the draft policy statement. With regard to US actions in Indochina, the JCS majority preferred a revision of the action for exploitation

14. (TS) NSC 5429, 4 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 77.

of available means to make Viet Minh control of North Vietnam more difficult. They would substitute continued exploitation of "opportunities to further US long-range objectives toward uniting Vietnam under a democratic form of government." If this change were accepted, they felt, it would eliminate the need for either of the alternative actions of preventing North Vietnam from becoming permanently attached to the Soviet bloc or treating North Vietnam as already permanently incorporated in the communist bloc.

With respect to the four alternative policies toward Communist China, they considered the first two inadequate and the fourth extreme. Consequently, they preferred the third alternative--reduction of the power of Communist China in Asia even at the risk of, but without deliberately provoking war--with certain revisions in the courses of action to implement this alternative. This policy, with their proposed revisions, would provide for a positive approach to the problem of reducing the threat of further Communist Chinese expansion in Asia, furnishing a basis for action against indirect aggression that was lacking in the first two alternatives, while avoiding the "more extreme measures, with their greatly enhanced risks," contained in the fourth alternative.

The Chief of Staff, Army, however, had more basic reservations regarding NSC 5429. He stated that the proposed policy was not a comprehensive review of Far Eastern policy, adding that the problem confronting the United States in the Far East could not be stated except in relation to, and as an element in, a US foreign policy of "global scope." Although not suggesting what such a global policy should be, it seemed axiomatic to him that "one principal OBJECTIVE" should be to split Communist China from the Soviet bloc.

As a result, the Chief of Staff, Army, found none of the four alternative policies toward Communist China acceptable. He stated that there were elements in each alternative which, if combined, might offer a better alternative, emphasizing that the United States need not either appease Communist China (the first alternative) or destroy it (the last alternative).

Returning to the "objective" of driving a wedge between Communist China and the USSR, the Chief of Staff, Army, said that, if this objective were accepted, the "statesmanlike approach would seem to be to bring Peking to a realization

that its long-range benefits derive from friendliness with America, not with the USSR." These benefits would, of course, be forthcoming "in time," and only if Communist China "would mend its ways."[15]

NSC 5429/1 and NSC 5429/2

The National Security Council considered NSC 5429 on 12 August 1954, but did not heed the JCS recommendation for return of the draft policy statement to the Planning Board. The NSC accepted the sections dealing with the Pacific offshore island chain and general political and economic measures (Sections I and II) without change. In its consideration of the Southeast Asia section (Section III), the NSC could not agree on either alternative action to meet local subversion. Nor did the Council accept the recommendation of the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant, Marine Corps, with regard to the action to make Viet Minh control of North Vietnam more difficult. Instead, the NSC approved the provision as stated in NSC 5429 and chose also the alternative of exploiting available means to prevent North Vietnam from becoming permanently incorporated in the Soviet bloc.

After reviewing the four alternative policies toward Communist China, the NSC was unable to decide on any one of them. As a result, the Council adopted the first three sections of NSC 5429 with the exception of the paragraph (paragraph 8) in Section III treating local subversion. This paragraph, together with the fourth section, on Communist China, the Council agreed to reconsider on 18 August. The President--on the day of the NSC meeting, 12 August 1954--approved Sections I, II, and III, with the exception of paragraph 8, and directed their use as a general guide to US policy in the Far East. This revised NSC 5429 was published as NSC 5429/1, dated 12 August 1954.[16]

When the National Security Council met on 18 August 1954 it had before it the four alternative policies toward

15. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East - NSC 5429," 11 Aug 54, same file, sec 79.
16. (TS) NSC 5429/1, 12 Aug 54, same file, sec 80.

Communist China presented in NSC 5429, ranging from putting US relations with that nation on the same footing as those with the Soviet Union to military action against the Chinese mainland. The policy adopted by the Council was the third alternative (Alternative C), providing for the reduction of the power of Communist China in Asia even at the risk of war, but without deliberately provoking it. The language of the policy as finally adopted followed closely that suggested by the majority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the addition of a course of action calling for the creation of "internal division" in the Chinese regime as well as impairment of Sino-Soviet relations by all feasible overt and covert means--as supported by the Chief of Staff, Army, in the split JCS views of 11 August.

At the 18 August meeting, the National Security Council also reconsidered the question of how to deal with communist subversion in Southeast Asia. The Council selected neither alternative proposed in NSC 5429--a unilateral US declaration to Communist China threatening the use of force in the event of continuing communist expansion in Southeast Asia or US preparedness to act, either unilaterally or under the projected Southeast Asia security treaty, to assist local governments facing local communist subversion. Rather, the Council adopted a new paragraph calling on the President to consider asking Congress for authority to use US forces in Southeast Asia. Specifically, the new paragraph stated:

> If requested by a legitimate local government which required assistance to defeat local Communist subversion or rebellion not constituting armed attack, the U.S. should view such a situation so gravely that, in addition to giving all possible covert and overt support within Executive Branch authority, the President should at once consider requesting Congressional authority to take appropriate action, which might if necessary and feasible include the use of U.S. military forces either locally or against the external sources of such subversion or rebellion (including Communist China if determined to be the source).

With all the disagreements now resolved, the National Security Council adopted the entire statement of US policy for the Far East on 18 August 1954 with the understanding that the section on Communist China would be used as the

basis for further consideration in light of a review by the Secretary of State scheduled to be completed in about one month. The President approved this statement of policy on 20 August with the same understanding. The approved policy, NSC 5429/2, was issued on the same day, with the section on Communist China the first, rather than the last, section.17

The Manila Conference

With an approved policy toward the Far East and Southeast Asia, the US Government now moved to create a regional security arrangement, the preliminary negotiations of which had been in progress since April 1954. Representatives of the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, joined by the Asian states of Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines, met in Manila in early September 1954 to draft such a treaty and, on 8 September, signed the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEACDT). The eight signatories recognized that an attack on any one of them would endanger the peace and safety of all and pledged that, in such an event, each would "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." In the event of a threat other than armed attack to their territory, sovereignty, or political independence, the signers agreed to consult on appropriate measures for the common defense. The area covered by the provisions included the general area of Southeast Asia, the entire territories of the Asian members, and the general area of the Southwest Pacific, including the area north of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude. A separate protocol extended the security provisions of the treaty to "the States of Cambodia and Laos and the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam." The United States, however, signed the treaty with the understanding that the provisions covering aggression and armed attack applied only to communist aggression, but consented to consult in the event of "other aggression or armed attack." The SEACDT provided for neither commitment of forces nor a formal treaty organization. Instead, it established a Council, with each member represented, to consider implementation of the treaty. The treaty also incorporated economic provisions, each party promising to

17. (TS) NSC 5429/2, 20 Aug 54, same file, sec 81.

cooperate in promotion of the economic well-being and social progress of all. Accompanying the treaty was the Pacific Charter, signed by the eight states on the same day. Therein they proclaimed their determination to resist any attempt "to subvert their freedom or to destroy their sovereignty or territorial integrity."[18]

Restudy of US Policy toward the Far East (NSC 5429/3)

In accordance with the August 1954 NSC decision, the Planning Board undertook a review of US policy toward the Far East in the fall of 1954, in light of the continuing critical situation and the Secretary of State's report to the National Security Council following the Manila Conference. Subsequently, the Planning Board circulated a new draft statement of US policy toward the Far East (NSC 5429/3) to the NSC members of 19 November 1954.

The new draft statement was organized into three sections--general considerations, objectives, and courses of action. Under general considerations the Planning Board set forth the primary problem of the United States in the Far East as meeting the serious threat resulting from the spread of communist power on the continent of Asia--over mainland China, North Korea, and the northern part of Vietnam. Not only had the Chinese communist regime apparently succeeded in consolidating its power on the mainland, but it had developed working relations with the Soviet Union. The task of the United States in coping with the threat was complicated by a number of factors. The noncommunist countries in Asia were vulnerable militarily, politically, economically, and psychologically to further communist inroads and all had intense nationalistic feelings with residual resentments against European colonialism. In addition, a sense of "weakness and inadequacy in the face of the worldwide power struggle" inhibited many Far Eastern and Southeast Asian countries from cooperating with the United States, and the divergent Far Eastern policies followed by US European allies, particularly with regard to Communist China, limited US political and economic pressures against Asian communist regimes.

18. For a full account of the Manila Conference and the resulting SEACDT, see Appendix.

The new draft statement included four principal objectives and reflected the JCS view that any full statement of US policy for the area should include goals that the United States was seeking to achieve in the Far East as a whole. The objectives, to be pursued with clear and strong resolve, and "if necessary at the risk of but not provocative of war," included: preservation of the territorial and political integrity of the noncommunist countries in the area against further communist expansion or subversion; progressive improvement of the relative political, economic, and military position of the noncommunist countries vis-a-vis that of the Asian communist regimes; reduction of Chinese Communist power and prestige; and disruption of the Sino-Soviet alliance through actions designed to intensify existing and potential areas of conflict or divergence of interest between the USSR and Communist China. The draft statement also contained a fifth objective, proposed by the Defense, JCS, Commerce, ODM, Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), and CIA respresentatives on the Planning Board, but opposed by the Department of State representative. It provided for creation in noncommunist Asia, and ultimately within Communist China, of political and social forces that would spread the "greater values of the Free World" and simultaneously expose "the falsity of the communist ideological offensive."

To achieve these objectives, the Planning Board proposed various courses of action, falling into two categories--those designed to "preserve the territorial and political integrity of the area" and those required to "enhance the individual and collective strength of the non-Communist nations." The first category included: maintenance of the security of the Pacific offshore island chain; conclusion of a mutual defense treaty with the Republic of China covering Formosa and the Pescadores; use of force, as appropriate, in the event of armed attack on the Republic of Korea or in an area covered by the Manila Pact; and preparedness to seek Congressional authority for necessary action, including use of force, to meet armed attack or imminent threat of attack against any other country in the area not covered by a security treaty to which the United States was a party. Further actions in this category were: prompt punitive action in the event of unprovoked communist armed attack on US personnel, aircraft, or vessels; encouragement of a Western Pacific collective defense arrangement; assistance, where necessary and feasible, to noncommunist governments

in the Far East to counter communist subversion and economic domination; and maintenance of US forces in the Far East as clear evidence of US intentions in the area. With regard to internal communist subversion or rebellion, the first category of actions included the same provision that had been included in NSC 5429/2 only after a lengthy consideration--calling for the United States to give all possible covert and overt support within the Executive Branch authority and for the President to be prepared to request Congressional authority for appropriate action, including military force, if appropriate.

The second category of actions, those required to enhance the individual and collective strength of the non-communist states, called for: increased efforts to develop the basic stability and strength of the noncommunist countries to resist communist expansion; continued recognition of the Government of the Republic of China, with direct military and economic assistance to that government; encouragement of the organization of an economic grouping of free Asian states, accompanied by all feasible measures to increase opportunities for trade among these countries and with the Free World; provision of economic and technical assistance, encouraging use of US advisers where appropriate; attempts to increase the understanding of, and orientation of the Asian peoples toward, the Free World as well as to expose the menace of Chinese imperialism and world communism; and encouragement of the application of private capital to the development of free Asia.

With respect to Indochina, the new draft policy statement continued unchanged that policy adopted in NSC 5429/2, with the addition of a new paragraph. Reflecting US concern over a growing problem, this new paragraph called for the United States to expose communist violations of the armistice in Indochina.

Included in NSC 5429/3 was a proposal by the Commerce and FOA members of the Planning Board for study of the feasibility of the negotiation of a Far Eastern settlement that might encompass such elements as recognition and seating in the United Nations of the two Chinas; opening trade with Communist China; unifying Korea; obtaining the abandonment of subversive communist pressures in South Vietnam; admission of Japan to the United Nations; and obtaining an undertaking by Communist China to refrain from support of subversive groups in any part of Asia. Realizing that such

a proposal would require detailed study and planning, the Planning Board stated that, in the meantime, the United States must weaken or retard the growth and power of Communist China, and also called for continued refusal to recognize Communist China and other Asian communist regimes, utilization of all feasible overt and covert means to create discontent and internal division within the communist-dominated area, and maintenance of a trade embargo against Communist China. On the matter of the trade embargo, however, the members of the Planning Board could not agree. Although all supported continuation of the embargo, the Defense, JCS, Commerce, and ODM representatives favored use of "the total bargaining position" of the United States to gain acceptance of the embargo, or near embargo, by all other noncommunist countries. The State, Treasury, Budget, and CIA representatives, on the other hand, would continue to exert US influence on other Free World countries for maintenance of the current level of trade controls against Communist China, but without using US influence in such a manner as to be "seriously divisive."19

In preparation for a 1 December NSC consideration of NSC 5429/3, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense their comments on the draft policy statement on 26 November, complaining that they had had only three days to prepare their views. They informed the Secretary that US policy for the Far East was dependent, in large degree, upon the "Basic National Security Policy of the United States." Since the Basic National Security Policy was currently under review by the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned that their views on the Far East draft policy statement must be considered tentative.

The new draft, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, would constitute a comprehensive policy for the area as a whole and would provide guidance for the formulation of subsidiary policies. With respect to the principal objectives, they endorsed all five goals. They believed, however, that the objective calling for the reduction of the power and prestige of Communist China lacked clarity, and they suggested the following expansion of that objective:

19. (TS) NSC 5429/3, 19 Nov 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 88.

> The reduction of Chinese Communist power and prestige with the objective of securing by reorientation a government on the mainland of China whose objectives do not conflict with the vital interests of the United States.

They supported the disputed fifth objective (for the creation in noncommunist Asia of the political and social forces to spread the values of the Free World and expose the falsity of the communist ideological offensive), stating that such an objective was "wholly consistent" with the basic goals of the United States in the Far East and should be retained in the policy statement. The Joint Chiefs of Staff found the draft policy with respect to Indochina, including the new paragraph dealing with armistice violations, "acceptable from the military point of view."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly opposed the proposal for study of the feasibility of negotiation of a Far Eastern settlement by swapping concessions with Communist China. They based their stand not so much on the value of the concessions to be bartered as on their belief that Communist China would not live up to any agreement not suiting its purposes. They stated that such a settlement would grant the Chinese Communists far-reaching concessions, while relying upon "the as yet undemonstrated faith of that regime." They pointed out that experience in Korea and currently in Indochina with respect to the armistice provided ample evidence that the communists would "distort, evade, or violate any agreements when it suits their purposes to do so." In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed it "highly unrealistic" to expect the Chinese Communists to abandon their subversive efforts in South Vietnam and elsewhere in Asia, regardless of any commitments to the contrary.

Concerning the question of the trade embargo on Communist China, the Joint Chiefs of Staff supported, as had their representative on the Planning Board, the more restrictive approach. They conceded that some of the proposed courses of action in that approach might not be feasible in view of existing Free World trade agreements, but they considered that the broad objective of US security policy would not be achieved if the United States was forced to defer to the counsel of the most cautious among its

allies or "if it was unwilling to undertake certain risks inherent in the adoption of dynamic and positive security measures."[20]

On 1 December 1954, the National Security Council considered NSC 5429/3 and expanded the objective toward Communist China, essentially as suggested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In addition, the Council retained the disputed fifth objective and, after some deliberation, deleted the proposal for study of the feasibility of Far Eastern settlement by bartering concessions with Communist China. In addition, under the courses of action to preserve territorial and political integrity of the Far East, the Council enlarged the one providing for punitive action in the event of unprovoked Communist attack on US personnel, aircraft, or vessels, including provision for pursuit of the attacking communist force into hostile airspace or waters, if feasible, and for retaliatory action as appropriate and approved by the President. The Department of State, however, considered that such pursuit should be undertaken only on specific order of the senior commander in the area. On the question of the trade embargo, the Council was unable to agree, and the draft policy statement on the Far East, as revised at the 1 December meeting, was subsequently circulated on 10 December as NSC 5429/4, with the questions of hostile pursuit and the trade embargo still unresolved.[21]

The Secretary of Defense requested the JCS views on NSC 5429/4, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff furnished them on 17 December 1954. They accepted the expansion of the course of action dealing with punitive action and hostile pursuit in the case of unprovoked attack. With regard to the Department of State qualification concerning who should authorize such pursuit, they considered that, under certain cirsumstances, "the United States commander on the spot" should have authority to initiate hot pursuit, but that such authority should be incorporated in the directives to the armed forces rather than in a broad policy statement.

On the other major outstanding issue, the trade embargo on Communist China, the Joint Chiefs of Staff once again

20. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Current U.S. Policy toward the Far East (NSC 5429/3)," 26 Nov 54 (derived from JCS 1992/420), same file.
21. (TS) NSC 5429/4, 10 Dec 54, same file, sec 89.

strongly supported the more restrictive approach. They considered that the policy for the control of trade with Communist China should be developed within the context of the overall US economic defense policy, adding that "maximum restrictions" on trade with the Chinese Communists would be desirable.[22]

The National Security Council on 21 December 1954 again considered US policy toward the Far East, but was still unable to resolve the matters of hostile pursuit and the trade embargo on Communist China. Consequently, on the following day, 22 December, the President approved the statement of policy in NSC 5429/4 with the exception of the portions dealing with these two matters, and the approved policy was circulated as NSC 5429/5, superseding NSC 5429/2.[23]

On 5 January 1955, the National Security Council reconsidered the unresolved issues of the US policy toward the Far East. The Secretary of State presented the Council a new draft section dealing with unprovoked attack and hostile pursuit which he had prepared in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA). This draft provided that the United States Government should issue a directive to its armed forces that, in the event of unprovoked communist attack against US personnel, aircraft, or vessels outside communist territory, US forces in the area would take "immediate and aggressive protective measures" against the attacking force including, if necessary and feasible, "hot pursuit . . . into hostile airspace or waters." In addition, the Department of State proposal retained provision for such additional punitive actions as might be specifically approved by the President. The Council adopted the State proposal without change.

With respect to the trade embargo question, the National Security Council adopted on 5 January a section calling for maintenance of the current level of US trade controls with Communist China and for administration of

22. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Current United States Policy in the Far East (NSC 5429/4)," 17 Dec 54, same file.
23. (TS) NSC 5429/5, 22 Dec 54, same file, sec 90.

these controls in such a manner "as to endeavor not to lessen the active cooperation in the multilateral control program of other Free World countries." Under this provision, the United States would urge other Free World countries to maintain the current level of trade controls on Communist China, promoting the willingness of such nations to do so by appropriate handling of routine exceptions. Additionally, whenever the Secretary of State determined that maintenance of the current multilaterally agreed level of export controls could be "seriously divisive" among US allies, or lead nations needing trade with Communist China toward an accommodation with the Soviet bloc, he would report the matter to the National Security Council for prompt consideration. The Council also agreed to study, "on an urgent basis," all aspects of US economic defense policy applicable to trade with the communist bloc, including Communist China.[24] The President approved both NSC actions, and NSC 5429/5 was revised accordingly.[25]

Thus, at the beginning of 1955, after five months of effort, the United States had an approved policy that, it was hoped, would cope with the serious challenge to vital US security interests in the Far East in general, and in South Vietnam in particular. During the development of this policy, Communist China was seen ever more clearly as the principal threat to US interests in the area. Necessarily, therefore, in the preparation of the policy, how to deal with Communist China tended to dominate the consideration of US policymakers. The basic decision made in the approved policy statement was to halt the spread of communism in the Far East and, if possible, to roll it back.

In a sense, the policy toward Indochina was developed as a corollary to the broad and basic policy. But it was Indochina, and especially South Vietnam, that was perceived as a seriously endangered area that would require substantial help if it was to serve as a bulwark against further

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24. This study was not completed and approved by the National Security Council until March 1957 (NSC 5701/1, 8 Mar 57).

25. (TS) NSC Action No. 1295, 5 Jan 55. (TS) Memo, ActgSecDef to CJCS et al., "Current U.S. Policy Toward the Far East--NSC 5429/5," 30 Dec 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 90. (TS) Memo, ExecSecy, NSC to NSC, "Current U.S. Policy Toward the Far East," 6 Jan 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 1.

communist inroads, and even during the months that the policy was under consideration, the situation in South Vietnam had deteriorated so rapidly that the United States was forced to act without benefit of an approved policy.

CHAPTER II

THREE TROUBLED MONTHS--August-October 1954

The summer and autumn of 1954, one of the most crucial periods in Indochinese history, was a time of turmoil, political instability, and strife. Although Laos and Cambodia achieved a measure of stability, South Vietnam became embroiled in civil conflict. Plans for political, economic, and military reform were lost in the anarchy surrounding the South Vietnamese Government of Premier Ngo Dinh Diem. French and US authorities had not been able to agree upon what measures ought to be adopted. The VNA was still prevented by politics from extending the authority of the Saigon government to the countryside. Hordes of refugees poured in from North Vietnam, clogging inadequate reception facilities. The Viet Minh were gaining strength in the south. By mid-November, when President Eisenhower sent General J. Lawton Collins to Indochina in a renewed effort to save Vietnam, the crisis was in its third month, and there appeared to be little chance of retaining South Vietnam in the noncommunist camp.

Political Turmoil

The Vietnamese political scene, in the period after the Geneva Conference, was a tangle of conflicting power groups, each struggling for dominance in postwar Vietnam. Except for US support, the Diem government stood alone. The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao politico-religious sects and the Binh Xuyen organization sought Diem's downfall because of his refusal to face "political reality," that is, the traditional Oriental prerogative of governmental officials to enrich themselves at public expense. The Chief of Staff of the VNA, General Nguyen Van Hinh, led a camarilla of ambitious young officers who, championing the restoration of public order, began laying plans for a coup d'etat. Other prominent but unaffiliated politicians such as Nguyen Van Tam, Nguyen Van Xuan, and Tran Van Huu intrigued with both the army and the sects in an attempt to regain positions of power. It was no secret that Chief of State Bao Dai, who

was living on the French Riviera, was strongly opposed to the Diem government. Bao Dai's plush living in France was largely financed by the sects and the Binh Xuyen, and he no doubt realized that he stood a good chance of being deposed as Chief of State if Diem called a constituent assembly.

Diem's immediate problem, however, was to cope with his local opponents, for they represented widespread political strength. Possessing no organized following of his own, Diem was compelled to negotiate with them. The sects and the Binh Xuyen in August offered to participate in Diem's government, but on terms that would have reduced the Prime Minister to a figurehead. Diem's counterproposals, on the other hand, would have given the sects no real measure of power. In the deadlock that followed, the sects began to collaborate with General Hinh to devise a plan for supplanting Diem by a military dictatorship. Both General Paul Ely, French Commissioner-General, and US Ambassador Donald H. Heath brought pressure to bear on Diem, the sects, and Hinh to moderate their demands and patch together a coalition government that could begin the work of pacification, refugee resettlement, and constitutional reform.[1]

These efforts by General Ely and Ambassador Heath were offset by France's lack of enthusiasm for Prime Minister Diem. The French were enraged by Diem's militant Francophobia. Like the Hinh coterie, they pointed to Diem's seeming inability to restore order as evidence of his unsuitability. General Ely, although personally convinced that Diem had to be replaced, apparently worked sincerely, if reluctantly, with Ambassador Heath to prevent Diem's downfall. Some of General Ely's subordinates, however, secretly encouraged both Hinh and the sects to overturn the Diem regime. Ambassador Heath reported that, although he did not doubt the "impartiality and integrity /of/ General Ely," it was clear that other French officers were giving "quiet encouragement if not unofficial support" to General Hinh. Moreover, the administrators at the "operating level in Paris," as well as "most French officials" in Saigon, wished either to unseat Diem as quickly as possible or to load his

1. (S) Msgs, Saigon 460 to State, 6 Aug 54, DA IN 77122; 580, 14 Aug 54; 751, 26 Aug 54; 758, 26 Aug 54, DA IN 81273. (C) Msgs, Saigon 515 to State, 10 Aug 54; 601, 16 Aug 54, DA IN 78405; 733, 25 Aug 54, DA IN 80878.

government with pro-French individuals who would destroy its authority and appeal.[2]

The French persistently sought to convince the US Government that Diem should be given a figurehead role, with actual authority vested in a stronger person. Tam, Xuan, Huu, Prince Buu Loc and Prince Buu Hoi were all mentioned. But none of the French candidates was acceptable to the United States, because of past identification with either France or the Viet Minh. The name most persistently put forward was that of Nguyen Van Tam, father of General Hinh and former Interior Minister, whose repressive police techniques had kept order in Saigon and thus endeared him to the French. The campaign in behalf of Tam reached a climax in mid-September when Diem complained that Deputy Commissioner-General Jean Daridan had demanded that Tam be taken into the government and implied that, otherwise, Diem would be out "in /a7 matter of days." Ambassador Heath reported the allegation to Washington, and the Department of State registered an official protest with Premier Mendes-France personally. The Premier denied knowledge of pressure in favor of Tam but agreed to instruct Saigon to "go easy." French advocacy of Tam, however, did not abate in succeeding months.[3]

By early September, the political atmosphere in Saigon had become so highly charged that a break in the deadlock clearly had to come soon. It came on 10 September. One of Diem's agents had infiltrated a General Staff meeting where plans for a coup d'etat were being drafted. His report confirmed Diem's suspicions, and the Prime Minister arrested two of the ringleaders, Colonel Lan and Captain Giai. Couching his protest as a thinly veiled threat, Hinh demanded that the two officers be reinstated. This so incensed Diem

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2. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 1036 to State, 16 Sep 54; 1204, 24 Sep 54.

3. (S) Msgs, Saigon 370 to State, 29 Jul 54; 759, 27 Aug 54. (S) Msgs, Paris 598 to State, 12 Aug 54; 781, 23 Aug 54; 873, 30 Aug 54. (C) Msg, Paris 849 to State, 28 Aug 54. (S) Msg, State 934 to Saigon, 8 Sep 54. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1059 to State; 1061; 1076; 17 Sep 54. (TS) Msg, State 997 to Paris, 17 Sep 54. (TS) Msg, Paris 1171 to State, 18 Sep 54. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1122 to State, 20 Sep 54.

that he summarily removed Hinh from command of the army and ordered him out of the country. Diem had moved boldly, but without carefully laying plans for subsequent action. He appointed General Nguyen Van Vy to fill the post vacated by Hinh, but Vy temporized and finally refused. Diem then placed Vy on inactive status and instructed Colonel Ho Thong Minh to assume command. When Minh refused, Diem could find no other available officer whom he considered sufficiently loyal to the government to hold the important position. As a last resort, Le Ngoc Chan, the civilian Secretary of State for Defense, took over Hinh's duties in addition to his own. Hinh, with direct orders to go abroad on a "study mission," procrastinated and at length barricaded himself in his home. Fully equipped infantry and a number of armored vehicles were brought in "to protect him from the President." Diem withdrew into Norodom Palace and strengthened the palace guard. Again the situation was deadlocked.[4]

Diem's mishandling of Hinh's ouster gave the General an opportunity to present the conflict as an attack by the government on the integrity of the army. Hinh was soon explaining that, although he would be happy to take a vacation in France, he could not leave without turning his command over to a qualified officer whom the army trusted. Besides, he asserted, the situation was no longer in his control. He had become a "moral prisoner" of the army. Judging his hand strong enough, he appealed to Bao Dai to intervene by discharging Diem and constituting a government that could restore order. General Ely, Ambassaodr Heath, and Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel, Chief, MAAG[5]

4. (S) Msgs, Saigon 933 to State, 9 Sep 54; 953, 954, 10 Sep 54. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 971 to State, 11 Sep 54; 1076, 17 Sep 54. (U) Msg, Saigon 1107 to State, 19 Sep 54, DA IN 645055.

5. The US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Indochina, was established in the summer of 1950 to provide assistance to the forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina. LTG John W. O'Daniel was appointed Chief, MAAG Indochina, in April 1954. Between 1950 and mid-1954, the United States provided approximately $2.753 billion in military assistance to the French and native troops, almost completely re-equipping them with modern weapons and vehicles.

Indochina, used all of their persuasive powers to prevent Hinh from acting rashly, and to influence the Premier to moderate his position enough to adopt a compromise that would save face for Hinh.[6]

Fortunately for Diem, the Hinh crisis had been accompanied by increasing disposition of the sects to participate in the government. They had been unable to agree among themselves on a formula for dividing control of a new administration, and Ambassador Heath had left little doubt that precipitate action might jeopardize the flow of US aid.[7] As a result, the sects had moderated their demands and begun negotiating with Diem. Agreement in principle was reached early in September, although at the last minute the Binh Xuyen withdrew rather than share authority with the two sects. By 21 September, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao were on the verge of entering the government.

But at this critical juncture, a Cao Dai functionary reported to Ambassador Heath that General Raoul Salan, Deputy Commander in Chief, French Union Forces, had called in the sects and declared that General Le Van Vien, Binh Xuyen leader, had received a mandate from Bao Dai to form a government led by the Binh Xuyen, and that France and the United States had accepted this solution. From Diem came intelligence that General Salan had threatened the sects with termination of their subsidies[8] if they joined the government, and that Deputy Commissioner General Daridan was reported to be exerting "heavy pressure" on the sects not to participate. A Hoa Hao officer "wistfully" remarked to Ambassador Heath that General Ely had counseled them to cooperate with the Prime Minister, and General Salan had advised them to the contrary. As a result they were "dizzy."

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6. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 1036 to State; 1043, 16 Sep 54; 1119, 19 Sep 54. (S) Msg, Saigon 1250 to State, 27 Sep 54, DA IN 87877; 1278, 30 Sep 54, DA IN 88724 (1 Oct 54). (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina MG 3228 A to CJCS, 22 Sep 54, DA IN 86638.

7. (S) Msg, Saigon 794 to State, 29 Aug 54.

8. In return for cooperation, often purely nominal, France had for some time given the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen subsidies of money and equipment.

Ambassador Heath assured the sects that the United States had not changed its attitude toward Diem. On 24 September Diem announced the inclusion in his Cabinet of Cao Dai and Hoa Hao representatives, and rumors of an impending military coup spread through Saigon as VNA troops clashed with Diem's palace guard.[9]

The Washington Conference

Against this background French and US negotiators met in Washington on 27 September to find a solution to the political tangle in Saigon and to work out military and fiscal problems. General Ely and Ambassador Heath flew to Washington to participate. No sooner had they departed from Saigon than Bao Dai intervened in the crisis by ordering Diem to take Generals Hinh, Xuan, and Vien into his government. Diem stalled and negotiated while his future was determined in Washington.[10]

The cross-purposes at which France and the United States had been working in Vietnam pointed clearly to the need for developing a unified approach to Vietnamese political problems. On their part, the French were anxious to obtain a US commitment for financial support of the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC),[11] as well as an indication of US plans for future aid programs to the three Associated States. The United States sought, as its principal objective in the Washington talks, to reach agreement with France on a political program for Vietnam. In the view of US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, if no such agreement were reached, there would be "no point in our discussing further aid."[12]

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9. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 1150 to State; 1154, 21 Sep 54; 1162, 22 Sep 54; 1185, 23 Sep 54. (S) Msg, Saigon 1231 to State, 25 Sep 54, DA IN 87675. (U) Msg, Saigon 1226 to State, 25 Sep 54, DA IN 647750.

10. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 1286 to State, 1 Oct 54, DA IN 88899. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1313 to State, 2 Oct 54; 1321, 4 Oct 54.

11. About 177,000 men of the FEC were stationed in Indochina at the close of the Geneva Conference.

12. (TS) Dept of State, Briefing Session Summary, 27 Sep 54, ELaC Memo 15, 4 Oct 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 14.

During the conference, M. Guy La Chambre, Minister for Relations with the Associated States, and Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith discussed at length the relative merits of the various personalities on the Vietnamese political scene. Minister La Chambre favored a plan whereby Prince Buu Loc, a member of Bao Dai's entourage, would be designated the representative of Bao Dai and sent to Saigon to form a new government. Secretary Smith insisted, however, that Diem had to be fully supported by the United States and France. The United States, he explained, felt that Bao Dai, although he should be constitutionally deposed at a more propitious time in the future, now ought to be persuaded to intervene in behalf of Diem. To attain this end, the United States suggested that Ambassador Heath and General Ely fly to Cannes and impress upon the Chief of State that the United States and France had determined to back Diem. Minister La Chambre finally agreed to the US plan.[13]

The French were obviously reluctant to insist strongly that Diem be replaced, for too intransigent an attitude might have prejudiced US financial support of the FEC. The United States had stopped paying FEC expenses incurred after the cease-fire, and the French were very anxious to have the flow of dollars resumed. France had declared in August that it could not reasonably be expected to continue to provide manpower for the defense of Southeast Asia unless US financial assistance were continued.[14] Most US authorities believed that the presence of the FEC in Indochina was necessary until indigenous forces could be developed, and that France would probably withdraw the FEC if the United States refused to contribute to its upkeep. The United States had determined, however, to make no definite promises

13. (S) Dept of State, ELaC D-1/1, "Establishment and Maintenance of a Stable Anti-Communist Government of Vietnam," 23 Sep 54; ELaC D-1/3, "Other Major Political Questions, Draft Minute of Understanding," 27 Sep 54; (TS) ELaC VM-1, "Minutes of Opening Political Session . . . ," 30 Sep 54; (S) ELaC Memo 16 "Minute of Understanding," 4 Oct 54; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 14. (TS) Msgs, State 1298 to Saigon, 30 Sep 54; 1327, 1 Oct 54.

14. (S) Msg, State 737 to Paris, 28 Aug 54.

until Fremch intentions could be assessed and until the matter was considered further within the US Government.[15]

At the Washington Conference, M. La Chambre stated that the FEC would be reduced from its current force of 175,000 to 100,000 by the end of 1955. Under this plan, the financial requirement during 1955 would total approximately $500,000,000, of which France could afford only $170,000,000. The United States, the French thought, should furnish about $330,000,000 to make up the difference. In reply, Foreign Operations Administrator Harold Stassen pointed out that Congress had appropriated FEC support funds before the armistice and for the express purpose of winning the Indochinese war. This objective was no longer attainable. No answer, he added, could be given until about 1 December, for Congress had to be consulted before new commitments were made.[16]

Of more immediate concern to the United States was the problem of obtaining French agreement to the principle of direct aid to the Indochinese countries. Not only would the objectives of the United States be best served if the Indochinese people could distinguish between French and US activities, but the provision of US aid through French channels was inconsistent with the independent status of the three countries. For these reasons the principle of direct aid had been adopted by the National Security Council and written into the Mutual Security Act by Congress.[17]

The French, when informed by Secretary Dulles in August that the United States intended to alter its aid procedures,

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15. (S) Dept of State, ELaC D-3/1, "U.S. Financial Assistance to French Union Forces in Indochina . . . ," 24 Sep 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 14.

16. (TS) Dept of State, ELaC VM-1, "Minutes of Opening Political Session . . . ," 30 Sep 54; ELaC VM-3, "Minutes of Economic Session of Franco-American Bilateral Talks . . . ," 2 Oct 54; same file.

17. (S) Msg, State 610 to Paris, 18 Aug 54, same file, sec 81. (S) Dept of State, ELaC D-1/2, "U.S. Relations with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam," 23 Sep 54, same file, BP pt 14. (S) Dept of State "A U.S. Policy for Post-Armistice Indochina," 12 Aug 54.

had objected strongly. Direct aid, they asserted, would violate the Geneva Agreements and would needlessly provoke the Chinese communists. Furthermore, the French believed that permitting the Indochinese any greater control over expenditure of aid funds would promote waste, graft, and corruption, and intensify the political struggle. As US Ambassador to France, C. Douglas Dillon, summed up this viewpoint, the French

> are convinced that if the Vietnamese are given, without restriction, an erector set with all the parts for a ten story building they will end up with a one story cabin and the remaining parts will either be sold or end up in the pockets of the builders. On the other hand if the parts are handed out with care and supervision, a well-built five story building will emerge after many trials and tribulations. Furthermore, the French believe that their past sacrifices on behalf of Vietnam and their obligation as a member of /the/ French Union dictate that they should be the construction supervisor.[18]

At the Washington Conference, Minister La Chambre advanced a plan whereby aid would be administered jointly by Franco-American committees. These organizations, one each for Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, would be headed by General Ely and would not include representatives of the Associated States. Each committee would serve, said M. La Chambre, as a "U.S.-French brain trust." Under Secretary of State Smith was inclined to accept the La Chambre plan, but his colleagues, principally Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson and Counsellor Douglas MacArthur II, pointed out that this procedure contradicted the US policy of dealing with the Associated States on a basis of equality. A compromise wording, for insertion in a Minute of Understanding, was proposed by Under Secretary Smith and accepted by M. La Chambre. It stated: "Such /aid/ programs will be planned and closely coordinated to assure maximum

18. (S) Msg, Paris 715 to State, 20 Aug 54. (S) Msg, State 737 to Paris, 28 Aug 54. (C) Dept of State, ELaC Memo 14, "French Position Papers re Military Aid and Economic Assistance to the Associated States," 28 Sep 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 14.

effectiveness through appropriate machinery established in agreement with interested governments." This wording, said Secretary Smith, could mean some form of tripartite organization, and he hoped it would be interpreted as such.[19]

This substitution of vague language for definite agreement failed to put France on notice that the United States was opposed to French participation in the distribution of US assistance. Minister La Chambre returned to Paris convinced that the United States had consented to a form of tripartite control. Mr. Robertson, however, later advised Secretary Dulles that no real understanding had been achieved on how aid funds were to be distributed.[20]

South Vietnam: Continuing Political Deadlock

Prime Minister Diem, confronted on the eve of the Washington Conference with Bao Dai's directive to take Xuan, Hinh, and Vien into his government, negotiated with the three generals in an effort to play for time. In accordance with the agreement reached in Washington that France and the United States would continue to support Diem, Ambassador Heath and General Ely flew to Cannes for a talk with Bao Dai. As a result of their representations, the Chief of State withdrew his ultimatum to Diem, and instructed Xuan, Hinh, and Vien to cooperate with the Premier. Although the crisis was temporarily eased, Diem was still in a precarious position. A mistake could trigger a revolt of the National Army and the Binh Xuyen Surete in Saigon. The military forces of the sects, which were now supporting Diem, would be of little help, for they were dispersed throughout the provinces. Each day brought fresh rumors that the army was planning to strike on the following day.[21]

19. (TS) Dept of State, ELaC MC-2, "Memorandum of Conversation, Smith-La Chambre Meeting, September 29, 1954," 6 Oct 54, same file.

20. (TS) Dept of State, ELaC Memo 20, "Report to the Secretary of State on Franco-American Bilateral Talks October 8, 1954," 22 Oct 54, same file.

21. (TS) Msg, State 1194 to Paris for Heath, 1 Oct 54. (S) Msgs, Paris 1413 from Heath to State, 4 Oct 54; Saigon 1361 to State, 7 Oct 54.

In this explosive atmosphere, Diem became more inflexible. Despite the repeated advice of Ambassador Heath and General Ely to move with extreme caution, Diem insisted that Hinh leave the country immediately. But Hinh had now joined with Vien and Xuan in a seemingly unshakable coalition that pressed exorbitant demands upon the Prime Minister. Hinh refused to surrender command of the army, Xuan was still determined to become Vice President and Defense Minister and Vien contended that the Binh Xuyen should control the Ministry of the Interior. Diem's acceptance of these demands would have reduced his role to that of a figurehead. Diem attempted to sow dissension among the three generals, but failed. Each time he offered a compromise the triumvirate raised its demands. The situation became increasingly tense, with all evidence pointing to an army coup on 13 October. Ambassador Heath and General Ely summoned Hinh and warned him that resort to violence would cause a suspension of US aid. Thereafter the threat of an uprising declined slightly, but the problem of the three generals remained to torment Diem.[22]

In the provinces, meanwhile, conditions steadily grew worse as a result of the prolonged paralysis of the government. Minister La Chambre, returning to France from a visit to Indochina, declared that the Viet Minh in Annam were openly exerting their influence, were cool, competent, assured, and acting like conquerors. Local Vietnamese officials were inefficient and powerless. Deputy Commissioner Daridan thought there was no possibility of retaining Annam, and that emphasis should be directed instead to saving Cochin-China. Ambassador Heath journeyed to Annam and confirmed Daridan's pessimistic report.[23]

In Cochin-China, communist strength was less obvious, but the French suspected that large numbers of Viet Minh troops had cached their arms and blended with the population. As the Viet Minh armies withdrew, the armies of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao rapidly moved in to establish themselves in time to levy duties on the rice crop. Although the sects were cooperating in the Saigon government, open warfare was

22. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1330 to State, 5 Oct 54; 1382, 8 Oct 54; 1397, 10 Oct 54; 1434, 13 Oct 54; 1487, 18 Oct 54; 1493, 19 Oct 54.

23. (S) Msg, Saigon 1513 to State, 21 Oct 54, DA IN 93686 (22 Oct 54). (TS) Msg, Paris 1807 to State, 28 Oct 54.

reported between them for control of the provinces. A "usually reliable Hoa Hao source" informed Ambassador Heath that at least one battle between Hoa Hao and Cao Dai troops had been deliberately engineered by the local French commander. The French, said Ambassador Heath's confidant, were following a "divide and rule" policy and were trying to create discord between the sects in order to weaken their cooperation in the Diem government.[24]

The VNA, involved in politics, poorly trained, and heavily dependent upon French leadership, could not bring order to the rural areas. The US Military Attache at Saigon reported that the VNA had shown itself incapable of performing even minor police actions without French staff and logistical support. One operation, originally conceived entirely as a Vietnamese project, after much confusion had to be planned and executed by a French colonial infantry regiment. French Union troops were thus brought into action against Vietnamese nationals, an eventuality France had wished to avoid.[25]

Little could be accomplished in the provinces until the political stalemate in Saigon was broken. Diem's cause received an appreciable stimulus in mid October with the publication in the United States of the Mansfield Report, which was expected to have great influence on Congress and the Department of State. United States Senator Mike Mansfield had visited Vietnam early in October. Upon his return he had written an analysis of the situation in Indochina. "The political issue in south Vietnam," declared Senator Mansfield,

> is not Diem as an individual but rather the program for which he stands. It is unlikely that any independent non-Communist government

24. (S) Msg, Saigon 1513 to State, 21 Oct 54, DA IN 93686 (22 Oct 54). (C) Msg, Saigon 1571 to State, 25 Oct 54. (S) Msg, Saigon 2007 to State, 29 Nov 54.

25. (C) Msg, USARMA Saigon MC 817-54 to CSUSA, 14 Oct 54, DA IN 98990 (15 Oct 54), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 84. (S) Msg, USARMA Saigon MC 825-54 to DA, 23 Oct 54, DA IN 94015, same file, sec 86. (S) Msg, Saigon 1513 to State, 21 Oct 54, DA IN 93686 (22 Oct 54).

can survive in Vietnam, let alone recover the Vietminh-held areas unless it represents genuine nationalism, unless it is prepared to deal effectively with corruption, and unless it demonstrates a concern in advancing the welfare of the Vietnamese people.

Ngo Dinh Diem offered the best chance of filling this prescription, thought the Senator. Should Diem be forced out of office, it was improbable that new leadership dedicated to these principles could be found. Senator Mansfield's conclusion, therefore, was that if the Diem government fell, "the United States should consider an immediate suspension of all aid to Vietnam and the French Union forces there, except that of a humanitarian nature, preliminary to a complete reappraisal of our present policies in Free Vietnam."[26]

The Mansfield Report produced noteworthy reactions in both South Vietnam and France. In South Vietnam, the "unfortunate Mansfield statement," as Xuan termed it, had a moderating effect both upon Diem's opponents and upon French officialdom. On the other hand Diem and his supporters were "jubilant" and the Prime Minister became more uncompromising. In France, where Diem had long since been given up as a lost cause, Paris officials felt the Mansfield formula violated the decision at the Washington Conference to support an alternate if Diem failed. Factions advocating conciliation of the Viet Minh pointed out that Senator Manfield's observations merely reinforced their own arguments. The United States, if it followed the Senator's recommendations, would withdraw should Diem fall; Diem, they believed, could not possibly succeed; therefore, France should start "betting on /the/ Viet Minh to win /the/ race."[27]

The Mansfield Report was followed closely by a crash program designed by the National Security Council to stabilize the Diem regime. When the National Security Council met on

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26. "Report of Senator Mike Mansfield on a Study Mission to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos," 15 Oct 54, 83d Cong., 2d sess., S. Com on Foreign Relations, pp. 11, 14.

27. (C) Msg, Saigon 1478 to State, 17 Oct 54, DA IN 92546. (S) Msg, Saigon 1501 to State, 20 Oct 54. (C) Msg, Paris 1608 to State, 16 Oct 54.

22 October, the Diem-Hinh conflict was in its fortieth day, with no end in sight and the Viet Minh promising to win South Vietnam by default unless prompt and vigorous actions were taken. The NSC decision was followed on the same day by instructions to Ambassador Heath to deliver a letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Diem, reiterating US support and offering to begin discussions immediately on a program of direct economic and military assistance to South Vietnam. Ambassador Heath also was authorized to acquaint French and Vietnamese officials with the US attitude, and to work out with General Ely a plan for neutralizing the opposition of Generals Hinh, Xuan, and Vien. A joint State-Defense message, also of 22 October, repeated for both Ambassador Heath and General O'Daniel the US policy to support Diem and directed them to begin a crash program to improve the loyalty and effectiveness of the Vietnamese armed forces. To accomplish this task, all the assets of the US Government in Vietnam would be available. Ambassador Dillon, in Paris, was instructed to present the French with the US program and to suggest that France had not been giving Diem all the support of which it was capable.[28]

This crash program and, in particular, the charge that France had fallen short in its support of Diem had an electric effect upon the French. Minister La Chambre replied that the President's letter to Diem, offering to work out immediate procedures of direct aid, was a clear-cut violation of the Washington Agreement. Under Secretary Smith, recalled M. La Chambre, had distinctly agreed to tripartite distribution of assistance funds. Moreover, the accusation that France had not been working actively to consolidate the Diem regime was not only untrue, but a direct reflection upon himself, General Ely, and the honor of the French Government. Although convinced that Diem was leading Vietnam to disaster, Minister La Chambre declared that France was still willing to support him. "We prefer to lose in Vietnam with the U.S. rather than to win without them," said the Minister. "We would rather support Diem knowing he is going to lose and thus keep

28. (TS) Msgs, State TODUL 14 to Paris; State 1678 to Saigon and Paris; 22 Oct 54. The President's letter had been drafted in August and a copy made available to the French, but delivery had been held up pending clarification of the Vietnamese political situation. (TS) Msg, Jt State-Defense (State 1679) to Paris and Saigon, 22 Oct 54.

Franco-U.S. solidarity than to pick someone who could retain Vietnam for the free world if this meant breaking Franco-U.S. solidarity."[29]

Upon learning of this conversation, Secretary Dulles drafted a formal message to Premier Mendes-France. The United States, said the Secretary, considered the crash program "as being in furtherance of the understandings reached at Washington." In addition, although the United States had not "the slightest idea of questioning the good faith of the French Government," the fact remained that "many French officials have not concealed their belief that Diem has failed . . . and that he should be replaced." The result of this attitude was the "impasse in Saigon." Minister La Chambre received Mr. Dulles' message "with little comment." He did, however, suggest a "way out of the mess." Tam, he thought should be made Minister of the Interior in Diem's government, for "Here is a man who knows how to fight Communists."[30]

The indignation in Paris notwithstanding, Ambassador Heath and General O'Daniel, in Saigon, devised a comprehensive plan, with political, economic, and military[31] courses of action, to put the NSC decisions into effect. The more important political features envisioned statements of mutual reconciliation by Diem and Hinh and Hinh's departure for France on a "study mission." Xuan was to be put aside and Vien taken into the government, although not in control of the Interior Ministry. Diem was to effect a house-cleaning of his administration, and personally circulate among the people. In the economic field, a general statement would be made declaring the government's intention to inaugurate a comprehensive land reform program.[32]

The plan of action was based on three admittedly untested assumptions: that Diem could be persuaded to accept the Ambassador's proposals; that Hinh would carry out his

29. (TS) Msgs, Paris 1718 to State, 24 Oct 54; 1736, 25 Oct 54.
30. (TS) Msgs, State 1565 to Paris, 29 Oct 54; Paris 1835 to State; 1836; 30 Oct 54.
31. See Chapter III, p. 63.
32. (S) Msg, Saigon 1609 to State, 27 Oct 54.

promise, recently made to General O'Daniel, to give the government his loyal support; and that the French would cooperate, in fact as well as in name, at all echelons.[33] None of these assumptions proved immediately valid. Diem remained as stubborn as ever. Hinh continued his intrigues. There was no noticeable improvement of local French support. The crash program, as a result, made little headway. The political stalemate continued, the Diem government grew weaker, and communist influence spread through the countryside.

French Policy

Aggravating the stalemate in Vietnam was the contradictory French policy toward Indochina. In formulating a policy, the Mendes-France government was apparently torn by factions striving toward conflicting objectives. Some members of the government wished to join with the United States in halting the spread of communism in Indochina and the rest of Southeast Asia. Others thought coexistence with the Viet Minh offered the only chance to protect French commerce, business, industry, and cultural institutions in North Vietnam. Still others were interested only in preserving the paramount position of France, and in blocking the growing influence of the United States, in South Vietnam. The French, however, had two strong incentives for adapting their policy to US ideas. They needed US financial support of the FEC, and they wished to avoid friction in Franco-American relations. France therefore subscribed, at the Washington Conference, to a four-point program to be undertaken in concert with the United States. First, France would "support the independence" of the Associated States. Second, within the limitations imposed by Geneva, France would "oppose the extension of /Viet Minh/ influence or control" in Indochina. Third, France would undertake, in cooperation with the United States, programs of economic and military assistance to strengthen the Associated States. Finally, France would support Prime Minister Diem in establishing a a strong anticommunist regime in South Vietnam.[34] These principles were later reaffirmed in conversations held

33. Ibid.
34. (S) Dept of State, ELaC Memo 16, "Minute of Understanding," 4 Oct 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 14.

between President Eisenhower and Premier Mendes-France in November.

France consistently professed its adherence to the policy adopted at the Washington Conference. Nonetheless, the behavior of French officials frequently cast doubt on the resolution with which the Mendes-France government intended to execute this policy. This behavior was nowhere more evident to the United States than in France's accommodative attitude toward the new Viet Minh regime.

French policy toward the Viet Minh can be explained partly by a widespread belief in France that the Viet Minh would inevitably win all of Vietnam despite French and US efforts, and that the French economic and cultural investment in Tonkin might not be lost if France approached the Viet Minh in a conciliatory fashion. Moreover, as Ambassador Dillon reported in November, Premier Mendes-France had found in Vietnam a "situation ideally designed to test /the/ basis of his fundamental political philosophy" of "peaceful coexistence," and his government had become increasingly "disposed to explore and consider a policy looking toward an eventual peaceful North-South rapprochement" on terms favorable to the Viet Minh.[35]

As a result of this thinking, the French insisted upon what some US diplomats thought an overly strict interpretation of the Vietnam Agreement. There was strong sentiment in the Department of State for avoiding at all costs the projected 1956 elections in Vietnam. This purpose could be accomplished without great difficulty since the armistice provisions governing elections were extremely vague. In addition, South Vietnam had not been a party to the Geneva Agreements and was therefore not pledged to conduct elections. The French, however, were unalterably opposed to any policy that might be construed, even remotely, as a violation of Geneva. The French would accept the results of general elections, thought Ambassador Dillon, "however academic that exercise may eventually prove to be." Premier Mendes-France had declared publicly that France intended to demand elections and abide by the results, and Minister La Chambre had stated that, if Ho Chi Minh won by a majority of a single vote, France would permit him to have all of Vietnam.[36]

35. (S) Msg, Paris 2080 to State, 15 Nov 54.
36. Ibid. (S) Msg, Saigon 1611 to State, 27 Oct 54.

The influence of the proponents of coexistence was apparent, for example, in the dispatch to Hanoi of Jean Sainteny, who had negotiated the March 1946 accords with the DRV.[37] M. Sainteny was charged with working out agreements with the Viet Minh for protection of French interests in Tonkin. Although his terms of reference contemplated purely consular activities, Sainteny's mission could not help but have political overtones, especially in view of his past activities in behalf of rapprochement with the Viet Minh.[38]

The Sainteny Mission greatly disturbed General Ely. He confided to Ambassador Heath his fear that Sainteny would soon tire of a dull consular role and begin to promote political friendship and cooperation with North Vietnam. General Ely declared that he would have been much happier had Paris sent a "stupid type of consular officer" rather than a man of Sainteny's "active stripe." Seriously concerned over the evident duplicity of French policy, he flew to France to learn just what Paris intended to do. There he informed Premier Mendes-France that he was not disposed to retain his assignment if French policy, as reflected by the Sainteny Mission, was to play a "double game" in North and South Vietnam with the intention of eventually backing the side that came out on top. The Premier gave General Ely unqualified assurance that the policy of the French Government was to give maximum support to anticommunist elements in South Vietnam and to do everything possible to contribute to the success of these elements in the 1956 elections. Placated, the General returned to Saigon, but there was no perceptible change in French policy.[39]

37. See (TS-GP 1) JCS Hist Div, History of the Indochina Incident, 1940-1954, pp. 102-103.

38. (TS) Msg, Paris 646 to State, 15 Aug 54. (S) Msg, Saigon 494 to State, 8 Aug 54.

39. (C) Msg, Saigon 795 to State, 29 Aug 54. (S) Msgs, Saigon 507 to State, 10 Aug 54; 721, 24 Aug 54. (TS) Msg, Paris 646 to State, 15 Aug 54. Amb. Dillon reported on 20 October a conversation with Jacques Raphael-Leygues, French Union Counsellor and reputedly a member of the Mendes-France "brain-trust" on Indochinese affairs. Sainteny, said Raphael-Leygues, had convinced the government that South Vietnam was doomed and that the "only possible means of salvaging anything was to play Viet Minh game and woo Viet

M. Sainteny's efforts to safeguard French economic interests led, in December, to an agreement with Ho Chi Minh permitting French enterprise to carry on without discrimination. On the surface the agreement appeared to be an important concession, but French businessmen in Indochina were not optimistic. They pointed out that, although Ho had guaranteed freedom of operation without discrimination, he had insisted that French enterprises be regulated by Viet Minh legislation. The communists could thus do as they pleased with French business merely by passing appropriate legislation. Ho had granted the right to sell freely in the Tonkinese market and to transfer profits to the franc zone. But the Viet Minh piaster had no value outside the communist orbit, and no purpose would be served by transfer. Most French concerns decided that potential profits were not worth the risks, and they prepared to withdraw from North Vietnam. Sainteny nonetheless remained in Hanoi as France's "general delegate" to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.[40]

Although at the Washington Conference the French had pledged themselves to support the Diem government, the promise had been given with obvious reluctance. Officials in Saigon, receiving no authoritative leadership from Paris, not only persisted in their antagonism toward Diem, but worked more openly to undermine his regime. Paris continued its efforts to convince the United States that Diem ought to be replaced by men such as Tam, Xuan, or Vien. Diem, already recognized by the French as a Francophobe, added to French hostility toward his government by interfering with Sainteny's prospects for a settlement with Ho Chi Minh.[41]

Minh away from Communist ties in hope of creating Titoist Vietnam which would cooperate with France and might even adhere to French Union." When the rift appeared between France and the United States over the government to be supported in Saigon, the French deferred to the United States in order to obtain financial support of the FEC and to fix responsibility for eventual loss of South Vietnam on the United States. General Ely, said Raphael-Leygues, was not fully "au courant" with these facts and was "playing straight game of honestly cooperating with United States." (C) Msg, Paris 1665 to State, 29 Oct 54.

40. NY Times, 11 Dec 54, 3:7; 12 Dec 54, 42:1. (C) Msgs, State 2413 to Saigon, 13 Dec 54; Paris 2542 to State, 14 Dec 54.

41. (S) NIE 63-7-54, 23 Nov 54, pp. 4, 7-8.

Prince Buu Hoi, a member of Bao Dai's court, had in past years been friendly to the Viet Minh cause, and he quickly became the outstanding contender for Diem's job. By November, Buu Hoi had enlisted an impressive array of supporters, and Ambassador Dillon reported that Premier Mendes-France and Minister La Chambre were inclined to favor the Prince as an eventual alternate to Diem. Alarmed at the proportions the Buu Hoi campaign was assuming, Secretary of State Dulles instructed Ambassador Dillon to inform the French Government that "So far as Buu Hoi is concerned we can state that if he or a person of his political ideologies" were to replace Diem as Prime Minister "a basic re-examination of our present policy with respect to Viet-Nam would be entailed." This declaration was received "without grace" in the French Foreign Office, and French officials continued to champion Buu Hoi.[42]

The conflicting currents of French policy put the United States at a disadvantage in dealing with France vis-a-vis Indochina. France repeatedly insisted that its policy was to oppose the extension of communism in Vietnam, but much evidence suggested that the Mendes-France government was reconciled to an all-communist Vietnam. France also insisted that it was fully supporting Diem, but officials in Saigon consistently gave support to his political enemies, while diplomats in Paris advanced a galaxy of unacceptable candidates for the consideration of the United States.

The Question of Independence

Intricately involved in the French turmoil over Indochina policy was the question of the independence of the Associated States. Prior to the Washington Conference, the United States, to the annoyance of the French, had made clear its interest in seeing France accord full independence to the three States, as promised at Geneva. France believed, said Ambassador Dillon, that the United States had an "almost psychotic attachment to 'independence' without giving sufficient thought and attention to the practical problems and risks involved." This belief did not, however, deter Ambassador Dillon from pointing out that the United States would

42. (S) Msgs, Paris 1883 to State, 3 Nov 54; State 1737 to Paris, 10 Nov 54; Paris 2018 to State, 11 Nov 54.

be more inclined to consider generous aid programs in Indochina if France attacked the problem of independence immediately and vigorously.[43] Specifically, France should satisfy the nationalistic aspirations of the Vietnamese. Laos and Cambodia presented no particular difficulty. Both had recently been granted independence, and although France had maintained considerable influence in Laotian affairs, the Cambodian government believed itself to be truly independent, and acted accordingly.

The policy of the Mendes-France government toward South Vietnam was, as Minister La Chambre expressed it, to grant total independence "without retaining anything in the back of /the/ bureau drawer." But this policy did not imply relaxation of the average Frenchman's resolute attachment to the concept of the French Union. He believed that full sovereignty and membership in the Union were entirely compatible, and he would sanction no policy that did not include Vietnam in the French Union. The Union offered economic and commercial advantages, the trappings of world power, and the opportunity to advance French culture overseas. No French Government dared defy public opinion by permitting severance of Union ties. Nevertheless, as the United States had pointed out at Geneva, any relationship that failed to recognize the right of South Vietnam to withdraw from the French Union was not true independence.[44]

An entirely new formula for granting independence to South Vietnam was now developed by the Mendes-France government, which planned to discard the treaty of independence initialled by the Laniel government in June 1954. Minister La Chambre, in explaining this suprise move, declared that previous governments had followed a "terrible policy." They had negotiated basic treaties and then had attempted to hold back the attributes of sovereignty by narrow interpretation of technical accords. Moreover, because of the partition of Vietnam, conclusion of a formal treaty might give the impression of creating a permanently divided country. The treaty was therefore to be replaced by a three-phase program. First, all possible technical services would be turned over to the Vietnamese immediately. Second, a four-power meeting

43. (S) Msgs, Paris 366 to State, 27 Jul 54; 715, 20 Aug 54.
44. (S) Msgs, Paris 366 to State, 27 Jul 54; 438, 30 Jul 54.

would examine matters of common interest. Finally, any remaining French functions in Vietnam would be transferred as soon after the four-power conference as possible.[45]

Pursuant to the first phase of this program, General Ely transferred to Vietnam the direction of the port of Saigon, all local administrative and judicial functions, meteorological services, and civil aviation. France retained, nonetheless, an influential role in South Vietnam's military affairs, and the FEC remained, in the eyes of the local population, a bar to genuine independence. Premier Mendes-France had promised to withdraw the FEC upon request. Accordingly, the Diem government in September asked Paris to evacuate the FEC by May 1956, in order that South Vietnam might face national elections free of this symbol of French colonialism.[46]

Delegates from France and from each of the Associated States met in Paris on 26 August to reorganize the financial and economic relationship of the four countries to accord with the status of independence. The conferees decided to liquidate the Bank of Indochina and institute separate banks of issue and separate currencies. For the time being, however, each State would retain the piaster as the unit of currency, with the same rate of exchange with the franc as earlier. As the United States had urged, the delegates did not link the piaster to the Viet Minh currency. Furthermore, Premier Diem assured the United States that no exchange relationship would be established. The four-power customs union was abolished, leaving France to negotiate bilateral accords with each State for special economic privileges as a member of the French Union.[47]

Although agreement on breaking up the quadripartite organizations came quickly, the conference dragged on for four months. Cambodians and Vietnamese, jealous of their national rights, argued endlessly over navigation of the Mekong River, preferential treatment for Cambodia in the port of Saigon, and division of assets formerly held in common.

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45. Ibid.

46. (C) Msg, Paris 849 to State, 28 Aug 54. NY Times, 17 Sep 54, p. 3; 28 Sep 54, p. 1.

47. NY Times, 27 Aug 54, p. 5; 3 Sep 54, p. 5; 30 Dec 54, p. 1. (S) Msgs, State 740 to Paris, 30 Aug 54; Saigon 580 to State, 14 Aug 54.

When the meeting finally adjourned in December, the three States had agreed to found a tripartite control board to supervise navigation on the Mekong, and to negotiate bilateral accords giving Cambodia and Laos special facilities in Saigon and transit rights through Vietnam.[48]

The transfer of services and abolition of the four-power organizations wiped out almost the last vestiges of French colonialism in Indochina. For all practical purposes the Indochinese States were now independent. In the native mind, however, real independence was not possible while French troops remained and while membership in the French Union was complusory.

The Situation in North Vietnam

While the situation in South Vietnam in the months following the Geneva Conference grew more chaotic, the outlook in North Vietnam was quite the reverse. The Viet Minh moved immediately to assert and consolidate control there. The tricolor was lowered over Hanoi on 9 October 1954, and the French garrison withdrew to Haiphong. Viet Minh troops in Soviet trucks and jeeps entered the city, to be greeted by wildly cheering Vietnamese. In succeeding weeks the Viet Minh followed the pattern of discipline, orderliness, and moderation that had characterized the early period of communist rule in China. The administrative system was not materially changed, and most Vietnamese civil servants retained their posts in the municipal government. Corruption in any form was attacked, and prostitution and other vice that had flourished in Hanoi were abolished. Before long, however, the marks of authoritarian rule became evident. Propaganda posters cluttered the city, and the population was mobilized into "discussion groups" that were required to listen to lectures, learn slogans, and sing communist songs. Also the Viet Minh, although they announced the abolition of press censorship, took over the newspapers and printed nothing but communist-line material.[49]

48. (U) Msgs, Paris 1545 to State, 12 Oct 54, DA IN 654436; 1668, 21 Oct 54. (C) Msg, Paris 2360 to State, 4 Dec 54. NY Times, 20 Oct 54, p. 12; 30 Dec 54, p. 1.

49. NY Times, 10 Oct 54, p. 1; 21 Oct 54, p. 11.

United States Consul Thomas G. Corcoran and five assistants remained in Hanoi after the French withdrew. The Viet Minh radio charged that this US presence constituted "a violation of the diplomatic sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam," a violation "completely contrary to the Geneva agreements." Although no attempt was made to expel Mr. Corcoran, the communists applied increasing administrative and logistical pressure designed to harass US consular officials and disrupt, if not block, all consular activities.[50]

In the metropolitan display-case of Hanoi, the Viet Minh made a great show of respecting the Vietnam Agreement. Outside the city they were less moderate and freely evaded the armistice agreement wherever convenient. The most flagrant violations were evident in the Viet Minh effort to prevent refugees from migrating to the south. Road blocks were erected, refugees physically intimidated, children snatched from their parents, group leaders arrested, and boat-loads of emigrants bombarded with mortars and fired upon with automatic weapons. The Viet Minh insisted upon absurdly strict interpretation of regulations and impossible administrative restrictions. Refugees were forbidden to sell their property. Those who were turned back or failed to find transportation were prohibited from reoccupying their land. Untold numbers of Tonkinese were thus deterred from fleeing the communist regime.[51]

The Viet Minh respected the military provisions of the armistice no more than those dealing with refugees. General Vo Nguyen Giap continued to expand and modernize his army. Intelligence sources reported that, during the last six months of 1954, the Viet Minh formed four new infantry divisions and one heavy division, and added an organic artillery battalion to each division. The same sources reported the importation from China, in violation of the Geneva Agreements, of 150 artillery pieces, over 500 mortars,

50. NY Times, 29 Oct 54, 5:3. (TS) Memo, OCB, Working Group on Indochina to Chm, OCB, "Special Status Report on Indochina . . . ," 14 Dec 54.

51. (LOU) Msg, Saigon 2114 to State, 6 Dec 54, DA IN 103403.

9,000 automatic weapons, 500 recoilless rifles, 400 military vehicles, and large quantities of ammunition.[52]

Truce violations by the Viet Minh were not confined to Tonkin. In South Vietnam the politico-military cadres left by the departing Viet Minh armies began preparing, clandestinely, for the 1956 elections. In Cambodia the government suspected that not all Viet Minh soldiers had been withdrawn and knew that the Khmer Resistance Forces had not been disbanded. In Laos, Pathet Lao troops remained in control of the two provinces bordering Tonkin, and refused to recognize the hegemony of the Royal Laotian Government.[53]

The International Control Commissions (ICCs) in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam were almost powerless to enforce the armistice regulations. The Indian, Canadian, and Polish members of the teams rarely agreed on any issue. The Canadians sought to discharge their duties in an objective and unbiased fashion, but the Indians took a neutral stance, perferring negotiation rather than voting with either side. Both the Indians and the Canadians, however, felt that all chances of cooperation would be destroyed if they permitted either side to use the findings of the Commissions for propaganda purposes. The Poles, on the other hand, were not so scrupulous. To the disillusionment of the Indians, the Poles proved obstructive, biased, and unreasonable; they directed their energies less to the business of the Commissions than to gathering propaganda material for the Viet Minh.[54]

Attempts of the Commission assigned to Vietnam to investigate violations in Tonkin were consistently thwarted by the Viet Minh. Investigators were harassed with onerous administrative requirements as well as with restrictions on travel.

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52. (S) Intelligence Advisory Committee, IAC-D-93/2, "Vietminh Violations of the Geneva Agreements Through 31 December 1954." (Hereafter cited as IAC, Vietminh Violations.) (S) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina MG 3267A, 1 Oct 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 84.

53. (S) IAC, Vietminh Violations. (S) Msg, Saigon 383 to State, 30 Jul 54, DA IN 75514.

54. (S) Msg, Saigon 2070 to State, 3 Dec 54, DA IN 103027. (S) IAC, Vietminh Violations.

They had to give advance notice before arriving in a given area, thus permitting the Viet Minh ample time to set the stage and terrorize prospective witnesses. By contrast, representatives of the Commission operated with complete freedom in South Vietnam. Nevertheless, in at least five incidents investigated during the last few months of 1954 the Commission unanimously placed the blame on South Vietnam. An Indian official confided to an Embassy officer that the VNA was "inexperienced and trigger-happy," and that in some cases Vietnamese officers had ordered crowds of their own people dispersed with hand grenades. The Indian admitted that Viet Minh agents were probably agitating the populace, but evidence could rarely be obtained to confirm the suspicion.55

Interference with the ICC was but one manifestation of the ruthless and efficient control the Viet Minh were rapidly extending over Tonkin. Contrasted with the Saigon government, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was, as one correspondent expressed it, "indisputably strong, confident, and unified." By the end of 1954, the Viet Minh were well advanced in converting Tonkin into a genuine totalitarian communist state, with every phase of national and private life rigidly controlled by the Hanoi government. Only the Haiphong enclave remained in French hands, and the Viet Minh were poised to obliterate this last remnant of the old order when the evacuation period expired in May 1955.

55. Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE COLLINS MISSION

By November 1954, South Vietnam had been in the grip of political anarchy for over three months. No end seemed in sight, and French and US officials in Saigon saw little hope of preventing Annam and Cochin-China from going the way of Tonkin. In Washington, President Eisenhower was becoming increasingly concerned. He concluded that the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam called for extraordinary measures. To attempt the task of restoring order and hope in the future of the beleaguered nation, the President dispatched General J. Lawton Collins, USA, then serving as the US member on the Military Committee of NATO, on a special mission to Saigon. General Collins was designated Special United States Representative in Vietnam with the personal rank of Ambassador, and given broad authority to direct, utilize, and control all agencies and resources of the United States in South Vietnam.

On the eve of General Collins' departure, the President outlined the mission to be accomplished, as follows:

> The immediate and urgent requirement . . . is to assist in stabilizing and strengthening the legal government of Viet-Nam under the premiership of Ngo Dinh Diem. Accordingly, the principal task of your mission is to coordinate and direct a program in support of that government to enable it to: (a) promote internal security and political and economic stability, (b) establish and maintain control throughout the territory, and (c) effectively counteract Viet Minh infiltration and paramilitary activities south of the military demarcation line. As an initial framework for a concrete program of action you should (a) use the joint

instructions which the Departments of State and Defense transmitted to the American Embassy in Saigon on October 22 and (b) take into consideration the latter's reply of October 27, 1954.[1]

When the President's action was communicated to General Ely, whose cooperation was essential to the success of the Collins' mission, the response was not encouraging. Although expressing warm friendship and high esteem for General Collins, General Ely declared that such a mission would inevitably create an unfavorable impression in both France and free Vietnam, for it would be interpreted as evidence that the United States was planning to take over Indochina. He even implied that he might have to resign if the United States insisted on the assignment.[2] But General Ely did not resign, and on 11 November 1954 General Collins arrived in Saigon.

The Seven-Point Program

General Collins found himself confronted with a situation of discouraging complexity. For weeks Diem's government had been virtually paralyzed by the defiance of General Nguyen Van Hinh, who was supported by a large portion of the army, by General Le Van Vien and the Binh Xuyen, by ex-President Nguyen Van Xuan, and sub rosa, by many French officials. The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, having finally been persuaded to join the government, nevertheless pursued their own selfish goals with scant regard for the national interest. In addition to powerful political opposition, the Diem government was burdened with the immense task of caring for the thousands of refugees pouring in from North Vietnam. Only a fraction of the refugees could be resettled in the rural areas, for many provinces had fallen under control of Viet Minh shadow governments, and others had become feudal domains

1. (TS) Ltr, Pres to GEN Collins, 3 Nov 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 88. See Ch. II, pp. 42-43 for the joint State-Defense instructions and Ambassador Heath's reply.
2. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1686 to State, 3 Nov 54.

of the sects or, worse, objects of dispute between them. "From nearly every point of view," General Collins recalled later, "'free' Vietnam appeared headed toward absorption by the Viet Minh," either "through a French-managed accommodation with the Communists or through the restoration of a scarcely veiled colonial system." The latter, added the General, "could have been sustained against the Viet Minh only by the weight of arms which, paradoxically, the French had made clear they had no intention of using."[3]

Devising a comprehensive and orderly approach to this tangled situation was indeed a formidable undertaking. General Collins, however, proposed to General Ely that they unite their efforts to attain six specific objectives designed to counteract the political, economic, and military chaos of Vietnam. General Ely agreed, and at his request a seventh, dealing with educational matters, was added.

The first objective of this seven-point program was the solution of the problem of the Vietnamese armed forces, especially the army. The VNA's support of General Hinh had been largely responsible for prolonging the political impasse, which in turn was delaying both political and economic reforms. Until it was molded into an efficiently organized, tightly disciplined, well-trained force loyal to the legal government, the VNA could not extend the authority of the central government to the provinces. And until the provinces were brought under the effective administrative control of Saigon, the US objective of a stable, anticommunist Vietnam could not be realized.

The second objective was that of strengthening and broadening the Diem government. The Premier was running what was virtually a one-man operation, and General Collins believed that the key ministries should be filled at once with capable and energetic men. A complementary goal was to set up some sort of national assembly as soon as possible. Except for municipal and provincial councils,

3. (TS) Memo, Collins to SecState, "Report on Vietnam to the National Security Council," 20 Jan 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 3. (Hereafter cited as Collins Report to NSC.)

for which the last elections had been held in 1953, South Vietnam had no representative institutions, and the Diem government badly needed a measure of identification with democracy.

The closely allied problems of land reform and refugees occupied prominent positions in the Collins-Ely program. The task was not only to care for the immediate wants of the emigrants from Tonkin, but also to devise a long-range program that would win their political support, bring into productivity the uncultivated land, and give South Vietnamese tenant farmers an investment in freedom by granting them ownership of the land they tilled. Measures to modernize the financial and economic structure of Vietnam, to develop local talent in all fields, especially civil service, and to improve education completed the seven-point program.

Generals Collins and Ely formed specialized working groups from their respective staffs to draw up detailed programs in each of the seven categories. These working groups would submit draft plans to the two Generals, who would resolve differences and settle upon an agreed Franco-American position. This position would then be used as the basis for recommendations to Premier Diem and for consultations with representatives of the Vietnamese government agencies responsible for putting the program into effect. French and US information agencies were to concentrate on giving Diem full credit for any progress that might be made.[4]

In subsequent weeks, a close and highly satisfactory relationship developed between Generals Collins and Ely. The distaste with which Ely had received the appointment of General Collins was apparently overcome. Although General Ely sincerely cooperated with General Collins in carrying out most features of the seven-fold approach, the attitudes of the government in Paris and the French community in Saigon limited his authority. Most Frenchmen seemed unable either to understand the new order that had emerged in Vietnam or to face the necessity for surrendering additional French influence in Vietnamese affairs.

4. Ibid. (S) Msg, Saigon 2004 to State, 29 Nov 54, DA IN 101696-S, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 88.

In the end, therefore, it was General Collins who initiated most of the concrete measures of reform, and who provided the impetus that carried them forward despite the many obstacles.

The Problem of Creating an Effective VNA

Even before General Collins went to Saigon, the United States had realized that Vietnam desperately needed a strong, well-trained army to cope with its formidable internal security problem. The role of the United States in developing such an army, however, became a subject of disagreement between the Department of State and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The dispute was touched off by General O'Daniel, Chief MAAG Indochina.[5] In the week following the signing of the Geneva Agreements, General O'Daniel had urged that the United States undertake, without French interference, a priority program for training the VNA. Pointing out that the Vietnam Agreement prohibited the enlargement of foreign contingents in Vietnam after 11 August 1954, he recommended that MAAG Indochina be immediately increased in order to carry out a realistic training program. Seeing that final decision would be delayed beyond 11 August, General O'Daniel took advantage of the passage trhough Saigon of one hundred Air Force mechanics en route to Manila to expand his roster of authorized personnel.[6]

Ambassador Heath and his superiors in the State Department strongly concurred with General O'Daniel's recommendations, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not. They had no wish to be drawn into a situation where the United States would have responsibility for a program that faced a good chance of failure through factors beyond US control. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore defined four "preconditions" they considered should be met before the United States assumed any training obligations in Vietnam or Cambodia. First, a strong and stable civil government should be in control of the country. "It is hopeless," warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "to expect a U.S.

5. As a concession to LTG Navarre's rank consciousness, LTG O'Daniel had taken a one-grade reduction in rank upon assignment to MAAG in the spring of 1954. With GEN Navarre's replacement by GEN Paul Ely, GEN O'Daniel's three-star rank was restored in August 1954.

6. (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina MG 2062Z to DA, 27 Jul 54, DA IN 74737, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 76. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 301 to State, 24 Jul 54; 366, 29 Jul 54.

military training mission to achieve success unless the nation concerned is able effectively to perform those governmental functions essential to the successful raising and maintenance of armed forces." Second, each state should formally request US financial support and training assistance. Third, the French should grant full independence to the Associated States and provide for a phased withdrawal of French troops, officers, and advisers. Without this provision, reasoned the Joint Chiefs of Staff, there would be lack of motivation and an unsound basis for the establishment of indigenous armed forces. As a corollary of this stipulation, the United States from the beginning should deal directly with the native governments, "completely independent of French participation or control." Finally, the size and composition of the forces should be based on "local military requirements and the overall U.S. interests." Only when these conditions were fulfilled, they believed, should the United States commit itself to training and financing the native forces.[7]

Secretary of State Dulles pointed out in reply that Cambodia already had met the four conditions. Cambodia had formally requested US assistance, it qualified as politically stable, and it enjoyed complete sovereignty. The command of the Royal Khmer Army had been handed over to the King, and with the exception of a few French advisers attached to Cambodian military forces, French troops had been removed from Cambodian soil. Although Vietnam could not meet the JCS specifications, Secretary Dulles believed that the United States should nevertheless undertake a training program. Strengthening the army, he reasoned, was in fact a prerequisite to political stability. Conceding that the problem was the "familiar hen-and-egg argument," he nonetheless asserted that "one of the most efficient means of enabling the Vietnamese Government to become strong is to assist it in reorganizing the National Army and in training that Army." The FEC had not been withdrawn from Vietnam, but "It would be militarily disastrous to demand the withdrawal of French forces . . . before the creation of a new National Army." Secretary Dulles saw no reason why the United States could not train the Vietnamese forces at the same time the French were gradually phasing out their troops.[8]

7. (S) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "U.S. Assumption of Training Responsibilities in Indochina," 4 Aug 54 (derived from JCS 1992/367), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 77. (S) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 12 Aug 54, same file, sec 80.

8. (S) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 18 Aug 54, App to Encl to JCS 1992/388, 3 Sep 54, same file, sec 82.

Meanwhile, however, the National Security Council had decided that political factors outweighed the military considerations on which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had based their opinion. NSC 5429/1, adopted by the Council on 12 August and approved by the President on the same day, stated that, "working through the French only insofar as necessary," the United States would assist in the buildup of indigenous "military forces necessary for internal security." Succeeding events were to prove this policy much more easily conceived than executed.[9]

With provision for assumption of training responsibilities by the United States incorporated into Far Eastern policy, Secretary Dulles notified the French in August that the United States intended to assign a training mission to MAAG Saigon. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff still believed that their four conditions should be fulfilled before the United States launched a training program. Reviewing the problem on 22 September, they concluded that these conditions had not yet been met. They accordingly recommended that no commitment to train the VNA be made during forthcoming talks with French officials.[10]

The State Department, on the other hand, reasoned that the French, if presented with the JCS conditions, certainly would not agree to exchange French for US influence in Vietnamese military affairs. The United States then would have either to discard the conditions or withdraw its support for Vietnam. The latter alternative was unacceptable because of the extensive investment of US money and prestige in Indochina, and the obligations recently assumed under the Manila Pact. The position of the United States, therefore, was to make no commitments on training the VNA, but to concentrate on more immediate problems.[11]

The training issue, in the following weeks, became enmeshed in a dispute between the State Department and Joint Chiefs of Staff over Vietnamese forces levels. The Joint

9. (TS) NSC 5429/1, 12 Aug 54, same file, sec 80.
10. (S) Msg, State 610 to Paris, 18 Aug 54. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "U.S. Assumption of Training Responsibilities in Indochina," 22 Sep 54 (derived from JCS 1992/393), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 83.
11. (S) State Dept. ELaC D2-4, "Development and Training of Indigenous Forces in Indochina," 24 Sep 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) BP pt 14.

Chiefs of Staff proposed a VNA of 184,000 and a militia of 50,000, with a small air force and navy. Since the forces could be equipped with Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) material already on hand, there would be no initial expenditure, but the annual operating cost would total $475,000,000.[12]

Secretary of State Dulles objected to this plan. He asserted that NSC 5429/2 envisaged maintenance in Indochina only of those forces necessary for internal security. In the event of a threat to security from external sources, the Manila Pact would become operative. With these facts in mind, concluded the Secretary, the JCS manpower and cost estimates appeared excessive.[13]

The JCS, in turn, replied that US policy, as set forth in NSC 162/2, the Basic National Security Policy, relied on ground defense in the Far East by indigenous troops. If every nation developed only those forces required for internal security, no forces would be available to go to the defense of another country. The mission of the VNA, therefore, should be not only to police Vietnam, but also "to deter Viet Minh aggression by a limited defense of the Geneva armistice demarcation line." On this note, the question of size and composition of Vietnamese forces was deferred for a month. But Secretary Dulles' persistence had at the same time brought the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reconsider their opposition to a training program in Vietnam. Although they still believed that, from a military viewpoint, the United States should not participate in the training of Vietnamese forces, they conceded that, from a political viewpoint, the risk might be justified. If so, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded, they "would agree to the assignment of a training mission to MAAG Saigon with safeguards against French interference with the U. S. training effort."[14]

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12. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Retention and Development of Forces in Indochina," 22 Sep 54 (derived from JCS 1992/394), same file, sec 83.

13. (TS) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 11 Oct 54, App to Encl to JCS 1992/402, 15 Oct 54, same file, sec 84.

14. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Development and Training of Indigenous Forces in Indochina," 19 Oct 54 (derived from JCS 1992/404), same file, sec 85.

This decision by the Joint Chiefs of Staff came at the time when the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB)[15] was considering what political, economic, and military measures could be taken to resolve the crisis in Vietnam. The State Department drafted a message outlining a crash program to be carried out by all US agencies in Vietnam. Although the OCB envisaged, as one of several measures, a limited and interim training program, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, USN, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, believed the message, as drafted, would set in motion the long-range program that General O'Daniel had proposed. The Joint Staff therefore drew up another message to substitute for the State Department's draft, but before this version could be considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council, on 22 October, approved both the OCB plan and a draft joint State-Defense message to Saigon. This cable was dispatched the same day, and authorized Ambassador Heath and General O'Daniel to "collaborate in setting in motion a crash program designed to bring about an improvement in the loyalty and the effectiveness of the Free Vietnamese forces." The "how" was left to the Ambassador and the Chief, MAAG.[16]

In the absence of final decision on a long-range program, Ambassador Heath and General O'Daniel, with General Ely's concurrence, decided to extend US military influence by placing a MAAG officer in the Defense Ministry, three in VNA headquarters, and one at each regional headquarters. But an effective training program had to await detailed planning in Washington, formal agreement with France, and reorganization of MAAG Saigon.[17]

Upon General Collins' arrival in Vietnam, and even before he and General Ely had reached final agreement on the sevenfold approach, the two generals took up the problem of the

15. The Operations Coordination Board was a major subsidiary organization of the National Security Council. It functioned as the coordinating and integrating arm of the NSC for all aspects of implementation of national security policy.

16. (TS) CM-117-54 to D/JS, 21 Oct 54, Encl to JCS 1992/406, 21 Oct 54; (TS) JCS 1992/407, 22 Oct 54; (TS) Msg, State 1678 to Saigon and Paris, 22 Oct 54; (TS) Msg, Jt State-Defense (State 1679) to Saigon and Paris, 22 Oct 54; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 85. (TS) NSC Rcd of Action, 218th Mtg, 22 Oct 54.

17. (S) Msg, Saigon 1609 to State, 27 Oct 54.

VNA. It was the opinion of General Collins that the army represented the key to success in Vietnam, but in almost every respect the VNA was unprepared to cope with the responsibilities and dangers posed by the political and military situation in Vietnam.

In November 1954, the VNA, consisting of 170,000 regulars, was badly organized and trained and possessed no units above the regimental level. Still primarily an instrument of the French High Command, it remained under French operational control and was entirely dependent upon the French for logistical support. Twenty percent of the infantry and fifty percent of the support and technical units were at least partially staffed by French cadres. The French had failed to develop qualified leaders in the VNA, and native officers, even when given authority and responsibility, were inclined to rely heavily on French advisers. Moreover, the Hinh rebellion had disrupted the planning activities of the General Staff and had fostered insubordination and irresponsibility throughout the army.[18]

General Collins' plan of action for the VNA was designed to remedy these defects. It provided, first, for reaching agreement with France and South Vietnam on force levels, composition, and mission of indigenous forces. This done, General O'Daniel would assume responsibility for organizing and training Vietnamese forces. The Collins plan also called for French agreement to a program aimed at granting full autonomy to the Vietnamese military establishment by the summer of 1955 and a determined effort to straighten out the tangled political loyalties of the army. After France and South Vietnam had agreed to these principles, and the reorganization and training ventures had been launched, the army would be employed to pacify and rehabilitate the country.[19]

Before any degree of success could be assured, resolution of the Hinh rebellion was essential. This feud had lasted three months, and friction between Diem and Hinh had become so acute that reconciliation was impossible. If the principle of civil supremacy over the military were to be maintained, Hinh had to be removed from Vietnam.

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18. (S) NIE 63-7-54, 23 Nov 54.
19. (S) Msg, Saigon 2004 to State, 29 Nov 54, DA IN 101696-S, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 88.

Shortly after General Collins arrived in Saigon, Hinh's defiance was effectively neutralized. Surprisingly, the impulse for Hinh's removal came from Bao Dai. Early in November, US diplomats in France surmised that Bao Dai, hoping to insure the security of his position as Chief of State, had decided to exhibit more respect for US policy in Vietnam. In any event, he sent an emissary to Saigon with orders for Bay Vien and the Binh Xuyen to cooperate with the government, and for General Hinh to report to him in Cannes immediately. After two weeks of indecision, during which he attempted to secure a reprieve from this summons, Hinh made a belligerent farewell speech and on 19 November departed for France. Upon his arrival, he sealed his own fate by publicly expressing defiance of Bao Dai's authority. Bao Dai summarily removed Hinh from his position of Chief of Staff of the VNA and named General Le Van Ty to succeed him. At the same time Bao Dai designated General Nguyen Van By to assume the duties of Inspector General, recently given up by French General Marcel Alessandri.[20]

Bao Dai's action removed one of the more serious irritants from the Vietnamese political scene. The way was now cleared for reconciliation between government and army. Diem issued a public declaration affirming complete confidence in the loyalty of the army, and thereafter the army did not pose a serious threat to Vietnamese political stability.

But before it could be considered an effective arm of the government, the important questions of the size, organization, and mission had to be settled. General Collins therefore moved quickly to secure endorsement by his superiors in Washington and acceptance by the French and Vietnamese of his concept of the future of Vietnamese armed forces. Such questions were not easily resolved, however, for the Departments of State and Defense remained in fundamental disagreement on the crucial issue of force levels that the United States should support. General Collins was aware of this disagreement and asked, on 11 November, that Washington take no action on indigenous force levels until he had had an opportunity to make

20. (S) Msgs, Paris 1927 to State, 5 Nov 54; 2036, 12 Nov 54; 2211, 25 Nov 54; 2240, 28 Nov 54. (S) Msg, Saigon 1807 to State, 12 Nov 54. (C) Msgs, Paris 2272 to State, 30 Nov 54; 2290, 1 Dec 54. (U) Msg, Paris 2193 to State, 23 Nov 54.

his own recommendations on the matter. The Department of Defense agreed to this on 13 November.[21]

General Collins' recommendations, which were received on 16 November, represented a compromise between the positions of the Departments of State and Defense. Although he had been charged with assisting the Vietnamese to develop a force capable only of establishing and maintaining internal security, General Collins considered that some divisional combat elements should be included in the VNA. They were necessary not only to assist the FEC to absorb the shock of invasion if hostilities were renewed, but also, if called upon, to reinforce the security troops in pacification activities. Moreover, to cut the army in half without at the same time providing forces organized for combat rather than merely for security duty was certain to have a bad effect upon the morale of both the VNA and the Vietnamese people.

Accordingly, General Collins recommended that the United States support, in fiscal year 1956, a small, well-balanced defense force totalling 83,685 military and 4,400 civilian personnel--almost 100,000 less than the Joint Chiefs of Staff had proposed in September. To establish and maintain internal security, the VNA would include thirteen security regiments and an airborne regimental combat team. It would also include three field divisions to delay any communist invasion until external assistance from the Manila powers arrived. With support troops, this army would number 77,685 officers and men, as well as 4,000 civilians. A small navy and air force would complete the Vietnamese military establishment. General Collins estimated the total support cost, to be borne by the United States, at $201.6 million for fiscal 1956.[22]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 17 November approved the recommendations of General Collins and, substituting his figures for those drawn up by the Joint Strategic Plans Committee, submitted the figures, and their views on the whole problem, to the Secretary of Defense. In doing so, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned that these forces alone could not

21. (S) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina (Collins) 1795 to OSD, 11 Nov 54, DA IN 98060. (S) Msg, DEF 970965 to CHMAAG Indochina, 13 Nov 54.

22. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1830 to State, 15 Nov 54, DA IN 99015, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 87.

provide adequate insurance against external aggression after French forces were withdrawn. With the Viet Minh increasing the size and effectiveness of its armies, and with no forces actually committed to mutual defense by the Manila powers, an organized military assault by the Viet Minh would encounter no more than "limited initial resistance" from the VNA. The Secretary of Defense concurred in the recommendations and views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and provided them to the Secretary of State on 26 November.[23]

These observations brought into focus another problem--the size of the French Expeditionary Corps. The French were already withdrawing elements of the Corps, planning to cut it to 100,000 by the end of 1955. At the Washington Conference in September, they had made clear that retention even of this number depended upon the flow of dollars, estimating that $330 million would be required. The United States had promised an answer by 1 December.

United States policymakers, however, had reservations about continuing to support the FEC. A State-JCS meeting revealed that military and diplomatic leaders alike thought it better that France pull its troops out of Vietnam altogether. Overt aggression was not thought likely. The real threat was civil war, and the French had several times declared that they would not intervene in such a conflict. Since an immediate objective of US policy was to restore order in Vietnam and bolster the Diem government, the FEC hardly seemed worth the cost of its upkeep. Both General Collins and Ambassador Heath disagreed with this contention. They believed that the United States should help maintain the Corps, although not to the extent of $330 million. Complete withdrawal of French troops in 1955, they reasoned, would create a vacuum that only the Viet Minh could fill, for the VNA would be unable to cope with communist irregular forces for some time to come. Moreover, without French cooperation any US project in Vietnam was doomed, and a US decision to cut off support funds would gravely jeopardize this cooperation.[24]

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23. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Indochina," 17 Nov 54 (derived from JCS 1992/412), same file. (TS) Ltr, ASD(ISA) to SecState, 26 Nov 54, Encl to JCS 1992/421, 30 Oct 54, same file, sec 88.

24. (S) Msg, Saigon 1761 to State, 8 Nov 54. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1830 to State, 15 Nov 54, DA IN 99015, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 87.

The views of General Collins and Ambassador Heath prevailed. The United States informed France it would contribute $100 million to maintenance of the FEC during calendar 1955, after which no further support was contemplated. The United States also put France on notice that for 1954 it would "continue to reimburse French 1954 budget year expenditures," but proposed to "declare ineligible for reimbursement all expenditures on material, equipment and supplies which cannot or will not be delivered to Indochina by December 31, 1955."

The provision of US funds for support of the FEC and for the reimbursement of French expenditures for material, equipment, and supplies was made contingent upon consultations with (and presumably approval of) Congress and "subject /to/ Ely and Collins and /the/ two governments mutually agreeing on what is to be done in Indochina."[25]

The sum of $100 million was well below the $330 million the French had anticipated, and they made clear that the US decision would entail a drastic reduction of French troops serving in Indochina. Paris accordingly stepped up withdrawal of the FEC, and predicted that by the end of 1955 only 40,000 French soldiers would remain in South Vietnam. The Foreign Office emphasized that although this action was based entirely on monetary considerations, there was also much sentiment in France for transferring the FEC to North Africa. This sentiment stemmed from the belief that in Vietnam French troops were serving the interests of the free world; since the free world would not pay its upkeep, the FEC should be sent to North Africa where it would better serve the interests of France and the French Union.[26]

The Paris decision to accelerate reduction of the Expeditionary Corps forced General Ely to revise his strategic plans for the defense of South Vietnam and to place more reliance on the Manila Pact as a deterrent. Also, he intimated to General Collins that, because Washington chose not to support French and Vietnamese force levels adequate for defense of

25. (C) Msg, FAO Washington USFOTO 263 to Paris and Saigon, 24 Nov 54, same file, sec 88.

26. (TS) Msg, Paris 2433 to State, 8 Dec 54. (S) DA, ACofS, G-2 Intelligence Estimate of the "Defensive Capabilities of Southeast Asia Pact Nations," 1 Mar 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) BP pt 1.

the country, the United States had automatically assummed equal responsibility with France for the security of Vietnam. This proposition General Collins categorically rejected.[27]

Although the French wished to commit the United States to greater responsibility for South Vietnam, they consented only with great reluctance to any significant change in the VNA. This became clear during the protracted discussions on Vietnamese military problems. General Collins had drawn up a draft minute of understanding to be used as a basis for negotiations with General Ely. The minute outlined the US concept of size, composition, and mission of Vietnamese forces and defined the basic principles on which a training program had to be founded if success were to be achieved.

First and foremost, General Collins wanted assurances that "full autonomy will have been granted by France to the armed forces of the state of Vietnam by not later than 1 July 1955." Full autonomy, to General Collins, meant "actual command of all units of Vietnam armed forces by Vietnamese personnel." In addition,

> full responsibility for assisting the Government of Vietnam in the organization and training of its armed forces will be assumed by the United States on 1 January 1955. Exercise of this responsibility will be entrusted to the Chief of the United States Military Assistance Advisory Group.

The draft minute explained how this would work in practice. General O'Daniel, acting under the broad authority of General Ely in his capacity as the French Commander in Chief in Indo-China, would direct training activities. Reliance would be initially placed on French advisory personnel, but with progressive introduction of US instructors, the French officers would be gradually phased out.[28]

General Ely's reaction to the draft minute was mixed. He feared that the Manila Pact was not an effective deterrent to aggression, but reluctantly accepted the mission and reduced force base proposed by General Collins. General Ely

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27. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2168 to State, 9 Dec 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 89. (S) Msg, Saigon 2025 to State, 30 Nov 54.

28. (S) Msg, Saigon 1854 to State, 16 Nov 54.

also agreed to assumption by the United States of training responsibility, going so far as to declare that the agreement on Vietnam would not be an obstacle to augmentation of MAGG beyond the 342 spaces authorized when the cease-fire took effect. At the same time, General Ely expressed his conviction that no French government could accept replacement of Frenchmen by Americans in the training apparatus. In the opinion of General Collins, the opposing US and French views on this question represented the basic difference in the thinking of the two countries on the future role of France in Vietnamese military affairs. Phase-out of French instructors was one of the conditions that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had insisted be met before the United States entered the training field. The United States, if it were to have responsibility for development of an effective army, had to be free to use US methods and doctrines. Moreover, as General Collins pointed out to General Ely, it was necessary to convince the Vietnamese that the French really intended to give up their influence in the armed forces of Vietnam.[29]

Premier Mendes-France was much less inclined than General Ely to accept the Collins blueprint. The Premier arrived in Washington during the third week of November and quickly expressed his disagreement with the draft minute. France, he said, was willing to grant autonomy to the VNA, but he doubted that it could be accomplished by 1 July 1955. Also, increasing the size of MAAG for training purposes clearly violated the Vietnam Agreement. But the portion of the Collins plan that most aroused the opposition of the Premier was the provision for phase-out of French instructors. In his view it would be difficult for the French people to accept; they would not understand why France must relinquish its influence to the United States while continuing to support a heavy burden in Indochina. In addition, the phase-out of French instructors would be a severe blow to the morale of the French Expeditionary Corps. Although objecting to elimination of French instructors, the Premier at the same time attempted strenuously to establish for the record that primary responsibility for the policy of the free world in the Far East, including Indochina, rested with the United States. Neither Premier

29. Ibid. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1830 to State, 15 Nov 54, DA IN 99015, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 87. (C) Msg, Saigon 1920 to State, 21 Nov 54.

Mendes-France nor Secretary Dulles would yield, and in the end the matter was referred to Generals Collins and Ely for compromise and agreement.[30]

Three weeks of negotiation in Saigon produced an agreed minute that both Generals Collins and Ely signed on 13 December. During the discussions preceding agreement, General Collins had flatly asserted that he could not recommend US participation in training unless General O'Daniel possessed real authority, subject to the overall responsibility of General Ely, to direct training activities. As approved by General Collins and General Ely the agreement differed little from General Collins' draft minute of understanding, though the wording was softened to make the document less offensive to French pride. Perhaps the most significant change was introduced by the French. Instead of providing for phase-out of French instructors alone, the minute was worded to provide for phase-out of both French and US instructors as the efficiency of Vietnamese forces increased. The signed Minute of Understanding was immediately dispatched to Paris and Washington for final approval.[31]

Although the United States quickly approved the Collins-Ely agreement, France embarked upon a campaign of delay. In mid-December, a US-French review of Indochinese affairs was held in Paris. Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford represented the United States and General Ely was also present. During the course of discussion Premier Mendes-France informed Secretary Dulles that the French Government would have to study the Minute of Understanding closely for possible conflicts with the Vietnam Agreement especially the question of of strengthening the US MAAG. Both Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford assured the Premier that the United States intended only to rotate personnel, not to assign additional strength. Nevertheless, Mendes-France replied, a legal

30. (TS) Msg, State 2046 to Saigon, 19 Nov 54. (S) Msgs, State 2070 to Saigon, 22 Nov 54; 2126, 26 Nov 54.

31. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2250 to State, 13 Dec 54. (S) Msg, Saigon 2024 to State, 30 Nov 54. (C) Msg, Saigon 2261 to State, 14 Dec 54, DA IN 105051, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 89.

question still remained. Even though the Agreement permitted rotation, he feared that substitution of training for administrative personnel, or officers for enlisted men, was a violation. The Viet Minh, he added, had already officially protested to the International Control Commission.[32]

When apprised of these remarks, General Collins cabled the Secretary of State that, if France intended to hedge the agreement with legal restrictions of this type, the United States should not undertake a training venture. He added that Premier Mendes-France had promised to accept any agreement negotiated by General Ely. The Premier's latest action, in General Collins' opinion, raised the serious question of whether Paris intended to support the authority of its top officials in Vietnam.[33]

While the United States applied increasing pressure on France to honor General Ely's signature, the issue was debated within the French Government. At length, the French informed Washington that they had no quarrel with the substance of the Minute of Understanding, but objected to its form. The Vietnamese Government, they said, should not be confronted with a fait accompli, but rather with a series of recommendations agreed to by France and the United States. With this in mind, the French Embassy in Washington submitted a redraft of the Minute to the Department of State on 7 January 1955.[34]

This action added to General Collins' mounting impatience. It clearly indicated, he believed, that the French were stalling. He had never intended to present the Vietnamese with the Minute, and the French proposal actually would do just that. Moreover, in redrafting the Minute, the French had eliminated all refernce to autonomy of Vietnamese armed forces, and had omitted phrases spelling out General O'Daniel's authority over French training personnel. "I will certainly not agree to it unless specifically instructed by higher authority," General Collins concluded. When General Ely

32. (TS) Msg, Paris 2601 to State, 19 Dec 54.
33. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2455 to State and Manila, 25 Dec 54.
34. (TS) Msgs, Paris 2270 to State, 31 Dec 54; 2870, 7 Jan 55. (TS) Msg, State 2766 to Saigon, 7 Jan 55.

returned from the Paris meeting, General Collins declared to him that the French seemed to be deliberately dragging their feet. He emphasized that it was imperative that France approve the original Minute of Understanding at once because, using it as the basis for discussion, he had already begun negotiating with Vietnamese Defense Minister Ho Thong Minh. General Ely replied that there had evidently been a serious misunderstanding. The French Government had approved the original agreement, and he was perfectly willing that negotiations with Minh should continue.[35]

Although the US Embassy in Paris reported that the French Government, so far as could be ascertained, had not in fact approved the Minute, General Collins continued his talks with Minh. Here he encountered a further obstacle, for the Minister of Defense strongly objected to the proposed force levels.

Minh's arguments were telling. He contended that the army would be reduced to a size not much larger than the paramilitary forces of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen. This would alter the power relationship in South Vietnam and greatly enhance the political bargaining strength of the sects. The problem would be aggravated by enlistment of discharged soldiers in the armies of the sects. Furthermore, rapid reduction of the armed forces from 217,000 to 88,000 would flood the country with unemployed veterans, thus producing severe social, economic, and psychological effects, with consequent political complications. General Collins admitted that this was a real problem but declared that the United States simply could not afford the cost of a large Vietnamese military establishment. He did offer to modify the projected reduction. Instead of aiming for a force of 88,000 by 1 July 1955, the United States would agree to a goal of 100,000 by 31 December 1955, even though it would cost an extra $14.5 million. This Minh reluctantly accepted. An exchange of letters between the Vietnamese Government and General Collins on 19 and 20 January constituted formal agreement between the United States and Vietnam for US financial support of Vietnamese

35. (S) Msgs, Paris 2797 to State, 3 Jan 55. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 2660 to State, 9 Jan 55; 2663, 10 Jan 55, DA IN 109948; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 1.

armed forces and responsibility for their organization and training.[36]

Despite the success of these negotiations, the whole question of the VNA was far from resolved for the United States and France were still deadlocked over the Collins-Ely Minute of Understanding. The United States refused to accept the redraft submitted on 7 January and, according to an official of the French Foreign Office, Premier Mendes-France, for political reasons, simply could not accept responsibility for formally approving the Minute General Ely had signed in December. The impasse was finally broken by US initiative. In a personal message to M. Mendes-France, Secretary Dulles, with the concurrence of General Collins, advanced a compromise proposal. The Secretary of State suggested that both the Minute of Understanding and the French redraft be discarded, and that France dispatch two letters over General Ely's signature. The first would be sent to Diem guaranteeing complete autonomy to Vietnamese forces by 1 July 1955, the second to General Collins agreeing that both US and French training personnel would be under the immediate direction of General O'Daniel, acting under the overall authority of General Ely.[37]

With certain changes of wording, this solution proved acceptable to France. The French, however, still wished to present the 7 January redraft to the Diem government as joint Franco-American recommendations. The French desired, they said, an agreement that could be used in Parliament or made public if the need arose. The Department of State found this distinctly unpalatable, for the redraft, without the clarifying letters, was unsatisfactory to the United States. But General Collins was anxious to break the deadlock, and the United States finally agreed to use the redraft if the French promised to implement it in conjunction with the two letters contemplated by Secretary Dulles. On 11 February, General Ely carried out the compromise plan, and the next day General O'Daniel assumed responsibility for organizing and training the military forces of Vietnam.[38]

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36. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2453 to State for DOD, 24 Dec 54, DA IN 107298. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2676 to State, 10 Jan 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 2876 to State, 22 Jan 55, DA IN 113240.

37. (TS) Msg, Paris 3064 to State, 20 Jan 55. (TS) Msg, State 2629 to Paris, 24 Jan 55.

38. (TS) Msg, Paris 3195 to State, 28 Jan 55. (TS) Msg, State 2726 to Paris, 1 Feb 55. (C) Msg, Saigon 3343 to State, 11 Feb 55, DA IN 117991, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 4.

Economic Problems

Although military questions occupied much of the energies of Generals Collins and Ely, they had by no means neglected the other features of the seven-point program. Two closely related items of the program were the utilization of the uncultivated lands and the absorption of the refugees, most of whom still were housed in temporary rehabilitation camps, into the productive life of the nation.

American and French agencies in Vietnam undertook exhaustive studies involving far-reaching changes in the pattern of land tenure and use. The immediate requirement, however, was a short-range, emergency program to meet the more critical aspects of the two problems. Generals Collins and Ely encouraged Diem to adopt an emergency plan of governmental requisition of idle farm land for three years in order to resettle refugees from Tonkin, as well as displaced southerners and discharged soldiers. Diem was also advised to create a special agency within the Ministry of Agriculture, both to administer the short-range program and to plan the long-range program.[39]

Although Diem accepted these recommendations, US economic experts found it an entirely different matter to develop agreed procedures with subordinate Vietnamese officials. The Minister of Agriculture was a member of the Hoa Hao sect, which controlled large amounts of Vietnam's rice-producing lands, and the Hoa Hao feared the effect land reform would have on its vested interests. As a result, the Americans made little progress with officials of the Ministry of Agriculture.[40]

Nevertheless, Diem on 10 February signed decrees putting into effect the emergency program proposed by the French and United States officials. Two weeks earlier, on the Vietnamese New Year, he had announced adoption of a long-range agrarian reform program.[41] It remained to be seen how realistically these measures would be executed when the Hoa Hao found its feudal prerogatives actually being undermined.

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39. (S) Msg, Saigon 2075 to State, 4 Dec 54.
40. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2303 to State, 17 Dec 54, DA IN 105690.
41. (S) Msg, Saigon 2811 to State, 17 Jan 55; 3340, 11 Feb 55. (TS) Collins Report to NSC.

government, and he urged Diem to appoint Quat to the Defense Ministry, retaining the energetic and capable Ho Thong Minh as Deputy Defense Minister. Diem readily consented and offered the post to Quat.[45]

Strong oppostion to Quat quickly developed within the Diem government. The Premier's brothers, Ngo Dinh Luyen and Ngo Dinh Nhu, brought their considerable influence to bear to prevent the appointment. Both men, General Collins believed, were determined to keep the armed forces out of the hands of a strong personality who might prove a serious contender for the premiership. The sect representatives in the Cabinet also expressed their antipathy for Quat. Particularly vociferous were Hoa Hao General Tran Van Soai and Cao Dai General Nguyen Thanh Phuong, the latter strongly supported by the Cao Dai Pope, Pham Cong Tac. Both Soai and Phuong declared they would resign rather than sit in the same cabinet with Quat. Diem feared that if Quat were appointed the Hoa Hao would cut off Saigon's rice supply and the Cao Dai would precipitate an armed rebellion in the city. In addition, Acting Defense Minister Minh, whom Premier Diem as well as Generals Collins and O'Daniel wished to keep in the government, viewed the proposed appointment as a threat to his own ambitions. Minh declared that he would neither serve under Quat nor in any other department except Defense. He was certain that, as Acting Defense Minister, he had the army well in hand and was making progress in healing the wounds left by the Hinh episode.[46]

The pressures from these sources were stronger than Diem could resist, and he withdrew his offer to Quat. Early in January, Diem elevated Minh to the rank of Defense Minister, delegating him full authority, and this solution proved satisfactory.[47] In succeeding weeks, not only did Minh perform ably but Diem refrained from meddling in the affairs of the Ministry.

45. (S) Msg, Saigon 1967 to State, 24 Nov 54, DA IN 100745.
46. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 2250 to State, 13 Dec 54; 2285, 15 Dec 54; 2303, 17 Dec 54, DA IN 105690.
47. (S) Msg, Saigon 2334 to State, 17 Dec 54.

General Collins had less success in persuading Diem to surrender the Interior Ministry, for no candidate could be found with the necessary qualities of honesty, patriotism, and technical competence. General Ely proposed the old French favorites, Tam and Vien, but Diem pointed out that Tam was the complete antithesis of everything the Diem government stood for. Diem believed that Vien would also be an unfortunate choice since, apart from his unsavory personal reputation, his appointment would be politically dangerous. The Binh Xuyen already controlled the Saigon police, and to extend its police powers to the entire country by giving Vien the Interior Ministry would immeasurably enhance the Binh Xuyen's ability to challenge the supremacy of the government.[48]

Moreover, Diem himself did not wish to relinquish direct control of the Interior Ministry. Diem believed that he alone had adequate knowledge of both central and southern Vietnam; and he was convinced that he should have at least one major operating department under his personal control.[49] Therefore the Ministry of the Interior remained under Diem's personal direction.

General Collins considered the unsuccessful outcome of this effort a major setback. But this failure was offset somewhat, by an encouraging advance in the plan to reinforce the executive arm of the government with a legislative arm. By February, prospects were bright for incorporating a national assembly, albeit a primitive one by US standards, into the Vietnamese governmental structure.

A Provisional National Assembly

General Collins was convinced that a provisional national assembly of some sort ought to be constituted as quickly as possible. An assembly was necessary not only to give the Diem government a measure of democratic backing, but to provide a training ground for future political leaders. Accordingly, this item had been given a prominent place on the seven-point agenda drawn up by Generals Collins and Ely. But finding the exact formula to govern the composition and functions of the assembly was not an easy task. It was contemplated that the

48. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1906 to State, 20 Nov 54; 2285, 15 Dec 54; 2234, 17 Dec 54.
49. (S) Msg, Saigon 1906 to State, 20 Nov 54.

interim body would serve until security conditions permitted genuine national elections for a constituent assembly. It was important that the provisional assembly be as representative as possible without opening a Pandora's box of irresponsible discussion by politically inexperienced deputies. The assembly also had to have enough power to justify its existence, but not enough to cause complications for the struggling government of Premier Diem.

While the staffs of Generals Collins and Ely were drawing up plans for such an assembly, the Vietnamese themselves had not been idle. The Minister of Reform on 25 November had presented the Cabinet with a draft decree outlining a proposed assembly. In succeeding weeks, this draft underwent four revisions as attempts were made to resolve the differences between the Vietnamese concept and that of the US and French staffs.

The first conflict of opinion arose over the representative character of the assembly. Both Generals Collins and Ely believed that, if the assembly were to provide an element of democracy for the Diem government and a forum for the development of political talent, its elective character was more important than extensive powers. But the original Vietnamese concept had provided only that deputies from the north, south, and center of South Vietnam be nominated by Diem and approved by Bao Dai. This provision was subsequently changed to provide that 91 assemblymen be chosen by Diem after consultation with the municipal and provincial councilors, and 130 after consultation with the sects and other special interest groups. The Vietnamese plan still did not give the assembly a very solid popular foundation. But in the end Diem conceded more than had been expected. He agreed to an assembly chosen by municipal and village councilors, who had been elected to their offices in 1953. General Collins believed this plan to be as democratic as conditions in South Vietnam permitted at the time.[50]

A second area of disagreement concerned the nature of powers and prerogatives of the assembly. In General Collins'

50. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2022 to State, 30 Nov 54; 2259, 14 Dec 54; 2583, 5 Jan 55. (C) Msg, Saigon 3451 to State, 17 Feb 55.

opinion, the powers of the assembly had to be strictly limited and carefully defined. The Vietnamese, he reasoned, were still politically immature and had no democratic traditions. To give the assembly important powers, or vaguely defined powers, would invite even greater political chaos than already existed.[51]

Diem wished to delegate to the assembly greater constituent power than General Collins thought prudent. The Premier intended the assembly to draft, within three months, a provisional charter delineating the establishment of governmental institutions until such time as an elected constituent assembly drew up a permanent constitution. General Collins argued that this would involve defining the position of Bao Dai in the governmental hierarchy, and with a conflict between Diem and the sects apparently in the offing, this was decidedly not the time to antagonize the Chief of State. Although Diem seemed inclined to challege Bao Dai regardless of consequences, he finally accepted the advice of General Collins. As a result, restrictions denying the assembly all constituent powers were carefully written into the decree.[52]

In contrast to the position he had taken on constituent powers, Diem insisted on narrowly limiting the powers and functions of the assembly. The US officials concerned believed that such circumscription would unavoidably lead to the charge that the assembly was a meaningless institution without influence. The focal point of this issue was the assembly's right of interpellation. The original draft decree had provided for interpellation in all matters of foreign and domestic policy. This was modified in the second draft to prohibit debate or vote following the government's reply to interpellation. Finally, the right to ask questions was substituted for the right of interpellation.[53] Clearly, Diem did not want to create an assembly that might turn on him. Despite General Collins' arguments, Diem would not give in. Although the final revision of the decree did provide for interpellation, it still forbade discussion or vote on the

51. (S) Msg, Saigon 2259 to State, 14 Dec 54.
52. (S) Msg, Saigon 2583 to State, 5 Jan 55. (C) Msg, Saigon 3451 to State, 17 Feb 55.
53. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2022 to State, 30 Nov 54; 2259, 14 Dec 54; 2583, 4 Jan 55.

answer of the government. In addition to this limited privilege the decree permitted the assembly to discuss matters referred to it by the Premier and approve and supervise execution of the budget.[54]

Although the fifth draft still contained many defects, both Generals Collins and Ely felt it the best they were likely to get, and the Cabinet approved this version early in February. The delicate question then arose over who was to sign the decree, Diem or Bao Dai. This was satisfactorily resolved when Bao Dai obligingly authorized Diem, "by delegation of powers," to sign it. The Diem government made the decree public on 16 February, and the Minister of Reform optimistically announced that the assembly might be convened within six weeks. General Collins believed that, all in all, a substantial step forward had been taken.[55] Fortunately for Diem, the step came at a time when the United States was wavering in its resistance to French efforts to abandon him. Along with other evidence of South Vietnam's progress, Diem's approval of plans for a national assembly led the United States to reaffirm its support of the Premier.

The Question of Diem's Replacement

The replacement of Diem was an issue that had clouded US-French relations for some time. The French had acquiesced in retention of Diem as Premier only because of US insistence, but Diem's Francophobia, his galling personality, and his inability to stabilize the situation in South Vietnam were sources of constant irritation to France. Nevertheless, at Washington in mid-November, Premier Mendes-France reaffirmed the Smith-La Chambre agreement of 29 September 1954, in which the United States and France had pledged themselves to support the Diem government. In doing so, however, M. Mendes-France said that, before long, replacement of Diem would have to be seriously studied. If he failed to put an energetic program into execution within one or two months the United States and France would have to consider jettisoning him.[56] This

54. (C) Msg, Saigon 3451 to State, 17 Feb 55.
55. Ibid.
56. (S) Msgs, State 2055 to Saigon, 20 Nov 54; 2112, 24 Nov 54.

was the signal for heavy French pressure on all fronts aimed at weakening US determination to back Diem. In a US-French review of policy toward Indochina a month later, and through the Foreign Office in Paris and the Embassy in Washington, the French made clear their conviction that the time had come for a change.

Finding the United States would not accept the elevation of Prince Buu Hoi to Diem's place, the French brought up other proposals. One alternative they favored was to have Bao Dai designate a "Viceroy" with full authority to use the powers of the Chief of State for the purpose of unifying the disparate political forces. The French suggested that Tran Van Huu, Nguyen Van Tam, or perhaps Dr. Quat could perform this mission.[57] A second formula contemplated the immediate return to South Vietnam of Bao Dai himself. The Chief of State would form a government with Huu as Premier, Tam as Interior Minister, and Quat as Defense Minister. France had already received assurances that Huu would accept such an appointment and that Tam would consent to join his government.[58] Huu meanwhile was in Saigon busily plotting to bring about such an eventuality. He was reported to have summoned representatives of various political groups to inquire what posts they would require in the "Huu Government," and was even alleged to have offered twenty million piasters to Hoa Hao dissident General Lam Than Nguyen for his support.[59]

The French were not alone in their adverse judgment of Diem. Ambassador Heath had found his political and administrative capabilities distinctly limited. From the first General Collins had been skeptical about Diem's capacity to lead Vietnam through its crisis, and on 13 December he suggested that the Department of State consider three alternative plans that might be put into operation should Diem fail to show improvement. None offered much promise. First, Bao Dai could be urged to name Quat Premier. This admittedly was a long shot, for Quat's liabilities were many. But with full support of Bao Dai, General Collins believed, Quat might have a chance. Second, Bao Dai himself could return under a "state of emergency." This would have to be accompanied by convincing and dramatic evidence that Bao Dai had reformed,

57. (U) Msg, Paris 2601 to State, 19 Dec 54.
58. (S) Msg, Paris 2987 to State, 14 Jan 55.
59. (S) Msg, Saigon 2894 to State, 22 Jan 55.

and he would have to establish a government of capable, honest, and patriotic men. Finally, if neither of these solutions were thought advisable, the United States might withdraw from Vietnam altogether. Although the third possibility was not at all desirable, General Collins concluded, "in all honesty and in view of what I have observed to date it is possible this may be /the/ only solution."[60]

By 17 December, General Collins had become convinced that Diem lacked the leadership to unify the country and translate his fine words into concrete deeds. This conviction was strengthened by the Premier's failure to appoint Quat to the Defense Ministry. General Collins therefore recommended that the United States, while continuing to support Diem a short while longer, urgently consider the return of Bao Dai. He suggested that, if this was unacceptable to US policymakers, the United States should re-evaluate its programs in South Vietnam. In addition, he proposed that, if the situation continued without substantial improvement, the United States withhold support to the VNA and increase its support of the FEC while evacuating its MDAP materiel.[61]

The Department of State, however, was reluctant to countenance General Collins' proposals. Ambassador Heath, who was in Washington, told Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson that "General Collins' recommendations ignore the basic factor that we would assist a Communist takeover by a withholding of our aid, even if it must necessarily be given to a government which is less than perfect." Ambassador Heath also pointed out to Assistant Secretary Robertson that the Secretary of State had analyzed the situation in South Vietnam as "a time buying operation" in which the United States must attempt to stave off the communist takeover while it strengthened Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand.[62]

Moreover, consultations with Senator Mike Mansfield had revealed that Congressional opinion would not accept such action. In a recent conversation with Assistant Secretary Robertson, Senator Mansfield had concluded that although the

60. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2250 to State, 13 Dec 54.
61. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2303 to State, 17 Dec 54.
62. (U) Memo, Heath to Robertson, "Comments on Saigon Telegram 2303," 17 Dec 54, Pentagon Papers, vol. 10, pp. 824-825.

prospects for helping Diem strengthen South Vietnam were "dim" at best, the United States should, nevertheless, "continue to exert its efforts and use its resources"--even at great cost--to hold Vietnam since any other course would have a disastrous effect on Cambodia, Laos, and the rest of Southeast Asia. He believed that the United States should continue to support Diem (regardless of his weaknesses as an administrator and his inability to delegate responsibility), should put pressure on Bao Dai to stop his long distance "wire pulling," and should prevent the Chief of State's return to Vietnam if possible.[63]

On 19 December, Secretary Dulles discussed the problem with Premier Mendes-France and General Ely in Paris. Although admitting that Diem had been a disappointment, Secretary Dulles declared that the United States and France had to exhaust all pressure on him before considering alternatives. Nonetheless, the Secretary of State agreed that Generals Collins and Ely should study alternative plans and also the time of Diem's replacement.[64] The French chose to interpret Secretary Dulles' position as a US commitment to consider a change, with which Bao Dai would be associated, by 15 January 1955. The United States stoutly denied having committed itself to a deadline or to any formula definitely involving Bao Dai. The French just as stoutly insisted that this was the tenor of the conversations and that, in any case, Generals Collins and Ely had a mandate to study alternatives and report to their respective governments.[65]

Upon his return to Washington, Secretary Dulles reviewed for General Collins in Saigon and Ambassador Dillon in Paris what he considered to be the basic factors of the Vietnam problem and spelled out the guidelines for future US action. "Although there are many complex and difficult factors confronting Free Viet-Nam," Dulles stated, "there is no reason to admit defeat. During the past five months since Geneva, the situation has not disintegrated. The people are fundamentally anti-Communist . . . . In some ways developments may be better

63. (U) Memo of Conversation, Senator Mike Mansfield, Asst SecState Walter S. Robertson, et al., "Vietnam and Southeast Asia," 7 Dec 54, ibid., pp. 806-808.
64. (U) Msg, Paris 2601 to State, 19 Dec 54.
65. (S) Msg, State 2872 to Saigon, 13 Jan 55. (TS) Msg, Paris 3034 to State, 18 Jan 55.

than we predicted." With respect to the future, Secretary Dulles stated that the United States must create such a situation that the Viet Minh could take over only by internal violence, adding that investment in Vietnam was justified even if only to buy time. Bao Dai's return would not solve the problem, Secretary Dulles told General Collins and, consequently, the United States had no choice but to continue its aid to Vietnam and support Diem. He also stated that revitalization of the VNA would give hope for an improved security condition and that the United States should exploit the land reform issue.[66]

Even as the discussion of these differences continued, the United States was in the midst of a reappraisal of its position in South Vietnam. General Collins' fear that the United States might soon be faced with the choice of supporting Bao Dai's return or withdrawing from South Vietnam altogether had prompted another review within the US Government of its Indochina policy.

Re-evaluation of US Policy

Review of US policy toward Vietnam began in the Department of Defense early in January 1955. Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, surveying the latest developments in Vietnam, on 5 January advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a delicate and unstable situation prevailed in South Vietnam, and that it was necessary for the Department of Defense to be prepared for any eventuality. Accordingly, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to examine, and submit their views on, possible courses of action open to the United States.[67]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered this question on 21 January, but declared that they were not in a position to recommend the course of action the United States ought to pursue in South Vietnam. Although national policy prescribed making every effort to save South Vietnam, the degree to which

66. (U) Msg, State 2585 to Saigon, 24 Dec 54, Pentagon Papers, vol. 10, pp. 853-855.
67. (TS) Memo, SecDef to JCS, "Reconsideration of U.S. Military Programs in Southeast Asia," 5 Jan 55, Encl to JCS 1992/431, same date, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 1.

the United States was prepared to support that policy in men, money, materials, and additional war risks had not become apparent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They stated that before they could recommend courses of action in Vietnam, a firm decision on these matters at the national level was mandatory.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff saw four possible courses of action open to the United States. First, the United States, with the cooperation of France and Vietnam, could continue aid as currently being developed. Second, the United States could institute, through an advisory system, a unilateral program of direct guidance to the Vietnamese Government, making assistance dependent upon Vietnamese adherence to US direction. If neither of these courses of action proved adequate to insure the viability of South Vietnam, self-sustaining US forces might be deployed to Indochina, either unilaterally or as part of a Manila Pact force. Finally, the United States could withdraw all support from South Vietnam and concentrate on saving the remainder of Southeast Asia.

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff declined to recommend a favored course, they made clear the implications for the United States if the rest of Vietnam fell to the communists. Laos and Cambodia would probably be lost through subversion soon afterward. A friendly government could perhaps be maintained in Thailand, but only through a greatly expanded US aid program. Clearly the fall of South Vietnam would heighten the chance that US armed forces would be required to support US policy in Southeast Asia.[68]

A week after the JCS discussion of South Vietnam, General Collins, who was on a visit to Washington, gave the National Security Council essentially the same appraisal in even more positive terms. The General no longer thought that the United States should consider complete withdrawal from Vietnam. "In view of the importance of Vietnam to all of Southeast Asia," he advised the Council:

> I am convinced that the United States should expend the funds, material, and effort required

68. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Reconsideration of US Military Program, Southeast Asia," 21 Jan 55 (derived from JCS 1992/438), same file, sec 2.

> to strengthen the country and help it retain its independence. I cannot guarantee that Vietnam will remain free, even with our aid. But I know that without our aid Vietnam will surely be lost to Communism. If the chances of success are difficult to calculate, the results of a withdrawal would hasten the rate of Communist advances in the Far East as a whole and could result in the loss of Southeast Asia to Communism. In my opinion the chance of success is not only worth the gamble; we cannot afford to let free Vietnam go by default.[69]

General Collins was no longer as convinced in January as he had been in December that Diem should be superseded. The Premier had demonstrated in recent weeks that he was capable of making some progress. Through Defense Minister Minh, Diem had done much to patch up his feud with the army, and the way was almost clear for inauguration of a US training program for the VNA. Diem had begun an energetic campaign against graft and corruption in political circles, and his closing of the Binh Xuyen's palatial gambling establishment, the Grand Monde, had been received with approbation at home and abroad. He had made encouraging advances on land reform programs, and the plans for a national assembly were approaching completion. Even more spectacular had been Diem's visits to the provinces, where, surprisingly, he had been enthusiastically received as the champion of Vietnamese independence.[70]

These successes, though modest, still offered hope that Diem might be able to unify South Vietnam. Despite lingering doubts concerning Diem's ability to build popular confidence in his government, General Collins advised the National Security Council that, everything considered, "Diem's integrity, strong nationalism, tenacity, and spiritual qualities render him the best available Prime Minister to lead Vietnam in its struggle against Communism."[71]

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69. (TS) Collins Report to NSC.
70. (S) Msg, Saigon 2562 to State, 4 Jan 55. (C) Msgs, Saigon 2568 to State, 4 Jan 55; 2703, 11 Jan 55. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 3039 to State, 30 Jan 55.
71. (TS) Collins Report to NSC.

As a result of General Collins' recommendations, the National Security Council endorsed a strong US policy in Vietnam. The United States would continue to support the Diem government, and continue to press France to carry out the commitments made by La Chambre during the Washington Conference. The Council approved in principle the programs of military and economic aid drawn up to implement the recommendations of General Collins. Finally, the Council decided that, at the forthcoming Bangkok Conference, scheduled by the SEATO members for the last week of February to work out a formal treaty organization, the United States would seek reaffirmation by the Manila powers of their determination to react under the treaty if hostilities were resumed in Indochina. Patently, the United States intended to remain in South Vietnam.72

As General Collins flew back to Indochina, the US Charge d'Affairs in Saigon, Randolph Kidder, reported a noticeable relaxation of tension on the Vietnamese political scene. There was a "quickening of almost reluctant optimism," he said, which had been commented upon by numerous foreign observers. Diem's recent successes, together with the efforts of General Collins and the constancy of US support, thought Mr. Kidder, was responsible for the atmosphere of greater hope.73

Despite the optimism in Saigon, there was still much reason for concern. Diem, encouraged by his newly-discovered popularity in the provinces, had developed an exaggerated self-confidence and seemed anxious to take on all opponents at once. The drive to wipe out corruption was uniting the Premier's foes and inspiring in them even greater determination to eliminate him from the scene. All at the same time, Diem had investigations under way against former Presidents Tam, Xuan, Huu, and Buu Loc, as well as a number of less prominent public figures. As Mr. Kidder remarked, "hornets' nests seem to have an irresistible fascination for Diem." The war against corruption even had its effect on Bao Dai. Cannes became the headquarters of disgruntled Vietnamese politicians urging the Chief of State to dismiss Diem. Buu Loc, Buu Hoi, General

72. (TS) Memo, SecDef to JCS, et al., "Report on Vietnam for the National Security Council," 3 Feb 55, Encl to JCS 1992/447, 7 Feb 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 4.
73. (S) Msg, Saigon 3253 to State, 7 Feb 55.

Hinh, and Phan Van Giao, who had left Saigon a jump ahead of Diem's agents, were all in Cannes engaged in this activity. Bao Dai was reported to be resisting these blandishments, but his earlier sources of income were steadily diminishing. Diem's closure of the Grand Monde, from whose profits Bao Dai had reaped sizable returns, was an especially unpleasant blow to the Chief of State. Although for the time being he was faithfully adhering to the lines of US policy, Bao Dai's future cooperation was by no means assured.[74]

Of still more significance for the future was the growing hostility between the government and the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen. French subsidies to the sects had progressively diminished and were cut off entirely early in February. The National Army was unable to absorb all the sect troops and still remain within the force levels prescribed by the United States. All in all, the course of events seemed to be steadily closing in on the three sects, and their leaders were growing more and more restless.

In the seemingly inevitable conflict with the sects, however, Diem could take confidence from the fact that, once again, the United States appeared to be solidly behind his government.

74. (C) Msg, Saigon 2895 to State, 22 Jan 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 3102 to State, 1 Feb 55. (C) Msg, Paris 3092 to State, 21 Jan 55. (S) Msg, Paris 3316 to State, 7 Feb 55.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRISIS OF APRIL AND MAY 1955

By April 1955 the internal conflicts of South Vietnam had become so serious that they had to be resolved before the more important task of establishing a solidly anticommunist state could be continued. The most dangerous of these conflicts had developed between Prime Minister Diem and the sects.

The Sect Problem

As early as January 1955 it had become evident to US diplomats in Saigon that, sooner or later, either the sects or Premier Diem would have to give way. The three sects were strong and well organized. They were determined to retain at all costs their privileged position in Vietnamese life, and so powerful was their grip on the country that they had a good chance of succeeding. From key posts in the government, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao ministers could sabotage the reform programs drawn up by the French and Americans. The private armies of the sects, built up by the French during the war to fight the Viet Minh, were equipped with artillery, mortars, and machine guns. In those provinces administered by the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, their control of the population was absolute. In Saigon, law enforcement was exclusively the function of the Binh Xuyen.

Diem could not tolerate these conditions indefinitely without sacrificing the principles by which he attracted international support and with which he hoped to win the allegiance of the Vietnamese people. Although the sects argued that they were the strongest and most devotedly anticommunist groups in South Vietnam, their answer to communism was particularism. As a permanent solution, this was unacceptable not only to Diem but also to the United States. In the final

analysis, there was no place for the sects, with their undisguised ambition for power and wealth, in the political, economic, and social order that had to be created if South Vietnam were to win the ideological battle with communism, obtain foreign recognition, and retain US backing.

These were the factors underlying the growing tension between Diem and the sects. But the event that shook the sects from their complacency, and began the chain of circumstances culminating in the April revolt, was the French decision to stop paying subsidies for maintenance of their troops. Because the power of the sects rested on their private armies, this was a severe blow. With their primary source of income drying up, the sects were forced to turn to the Vietnamese Government for the necessary money.

Diem appreciated that the unpaid armies of the sects could be a genuine problem for the nation. He feared that at best the sects would increase their exactions from the population; at worst turn to large-scale banditry at a time when the forces of law and order were unprepared to cope with it. Therefore, the Premier began paying the sects part of the income they had formerly received from the French.[1] This measure was obviously not a long-term solution, however, and the sects were of course fully alert to the danger of their position. They resolved, according to the analysis of General Collins, upon three basic objectives designed to safeguard their interests.

The most important of these objectives was to preserve their private military forces by integrating, intact, as many sect units as possible into the National Army. The size of the VNA, however, was governed by the level of US aid, and the United States had consented to support no more than 88,000 men. By January 1955, only about 6,000 of the 30,000 to 40,000 Cao Dai and Hoa Hao troopers had been integrated, and

1. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2581 to State, 5 Jan 55.

it was clear that few more could be absorbed. In fact, there was every indication that, in executing the program for reducing the army, some of those already integrated would have to be discharged.

The second objective of the sects was to obtain governmental assistance to ease the transition to civil life of the sect troops who had to be demobilized. Generals Collins and Ely believed it desirable to provide severance pay for these troops and resettle them on confiscated lands. General Collins thought that if the French could furnish funds for severance pay, US aid might be used to finance a resettlement project. The two Generals agreed to establish a special working group within the Training Relations Instruction Mission (TRIM),[2] which was composed of US and French personnel charged with training the South Vietnamese armed forces. This group was to study the problem and draw up a plan that would be recommended to Diem.

The final objective actually constituted the crux of the sects' problem. The sects wanted recognition of their areas of influence together with assurances that, once their military strength was reduced, the government would not encroach on these areas. But this Diem had no intention of doing. On the contrary, his actions demonstrated that his plans for the future of Vietnam did not include an influential role for the sects. In fact, the Premier had already initiated a policy and program of applying gradually increasing pressure to the sects.[3]

Diem's anti-sect program alarmed the Hoa Hao in particular. The VNA moved into areas of central and southwestern Vietnam that the Hoa Hao considered its exclusive preserve, and, according to the Hoa Hao, deliberately provoked Hoa Hao troops. The Hoa Hao

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2. For further treatment of TRIM, see below, pp. 140-142.

3. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2581 to State, 5 Jan 55. (S) Msgs, Saigon 3797 to State, 10 Mar 55; 4373, 6 Apr 55.

leader Ba Cut responded by initiating open warfare against the government, and in turn the National Army mounted an all-out counteroffensive. Ba Cut had the sympathy and active support of old General Tran Van Soai, military chief of the Hoa Hao, who was also acting as a minister in the Diem government. Soai himself felt his power and authority slipping as a result of Diem's policies, especially after the Prime Minister won over two Hoa Hao dissidents, Colonels Ngo and Hue, together with their troops.[4]

The Hoa Hao were especially incensed by Diem's tactic of playing off the Cao Dai against the Hoa Hao. Principally, this took the form of concessions to the Cao Dai in the integration of its troops into the VNA - an act designed to win Cao Dai adherence in the contest with the Hoa Hao. From the viewpoint of the Hoa Hao the crowning blow came when its arch enemy, Cao Dai dissident Trinh Minh The, rallied to the government on the condition, allegedly, that his troops be employed in a campaign against Ba Cut.[5]

Although the Hoa Hao was on the verge of open warfare with the government and, in the case of Ba Cut, had already begun the war, it was the Binh Xuyen that constituted the most serious menace. Binh Xuyen commandos were concentrated in the capital city, where they posed an immediate threat to the Diem government. Moreover, Bay Vien, the leader of the Binh Xuyen, was a formidable adversary. He was the most ruthless, determined, and intelligent of all the sect chieftains. He believed that the United States was too interested in South Vietnam to withdraw its support even if Diem were overthrown, and he was determined to obtain, by one means or another, a new government that did not include Diem.[6]

4. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 2807 to State, 17 Jan 55. (S) Msgs, Saigon 3381 to State, 14 Feb 55; 3470, 18 Feb 55.
5. (S) Msgs, Saigon 3156 to State, 3 Feb 55; 3296, 9 Feb 55; 3470, 18 Feb 55.
6. (S) Msg, Saigon 4078 to State, 23 Mar 55.

Diem, for his part, had only contempt for Vien and his followers. The Premier had not yet applied as great pressure to the Binh Xuyen as to the Hoa Hao, but he had considerably reduced its commercial monopolies. Binh Xuyen control of the National Police and Surete especially rankled Diem, and he planned to regain the police for the government at the first opportunity. The United States, which could not reconcile itself to the idea of a band of former gangsters and pirates running the police apparatus, attempted to help Diem on this issue. The US Embassy in Paris suggested to Bao Dai that he revoke the decrees bestowing police powers on the Binh Xuyen. But Bao Dai replied that this move would not be likely to improve the political situation, and indeed would probably lead to further deterioration. Besides, he doubted that Diem had men capable of taking over responsibility for law enforcement.7

Through January and February the police issue loomed larger and larger in Diem's mind. It was only a question of time until he felt strong enough to challenge the Binh Xuyen, and it was improbable, in view of Bay Vien's attitude, that the Binh Xuyen would refuse the challenge when offered.

Even the Cao Dai, which Diem had chosen not to antagonize too openly, had grievances. The Cao Dai Pope, Pham Cong Tac, was bitterly hostile toward Diem, and made no effort to conceal his animosity. Tac, however, was losing influence with the military arm of the Cao Dai, and he was unable to force Generals Phuong and The, the principal temporal leaders, to turn on Diem. Phuong and The, probably for reasons of financial gain, kept the Cao Dai more or less behind the Diem government. But they too were having difficulties in maintaining their troops, and they trusted Diem's intentions little more than did the Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen.8

7. (S) Msg, Paris 3654 to State, 1 Mar 55.
8. (S) Msg, Saigon 3462 to State, 18 Feb 55.

Thus, all three sects felt confronted by a common threat to their existence. They had tried uniting against Diem in August 1954, but had failed to find ground for agreement. Once again, in the spring of 1955, they attempted to form an alliance aimed at supplanting the Diem government with one less hostile to their objectives.

The "United Front of Nationalist Forces"

On 4 March the Cao Dai Pope called a press conference in Saigon. Acting as spokesman for the leaders of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen, whose representatives were present, Tac announced the formation of the "United Front of Nationalist Forces." The Binh Xuyen political adviser read a declaration stating that the objectives of the new political group were to unify Vietnam, perfect its independence as a democracy, and assure its sovereignty. The declaration was obviously designed largely for US consumption, for it denounced feudalism and corruption, endorsed the Manila Pact, and refrained from directly attacking Premier Diem. Nevertheless, it frankly called for a new government, one based on "equitable, just and progressive foundations." Signing the declaration for the Hoa Hao were Generals Soai, Nguyen, and Ba Cut; for the Binh Xuyen, Bay Vien; and for the Cao Dai, Pham Cong Tac. Significantly absent among the signatures were those of Cao Dai Generals Phuong and Trinh Minh The, and the former Hoa Hao dissidents, Colonels Hue and Ngo. In fact, The and Ngo quickly issued public statements reaffirming their support of the Diem government.[9]

United States and French observers in Saigon took the declaration of the United Front as evidence that the sect opposition had switched to the political front. The danger of civil war, they thought, had abated. Diem appeared to be the least perturbed of all. He

9. (C) Msgs, Saigon 3754 to State, 8 Mar 55; 3861, 13 Mar 55.

recognized certain immediate and local dangers to his position, but to General Collins he did not seem greatly concerned by the apparent new unity among the sects.[10]

Diem's optimism soon seemed justified. The arrival of a delegation in Cannes to importune Bao Dai to withdraw Diem's powers as Premier followed closely the receipt by the Chief of State of a personal message from President Eisenhower outlining US objectives in Vietnam and the progress made by General Collins toward achieving these objectives. This message was immensely reassuring to the Chief of State, who in recent weeks had suffered a growing fear that the United States was preparing to eliminate him from the Vietnamese scene. As a result of this encouragement, Bao Dai denied the request of the sect representatives, and they returned to Saigon empty handed.[11]

The United Front next tried a more direct approach. At a second press conference in Saigon on 21 March, the Front released the text of a declaration and "motion," which had been sent to Diem the previous afternoon. The declaration recited all the familiar charges against Diem, attacking him for favoritism, partisanship, press censorship, a provocative and uncompromising attitude toward his opposition, and ineffectual foreign and domestic policies. The attached "motion" was a thinly veiled ultimatum. It "requested" Diem to "undertake within five days complete reorganization of the present cabinet and its replacement by a new cabinet with the approval of the United Front of Nationalist Forces." The ultimatum was signed by the same sect leaders, with the addition of Generals Phuong and The, as the declaration of 4 March. According to General The, who was present when these documents were drafted, a broad program of governmental action was to have been attached, but the sects had been unable to reach agreement. Again, they were finding it much easier to oppose existing programs than to propose new ones.[12]

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10. (S) Msgs, Saigon 3797 to State; 3812. 10 Mar 55. (S) Msg, USARMA Saigon MC 938-55 to DA for G-2, 15 Mar 55, DA IN 125334, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 6.

11. (C) Msg, State to Paris, 21 Feb 55. (S) Msgs, Paris 3654 to State, 1 Mar 55; 3896, 15 Mar 55.

12. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 4038 to State, 22 Mar 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 4050 to State, 23 Mar 55.

The same day, Diem discussed the latest maneuver of the United Front with his Cabinet, less the sect representatives, and all agreed that he could do nothing but refuse the demands of the sects. General Collins concurred and advised Diem to stand firm. The General also informed Diem that, although his failure to broaden the government made it difficult for the United States to continue to support him, US policy toward his government remained unchanged.[13]

Nevertheless, the defection of Phuong and The, whom Diem had been providing with liberal subsidies, was a heavy blow to the Premier. M. Michel Wintrebert, the French Charge d'Affaires, found Diem so profoundly depressed on the evening of 21 March that he appeared on the verge of giving up. This alarmed M. Wintrebert and, as General Ely was in Paris and Deputy Commissioner-General Daridan out of town, he decided to act on his own initiative. Without consulting General Collins, he cabled Paris recommending an immediate demarche to secure Bao Dai's intervention and "perhaps" his return to Indochina." The Foreign Office, supported by General Ely, urged the United States to join in such a move.[14]

But Diem recovered from his despondency, and General Collins, upon learning of M. Wintrebert's recommendation, cabled the Secretary of State that Bao Dai's return could accomplish nothing but cut the ground from under Diem. M. Daridan, who had returned to Saigon, made the same comment to Paris. Both recommended rejection of the proposal.[15]

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13. (S) Msg, Saigon 4050 to State, 23 Mar 55.
14. (S) Msgs, Paris 4050 to State, 23 Mar 55; Saigon 4084 to State, 24 Mar 55.
15. (S) Msgs, Saigon 4051 to State, 23 Mar 55; 4096, 24 Mar 55. Paradoxically, Wintrebert was the only important French official in Saigon who wholeheartedly believed in the policy of supporting Diem. General Collins, in explaining Wintrebert's conduct, said: "I believe Wintrebert, who is really a fine young man friendly to Diem, became a bit panicky after talking to Diem evening 21st."

The French, however, still believed that the only avenue out of the crisis was to use Bao Dai as mediator between Diem and the sects. This could be accomplished, they said, by either having Bao Dai return to Vietnam or having him summon Diem and the sect leaders to Cannes to negotiate their differences. The US Government believed it far more appropriate that a joint declaration be issued to the sects warning them that the United States and France were opposed to violence. The warning should contain the statement that the FEC would prevent movement of sect troops to reinforce the Binh Xuyen in Saigon. General Collins had been trying for a week to get General Ely to agree to employ French troops for this purpose, for he was convinced that Vien would not challenge the government by arms if he could not count on assistance by Hoa Hao troops. General Ely, supported by Paris, made it clear that the FEC would be used only to protect the lives and property of French and foreign nationals.[16]

The French next proposed that Generals Collins and Ely present the text of a joint demarche to both Diem and the sects urging moderation and compromise. The United States Government pointed out that such a move would put the sects on the same plane with Diem. It was absolutely necessary, the Department of State emphasized, to uphold the authority of the central government. The sects were rebels and should be treated as such. Both General Collins and Deputy Commissioner Daridan advised that the joint approach not be made. They agreed that they had already informed Diem and the sects of every point contained in the text of the proposed demarche.[17]

General Collins, in fact, had called in Phuong and The and lectured them rather sternly on the absurdity of demanding a solution in five days. Certainly, he

16. (S) Msgs, State 3384 to Paris, 25 Mar 55; Saigon 4096 to State, 24 Mar 55; Paris 4070 to State, 23 Mar 55; 4108, 24 Mar 55; 4151, 26 Mar 55.

17 (S) Msgs, Paris 4107 to State, 24 Mar 55; Saigon 4123 to State, 24 Mar 55; State 3384 to Paris, 25 Mar 55; State 4197 to Saigon, 28 Mar 55.

pointed out, they could not expect the United States to continue supplying funds for troop support if they overthrew the government by violence. Subsequently, General Collins stated that discussion with the two generals was like trying to reason with small children. But his lecture apparently had some effect, for General The soon withdrew from the United Front, declaring that he had only jointed it to exercise a moderating influence on the other members.[18]

As the deadline imposed by the United Front expired, the situation became highly explosive. The sect leaders refused to extend the deadline or to meet with Diem. The Premier moved reinforcements into Saigon and converted the grounds of the Presidential Palace into an armed camp. Battalions of Vien's green-bereted commandos concentrated in the southwestern section of the capital, while Hoa Hao troops occupied positions on the highways leading south from Saigon.[19]

Fighting in Cholon, 29-30 March

Diem chose this moment to challenge the Binh Xuyen. Just before dawn of 28 March, a tank-led company of National Army soldiers staged a bloodless coup that won Diem physical control of the Central Police headquarters, near the arroyo separating Saigon from the Chinese community of Cholon. The Binh Xuyen guards did not resist, but withdrew into the adjoining police school to await orders from Bay Vien. Next day, Diem informed Defense Minister Minh that he intended that afternoon to replace the Binh Xuyen police commissioner with his own appointee and to occupy the Surete headquarters in central Saigon. Minh protested that Diem should first consult his Cabinet. The Premier refused and Minh submitted his resignation on the spot. When General Ely learned of Diem's intention, he sent M. Wintrebert and General Pierre Jacquot to reason with him. They were more successful than Minh, and Diem agreed to defer his move against the Surete.[20]

18. (S) Msg, Saigon 4070 to State, 23 Mar 55. (LOU) Msg, Saigon 4157 to State, 28 Mar 55.
19. (S) Msg, USARMA Saigon MC 945-55 to DA for G-2, 27 Mar 55, DA IN 128188, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 6. NY Times, 27 Mar 55, p. 33.
20. (S) Msg, Saigon 4192 to State, 29 Mar 55. Washington Post, 29 Mar 55, p. 4.

This was a fortunate decision for the Prime Minister, for on the night of 29-30 March the Binh Xuyen struck. They thus stamped themselves as rebels attacking the legal government.

Shortly after midnight Binh Xuyen commandos, whom Diem's soldiers had driven from Central Police headquarters on 28 March, counterattacked in an attempt to regain their stronghold. About eighty Binh Xuyen soldiers, supported by mortar fire, stormed the police compound, but were repulsed by National Army paratroopers and later driven from the neighborhood. Another Binh Xuyen force attacked National Army headquarters on nearby Boulevard Gallieni, but this assault also was beaten off by VNA defenders. At the same time, mortar shells fell in the grounds of the Presidential Palace, wounding a number of Vietnamese soldiers. When government forces moved to retaliate by attacking the Surete headquarters, still in Binh Xuyen hands, the French ordered the National Army to remain on the defensive and, to insure compliance, temporarily cut off gasoline and ammunition supplies. By 0330 fighting had ceased.[21]

The aggression of the Binh Xuyen made Diem more than ever determined to destroy its power. Now that Vien had resorted to violence, Diem saw no alternative except to remove control of the National Police and Surete from the Binh Xuyen Director General, Lai Van Sang, as quickly as possible. The government, he told General Ely, could not escape its responsibilities. The Binh Xuyen had to be disarmed or wiped out, and the VNA had enough strength in Saigon to carry out this mission.[22]

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21. (S) Msg, Saigon 4213 to DA, 30 Mar 55, DA IN 128901. NY Times, 30 Mar 55, p. 1. General Ely initially denied the government reports that General Jacquot had interfered with Vietnamese troop movements. He declared that the VNA had been issued without question all the gasoline and ammunition it had requested. However, a few days later, Ely remarked that the French had never restricted gasoline or ammunition "except for a few hours" during the fighting of 29-30 March. (S) Msg, Saigon 4292 to State, 2 Apr 55. (TS) Msg, Saigon 4349 to State, 6 Apr 55.

22. (S) Msg, Saigon 4230 to State, 30 Mar 55.

General Ely was emphatically opposed. The army could take the Surete headquarters at any time, he told General Collins; that was not the issue. The important point was that Diem did not have sufficient strength to defeat the sects decisively and rapidly throughout the country. And if Diem used force, a long and bloody civil war would inevitably result. Angered by Diem's attitude, General Ely declared that Diem was suffering from hallucinations and was on the verge of megalomania. Diem had no appreciation of the means at his disposal, yet he was ready to "put the city to sword and flame to establish his authority." General Ely believed it would be criminal for the French to get mixed up in a civil war, and he stated that he would do no more than separate the opposing forces if asked to intervene. On the other hand, he asserted with some inconsistency, he intended to maintain order even if it entailed placing Diem under arrest.[23]

General Collins, while urging moderation, sympathized with Diem. He believed the Binh Xuyen had taken action to demonstrate that Diem could not control the country; and, if Diem did not remove Police Director General Sang and fight back, he would have to knuckle under to the sects and let them maintain their feudal systems. If General Collins had been in Diem's place, he told General Ely, he would have met the Binh Xuyen challenge by shelling Binh Xuyen headquarters and going after Bay Vien personally. The French, however, already had a different interpretation of the events of 29-30 March, one that coincided substantially with that of the United Front. The Binh Xuyen, said the French, might not have been the aggressors after all. There was reason for believing that the National Army had begun hostilities and the Binh Xuyen had only acted in self-defense.[24]

This distortion by the French was merely the first in a series of actions that, in the US view, seemed illogical. In subsequent weeks, the French bent the facts to fit their desires and then based official decisions on them. The explanation of this French behavior lay, apparently, in the

23. Ibid., (S) Msg, Saigon 4264 to State, 31 Mar 55; 4292, 2 Apr 55.

24. (S) Msgs, Saigon 4220 to State, 4230, 30 Mar 55; 4241, 31 Mar 55; 4292, 2 Apr 55.

vicious war of words the French and Vietnamese press had been waging for many weeks. The French had become so sensitive to the intemperate attacks on "colonialism," for which they held Diem responsible, that they were predisposed in favor of Diem's opponents regardless of political complexion.

Diem found himself in an unenviable position. The crisis had quickened the disintegration of his government and revealed flaws in the top military command. Ho Thong Minh had already resigned from the Defense Ministry in protest against Diem's policies. Four Hoa Hao cabinet members now resigned, and, despite elaborate ceremonies on 31 March integrating Cao Dai forces into the National Army, four Cao Dai ministers also resigned. Foreign Minister Do and his followers submitted their resignations, then withdrew them. But they ceased to be consulted by Diem or to have any influence upon him. The Inspector General of the National Army, Nguyen Van Vy, made no secret of his opposition to using the army against the Binh Xuyen, and publicly expressed the French view that the government had attacked the Binh Xuyen first. General Collins reported that Army Chief of Staff Le Van Ty was proving to be in this emergency the "weak reed we feared he might be." Diem now more than ever was operating a one-man government and, except for his brothers, stood virtually alone in his determination to resist the sects.[25]

On 31 March, both the government and the Binh Xuyen accepted French General Jean Gambiez as mediator, and a forty-eight hour truce was arranged. Several de facto extensions lengthened the truce through April, but tension continued to mount in Saigon, heightened by almost daily incidents. Generals Collins and Ely, as well as Washington and Paris, sought to find a solution that would resolve the sect problem.

The Recommendations of Generals Collins and Ely

To the men on the scene, it seemed that Diem simply was incapable of changing his methods sufficiently to form

25. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 4263 to State, 31 Mar 55; 4348, 5 Apr 55.

or maintain anything but a rubber-stamp cabinet. He had alienated almost every political group in Vietnam and antagonized the French community. Only the United States and General Ely, much against his personal predilections, stood behind Diem. Generals Collins and Ely soon concluded, however, that a major political change was essential if civil war were to be averted.

It was General Ely who now raised the question of Diem's replacement. He met with General Collins on 7 April, with no French staff present. Diem, he said, could no longer be maintained as Premier except by overcoming enormous difficulties. After a full day of "soul searching," General Ely continued, he was forced to conclude that, in order to preserve Vietnam for the free world, Diem had to be replaced. He was preapred to accept anyone but Diem, and this was his final conclusion.[26]

General Collins was reaching a similar conclusion. In fact, as early as 31 March he had informed the Department of State that it was necessary again to consider alternates to Diem.[27] Following his conversation with General Ely on 7 April, General Collins wrote Secretary of State Dulles as follows:

> Even before receiving your kind letter I had been considering writing you personally as to my estimate of President Diem's chances of successfully remaining as President of Viet Nam. I have just filed a despatch giving General Ely's final views on this point. You and the President are entitled to my judgment in light of this and other recent events.
>
> As you know, I have been doing everything within my power to assist Diem in accordance with my original directive from the President and subsequent instructions from you and the Department. In various messages, and in my January report, I have indicated my growing

26. (TS) Msg, Saigon 4382 to State, 7 Apr 55.
27. (TS) Msg, Saigon 4263 to State, 31 Mar 55.

doubts as to Diem's capacity for leadership under the difficult and complex conditions existing in Viet Nam.

I must say now that my judgment is that Diem does not have the capacity to achieve the necessary unity of purpose and action from his people which is essential to prevent this country from falling under Communist control. I say this with great regret, but with firm conviction.

During the five months that I have been here I have come to admire Diem greatly in many ways. He has valuable spiritual qualities, is incorruptible, is a devoted nationalist, has great tenacity. However these qualities, linked with his lack of practical political sense, his inability to compromise his inherent incapacity to get along with other able men, and his tendency to be suspicious of the motives of any one who disagrees with him, make him practically incapable of holding this government together. As I have often pointed out, he pays more attention to the advice of his brothers Luyen and Nhu than he does to General Ely or me. He has consistently failed to decentralize responsibility to his ministers, or to consult with them in advance of reaching important decisions. This has resulted in the resignation of the few able men in his cabinet who were not repeat not "yes men."

I agree with the appraisal of General Ely and of men like Dr. Quat, Do and Minh, that Diem will not succeed in getting any new men of ability to join even a reorganized government. Damaging as the above facts are, perhaps even more serious is the President's apparent incapacity for creative thinking and planning. At no time since I have been here has he offered to me a single constructive thought of his volition. All of the progressive programs which we have attributed to him

have in fact been developed through the cooperative efforts of General Ely and me, and our staffs. I am still not sure whether Diem really grasps the full significance of these programs, or the great difficulties of implementing them.

Instead of sticking to the clear but difficult road leading to the conversion of these paper plans into accomplished facts, Diem has been ever ready like Don Quixote to dash off on side excursions to tilt with windmills. And while bent on these excursions, whether they be to displace officers of the Army whom he regarded as loyal to General Hinh, to take action against Soai or Ba Cut, or to relieve a police chief, he loses all sense of direction toward the essential goals, and it is almost impossible to bring him back to the high road. We have had many such tiltings.

In summary, despite his several fine qualities, it is my considered judgment that the man lacks the personal qualities of leadership and the executive ability successfully to head a government that must compete with the unity of purpose and efficiency of the Viet Minh under Ho Chi Minh.

In saying this I hasten to add that I do not believe that Diem is indispensible for the accomplishment of our purposes in Viet Nam, that is, to save the country from Communism. Programs which General Ely and I have developed are, I believe, sound and susceptible of accomplishment. But our successors here must have a President and a Cabinet to work with, which to some degree will talk our language and will stick steadfastly to the implementation of these programs.

I believe that Tran Van Do or Dr. Quat could form and successfully head such a government.

If our government should accept such a change, I would urge that we stipulate as a prior condition the removal, by President Diem with the complete support of Bao Dai, of the control of the National Police and Surete from the Binh Xuyen. You may feel that if this is done, Diem should be given further time to see whether he can broaden his government and speed up progress. I believe it would be better not to wait. By having saved a certain amount of face for Diem by the transfer of police powers from the Binh Xuyen we should then accede to the appointment of Do or Quat as President of the country."

. . . .

I fully appreciate /the/ gravity of the recommendations I have made above. I need not tell you with what a heavy heart I file this message. However, it is by no means with a feeling of defeat for our objective here. I still feel that under proper native leadership, which can be had, the programs which we have initiated can still be made effective and can save Viet Nam from Communism.[28]

The Secretary of State, in reply, indicated that he could not see how replacement of Diem would solve the problem of the sects. Any successor to Diem with qualities that would warrant continued US support would still have the sects to contend with. Moreover, a change in premiers would be damaging to US prestige throughout the Far East. The United States would be charged with paying lip service to the cause of Asian nationalism, then abandoning a nationalist leader when "colonial interests" applied enough pressure. An additional consideration was the pro-Diem sentiment in Congress. The Mutual Security Bill was being debated, and Senator Mansfield made it clear that Congress would be reluctant to appropriate funds for

28. (TS) Msg, Saigon 4399 to State, 7 Apr 55.

Vietnam if Diem were superseded. Nevertheless, Secretary Dulles was willing to consider a change in US policy if General Collins would fly to Washington for consultations with Department of State officials and congressional leaders.[29]

Even before receipt of General Collins' views, Secretary Dulles had been under strong pressure from Paris to unseat Diem. The United States was informed in blunt terms that the US policy of maintaining and strengthening Diem was wholly unrealistic. The time had come for formation of a government responsive to the dominant political forces of Vietnam. The French had in mind the creation of a "Conseil Superieur." This body would be composed of representatives of Diem and his supporters, the sects (Cao Dai Pope, for example), intellectuals (Buu Hoi, the French suggested), politicians (Tam, Huu, and Quat), and the army (General Hinh). The supreme council would formulate policy to be executed by a cabinet of "nonpolitical" technicians headed by Diem. The United States rejected this formula, and replied that Franco-US policy should be to let Diem strike back at the Binh Xuyen with force, and to support him both morally and logistically in this move.[30]

Despite this ostensible support of Diem, the United States, following General Collins' proposal to switch premiers, decided to explore possible alternative solutions with France, and addressed to the Foreign Office a series of questions designed to elicit a concrete French plan. The United States asked the French who should succeed Diem, when the change would take place, how it would be accomplished, what would be done about removing the police from the Binh Xuyen, and how support of the new government by the sects would be assured. The French reply was that the answers to these questions should be developed jointly by the United States and France. For the French alone to answer the questions would be to depart from the agreed

29. (TS) Msgs, State 4438 to Saigon, 9 Apr 55; 4466, 11 Apr 55; 4575, 16 Apr 55.

30. (S) Msgs, Paris 4200 to State, 28 Mar 55; 4281, 4285, 2 Apr 55. (TS) Msgs Paris 4328 to State, 5 Apr 55; 4395, 9 Apr 55; State 3510 to Paris, 4 Apr 55.

policy of achieving a joint Franco-US approach to Indochinese problems. Unless this policy were continued, said the Foreign Office, France would have to state publicly that the United States was now fully responsible for developments in Vietnam.[31]

The United States stood firm, however, and the French, increasingly apprehensive over the mounting tension in Saigon, at length submitted answers to the US questions. They still declined to propose a successor to Diem, declaring that this must be the result of joint consultations. But they did outline, on 17 April, a plan by which a change might be accomplished. Generals Collins and Ely would prepare a slate of acceptable candidates for the premiership and various cabinet posts. Washington and Paris would reach agreement on this list and submit it to Bao Dai. The Chief of State would then summon representatives of the contending factions to Cannes and, on the basis of French and US recommendations, negotiate a solution, including the transfer of the police from the Binh Xuyen to the government. Support of the new government by the sects would be assured by their membership in a high council, together with a program of honors, indemnification, and integration of sect troops into the National Army.[32]

In Saigon, meanwhile, French officials became more and more adamant in their view that Diem must be replaced, calling his removal the will of the Vietnamese people. But General Collins pointed out that this was merely an opinion since there was no way to determine the Vietnamese will. He further noted that it would be difficult to explain Diem's ouster to the American people, adding that US congressional reaction could not be predicted. Despite this, General Collins himself was finding Diem harder and harder to do business with. On 20 April, after reporting to Washington that Diem was willing to agree, but only on his own narrow terms, to a proposal that he participate in a coalition government, General Collins informed Secretary Dulles, "I see no alternative to the early replacement of Diem."[33]

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31. (TS) Msg, State 3622 to Paris, 12 Apr 55. (TS) Msg, Paris 4498 to State, 16 Apr 55.
32. (TS) Msg, Paris 4503 to State, 17 Apr 55.
33. (U) Msgs, Saigon 4661 to State, 19 Apr 55; 4663, 20 Apr 55; Pentagon Papers, vol. 10, pp. 912-913, 918-922.

While the Department of State was studying the French reply of 17 April, General Collins arrived in Washington on 21 April to discuss the replacement of Diem. He reaffirmed his previous recommendation on the early abandonment of Diem during conversations at the Department of State the following day. Specifically he stated: it would be a major error in judgment to continue to support Diem, who had demonstrated marked inability to understand the political, economic, and military problems of Vietnam; Diem was currently governing by himself with the advice of his brothers and a few close friends to the exclusion of other capable men; in five months Diem had not had one constructive suggestion, idea, or plan; Dr. Quat and former Foreign Minister Do were the most able men available in South Vietnam; general elections in South Vietnam were not possible and the best form of government would be a constitutional monarchy. He had already told Diem, General Collins reported, that he did not see how anyone could save the Diem government and that Bao Dai would probably remove him.[34]

The day General Collins arrived in Washington, Bao Dai injected a further complication into the already troubled situation. On 21 April, Bao Dai told the US Embassy in Paris that it would be impossible to find a solution to the South Vietnamese problems as long as Diem remained Premier. Consequently, he proposed a plan, remarkably similar to the plan the French were so strenuously advocating, calling for him to summon representative Vietnamese to Cannes, designate Phan Huy Quat Premier, and instruct Quat to form a "non-political" cabinet of technicians. A high council also would be organized with membership from all factions of Vietnamese society, including the sects, army, peasants, artisans, and trade unions. If the United States rejected this plan, declared Bao Dai, he could no longer take responsibility for events in South Vietnam. Bao Dai asserted that if the United States did not reply to his proposal by 27 April, he would take action unilaterally.[35]

34. (U) Memo, Dep ASD(ISA) to ASD(ISA), 25 Apr 55, Pentagon Papers, vol. 10, pp. 937-940.

35. (TS) Msg, Paris 4576 to State, 21 Apr 55. (S) Msg, Paris 4659 to State, 26 Apr 55.

While officials of the US Embassy in Paris sought to defer Bao Dai's move, Secretary Dulles and General Collins, after conferring with Congressional leaders, reached a position on the question of Diem's replacement. The United States was now willing to consider shifting its support from Diem to either Quat or ex-Foreign Minister Do. The US Government, however, would not discuss the subject with the French until they submitted a full and frank statement of their intentions in South Vietnam. This statement should include unequivocal assurance of wholehearted French backing of any new political arrangements in Saigon, as well as resolution of "certain ambiguities" in French policy toward North Vietnam. Until Paris produced such a declaration, the United States would continue to support the Diem government.[36]

But even before these views were communicated to the French, the shaky truce in Saigon exploded.

The Binh Xuyen Insurrection

Since the fighting of 20-30 March, Diem had been determined to remove Lai Van Sang from the post of police commissioner. But French and US officials, as well as most of Diem's Cabinet, had advised caution. The Binh Xuyen would surely fight back and the consequences were unpredictable. Nevertheless, Diem on 25 April issued a decree charging Sang with "very grave official misconduct," and naming Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Le to replace Sang as Director General of National Police and Surete. The decree also announced the transfer of police headquarters to the prefectural police school building on Boulevard Gallieni and directed all personnel to report at that address by 1430 hours on 28 April or be considered as having abandoned their posts. Sang replied to Diem's decree over the United Front radio. He had been appointed by Bao Dai, he said, and only Bao Dai could dismiss him. Use of force in attempting to execute Diem's decree would have disastrous consequences for which Diem alone would bear the blame.[37]

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36. (TS) Msgs, State 4757 to Saigon, 27 Apr 55; State 3828 to Paris, 27 Apr 55; 3849, 28 Apr 55.

37. (U) Msg, Saigon 4844 to State, 27 Apr 55. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 4845 to State, 27 Apr 55.

The Binh Xuyen was not bluffing. Shortly before noon on 28 April, fighting broke out between the VNA and the Binh Xuyen around Bay Vien's headquarters in Cholon. A little later, mortar shells again fell on the Presidential Palace. Diem responded promptly by ordering the National Army to attack. The fighting, featuring light and heavy machine guns and mortars as well as 105 mm howitzers, spread through the fringe of the crowded Chinese community and onto Boulevard Gallieni. The VNA acted with vigor, if not always with tactical brilliance, and within nine hours the Binh Xuyen had been driven back into Cholon. With fires raging out of control in Cholon, and hundreds dead and wounded, an uneasy truce fell on Saigon.[38]

Diem had by no means won his battle. On 28 April Bao Dai, true to his warning of 21 April, acted. He dispatched telegrams summoning Diem and General Ty to France for "consultations," and vesting command of the army in General Vy, well known for his Binh Xuyen sympathies. Next day, he telegraphed that he was sending General Hinh, Diem's arch enemy, to Vietnam with instructions for Vy. The Chief of State was clearly intent on overthrowing Diem and, in fact, he so informed US diplomats in France. The United States, he charged, had refused his counsel and had blindly supported Diem in the hope that he would attack the Binh Xuyen. Diem had done so, and now Bao Dai would use his own judgment. The Prime Minister, however, was not to be intimidated, and for the first time he openly defied Bao Dai. With full cabinet support, Diem announced that he would neither heed Bao Dai's summons nor transfer command of the army to General Vy.[39]

Diem's announcement appeared to have considerable public support. The government press had portrayed Bao Dai and the Binh Xuyen as the instruments of French colonialism, and the hostilities had already taken on the cast of a war against French colonialism by nationalist forces. The French, for their part, did little to dispel the impression

38. (S) Msg, Saigon 4860 to State, 28 Apr 55. (U) Msgs, Saigon 4881 to State, 28 Apr 55; 4943, 30 Apr 55. NY Times, 29 Apr 55, p. 1.

39. (S) Msgs, Saigon 4926 to State, 29 Apr 55; 4951, 30 Apr 55. (C) Msg, Saigon 4928 to State, 29 Apr 55. (TS) Msg, Paris 4746 to State, 30 Apr 55.

that they were not, as Diem charged, backing the Binh Xuyen both morally and logistically. The Vietnamese saw French liaison officers entering and leaving Binh Xuyen lines. They also saw the cordon of French troops that barred the VNA from cleaning out the three Binh Xuyen outposts in the European quarter.[40] As the French and Vietnamese press and radio intensified their propaganda campaigns, animosity increased.

The atmosphere was propitious for the emergence of a political group reflecting the mounting anti-French, anti-Bao Dai sentiment. On 30 April the National Revolutionary Congress of the Vietnamese People was born. Backed by Cao Dai Generals Phuong and The, and Hoa Hao General Ngo, this new political group claimed it represented almost all political parties of South Vietnam. It issued a declaration repudiating Bao Dai, declaring the Diem government dissolved, and calling upon Diem to form a new government with the specific mission of holding elections for a national assembly, whose first task would be to draft a constitution.[41]

Although the new party consisted largely of individuals with a history of opportunism and was actually representative only of its founders, Diem found its program alluring. At Diem's invitation, on the night of 30 April about thirty members of the Revolutionary Committee of the Congress went to the Presidential Palace for discussions with the Premier. Encountering General Vy in the corridors, they stripped him of his insignia, and were about to slay him when Diem interceded. The committee then forced Vy to read to the press a prepared statement declaring that he was breaking with Bao Dai and going over to Diem.[42]

Next morning, safely out of the Palace, Vy called his own press conference, declared that legal government had ceased to exist, and announced his own assumption of control pending designation of a new Premier by Bao Dai. Vy then moved troops to key points in Saigon, many within the European sector. The French obligingly lowered the

40. (S) Msg, Saigon 4956 to State, 30 Apr 55.
41. (S) Msg, Saigon 4944 to State, 30 Apr 55. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 4957 to State, 30 Apr 55.
42. NY Times, 1 May 55, p. 1. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 4961 to State, 1 May 55.

barricades to admit units they thought were now loyal to Vy. But the Chief of Staff, General Ty, countermanded all of Vy's orders, and the troops obeyed Ty. Vy then fled Saigon for Dalat, leaving Diem master of the situation.[43]

Meanwhile behind the scenes, bitter disagreement had been building up between the top French and US officials in Saigon. In this period, since General Collins was enroute to Vietnam from his conferences in Washington, Charge d'Affaires Randolph Kidder was the principal US representative in Saigon. Mr. Kidder reported that General Ely had become incapable of discussing calmly any matter involving Diem. The Premier, according to General Ely, was an "irresponsible madman." He had broken the truce by firing Sang and bringing reinforcements into Saigon and therefore was to blame for the civil war. The United States was also to blame for not having agreed to a political solution before the fighting broke out. Now, said the General, Diem was hysterical beyond the point of reason. In Mr. Kidder's opinion General Ely himself verged on hysteria, and his emotional involvement had compromised his usefulness to both France and the United States.[44]

According to Mr. Kidder, General Ely was also apprehensive that the fighting, if unchecked, would spread to the European sector. He had attempted to persuade Mr. Kidder and the British Ambassador to join in a demarche to Diem aimed at securing a cease-fire. But both diplomats were determined to avoid interference in the conflict, and they had categorically refused. General Ely's concern for the French community was again manifested on 1 May in what Mr. Kidder described as a "violent tirade." After a meeting with Diem, Mr. Kidder had informed General Ely that in Diem's view the continued presence of Binh Xuyen troops in the French security zone created a potentially explosive situation. The General responded vehemently, declaring that Diem was obviously planning trouble for the night of 1 May and had called in Mr. Kidder for the express purpose of clearing himself in advance. Mr. Kidder, said General Ely, must go to Diem and warn him that any incidents between French and

43. NY Times, 2 May 55, p. 1.
44. (S) Msgs, Saigon 4882 to State, 28 Apr 55; 4926 29 Apr 55; 4953, 30 Apr 55. (C) Msg, Saigon 4908 to State, 29 Apr 55.

Vietnamese soldiers would be the Premier's sole responsibility. When reminded that Diem himself had deplored the possibility of incidents with the French, and that such a declaration would in effect be labeling Diem a liar, General Ely replied: "He is a liar and you should tell him exactly that." Despite heavy pressure from General Ely, Mr. Kidder flatly refused to intervene, and General Ely declared that, if his advice were not heeded, the responsibility for bloodshed would rest with Mr. Kidder personally.45

General Ely's prediction that Diem intended to provoke incidents between the VNA and FEC on the night of 1 May proved unfounded. Diem was planning, however, to launch a final offensive against the remaining Binh Xuyen strongpoints. At noon on 2 May, National Army troops crossed the Chinese arroyo in boats and attacked the Binh Xuyen forces in Cholon. By the following morning the power of the Binh Xuyen had been broken and the remnants of Vien's army had been driven into the countryside south of Cholon.46

As Diem was launching his cleanup operation, General Collins arrived in Saigon. He found Diem strongly inclined to associate himself with the Revolutionary Committee and use it to dispose of Bao Dai. General Collins feared that, more likely, the Premier might himself become a captive of the committee. In any event, elimination of Bao Dai would destroy the legal foundations of the Vietnamese Government and leave the country at the mercy of a self-appointed group of known opportunists. Moreover, a number of functionaries on the committee had past affiliations with the Viet Minh. The French intelligence services were convinced that Viet Minh agents had infiltrated the committee and intended to use it for their own purposes. The United States also had an uneasy feeling that communists were lurking somewhere in the committee's organization. General Collins therefore strongly urged Diem to use all his influence to hold the Revolutionary Committee in check, to

45. (S) Msgs, Saigon 4953 to State, 30 Apr 55; 4988, 1 May 55.

46. (C) Msg, Saigon 4039 to State, 4 May 55.

reconstitute his government, to get on with the reform programs, and to leave the question of Bao Dai to an elected national assembly.[47]

This advice may have made Diem more cautious in his relations with the Revolutionary Committee. In any event, he attempted to give the movement against Bao Dai a more representative character by summoning 700 elected councilors from 39 provinces to consider the legality of Bao Dai's role in South Vietnam. This "Estates General," or Congress of Elected Representatives, chose 50 of its number to draw up a program. On the afternoon of 5 May, these men met at the Presidential Palace. Angry words were soon being exchanged between Diem's supporters from Annam and Tonkin and the Cochin-China delegates who had long been hostile to Diem. At length, 18 of the 22 delegates from Cochin-China walked out of the meeting. The remaining councilors then drafted a resolution demanding that Bao Dai transfer all civil and military powers to Diem, who would exercise them until a national assembly met, within six months, to draw up a constitution.

At the same time, 4,000 activists, claiming to represent 95 political parties, met at a downtown theater to consider the Revolutionary Committee's platform. Much of the committee's driving force had been lost with the death of Trinh Minh The in fighting on 3 May, but extremism and demagoguery were still the order of the day. Three motions were enthusiastically adopted. They called for Bao Dai's overthrow, Diem's dismissal, and formation of a provisional government under Diem to govern as agent of the Revolutionary Committee.[48]

Little of a concrete nature emerged from the confused conflict of diverse political factions and personalities and the fulminations against colonialists and puppet emperors. The committees and congresses in Saigon generated much heat, but the real fate of Diem and Bao Dai was

47. (S) Msgs, Saigon 5005 to State, 5006, 2 May 55; 5047, 5049, 5053, 5054, 4 May 55. (S) Msgs, State 4867 to Saigon, 3 May 55; Paris 4814 to State, 4 May 55.

48. (C) Msg, Saigon 5103 to State, 6 May 55. NY Times, 6 May 55, p. 1.

being worked out between the United States and France. Secretary Dulles and Premier Faure, who had succeeded Mendes-France in February, in the second week of May sat down at conference tables in Paris to discuss the future of Ngo Dinh Diem. For the fourth time in nine months, the French and US Governments attempted to resolve this question, and this time they were in even more fundamental disagreement than at any previous time.

Trilateral Talks in Paris

The United States, on the eve of the Binh Xuyen insurrection, had finally agreed to discuss Diem's removal with the French. But the dramatic events in Saigon completely changed the situation, and on 1 May Secretary of State Dulles cabled the Embassies in both Saigon and Paris that, in view of Diem's apparent military successes, congressional and public opinion simply would not sanction any relaxation in US support of the Vietnamese Premier.[49] The United States was again solidly behind Diem, but the almost total divergence of views between the French and Americans in Saigon, and between Washington and Paris, threatened to immobilize free world efforts in Indochina. Understandably, therefore, the Vietnamese question occupied a prominent place on the agenda when the Foreign Ministers of the United States, France, and Great Britain met in Paris on 8 May at a conference called to discuss problems of European defense.

With British Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan sitting in, Prime Minister Faure and Secretary Dulles discussed their positions on South Vietnam. Clearly, US support of Diem had hardened, and Mr. Dulles emphasized that the United States must either continue to support Diem or withdraw from Vietnam altogether. No one else who had so far appeared on the Vietnamese scene could warrant commitment of US resources and prestige--certainly not Bao Dai. The Chief of State, nonetheless, should be retained as constitutional figurehead, said the Secretary, until the Vietnamese people themselves decided his fate. This would ensure maintenance of the much discussed "thread of legality."

49. (TS) Msg, State 4831 to Saigon, 1 May 55.

The French position on Diem had also hardened. Diem, said Premier Faure, was not only incapable but mad. He had deliberately taken advantage of General Collins' absence to engineer a coup de force by attacking the Binh Xuyen, and now he was surrounded by Viet Minh elements. To retain Diem would, one way or another, bring on a Viet Minh victory, focus the hostility of everyone on France, and result in a breach in Franco-US relations. Prime Minister Faure concluded:

> Diem is a bad choice, impossible solution, with no chance to succeed and no chance to improve the situation. Without him some solution might be possible, but with him there is none . . . . What would you say if we were to retire entirely from Indochina and call back the FEC as soon as possible . . . . I think I might be able to orient myself to it if you say so. It would have the advantage of avoiding all future reproach to France of "colonialism" while at the same time giving response to Diem's request that France should go. Since it contemplates the liquidation of the situation and the repatriation of the FEC, would the United States be disposed to help protect French civilians and the refugees?[50]

Secretary Dulles feared that the French were not bluffing, and that the choice was now between French or US withdrawal from Indochina. He proposed that the discussion be continued later, and called upon Washington for counsel. The question was referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for comment. To the Joint Chiefs of Staff neither alternative appeared acceptable. They believed that withdrawal of the FEC would leave South Vietnam in a precarious position. The VNA was as yet not capable of filling the vacuum that would be created, and the United States was debarred by the Geneva Agreements from supplying the forces that would be necessary to insure protection of French lives and property. Nor should the United States withdraw, for without its moral and material support France could not develop effective and cohesive indigenous forces. In the opinion of the Joint

50. (TS) Msg, Paris SECTO 8 to State, 8 May 55.

Chiefs of Staff, if either country withdrew, South Vietnam would probably fall to the communists. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that the question of continuing to support Diem was one for resolution at the governmental level, but expressed their opinion that the Diem government offered the best hope of achieving internal stability.[51]

General Collins was also strongly opposed to any solution involving withdrawal of the FEC. In the first place, the FEC was responsible, under the aegis of the Manila Pact, for defense of Indochina, and it was apparent that neither the United States nor the British Commonwealth was prepared to take over this responsibility. In addition, French military assistance was essential to the development of Vietnamese forces. The FEC still provided almost complete logistical support of the VNA, and furnished the French instructors working with the MAAG in the training program. Finally, General Collins, while recognizing that the presence of French troops caused much bitterness among the Vietnamese, believed that the FEC was a stabilizing influence in the strife-ridden politics of South Vietnam.[52]

With these comments as background, Secretary Dulles met with Premier Faure again on 11 May. The Secretary of State emphasized that Indochina, despite its importance, should not be permitted to injure relations between the United States and France. The United States still insisted on Diem's retention, he declared, but some common ground ought to be found. He proposed that France agree to support a broadened Diem government until elections could be held for a national assembly. The assembly would then decide the ultimate political structure of South Vietnam. It might or might not include Diem, but it would be the free expression of the will of the Vietnamese people.[53]

Prime Minister Faure, much against his personal views and the pressure of French opinion, accepted the US proposal on the following conditions: enlargement of the Diem government and acceleration of the electoral process;

51. (TS) JCS 1992/460, 9 May 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 8.
52. (TS) Msg, Saigon 5154 to State, 9 May 55.
53. (TS) Msg, Paris SECTO 36 to State, 11 May 55.

peaceful resolution of the sect problem; cessation of anti-French propaganda; retention of Bao Dai as Chief of State; reciprocal removal from South Vietnam of French and US officials deemed disturbing to Franco-US harmony; and assurances by the United States that French economic, cultural, and financial relations in South Vietnam would be nurtured.

Secretary Dulles agreed to the French conditions, but pointed out that Diem was not a puppet of the United States. United States diplomats could give him advice but not orders. Therefore, the United States could not promise that the conditions involving Vietnamese action would be fulfilled. In concluding, the Secretary made an especially significant point. The Vietnamese problem, he said, did not lend itself to a contractual agreement between France and the United States. Accordingly, both countries should state their policies and proceed with knowledge of what the other was doing. In other words, the attempt at achieving a joint policy would be discarded, and in the future the United States would act more independently of France.[54]

In South Vietnam the crisis had passed. Diem had dealt the Binh Xuyen as well as the United Front a crippling and, although the French refused to believe it, a fatal blow. Bay Vien and his henchmen, declared outlaws by Diem, had taken to the hills. They were presumed to be conspiring with Bao Dai's emissary, General Hinh, who had wisely avoided Saigon upon arriving in South Vietnam. Whether they could rally the beaten Binh Xuyen forces and join with the Hoa Hao to challenge Diem again was an open question in May 1955. Certainly the VNA, fired by recent success, would be better able to meet the challenge than previously. The United States was again giving Diem its unqualified support, and France had again promised to do so even if reluctantly, with conditions. Moreover, Bao Dai was no longer the threat to Diem he had been formerly. He had blundered badly in trying to overthrow Diem, and had lost much support in South Vietnam.

On 10 May, the rebellion broken, Diem had reconstituted his government, naming a group of relatively unknown "technicians" to support him until elections were held. The

54. (S) Msg, Paris SECTO 42 to State, 12 May 55.

Cabinet was the immediate target of criticism both at home and abroad. From all indications, it was another rubber-stamp government that would assure the continued primacy of the Ngo brothers in the policies of the nation.55

A special US intelligence estimate in early May assessed the situation in South Vietnam as follows:

> The success of Premier Diem is operations against the Binh Xuyen, and his stand against Bao Dai, the French and General Vy, has created a new and potentially revolutionary situation in Vietnam. While the situation in Vietnam is extremely fluid, Diem appears to hold the initiative in the phase that is about to begin.

The estimate concluded that:

> In present circumstances, we do not believe that Diem could be persuaded voluntarily to resign. If he were forced from office, many of Diem's followers would probably undertake revolutionary opposition, including maquis resistance to the successor regime. . . . /Nevertheless,7 Although Diem has improved his position, we believe that it will still be extremely difficult, at best, for Diem or any Vietnamese government to build sufficient strength to meet the long-range challenge of the Communists.56

As South Vietnam embarked upon a new chapter in its struggle to become a united, free, prosperous, and democratic nation, the Collins Mission drew to a close. The General left Saigon on 14 May, and later in the month Ambassador G. Frederick Reinhardt presented his credentials

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55. (U) Msg, Saigon 5187 to State, 10 May 55. (C) Msgs, Saigon 5188 to State, 10 May 55; 5258, 14 May 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 5209 to State, 11 May 55.

56. (U) SNIE 63.1-2/1-55, 2 May 55, Pentagon Papers, vol. 10, pp. 955-957.

to Diem. On 2 June, General Ely also terminated his assignment in Indochina, thus making good his oft-repeated declaration that he would not stay in Vietnam if Diem remained Premier. General Jacquot assumed the duties of Commissioner-General pending assignment of General Ely's successor.

CHAPTER V

THE OUTLOOK BRIGHTENS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Emerging victorious from the battle of Saigon in May 1955, Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem found himself in a position of new strength. He had seriously crippled the sects and all but broken Bao Dai's grip on Vietnamese politics. His resolute stand against the sects had gained him respect abroad and popular confidence at home. It had dispelled grave doubts in Washington about his personal fitness and had won him renewed US support. It had also brought about renewed, though qualified, French support.

Important as his success had been, however, Diem still faced many pressing problems. The sect armies had scattered into the provinces where, together with Viet Minh elements, they made pacification a more urgent requirement than ever. The constitutional question also remained to be resolved; Bao Dai's "thread of legality" had to be severed, and a constitutional government, deriving strength from popular participation and decision, had to be erected.

Further, outstanding problems with France demanded attention. The political, military, economic, and financial relationship between the two countries all required resolution and implementation. Finally, and perhaps most pressing of all, the Vietnam Agreement and the question of nation-wide elections remained to be dealt with.

Diem's Refusal to Consult

Diem was far more interested in consolidating his regime, disposing once and for all of Bao Dai and the sects, and settling accounts with the French than in dealing with the requirements of the Vietnam Agreement. The Final Declaration of the Geneva signatories, however, had called for nation-wide elections for the unification of Vietnam to be held in July 1956, and for consultations between the interested parties to begin a year earlier.

The Declaration was obscure on who these interested parties were to be.[1] As the ruling power in Vietnam, France had signed the Agreement and was thus responsible for carrying out its provisions. By July 1955, however, French power in Vietnam had eroded so badly that France was no longer able to fulfill its responsibilities without the cooperation of the Diem government. But Diem had refused to sign the Agreement and had emphatically protested when France signed. His view had not changed in the ensuing year. He still refused to admit that his country was bound by the Agreement.

French policymakers were under increasing pressure from public opinion to give the DRV no pretext for renewing hostilities while the FEC remained in Indochina, and it therefore became a matter of urgency that some means be found to fulfill the requirement for consultations in July. Since any formula for holding elections would have to be approved by South Vietnam, the realistic solution was to persuade Diem to confer with the Viet Minh.

In this attempt the French had help from the British. Because of the leading role they had played in bringing about the Geneva settlement, the British wanted South Vietnam to follow a course they could represent as conforming to that settlement. They believed it essential that Diem recognize the principle of consultations and elections even if he did not consult immediately. At all costs, he should be prevented from publicly repudiating the Agreement. Accordingly, British diplomats in Saigon joined the French in urging Diem to consult with the DRV.[2]

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1. The question of elections was dealt with by the Geneva conferees in paragraph seven of the Final Declaration: "The Conference declares that as far as Vietnam is concerned, the settlement of the political problems . . . should permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the basic freedoms, guaranteed by the democratic institutions to be established after holding general free elections by secret ballot. . . . the general elections shall be held in July 1956, ... Consultations shall be held on this matter between competent representative authorities of the two areas beginning on July 20, 1955."

2. (S) Msgs, State 35 to Saigon, 5 Jul 55; 53, 6 Jul 55; 80, 9 Jul 55; 155, 14 Jul 55; 179, 16 Jul 55. (S) Msg, Paris 69 to State, 6 Jul 55. (S) NIE 63.1-3-55, 11 Oct 55.

Although the United States had not signed the Vietnam Agreement, in the year following the war it had become the power with the greatest interest and influence in South Vietnam. The views of the US Government on elections were eagerly awaited not only by the British and French, but also, no doubt, by the communists. Several times during the winter General Collins had called for an expression of US policy on the subject, and early in 1955 the NSC Planning Board began work on a draft statement of "U.S. Policy on All-Vietnam Elections" (NSC 5519).

The Planning Board concluded that neither South Vietnam nor the United States could afford to give the impression of obstructing popular elections. By adopting such a position, the Diem government would enable the communists to pose as the sole champions of Vietnamese unification, and would badly complicate its own task of winning popular support at home. As for the United States--which had advocated national elections in Korea, Austria, and Germany--such a position would appear to the world as more than mildly inconsistent. However, while recommending that the United States encourage Diem to consult with the Viet Minh, the Planning Board cautioned that he should be advised and assisted in the matter by the United States. Above all, Diem should reach no agreement with the Viet Minh that did not guarantee free elections and provide for effective supervisory machinery.3

When asked to comment on NSC 5519, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after close study, recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he concur in its approval with one important modification. The change sought by the Joint Chiefs of Staff concerned Paragraph 10 of the draft policy statement:

> 10. If pursuit of the above policy should result in a renewal of hostilities by the Communists, the U.S., in the light of the circumstances then prevailing, should be prepared to oppose any Communist attack with U.S. armed forces, if necessary and feasible . . . preferably in concert with the Manila Pact allies of the U.S., but if necessary alone.

3. (TS) NSC 5519, 17 May 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 8.

Taking exception to that portion of the paragraph that envisioned the possibility of employing US forces "alone" to oppose communist attack, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested that the language following "oppose any Communist attack" be replaced with "by immediately invoking the Manila Pact and taking vigorous action thereunder to repel the Communist military aggression." The Joint Chiefs of Staff wished to avoid committing US forces to battle in Southeast Asia without the armed assistance and support of the SEATO allies.[4]

The Secretary of Defense forwarded the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the National Security Council, and these views, along with the draft policy statement in NSC 5519, were considered by the Council on 9 June. The Council chose, however, to shelve the whole question of all-Vietnam elections for the time being. It decided that no statement of policy on elections was required at that time and noted that US policy in the event of a renewal of fighting would be governed by paragraph 5d of NSC 5429/5 pending a review of that paragraph by the Planning Board.[5] This revision, as it turned out, was not accomplished for over a year.[6]

Despite the failure of the National Security Council to adopt NSC 5519, the main features of the policy outlined in the paper had in fact already been carried out by the Department of State. On 7 June the new United States Ambassador

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4. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "U.S. Policy on All-Vietnam Elections (NSC 5519)," 25 May 55 (derived from JCS 1992/463), same file.

5. (TS) Paragraph 5d set forth the action the US would take as follows:

> In the event of Communist overt armed attack in the area covered by the Manila Pact prior to the entering into effect of the Pact, take actions necessary to meet the situation, including a request for authority from Congress to use U.S. armed forces, if appropriate and feasible. When the Pact is in effect, be prepared to oppose any Communist attack in the Treaty area with U.S. armed forces if necessary and feasible, consulting the Congress in advance if the emergency permits.

6. (TS) Memo, ExecSecy, NSC to NSC, "U.S. Policy on All-Vietnam Elections," 13 Jun 55, same file, sec 9.

to South Vietnam, G. Frederick Reinhardt, had told Diem that, although the United States recognized that South Vietnam was not bound by Geneva, it believed that consultations, under carefully defined conditions, should be held with the Viet Minh. The United States Government considered that only North and South Vietnam should be parties to the negotiations and that, in particular, the International Control Commission should be kept out of the picture. The Ambassador emphasized that in the US view the crucial question was that of safeguards. Unless the communists agreed to free elections by secret ballot, further discussion should be avoided for fear of arousing public expectation that elections were to be held even in the absence of safeguards. To insure free elections Diem should insist upon the same conditions that Sir Anthony Eden had drafted, and the west had supported, for German unification. These conditions included individual freedom from intimidation or coercion before, during, and after elections, and creation of a commission with full powers to supervise the elections and to guarantee against coercion prior to the elections and reprisal afterwards.[7]

Although Diem listened to the advice of US, British, and French diplomats, he could not bring himself to sit down at the conference table with the Viet Minh. He had already made public his opinion that so momentous a question ought to be referred to the future national assembly for debate and decision. Moreover, he felt that he could not negotiate with DRV officials without giving the impression that he recognized the Geneva settlement as binding on South Vietnam. Finally, he believed that his bargaining position would not be firm until he had the same united and strong western support enjoyed by Chancellor Adenauer in Germany and President Rhee in Korea.[8]

What Diem really wanted was to disassociate South Vietnam entirely from the Geneva Agreements, but he finally agreed to a less extreme solution. After much debate with the British Ambassador in Saigon, the Prime Minister on

7. (S) Msg, State 5267 to Saigon, 27 May 55. (TS) Msg, State 4362 to Saigon, 6 Apr 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 5711 to State, 7 Jun 55.

8. (S) Msgs, Saigon 5731 to State, 8 Jun 55; State 5347 to Saigon, 3 Jun 55; 35, 5 Jul 55.

16 July made public his position. Although carefully explaining that he did not reject the principle of free elections, he declared that South Vietnam could not "consider any proposal from the Communists" without proof that they had mended their ways and were prepared to submit to the conditions necessary for genuinely free elections.[9]

Diem's statement seemed to be a rejection of both consultations and elections, and it came at a particularly embarrassing time for the West. The Big Four "summit" talks were scheduled to open at Geneva on 18 July, and the Western powers feared that the USSR would try to force consideration of the issue during the conference. Already, Soviet Premier Bulganin and Indian Premier Nehru, during the latter's visit to Moscow on 23 June, had issued a communique agreeing that all signatories of the Geneva Agreements should "do their utmost fully to discharge their obligations." They had pointedly urged "that where elections are to be held as preliminary to a political settlement the efforts of the governments concerned should be directed to the full implementation of the provisions of the agreement."[10] And hardly had the summit conference of 1955 opened when DRV Premier Phan Van Dong, as if to dramatize the issue for the diplomats at Geneva, called on Diem to appoint representatives to meet with the Viet Minh any time after 20 July to discuss procedures for holding elections.[11]

British, French, and US officials went to the summit meeting in full agreement that the West would try to avoid any discussion of Indochina, would resist any Soviet pressure for inviting the Chinese communists to participate in a five-power conference on Indochina, and would oppose any attempt to reconvene the Geneva Conference of 1954.[12] With the Soviets wearing the guise of affability and moderation, the conference might well have ended without touching the ticklish problem of Indochina, but two days after it began Saigon made world headlines.

The first anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Agreements fell on 20 July 1955. Anticommunist demonstrations, protesting the partition of Vietnam, broke out in Saigon. Rioters sacked two hotels housing the ICC, and police made

9. NY Times, 17 Jul 55, p. 7.
10. Ibid., 22 Jun 55, p. 1; p. 2.
11. Ibid., 21 Jul 55, p. 6.
12. (S) Msg, Paris SECTO 12 to State, 15 Jul 55.

only token efforts to prevent the mob from destroying the personal effects of members of the Commission. Several Americans were rescued from the mob by officers of the US Embassy. Diem promptly apologized and offered indemnification to the governments whose nationals were involved, but the damage had been done.[13]

Pointing out that continued supervision of the armistice was being jeopardized by conditions of lawlessness, the ICC called on the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954 (Eden and Molotov) for new instructions--which, it said, the riots had made necessary. Prime Minister Nehru of India also cabled Eden and Molotov. Stressing South Vietnam's hostile attitude towards the ICC, he supported the Commission's appeal for new instructions.[14]

At Geneva, the questions raised by the ICC and Nehru were kept off the agenda, and Eden and Molotov discussed the matter informally. As the French and Vietnamese had promptly given assurances that the ICC would be protected in the future, the Soviet and British Foreign Ministers decided to advise Nehru that the ICC could now assume that adequate security existed.[15]

The immediate crisis had been met, but the election issue had only been aggravated. The communists served notice that they would make as much of it as possible. In his closing speech at Geneva, Bulganin stated that "the Geneva agreements on Indochina and other problems will not tolerate postponement." Several days later Chou En-lai attacked the Diem regime for permitting mob violence to ICC personnel and declared that "the most urgent need at present is . . . consultations on the question of general elections." Ho Chi Minh followed with a warning that the US imperialists were planning to keep Vietnam partitioned indefinitely. Even the

13. (LOU) Msg, Saigon 298 to State, 20 Jul 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 341 to State, 21 Jul 55. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 352 to State, 22 Jul 55. (C) Msg, State 215 to Saigon, 20 Jul 55. Washington Post, 21 Jul 55, p. 1; 22 Jul 55, p. 4.

14. (S) Msg, State 220 to Saigon, 20 Jul 55. Washington Post, 22 Jul 55, p. 7.

15. (C) Msg, State 344 to Saigon, 30 Jul 55. Washington Post, 22 Jul 55, p. 7.

French joined in the communist demand. Premier Faure warned President Eisenhower at Geneva that unless steps were taken to arrange nation-wide elections in Vietnam, the West might face a full-scale crisis in Indochina.[16]

Franco-Vietnamese Relations

Diem's public announcement on 16 July only partially revealed the motives that had led him to reject consultations. In the Premier's mind this question was intimately bound to the continued presence in Vietnam of the French High Command and the FEC.

Although the Vietnamese National Army had been operating independently of the French in the war against the sects, a French officer still retained the title of Commander in Chief, as well as paper responsibility for internal security, and the FEC still provided a pervasive military influence. Diem reasoned that this situation made South Vietnam vulnerable to communist propaganda depicting it as a French colony and, as long as this was so, his negotiators could not meet with the Viet Minh as representatives of a sovereign country.[17]

Diem therefore insisted that the French honor their promise, made by Premier Mendes-France at the Geneva Conference of 1954, to turn over the High Command to the VNA and to withdraw the French Army from Vietnam. He sent one of his ministers, Nguyen Huu Chau, to France to negotiate this question and also to secure a revision of Franco-Vietnamese economic, financial, and cultural accords. Chau was to obtain the withdrawal of French ground troops, but was to ask the French to leave naval and air forces, under Vietnamese command, to provide logistical support for Vietnamese armed forces and to pose a continuing threat to the Viet Minh.[18]

Although there was little chance that the French would place their military units under Vietnamese command, they were anxious to withdraw the FEC and seemed willing to turn

16. Washington Post, 22 Jul 55, p. 7.
17. (S) Msgs, Saigon 5677 to State, 6 Jun 55; State 5438 to Saigon, 11 Jun 55.
18. (S) Msgs, Saigon 5705 to State, 7 Jun 55; 5731, 8 Jun 55.

over the High Command to the VNA. As Nguyen Huu Chau arrived in Paris, therefore, he had good reason for optimism. But at this juncture Diem raised another issue that antagonized the French and interfered with the military talks. He began to press for a change in the diplomatic relationship between France and Vietnam.

The Premier demanded that Vietnamese affairs in France be handled by the Foreign Office instead of by the Ministry of Associated States, and that General Ely's successor, former UN Representative Henri Hoppenot, be accredited to the Vietnamese Government in the same fashion as other foreign diplomats. The French curtly refused the first request, but did go so far as to give Hoppenot the title of Ambassador instead of High Commissioner. His duties, however, would include responsibility for Laos and Cambodia as well as Vietnam and in all other respects would be the same as those of the old High Commissioner. The High Commissariat would not become an Embassy even in name. As a French diplomat explained to an American, for reasons of French domestic politics the transition to new diplomatic forms could not be done so abruptly as to raise delicate constitutional questions affecting the French Union.[19]

Because Diem refused to accept their terms, the French held up the military talks with Minister Chau. In July, however, Diem at length relented and accepted "Ambassador" Hoppenot. But no sooner had the Hoppenot problem been resolved than Diem arrested two French officers suspected of complicity in the bombing of several electric power stations in Saigon and announced that they would be tried in Vietnamese courts for menacing the security of the state. Deeply angered, the French again suspended the military talks until such time as Diem released the officers.[20]

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19. (C) Msgs, Paris 5513 and 5514 to State, 16 Jun 55; 5701, 21 Jun 55; 5776, 29 Jun 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 5969 to State, 24 Jun 55; Paris 27 to State, 2 Jul 55; 183, 12 Jul 55.

20. (C) Msg, Saigon 381 to State, 23 Jul 55. (S) Msgs, Paris 1460 to State, 29 Sep 55; 1757, 14 Oct 55.

The deadlock continued for several months until, late in 1955, the French moved to ease relations with Vietnam. First, they transferred responsibility for Vietnamese affairs from the Ministry of Associated States to the Quai d'Orsay. Next, they attempted to quiet Diem's suspicions by refusing to accept the assignment of a diplomatic representative of the DRV to Paris and by making clear that the Sainteny Mission was in Hanoi for the sole purpose of protecting French economic and cultural interests in North Vietnam. Finally, following Diem's victory in the popular referendum (see below), they recognized the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) with Diem as its President. For his part, Diem at last released the two French officers to French custody.[21]

These concessions, however, failed to clear the way for harmonious relations, for Diem seemed intent upon convincing even the most hard-headed Frenchman that the French simply were not welcome in Vietnam. In December he suddenly terminated the economic and financial accords that had been so laboriously negotiated in late 1954. He imposed stringent commercial regulations upon French businessmen, forcing them to leave the country in increasing numbers. The outrage the French felt at this trend was not assuaged by the realization that the mounting activity of the United States in Vietnam was fast driving their former colony from the franc into the dollar area. As a final blow to French pride, Diem withdrew South Vietnam's representatives from the French Union Assembly.[22]

The Campaign Against the Sects

Part of the confidence that led to Diem's defiance of France stemmed from his victory over the sects in May. This victory had secured his position in Saigon, but in order to prepare the way for his political program, Diem also attempted to eliminate sect opposition from the provinces. He undertook this ambitious task with an untrained army whose loyalty had been only partially tested and with a political following of uncertain strength.

21. (S) Msg, Paris 2889 to State, 17 Dec 55. (C) Msg, Paris SECTO 17 to State, 17 Dec 55.

22. (C) Msg, Paris 2886 to State, 17 Dec 55. NY Times, 1 Nov 55, p. 8. (S) Msg, Saigon 2671 to State, 5 Jan 56.

The Binh Xuyen and Hoa Hao remained Diem's strongest adversaries. Remnants of Bay Vien's Binh Xuyen army, about 1,200 in number, had established themselves in the swamps south of Saigon, where they preyed upon river traffic. The Hoa Hao posed a more serious threat. Although some 6,000 Hoa Hao troops either had been integrated into the VNA or had pledged loyalty to Diem, another 10,000 under Tran Van Soai and Ba Cut ranged across South Vietnam from the Cambodian frontier to the South China Sea. The headquarters of both became rallying points for anti-Diem elements, including Bao Dai's emissary, former Chief of Staff Nguyen Van Hinh. United States military intelligence officials were convinced that French officers were supplying these Hoa Hao units and encouraging them to attack the VNA.[23]

The Cao Dai carried a double standard. The Pope, Pham Cong Tac, was cooperating with the other hostile sect leaders in trying to overthrow Diem, but the Cao Dai military leader, Nguyen Thanh Phuong, supported Diem. Phuong concluded an agreement with Diem, integrating the 15,000-man Cao Dai army into the VNA and eventually succeeded in stripping Tac of his temporal powers. Except for an abortive attempt to take over the Revolutionary Committee, formed during the Saigon crisis in May, the Cao Dai ceased to be a major problem to Diem[24]

By late spring US intelligence officials believed that they had solid evidence that the French were supporting the sects against Diem. Not only had French officials actively hindered Diem's efforts to finish off the Binh Xuyen, but they were known to be advising and supporting with money and ammunition both the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao. The Deputy Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff, informed the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 1 June that, "It appears that the present French plans include the support of the dissident sects against the Diem government in an effort to cause eventual widespread revolt in South Vietnam, making it necessary for the French Expeditionary Corps to intercede,

23. (TS) Msg, Saigon 5609 to State, 2 Jun 55. (TS-NCFORN) Memo, DDI to CJCS, "Relationship between France and the Diem Government in South Vietnam," 1 Jun 55.

24. (S) NIE 63.1-3-55, 11 Oct 55, pp. 4-5. NY Times, 6 Nov 55, p. 33.

reestablish internal security, and to sponsor a new government, tied closely to France . . . through Bao Dai."

French help did not save the sects. After the battle for Saigon, Diem immediately threw thirty VNA battalions against the Hoa Hao. Both Soai and Ba Cut, badly outnumbered, suffered one defeat after another. By mid-July the Hoa Hao organization had disintegrated and its leaders had taken refuge temporarily in Cambodia. The flag of South Vietnam was planted on all seven peaks of the Hoa Hao stronghold in the Seven Mountains region of Southwest Vietnam. On 20 September Diem opened the long-awaited campaign against the Binh Xuyen south of Saigon. Twenty-two VNA battalions were concentrated in the area and in a surprisingly short time wiped out organized resistance.

By the end of 1955 the Hoa Hao, Binh Xuyen, and Cao Dai had been eliminated as organized threats to the government. There remained, however, the major operations of methodically destroying, in province and village, the scattered bands of sect guerrillas and the subversive Viet Minh elements. The need for a more extensive organization to accomplish this task had become apparent even before the sects were crushed.[25]

Organizing for Pacification

With the military defeat of the sects, the security problem in South Vietnam assumed a new form. Hitherto, the sects, militant and selfish but thoroughly anticommunist, had constituted one menace to internal stability and orderly government. The Viet Minh, with numerous armed agents in addition to political cadres and front organizations, had constituted another. As the sects lost hope of prevailing over the national forces in combat, however, there

25. (TS-NOFORN) Memo, DDI to CJCS, "Relationship Between France and Diem Government in South Vietnam," 1 Jun 55. (LOU) Msg, Saigon 1354 to State, 21 Sep 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 2117 to State, 17 Nov 55. (C) Msg, Saigon 2192 to State, 22 Nov 55. The remnants of the Hoa Hao armies broke into roving guerrilla bands that were decimated and further fragmented by a second offensive begun in November. (S) Msg, Saigon 3498 to State, 28 Feb 56.

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leadership fell prey to infiltration by Viet Minh cadres. The influence of the Viet Minh soon became apparent in the tactics of the sects. They began to concentrate less on military forays against the VNA and more on subjugating the villages by intimidation and propaganda. At the same time, intelligence agencies in Saigon reported that the Viet Minh had strengthened its capability for infiltration, sabotage, and terrorism at the village level. Communist subversive pressures were making themselves felt both through the sects and through the Viet Minh's own apparatus.

The VNA had been deployed throughout South Vietnam in a manner that kept the Viet Minh and the sects from becoming too aggressive. But in the late fall of 1955, the General Staff began to regroup many of the scattered battalions and form them into divisions for training purposes. Thus, extensive security forces were clearly needed: first, to check and ultimately destroy the Viet Minh-sect combination; and second, to gain for the government the confidence and allegiance of the people.[26] At the same time a need existed to improve the quality of indigenous officers engaged in pacification operations. One plan for filling this need that found favorable attention in Washington was drawn up by Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, USAF, [redacted]

Colonel Lansdale reasoned that US doctrines of unconventional warfare could be strengthened by including distinctively Asian tactics that had proved sound in practice. The situation in Vietnam, he believed, closely paralleled that faced by the Philippines during the Huk war of 1950-51. Because the Filipinos were very proud of the unconventional methods they had employed to eliminate the Huk menace, Colonel Lansdale suggested that the United States devise a program for training Vietnamese officers in the Philippines by Filipino officers who were veterans of the Huk campaign.[27]

[redacted] passed Colonel Lansdale's proposal to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Radford, who in turn referred it to the Chief of

26. (S) Msg, Saigon 2420 to State, 8 Dec 55.
27. [redacted]

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Staff, Army, General Maxwell D. Taylor, for comment. General Taylor agreed with Colonel Lansdale that the benefits of successful Asian anticommunist doctrine would be lost if the United States insisted solely on its own methods. Moreover, he pointed out, "The psychological impact of Asian aid for another Asian country, without apparent US involvement, has the definite advantage of furthering the concept of Asian self-help and unity in the face of Communist subversion."[28]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 September agreed with General Taylor's analysis and solicited CINCPAC's views. In reply, Admiral Stump enthusiastically endorsed the Lansdale Plan and, having found Filipino military leaders anxious to help, recommended that a training program in countersubversion be set up in the Philippines, within the framework of SEATO, to train selected Vietnamese officers, who in turn would serve as instructors in Vietnam. On 1 November 1955 the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved Admiral Stump's recommendation and, after securing the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense, authorized CINCPAC to budget for and plan such a program.[29]

Diem's Political Program

Diem, by making significant gains in reducing the menace of lawless and subversive elements, advanced his chances of success on the political front. Diem began the campaign on this front in the summer of 1955 with important assets that he had lacked before the crisis of April and May. His victory in the battle of Saigon, and the apparent progress of the pacification program daily increased the Prime Minister's popular following throughout the country. Also, the United States had now reached the firm decision that the Diem government offered the only hope of achieving a stable, democratic, and secure Republic of Vietnam. Consequently, both Diem and his opponents, foreign and domestic, knew that US support and financial assistance for South Vietnam was

28. (S) JCS 1992/468, 15 Jul 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 9.

29. (S) Msg, JCS 988351 to CINCPAC, 12 Sep 55 (derived from JCS 1992/477), same file, sec 11. (S) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Training of the Vietnamese Army," 1 Nov 55 (derived from JCS 1992/490), same file, sec 14. (C) N/H of JCS 1992/490, 2 Dec 55, same file.

virtually assured as long as Diem remained at the helm. Finally, Diem had purged the army leadership of officers friendly to the sects, and the army's loyalty to him personally increased with each victory over the sects.

As Diem's strength and self-confidence grew, those features of his administration that had long worried US diplomats became more evident. Despite his profession of democratic principles, Diem appeared more and more authoritarian and less and less tolerant of opposition--trends for which informed Vietnamese citizens and foreign missions held the United States responsible. The Cabinet of "technicians" was completely dominated by Diem, who in turn was heavily influenced by his brothers. The Prime Minister seemed to have no intention of changing the composition of his regime until after the institutions of constitutional government had been established, and those he now meant, apparently, to build and control himself.

Diem's plans for national political action reflected both his new self-confidence and his growing authoritarianism. These plans called for achieving constitutional government in three stages. As a first step, Diem intended to hold a national referendum in late October. The people would be asked to decide whether or not to depose Bao Dai as Chief of State, and whether or not to designate Diem Chief of State with a mandate to organize a government. If this referendum turned out as expected, a second would follow in November, in which the people would be asked to approve a draft constitution prepared by Diem. Communal and municipal elections would also be held. Then, to complete the sequence, direct elections for a national assembly would take place in December.[30]

Ambassador Reinhardt viewed these ambitious plans with some concern. He pointed out to Diem that the complex mechanics of such a program would be difficult to execute and that its undemocratic features would be apparent both at home and abroad. Elections for a national assembly should be held first, he advised, and then that organization could deal with the questions of Bao Dai and a constitution. But Diem argued that an assembly would take too long to depose

30. (S) Msg, Saigon 1468 to State, 28 Sep 55.

Bao Dai and to approve a constitution. In the end it might produce an unacceptable constitution that provided too much parliamentary authority over the government. Vietnam, he emphasized, could not in this phase of its development afford to risk the instability of French-style parliamentary government. Underlying Diem's attitude, in the Ambassador's opinion, was a determination to prevent a national assembly from gaining too much power before he had fully established his own political supremacy.

Diem had made it clear to the Ambassador that he did not need the advice of the United States to carry out his political program. As the Ambassador informed Washington, US influence in this matter was distinctly limited because Diem realized that the United States was committed to backing him and that US support could therefore be taken for granted. Despite the undesirable features in Diem's political program, Ambassador Reinhardt believed it "preferable to further procrastination and haggling."[31]

Diem announced that the first referendum would be held on 25 October. From his chateau on the French Riviera, Bao Dai made a last vain attempt to reassert his former authority. He appealed to the United States, France, and Great Britain to disregard the results of the "undemocratic" referendum. Several days later he hurried to Paris and issued a decree dismissing Diem as Prime Minister of Vietnam.[32] The decree proved as ineffectual as the appeal. Bao Dai's ability to influence Vietnamese politics had vanished with the power of the discredited sect chieftains, and Diem was no longer dependent upon either for support. Recognizing this fact, the great powers ignored the fulminations of the Chief of State.

The Vietnamese people trooped to the polls on the appointed day and were given a ballot printed with pictures of a scowling Bao Dai on one side and a smiling Diem on the other. Over 98 percent of the voters tore the ballot in two, dropping Bao Dai's picture on the ground and Diem's picture

31. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1483 to State, 29 Sep 55; 2378, 6 Dec 55.
32. NY Times, 19 Oct 55, p. 1.

into the ballot box.[33] The balloting clearly expressed the overwhelming desire of the Vietnamese to rid themselves of Bao Dai. What else it expressed was open to question. The pre-election campaign had been energetic and one-sided, with the activities of opposition groups impeded by governmental restrictions. Diem's undeniable success, reported Ambassador Reinhardt, lay not so much in his victory percentage as in the large turnout of voters and the orderly and democratic fashion in which the balloting had been conducted.[34]

Apparently emboldened by the unexpected success of his experiment with democracy, Diem modified the remainder of his program and in effect did what the United States had been urging. The day after the election he issued a Provisional Constitutional Act establishing Vietnam as a republic, naming himself President, and changing the titles of all Ministers to Secretaries and all Ministries to Departments. He then created a commission to draft a constitution that would be submitted, not to the people as had been planned, but to the future national assembly. A commission was also set up to arrange elections for the assembly.[35]

After publication of the Provisional Constitutional Act, Vietnamese political parties, in anticipation of election day, took on clearer lines. The two largest and most powerful parties, the National Revolutionary Movement (NRM) and the Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP), were solidly behind Diem. The NRM, an outgrowth of the old Revolutionary Committee, was largely controlled by Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Can. The RWP was led by another of Diem's brothers, Ngo Dinh Nhu. The most important opposition parties, such as the Dai Viet,[36] were only mildly opposed to Diem. Nevertheless, they announced that they would boycott the election because he refused to permit them greater freedom to campaign against

33. Ibid., 24 Oct 55, p. 1.
34. (S) Msg, Saigon 1846 to State, 25 Oct 55.
35. (U) Msg, Saigon 1857 to State, 27 Oct 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 1867 to State, 27 Oct 55. (U) Msg, Saigon 2297 to State, 20 Nov 55. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 1911 to State, 30 Oct 55.
36. Dai Viet (National Party of Greater Vietnam) was a nationalist party dating back to World War II.

him. This position made an overwhelmingly pro-Diem assembly almost a foregone conclusion.37

President Diem's autocratic brand of "democracy" was distasteful to officials in the Department of State. They feared that by restricting the freedom of opposition parties he was antagonizing elements that might add strength to the Vietnamese Government in the future. On the other hand, the realities of Vietnamese politics had to be faced. As Ambassador Reinhardt pointed out, there was almost no Vietnamese political leader, either in or out of the government, who was sincerely motivated by democratic principles. In the interest of the United States as well as Diem, a strong and stable government was more important than encouraging democratic trends. In the view of the Department of State, therefore, it was necessary at least temporarily for Diem to dominate both the government and the national assembly of Vietnam.38

In this regard, US officials had little to fear. Diem had shown clearly that he meant to dominate both the government and its legislative body. When Diem spoke now he spoke for a government no longer dependent on France, a government no longer verging on collapse. As a measure of Diem's personal success, he had, in the eight months following the sect revolt, strengthened his political position, gained substantial public support, eliminated his main rivals, and proclaimed South Vietnam a Republic with himself as titular, and de facto, head.

The Training Relations Instruction Mission (TRIM)

At Diem's insistence the French began gradually to withdraw their military forces from South Vietnam during 1955.

37. (C) Msg, Saigon 3244 to State, 10 Feb 56. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56. (C) Dept of State, PST 5/50, "Karachi Conference, Background Paper on Viet-Nam," 16 Feb 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 20.

38. (S) Msg, Saigon 2378 to State, 6 Dec 55. (C) Dept of State, PST 5/50, "Karachi Conference, Background Paper on Viet-Nam," 16 Feb 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 20.

Although the US Government welcomed the French withdrawal, the phase-out of French troops combined with other developments to retard progress of the program Generals Collins and Ely had worked out in December 1954 to strengthen the Vietnamese forces.

According to the Collins-Ely Minute of Understanding, signed by the two generals on 13 December 1954, the Chief of the MAAG, acting under the French Commander in Chief for Indochina, was to be responsible for training the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). Although this agreement, because of diplomatic procrastination in Paris, did not go into effect until 12 February 1955, General O'Daniel began immediately to organize the joint Franco-American group that became known as the Training Relations Instruction Mission.

This mission, separate from the MAAG, consisted of all French and US advisory and training personnel in Vietnam, as well as French cadres with Vietnamese units. It was organized in two echelons. The TRIM staff advised and assisted the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense, the General Staff, and the Arms and Services Directorate, while the TRIM Advisory Group advised and assisted subordinate headquarters, schools, training center, agencies, and installations. The various sections of TRIM were commanded either by a US officer with a French associate or by a French officer with a US associate. All were responsible to General O'Daniel, who served as Chief of both TRIM and MAAG.[39]

During 1955 TRIM occupied itself in organizing a military school system, setting up programs for training officers and specialists in the United States and other countries, and reducing the language barrier between the US and French instructors and their Vietnamese pupils. Much time and thought went into planning for reorganizing and training the army on a divisional rather than a battalion basis. In this area, however, TRIM accomplished little beyond the planning stage during 1955.[40]

39. TRIM Briefing, in (TS) Report of Visit of LTG Bruce C. Clarke, Commanding General, U.S. Army, Pacific to Western Pacific and Southeast Asia, 6-29 Sep 55 (hereafter cited as Clarke Report), vol. III, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) BP pt 5.

40. Ibid.

One reason for this slow progress was the continued employment of the army in operations against the sects. Another was the reduction of French personnel assigned to TRIM. As the French reduced the strength of the FEC, they also cut the strength of the French component of TRIM. Between April and November 1955, for instance, the number of French assigned to TRIM dropped from 268 to 122. The justification offered by the French for this reduction was that the French members of TRIM were being relegated to secondary and passive roles. Yet, in the same period the French jealously guarded the Vietnamese Navy and Air Force from even token US influence, and the training of those services remained almost exclusively under French purview.[41]

The rapid reduction of the FEC, together with the continuing need for employing the VNA in the pacification program, not only slowed the pace of training activities, but also left South Vietnam unprepared to cope with aggression by the DRV. This lack of forces capable of meeting external aggression led the RVN to press for US support of higher force levels.

Revision of Vietnamese Force Levels

In November 1954 the United States, on General Collins' recommendation, had agreed to support a Vietnamese force of 88,000 men; the 170,000 men of the armed forces were to be reduced to this figure by 1 July 1955. However, in January 1955 the RVN had persuaded the US Government to support a force of 100,000 men by December 1955, but it had soon become apparent that even this goal was unrealistic. The conflict with the sects, the continued buildup of Viet Minh subversive pressures, and the reduction of the FEC emphasized the undesirability of scaling down the army too soon. Moreover, the Vietnamese lacked the necessary administrative machinery to demobilize efficiently within the time allotted. The RVN were also able to make a good case that large-scale demobilization would add heavily to the burden

41. (S) Msg, CHMAAG Vietnam MG 1191 F to CNO, 17 Nov 55, DA IN 181427, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 15. (S) Msgs, State 2520 to Saigon, 24 Jan 56; Saigon 4070 to State, 7 Apr 56.

of an economy already strained by its effort to support large numbers of unemployed refugees from the north.[42]

In August 1955, therefore, General O'Daniel proposed a new adjustment in force levels. He recommended that for the balance of 1955 the US Government support a military establishment of 150,000 men, plus 10,000 sect troops; by the end of FY 1956 this 160,000-man force would be reduced to 150,000 men. The 150,000-man force would be organized into four field and six light divisions, thirteen territorial regiments, one airborne RCT, and support troops. The force bases would include an air force and a navy of limited size.[43]

Ambassador Reinhardt and CINCPAC fully endorsed General O'Daniel's proposal, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that the recommended force basis should be accepted. The Department of Defense subsequently approved the O'Daniel Plan, and MAAG immediately began planning for the reorganization of Vietnamese forces according to US concepts and at the newly approved level.[44]

The revision of force levels, the independence of the RVN, and the withdrawal of the French seemed to call for a reassessment of the mission of the RVNAF. Drafting US policy towards Vietnam in August 1954, the NSC, apparently expecting the FEC to deter or block any Viet Minh invasion, had defined the mission of Vietnamese forces as maintenance of internal security. For almost two years this was to remain the sole mission approved by the NSC. In fact, however, the United States had organized and supported Vietnamese forces on the assumption that they might be called upon to perform an additional mission--limited, but effective, initial resistance to external aggression.

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42. (S) Briefing by CHMAAG Indochina, in (TS) Clarke Report. (S) Msg, Saigon 186 to State, 14 Jul 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 9. (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina to CINCPAC, 9 Aug 55, same file, sec 10.

43. (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina to CINCPAC, 9 Aug 55, same file.

44. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to OSD, 10 Aug 55, same file. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Revised Force Bases for Vietnam, 19 Aug 55" (derived from JCS 1992/472), same file. (S) Msg, Saigon 186 to State, 14 Jul 55, same file, sec 9.

The record makes it clear that Vietnamese forces were being developed to perform both missions, for in 1955 the stated objective of the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) in South Vietnam was to assist in organizing, equipping, and training Vietnamese forces in order to "insure the maintenance of internal security and provide limited initial resistance to attack by the Viet Minh." Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended as one US military objective in Vietnam the promotion of eventual Vietnamese participation in SEATO, and it was their opinion that the members of the pact should have the capability of resisting armed attack.[45]

When the question of force levels arose in July 1955, Ambassador Reinhardt pointed out the desirability of re-examining the mission as defined by the NSC, and Admiral Stump declared that failure to include the mission of deterring aggression and delaying a Viet Minh attack invited such an attack and reduced the value of US aid to Vietnam. But, despite the need felt by these US officials for revision of the NSC definition of the RVNAF mission, the NSC statement remained unchanged until September 1956.[46]

MAAG's Personnel Problems

The increase in force levels and the cutback in the French training mission put TRIM in a difficult position. Even with French help, advisers and instructors had been too thinly spread through the Vietnamese military establishment. Now the training requirement was greater and the personnel to accomplish it fewer. MAAG had similar problems. General O'Daniel had transferred 220 of his 342 men to TRIM in February 1955, and, with the French withdrawing personnel engaged in processing MDAP equipment, MAAG found it difficult to supervise redistribution and use of this material. As

45. (S) JCS 2099/466, 14 Mar 55, CCS 092 (8-22-46) (2) BP pt 7. (S) JCS 2099/603, 7 Apr 56, same file, BP pt 9. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Objectives for the Department of Defense International Security Plan," 1 Mar 55 (derived from JCS 2101/189), CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50) sec 52. (TS) JCS 2099/540, 17 Nov 55, CCS 092 (8-22-46) (2) sec 20.

46. (S) Msg, Saigon 186 to State, 14 Jul 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 9. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to DA for OSD, 30 Jul 55, same file, sec 10. (TS) NSC 5612/1, 5 Sep 56, same file, sec 26.

early as February, before the French began to withdraw, General O'Daniel had reported that he needed twice his authorized strength to accomplish the mission assigned him.[47]

But the United States had decided that, although not a signatory, it would abide by the provisions of the agreement on Vietnam. Thus, according to Department of State interpretation, Article 16 of the agreement, which limited foreign military personnel in Vietnam to the number present in July 1954, limited the number of MAAG spaces to no more than 342. Both Admiral Stump and General O'Daniel argued forcefully for a change in the Department of State's ruling. The Commander in Chief, Pacific, believed that the policymakers in Washington were, to an alarming degree, permitting fear of offending the ICC to influence the course of US policy Their attitude he characterized as one of "leaning over so far backward we are apt to fall on our faces."[48]

On 2 November 1955 Admiral Stump, in a long cable, laid his case before the Chief of Naval Operations. He argued that in restricting foreign military personnel in Vietnam the Vietnam Agreement specified no nationality and clearly dealt in totals of communist and noncommunist foreign troops. Unless there was an increase in the total number of noncommunist troops in Vietnam, he said, it could not be validly contended that the armistice of agreement had been violated. Therefore replacement of French by US personnel did not violate Article 16 of the agreement and should be promptly authorized. It was bad enough to be pictured in Asia as a paper tiger, he concluded, but "even a paper tiger would lose face if he showed fear of possible Communist words."[49]

Admiral Burke took CINCPAC's plea to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, adding his own strong endorsement. They agreed, and in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense stated:

> The Joint Chiefs of Staff concur in the views of CINCPAC. They believe that it would

47. (S) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina MG 125 A to CNO, 10 Feb 55, DA IN 117629, same file, sec 4.
48. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 28 Feb 56.
49. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 2 Nov 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 15.

be realistic to interpret the provisions of the Geneva Agreement to permit replacement of French military personnel, withdrawn from the Combined Training Organization (TRIM) without replacement, by U.S. military personnel. Similarly, it should be permissible to replace French military technicians, withdrawn without replacement from execution of the MDAP redistribution activities, by U.S. military technicians. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Secretary of Defense inform the National Security Council of the gravity of the situation in Vietnam, requesting authority to raise the 342 limitation on U.S. military personnel in Vietnam to replace, as required, French personnel withdrawn without replacement from the training and MDAP equipment redistribution program.[50]

Transmitting these views to the Secretary of State on 13 December, the Secretary of Defense added his own emphatic concurrence. Conceding that the political impact of such a move as advocated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff would have to be carefully studied, Secretary Wilson suggested that this time military considerations might well outweigh political considerations. The Chief, MAAG, he continued, had been made responsible for the mission defined by the NSC, but had been denied the means to accomplish it. "If a favorable solution to this problem is not forthcoming in the immediate future," wrote Secretary Wilson, "It is considered that the NSC military objective should be revised downward so as to reflect a mission which might reasonably be accomplished by MAAG, Viet Nam."[51]

The "NSC military objective" in Vietnam was not revised nor was the Chief, MAAG, immediately given the additional

50. (S) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Raising U.S. Military Personnel Ceiling of MAAG Vietnam" (derived from JCS 1992/500), 9 Dec 55, same file, sec 16.

51. (S) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 13 Dec 55, N/H of JCS 1992/500, 14 Feb 56, same file.

personnel he deemed essential; the explanation may, in part at least, lie in the relative calm in Southeasteast Asia and the more sanguine view taken by US officials of the security threat.

The Security Threat

Although in 1954 the Viet Minh went through the outward motions of compliance with the Vietnam Agreement calling for the withdrawal of their forces, it had been rapidly apparent that they, in fact, were not doing so. The year 1955 brought renewed evidence that the Viet Minh were not abiding by the Agreement. Intelligence sources continued to report that the Viet Minh were leaving behind substantial numbers of trained military personnel in civilian guise while withdrawing new recruits to North Vietnam for training and indoctrination. French and VNA units moving into areas evacuated by the Viet Minh frequently discovered arms and ammunition caches, confirming that the Viet Minh had further plans for South Vietnam.

By late 1955, when the last Viet Minh units had left South Vietnam, a number of agents remained behind to direct the subsequent phases of the enemy campaign to unite the Vietnamese under Hanoi's rule. United States officials did not have an accurate estimate of the number of cadres left behind but clearly saw the threat these men represented. "The biggest danger facing South Vietnam (other than outright renewal of hostilities) is that of a Viet Minh decision to exercise its very extensive capability for widespread terrorist-guerrilla activities," the Deputy Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff, informed Admiral Radford on 22 November 1955. The decision to engage in such warfare would be taken by Hanoi only after it found itself unable, because of South Vietnam's increasing strength and stability, to conquer through political means. Admiral Radford noted, however, that it would be "increasingly difficult" for the Viet Minh to "get away with" terrorist activities as they had done in the past.

General O'Daniel did not believe that the Viet Minh had a very "extensive" guerrilla capability. They had, he thought, much less paramilitary strength than they had a year before. He predicted that this strength would continue to dwindle. Accepting this judgment, the Deputy Director for Intelligence informed the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 19 December 1955 that the present Viet Minh guerrilla capability was not

sufficient to take over the country and that only through a resumption of hostilities could they win South Vietnam.[52]

Thus as 1955 drew to a close the trend of events in South Vietnam appeared favorable to US policy. This trend seemed to bode well for the establishment of a reasonably stable government and a security climate in which the new republic might well become a dependable link in the chain of resistance to communist expansion in Asia.

52. (S) Rpt, Intelligence Advisory Committee, "Vietminh Violations of the Geneva Agreements through 31 December 1954," 21 Jan 55; (S) Memo, DDI, JS to CJCS, "Emerging Pattern-South Vietnam," 22 Nov 55. (S) Memo, DDI, JS to CJCS, "Comments by LTG O'Daniel on 12 Dec 55," 19 Dec 55.

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

When the Geneva settlement formally acknowledged de facto Viet Minh control in the northern half of Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had been exercising authority over large areas in the north for nine years.

This pre-Geneva experience provided a governmental framework that eased the DRV's task of assuming complete governmental control in 1954; the DRV soon found, however, that economic and political problems had been substituted for military ones. Before Geneva, the regime could command the support of the population simply by waging an effective war for independence and, when faced with economic and social problems, could convincingly attribute them in one way or another to colonialism. Thus the Viet Minh, and hence the DRV, although bearing few of the responsibilities and costs of real governmental power, nevertheless enjoyed great popularity and public cooperation. The Geneva Agreements ended this state of affairs, and visited new and taxing demands upon the DRV government.

Evacuation of Refugees

The Vietnam Agreement provided that French and Viet Minh forces be regrouped in their respective zones within 300 days after the armistice became effective. Withdrawal of French forces was to be accomplished in three stages: from the Hanoi perimeter by the end of 80 days; from the Haiduong perimeter by the end of 100 days; and from the Haiphong perimeter by the end of 300 days. Hanoi and Haiduong were evacuated on schedule, leaving Haiphong the last French foothold in the north. The transfer of the Haiphong enclave from French to Viet Minh hands began on 22 April 1955 and was completed on 16 May, two days before the deadline. The transfer was accomplished without incident, and the DRV thus assumed full responsibility, pending a final political settlement and unification of the country, for the administration of all Vietnamese territory north of the 17th Parallel.

In addition to the regrouping of military forces, the Vietnam Agreement also provided that civilians on either side of the demaracation line desiring to move to the other side should be permitted and helped to do so. The Agreement specified the same period of time for such transfers as for the removal of the military forces--300 days.

Within a few days of the signing of the Geneva Agreements, however, it became apparent that the French and the South Vietnamese would be unable to handle the evacuation of the thousands of refugees electing to migrate from North to South Vietnam. Ambassador Heath reported early in August 1954 that the refugee program was being gravely endangered by Viet Minh terrorism, South Vietnamese incompetence, and "incorrigibly weak" French staff work. The President should be advised, he added, that only bold US leadership could prevent failure.[1] Thus alerted, the United States Government responded with alacrity when the French and South Vietnamese, on 7 August 1954, requested assistance. General O'Daniel, as coordinator of refugee affairs, mobilized all appropriate US, French, and Vietnamese agencies to carry out what had been christened "Operation Exodus." Rear Admiral Lorenzo S. Sabin, USN, was designated by CINCPAC to organize Task Force 90, consisting of 41 troop and cargo ships and 10 support vessels. Task Force 90 was charged with assisting the French, who were conducting both sea and air lift, to transport refugees from Haiphong to reception centers at Saigon and Cap St. Jacques.[2]

United States officers found the staging areas at Hanoi, Haiduong, and Haiphong in a state of confusion and disorganization. Swarms of refugees jammed tent cities, public buildings, and even the streets. Sanitary conditions were deplorable. Viet Minh agents used all manner of tactics to induce or compel the emigrants to return to their homes. Communist photographers patrolled the beaches, photographing what one American described as the French "herding operation." French officers showed great reluctance to cooperate with the Americans. Admiral Sabin was denied permission

1. (S) Msg, Saigon 458 to State, 5 Aug 54, DA IN 76895.
2. (U) "Exodus Report on a Voluntary Mass Flight to Freedom, Viet-Nam, 1954," Dept of State Bulletin, 5 Feb 55, pp. 223-224. Hereafter cited as Exodus Report.

to send a communications team ashore unless it were integrated into the French Army, and United States medical officers were unable to secure an audience with representatives of the French medical service to discuss preventive medicine for the refugees. One French officer, with more candor than discretion, advised a US observer that "You people have the job of supplying the money and the ships. Please don't try to tell us how to run our end of the show. We will run it the way we think best."3

Conditions at the reception centers about Saigon were somewhat better than in the staging areas. A joint US-French-Vietnamese headquarters was established to coordinate refugee activities, and the development of reception centers was undertaken as a joint enterprise. France and the United States supplied large quantities of tentage, and messing, sanitary, and hospital facilities, as well as supervisory personnel. The South Vietnamese, for their part, furnished military units to be used as labor battalions. A number of private relief organizations assisted greatly at all stages of the effort. Expansion of the centers, however, failed to keep pace with the influx of immigrants, owing mainly to South Vietnamese vacillation and incompetence, rotation of personnel, and differences between the VNA and the Saigon government. The planned resettlement of refugees also lagged, thereby contributing to the congestion at the reception centers. Effective and extensive land reform, which would have absorbed most of the immigrants, became an impossibility as the Diem-Hinh conflict delayed the pacification program. Although 30,000 Tonkinese had been established as farmers on uncultivated lands in Bien Hoa by 14 September, the majority of the refugees settle down to months of waiting in the reception camps.4

The French employed their entire naval force in Indochina to carry out the evacuation of refugees. In addition 30 C-47s of the French Air Force were used to evacuate refugees. The first US vessel to participate directly began evacuating personnel on 16 August. During August, the peak

3. (TS) Memo, W.J. Lederer to CINCPAC, "Report on Trip to Indochina," 30 Aug 54.

4. Exodus Report, pp. 226-228. (S) Msgs, Saigon 613 to State, 17 Aug 54; 723, 25 Aug 54, DA IN 80795.

month for evacuation, 177,000 persons were carried southward to Saigon. The flow began dropping off in September with 155,000 civilian and military personnel being evacuated during that month. The United States Military Attache at Saigon ascribed this diminution to Viet Minh terror tactics and the inadequacy of the reception and relocation program at Saigon. During November the number of evacuees dropped to 65,000. Nevertheless, by 20 November a total of 473,000 persons had been recorded leaving North Vietnam. This did not include many thousands of Vietnamese who, out of fear of Viet Minh reprisals, had walked southward across the 17th Parallel.[5]

The evacuation of refugees continued until 16 May 1955 when the closure of Haiphong officially terminated Operation Exodus. Between August 1954 and May 1955, a total of 620,000 refugees had elected to leave the communist north for an uncertain future in the south. Most of these were Roman Catholics likely to be singled out for persecution if they had remained. Approximately half of the emigrants were moved to the south by the US Navy, and, in all, Task Force 90 transported 304,704 refugees, 68,727 tons of cargo, and 8,114 vehicles.[6]

The total number of refugees would doubtless have been much higher but for the terroristic tactics consistently applied by the Viet Minh to would-be emigrants throughout the entire 300-day period. Intimidation of refugees by the Viet Minh led to widespread sentiment in the free world for extending the truce deadline beyond 18 May 1955. The South

5. (S) OCB Status Report, "Indochina Economic and Financial Programs," 3 Nov 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 86. (S) Msg, USARMA Saigon MG-815-54 to DA, 12 Oct 54, DA IN 91346, same file. (C) Memo, COMAMPHIBSQDN ONE to ADM Radford, "Statistical Summary Indochina Evacuation," 20 Dec 54.

6. (S) OCB Report, "Detailed Development of Major Actions Relating to 'U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia' (NSC 5405) and Portions of NSC 5429/5 from March 16 through November 16, 1955," 29 Nov 55; (S) OCB Report, "Progress Report on 'U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia' (NSC 5405) and Portions of NSC 5429/5," 29 Nov 55; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 16.

Vietnamese delegation to the Bandung Conference discussed the subject with the Viet Minh delegation, and early in May Prime Minister Diem had brought the matter to the attention of Secretary of State Dulles. In the meantime, General Ely had informed the Canadian member of the International Control Commission that France strongly favored an extension of the 300-day period to compensate for the policy of obstruction employed by the Viet Minh. Finally, Sir Anthony Eden, co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference, broached the topic to his opposite number, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov. The DRV proved receptive, probably because Ho Chi Minh hoped that the principle of freedom of movement might be expanded to include freedom of circulation between zones and lead eventually to cultural and economic exchanges, which the communist press and radio had been advocating for several months. Freedom of movement would greatly enhance opportunities for infiltration and subversion of South Vietnam. Accordingly, the DRV agreed on 20 May to extend the deadline for one month, and subsequently allowed the date again to be moved forward, this time to 20 July 1955. Although these concessions were not accompanied by relaxation of Viet Minh oppression, an estimated 150,000 more refugees left North Vietnam after the closure of Haiphong. According to a Department of State estimate approximately 900,000 refugees eventually made their way to South Vietnam.[7]

Evacuation of MDAP Equipment

The question of MDAP equipment shipped to Tonkin for use by French Union Forces during the war had caused much concern to US officials, including Congressmen, who feared that quantities of it might fall into the hands of the Viet Minh. This concern had been heightened by evidence that the French were not carrying out the evacuation program in a manner calculated to ensure removal of the material by

7. (S) Msg, Saigon 3726 to State, 5 May 55. (C) Msgs, Saigon 5146 to State, 9 May 55; 5239, 13 May 55. (LOU) Msg, Saigon 5679 to State, 6 Jun 55. (S) Msg, Hanoi 1345 to State, 22 May 55. NY Times, 21 May 55, p. 5; 23 May 55, p. 4; 1 Jun 55, p. 8; 26 Jun 55, p. 6. (U) Dept of State, Publication No. 7308, "A Threat to the Peace," Pt 1, Dec 61, p. 6.

the end of the 300 days. The United States expressed its apprehension to the French during the Smith-La Chambre talks in September 1954. On this and subsequent occasions, the French promised that no US equipment would be left in Haiphong for the Viet Minh, and they were able to make good their promise. By February 1955, all large items of military equipment had been shipped to Saigon.[8]

General O'Daniel reported in March that equipment with an acquisition cost of almost $206 million had been recovered from Tonkin and stockpiled in South Vietnam. The United States planned to distribute most of this to Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian troops, and ship the remainder to other recipients of MDAP aid in the Far East. This could not be done, however, until the French completed an inventory of all the excess equipment. As French accounting, storage, and distribution procedures left much to be desired, the inventory proved to be a time-consuming operation. But the MAAG preferred accuracy to speed, and did not attempt to rush the French.[9]

One category of equipment still remained in Haiphong, and the French appeared to be making no effort to remove it. This was the heavy machinery, financed by the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), in the Hon Gay coal mines. General Ely had repeatedly assured the United States that this equipment would not be left behind when the French evacuated Tonkin. But General Ely was also under instructions to do nothing that might provoke trouble with the Viet Minh, and the French feared that the Viet Minh would not permit the equipment to be evacuated peacefully. So they procrastinated, and the United States was confronted with the unpleasant prospect of US-financed equipment providing fuel and power for communist industry. But General Ely had given his word. While Paris gave US diplomats qualified promises and talked in ambiguous legalities, the General boldly began to evacuate the machinery. The first items were dismantled and

8. (S) Msg, CHMAAG Indochina MG 0022 B to OSD, 10 Jan 55, DA IN 110057, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 1. (S) Msg, Saigon 2759 to State, 15 Jan 55.
9. (S) Memo, Dep ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "MDAP Equipment in Indochina," 30 Jun 55.

shipped to Saigon early in February, and the operation was completed on 28 March.[10]

French Industry Leaves Tonkin

A partial explanation of the dilatory French approach to the evacuation of industrial equipment lay in the fact that they hoped to retain their commercial interests in North Vietnam following the withdrawal of their military forces. The "Sainteny policy" of maintaining the economic, industrial, and cultural presence of France in the north, begun under Mendes-France, had also been adopted by the Faure government. Paris had attempted to persuade French companies to remain in the north and operate under the communist regime, but these firms had refused to carry on without certain financial guarantees that the French Government was unwilling to provide. After some consideration of a proposal to persuade Ho Chi Minh to internationalize Haiphong and exempt French industry and shipping from regulation by the DRV, Sainteny induced the French Government to try to plan for mixed French-Viet Minh companies. According to Sainteny's formula, French industry in Haiphong, after the transfer of the enclave in May, would cede its physical properties to the Viet Minh. A new corporate ownership would be formed in which the DRV had controlling interest. The remaining interest would be divided between the French Government and the private French industrialists concerned. Sainteny's mission in Hanoi was authorized to begin negotiations with Ho Chi Minh for establishing a pilot project to test the feasibility of this proposal. The firm selected was Charbonnages du Tonkin, which administered the Hon Gay coal mines containing the US-financed machinery.[11]

The French tried to convince the United States that this proposal was actually in the interest of the free world. If the French withdrew from the enterprise, the Foreign

10. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2759 to State, 15 Jan 55; 2874, 21 Jan 55; 4159, 28 Mar 55. (C) Msg, Saigon 3355 to State, 12 Feb 55. (S) Msg, Paris 3565 to State, 23 Feb 55.

11. (S) Msgs, Paris 2883 to State, 7 Jan 55; 3091, 21 Jan 55. (C) Msg, Paris 3306 to State, 7 Feb 55. (S) Msg, Saigon 2985 to State, 27 Jan 55.

Office explained, Chinese or other communist technicians would be brought in to operate the French installations. If the French remained, however, Ho's dependence on the communist bloc would be lessened. As an official of the US Embassy in Paris pointed out, the French had not yet given up their belief that the DRV could be kept from becoming a communist satellite.[12]

To US officials, the French approach in general, and the Sainteny plan in particular, seemed to be based more on wishful thinking than on a realistic appraisal of past experience with the communists. Apart from this consideration, the US Government believed that Sainteny's proposal to work with the communist north contradicted French professions of support for the Diem government in Saigon. The United States also concluded that mixed companies could not qualify as "western installations," for which special exceptions were made to the embargo on trade in strategic materials with the communist countries of the Far East. Without US support, French-DRV companies could not hope to secure permission to import strategic materials essential to their operations. Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh, in negotiations with Sainteny and representatives of Charbonnages du Tonkin, had demanded 95 percent interest in the mixed companies, terms that hardly appealed to the Charbonnages directors. To the disappointment of the authorities in Paris, Charbonnages du Tonkin therefore refused to continue operations. Accordingly, the company concluded arrangements for the sale of its installations and equipment to the DRV, thus setting an example soon followed by the other French concerns in the Haiphong area. As a result, the Foreign Office informed the United States that France had decided to abandon the project for maintaining French business in Tonkin. When the DRV took over Haiphong in May, no French industry and very few French technicians remained.[13]

12. (S) Msg, Paris 3394 to State, 11 Feb 55. (S) Msg, Paris 3452 to State, 16 Feb 55.

13. (C) Msgs, State 2846 to Paris, 11 Feb 55; Saigon 3355 to State, 12 Feb 55. (S) Msgs, Paris 3582 to State, 17 Feb 55; 4263, 1 Apr 55; 4409, 12 Apr 55.

Reconstruction and Expansion of the Agricultural Economy

One of the most densely populated areas in the world, North Vietnam has historically been a food (rice) deficit area. From the outset the DRV was determined to develop an agricultural self-sufficiency that would free it from dependence on outside sources. Although collectivization was the ultimate objective of the DRV's economic programs, the regime did not adhere blindly to communist dogma. The collectivization of agriculture, initially at least was pursued cautiously, if firmly.[14]

The DRV had good readon to proceed with care. The war with France had seriously disrupted the already marginal agricultural economy of the north and the Geneva settlement had interrupted the importation of rice from the south. Moreover, the situation grew even worse with the failure of the rice crop. Despite 100,000 tons of rice supplied by Red China, North Vietnam's rice deficit jumped from 200,000 tons in 1954 to 700,000 tons in 1955. The DRV blamed the landowner class for "sabotaging agricultural reforms," and in February 1955 instituted rationing and controls. But many areas of Tonkin continued to suffer acute food shortages, and rice prices doubled in Hanoi.

Although an extensive land reform program was launched, paddy taxes continued to absorb 40 percent of the peasant's output. Heavy sales and inventory taxes were clamped on merchants, and the scope of private trade diminished as the

14. William Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided: The Economy of North Vietnam," P. J. Honey (ed.), North Vietnam Today: Profile of a Communist Satellite (1962), p. 106. James Price Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam," Far Eastern Survey, August 1959, p. 113. Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indo-China (1961), pp. 368, 372-373. For a discussion of DRV policy of independence, see, Harold C. Hinton, China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam (1958), p. 17. For its program of economic independence, see M.M. Avsenev, The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Economy and Foreign Trade (Joint Publications Research Service) (Leningrad: 1960), p. 168.

government began to take over all commercial intercourse. Flight of foreign business and technicians forced even greater reliance on imports, and enlarged the chronic deficit in the balance of payments of the Tonkin region. Depreciation of currency and forced labor added to the problems of the regime and burdens of the populace.

At the end of the DRV's first year in power, US intelligence officials found it difficult to assess the character and intensity of resistance within North Vietnam. The evidence available indicated that, despite governmental oppression and depressed living standards, discontent was not finding expression in organized opposition to the regime. The people saw that the government was strong, cohesive, and prepared to crush any opposition with complete ruthlessness. Further, for the most part they retained respect for the Viet Minh as the nationalist movement that had expelled the hated French.[15]

One area in which the DRV could make considerable progress without fear of popular resentment was in the matter of rehabilitation of unproductive land. During 1955-1956, while the other phases of the agricultural program stumbled along, efforts at land rehabilitation were vigorously and successfully pursued, with the result that by the end of 1956, 85 percent of the arable land in the north was under cultivation, a 15 percent increase over the previous year.[16]

The other major element of the regime's agricultural program was the distribution of the property of large landowners (church and communal land was included) among the landless agricultural workers. The fact that there was apparently no great economic need in the north for redistribution suggests that the regime's program was carried out for political or propaganda purposes. During the long years of revolution, the Viet Minh had claimed that land reform would be one of the benefits which would result from the explusion of the French, and had gone so far as to carry out

15. (S) NIEs 63.1-55, 19 Jul 55; 10-55, 12 Apr 55. (S) Msgs, Saigon 3637 to State, 4 Mar 55; 2159, 20 Nov 55; Hanoi 4 to State, 1 Jul 55.

16. Theodore Shabad, "Economic Developments in North Vietnam," Pacific Affairs, March 1958, pp. 45, 51.

some reforms in the area under its control. These "campaign promises" were especially significant in the south where the existence of large individual holdings and absentee ownership made land reform particulary appealing to the southern peasantry. Unlike the situation in the south, the pattern of land ownership in the north had for many years been characterized by large numbers of small owner-operated farms, and relatively little absentee ownership. Only about 17 percent of the total area under cultivation in the north was made up of "large properties," i.e., more than 3.6 hectares. Redistribution would, however, set the stage for the socialization of agriculture, and by destroying the small class of large landowners the regime would, it was hoped eliminate the primary potential source of resistance to collectivism and induce a sense of loyalty in the recipients of the redistribution.17

During its first year in power (1954-1955) the DRV did not press land redistribution, because, apparently, it did not want to tamper with an operating system. Moreover, the go-slow formula of the first year may have in part reflected the regime's desire not to appear extremist in the eyes of the West or of the peasants of South Vietnam. In 1955, however, a National Planning Board, established with the help of Chinese and Soviet personnel, announced the first of two annual "plans" which were to begin the transformation of agriculture in the north. A special cadre drawn from, and responsible to, the Lao Dong (communist) Party was created to implement the redistribution program. Several People's Courts--groups of local inhabitants drawn together to suggest landowner classifications for their neighbors and to judge the merits of the classifications assigned--were established. These groups, however, often degenerated into vehicles for the satisfaction of personal grudges or selfish claims. Other injustices stemmed from the fact that the land held by people who could fairly be classified as "large owners" was, when divided, insufficient to give the large

17. Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam," p. 113. Avsenev, The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Economy and Foreign Trade, pp. 27, 109. Bernard Fall, The Viet Minh Regime, Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic (1956), p. 117.

number of eligible recipients more than token accessions. By the summer of 1956 it was apparent that the new program of agrarian reform was arousing widespread dissatisfaction and open opposition from the peasantry. Corrective measures were applied by the DRV but they came too late to prevent in November 1956, a rebellion in Ho Chi Minh's native province, Nghe An.[18]

Despite the setback caused by the peasant opposition and rebellion the land reform program was basically completed by October 1956. The "landlord class" was virtually eliminated, and the pattern of small owner-operated farms was expanded to encompass almost the entire agricultural economy.

Subsequently, the regime initiated a series of steps to encourage the peasants to join one of several programs that were ultimately to result in the socialization of agriculture. These steps included manpower exchange teams, cooperatives, and, finally, collective farms. The regime moved cautiously in its socialization program up to the end of 1957, then launched a concerted drive to collectivize agriculture. One year later 65 percent of the peasants in NVN had been organized into manpower-exchange teams and by mid-1960 more than half of NVN's peasant households were enrolled in the agricultural producer cooperatives. The stage had been set for complete collectivization of agriculture, but this would not be accomplished for some time to come.[19]

The DRV made considerable progress in its effort to achieve agricultural self-sufficiency. During this period the DRV succeeded in increasing total rice production, mostly through the reclamation of arable land, to the point where it exceeded the production of any year before Geneva. Rice production enable the regime, for the first time in the history of the northern region of Vietnam, to export small amounts to India and Indonesia.[20]

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18. For a full discussion of land reform program, see Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam," pp. 117-120.

19. For material on the stages of collectivization, see (C) NIS 43C, sec 61, pp. 13-15; and sec 60, p. 4.

20. Shabad, "Economic Developments in North Vietnam," pp. 47-48. Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided: The Economy of North Vietnam," p. 116.

This progress was scarcely apparent to the Vietnamese consumer, however. Although the DRV had managed to increase rice production substantially, the annual ration remained only slightly more than the 300 kilograms declared by the regime to be the minimum requirement. Moreover, the variety of the diet was still substandard even by the low standards of pre-World War II Indochina.[21]

In summary, the activities of the DRV in the field of agriculture helped the people of North Vietnam achieve at least a subsistence level diet in the face of adverse conditions. In addition, the DRV's agricultural program succeeded in reconstructing and developing the agricultural economy to the point where it promised to make the north independent of food imports. Finally, the regime laid the basis for the socialization of agriculture. In contrast to both the USSR and Communist China, the DRV seemed to have begun its national planning with full attention to the basic importance of agriculture in its economy. In a further departure from the Soviet agricultural system, which called for the increase in agricultural output per worker through mechanization, DRV planning called for programs of food production that capitalized on the abundance of its manpower and made allowance for the limitations of its industrial capacity. In its national planning the regime demonstrated a pragmatism and flexibility well suited to the difficult situation which it faced.[22]

Reconstruction and Expansion of the Industrial Economy

In order to complete the base on which it hoped to build a viable economy, the regime sought to complement its efforts in agriculture with a program of industrial reconstruction and development. It was hoped that the products of a revived and expanded industrial plant would contribute to the development of economic self-sufficiency and supply North Vietnam with export commodities, which would be traded for products that could not be produced domestically.

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21. Shabad, "Economic Developments in North Vietnam," pp. 46-47.

22. (C) NIS 43C, sec 55, p. 9. (S) NIE, 63-59, 26 May 59, pp. 8-9.

The industrial resources of North Vietnam, though substantial when compared with those available in the south, did not qualify the north as an industrialized area. Although there were large numbers of handicraftsmen and some light industry, the few existing large industries were engaged almost exclusively in the extraction of raw materials. North Vietnam's natural endowments presented a brighter picture for the future: it had the only known major coal basin in Southeast Asia and had a potential for the production of cotton, rubber, and other "industrial crops."[23]

Industrial recovery and development in the north, in conformity with the regime's socialist orientation, was planned and controlled by the government. Except for the larger foreign holdings, many of which had been appropriated outright, the regime confined itself to the use of indirect methods to guide industry. It did this by controlling the distribution of raw materials and imported goods, and by insuring a market for products at a favorable price through government purchases. The regime was also able to affect the course of industrial development through the granting or withholding of government loans. These controls were exercised by the governmental apparatus pursuant to programs set forth by the Central Planning Commission, which was established late in 1955.[24]

In line with its general policy of subordinating ideology to practicality in order to encourage the swiftest possible economic recovery, the regime made little effort during the reconstruction period to socialize the nation's light industries and handicrafts. Although the regime began reconstructing the large enterprises left by the French, more benefit was expected in the immediate postwar period from the light industries and handicrafts because their recovery could be accomplished quickly and at a small cost, and their reconstruction required little technical skill or

23. P.H.M. Jones, "The Industry of North Vietnam," Far Eastern Economic Review, 22 Sep 60. (C) NIS 43C, sec 60, p. 10. Shabad, "Economic Developments in North Vietnam," pp. 42ff. Avsenev, The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Economy and Foreign Trade, pp. 55-57, 83ff.

24. Avsenev, The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Economy and Foreign Trade, pp. 75-82. (C) NIS 43C, sec 60, p. 17.

capital. Further, the light industries produced essential consumer goods and materials needed in the agricultural recovery program, thus reducing the need to import them and freeing more of the country's foreign exchange for the purchase of industrial equipment that could not be produced domestically. Nevertheless, by expanding its productive capacity, the state sector, confined almost entirely to the large industries, increased its share of the total industrial production from 17 percent in 1956 to 36 percent of North Vietnam's total in 1957.[25]

Agriculture and Industry: The Three Year Plan and After

The terror and confusion following the agricultural rebellion in 1956 had upset farming, and caused a serious setback in the rehabilitation and industrial reconstruction program begun in 1954. A breathing space had clearly been needed; thus in 1956 and 1957 the DRV had inaugurated modest one year plans. By 1958, however, the DRV apparently believed the time had come to expand its control and the modernization of the nation's economy. In 1958 it launched a well publicized Three Year Plan with ambitious targets for agriculture and industry. The plan called for a substantial increase in agricultural and industrial production, aiming in the first instance to achieve an adequate food supply and greater export surpluses and in the second to lay the foundations for a modern industrialized state. Consonant with Marxist doctrine, the DRV looked ultimately to achieving a high degree of industrialization, but it realistically had to concede in 1958 that the scarcity of technical and managerial skills meant that the country would have to depend on exporting agricultural and mineral raw materials in exchange for machinery and equipment. Thus the primary aim of the Three Year Plan was to increase production of food through the exploitation of North Vietnam's abundant human resources in the slow process toward modern industrialization.[26]

25. Asvenev, The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Economy and Foreign Trade, pp. 71, 76-77, 168.

26. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55, p. 8. Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided," p. 108.

The Three Year Plan had a political as well as an economic aim; state control was to be extended over a wide range of economic activities. In particular, agricultural producers' cooperatives, i.e., collectives, were to be established on a large scale and government control was to be extended in industry by transferring private and mixed enterprises to the "socialist economy." By the end of 1960 the bulk of private industry and commerce had been transformed into joint-stock companies run for the state by their former owners. The state owned nine-tenths of all industry and commerce and four-fifths of all transport. Approximately three-quarters of all petty traders and artisans had been organized in state-controlled cooperatives.[27] In February 1960 Hanoi announced that within the year it hoped to complete "the grouping of peasants and handicraft workers into semi-socialist cooperatives and complete the transformation of private industry and commerce in the form of joint state-private ownership of enterprises."[28]

The DRV continued to emphasize economic rehabilitation during the 1960s. At the opening meeting of the Third National Congress of the Lao Dong Party on 5 September 1960, Le Duan, a member of the Political Bureau, proclaimed the inauguration of the Five Year Plan to begin in 1961. By this new plan the DRV hoped to increase the total value of industrial output 148 percent and agricultural output 96 percent. Once again the emphasis was on agriculture as the basis of industrial growth.[29] A major feature of the Five Year Plan was socialization of agriculture and the rapid obliteration of the private farm. Despite their traditional attachment to private land, the peasant landlords, faced with uneconomical plots, a scarcity of draft animals, and the high delivery quotas of the Five Year Plan, in increasing numbers began enlisting in the Work Exchange Teams, the basic units of the state's agricultural cooperative system. By the end of 1960 the cooperatives included 85 percent of all farming families, and 99 percent of all crops were being produced on these cooperatives. The cooperatives were reorganized in March 1963 and the percentage of all farming families inched up to 87.7. These impressive statistics notwithstanding,

27. Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided," p. 109.
28. NY Times, 10 Feb 60, p. 6; Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided," pp. 108-109.
29. NY Times, 6 Sep 60, p. 18.

the DRV still faced a basic dilemma. With a population increase of 3.5 percent per year, food production had to increase at least 200,000 tons a year to feed the people of North Vietnam. Even the optimistic figures in the Five Year Plan did not provide for such increases.[30]

The DRV Government

In addition to its efforts in the fields of agriculture and industry, the DRV worked in the years after Geneva toward the imposition and consolidation of its political control over the north. To this end the Communist Party and the governmental structure were reshaped and strengthened. The party tried to streamline its governmental control apparatus and widen its political base, for in spite of its nearly quarter-million membership in 1954, the party was weak in rural areas, suffering from its essentially urban orientation. To avoid the danger of exclusive reliance on one segment of the population, it worked to incorporate into its leadership prominent communist officials from South Vietnam as well as new members from the army and ethnic minorities.[31] With the transfer of the last French-held enclave to the DRV, North Vietnam stepped behind the Bamboo Curtain. As the DRV gained wider and tighter control of the country, it acquired more and more of the distinctive trappings of the communist police state.

In the late spring of 1955, Consul Thomas Corcoran, who maintained the US Consulate in Hanoi, reported that the capital city was submitting readily to communist regimentation. An efficient block leader system had been installed to mobilize the population for parades and demonstrations. Flags, banners, and posters, which depicted the current party line and generated an anti-American fevor, were in evidence everywhere. The DRV made lavish and conspicuous use of sentries and patrols, although there was little danger to the security of the regime. A high degree of police surveillance, farcical people's court trials, Stakhanovite competitions, self-criticism by civil servants, and "brain-washing" of political

30. Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (1963), pp. 154, 164-166.

31. (S) NIE 63-55, sec 55.

prisoners marked the conversion of Hanoi from a bastion of French colonialism to the showcase of Vietnamese communism.32

Although the constitution promulgated by Ho Chi Minh in 1946 placed supreme authority in the National Assembly, all important domestic policies actually were framed by the politburo of the party. Moreover, close liaison between party and government was assured by the party's virtual monopoly of key positions at all levels of government. The party leaders centralized governmental authority and reduced the administrative flexibility and local autonomy required by wartime conditions. For example, the wartime administrative "interzones" between the central government and the provinces and municipalities were abolished, and the DRV created three "autonomous regions," ostensibly for the purpose of providing ethnic minorities with some cultural and political autonomy, but in fact for facilitating party and government control of these minorities.

Supreme leadership of the DRV remained in the hands of Ho Chi Minh and a small party coterie. Except for a well-publicized trip to Peking and Moscow in 1954, Ho appeared less frequently in the international spotlight, but US intelligence officials believed that because of his great popular appeal as a symbol of Vietnamese nationalism he remained the ultimate authority. With the victory of Dien Bien Phu behind him, the DRV's military commander, Vo Nguyen Giap, appeared to assume greater importance and responsibility in the DRV hierarchy. Even more evident was the rise of Pham Van Dong, appointed Foreign Minister in 1954 and Prime Minister the next year.

Unlike the Communist Party, the Vietnamese People's Army (VPA) was always broadly based, and Vo Nguyen Giap's large, well-trained, and well-equipped force was of major importance in spreading communist authority throughout the country. More secure in its national position, the army was able to execute harsh and unpopular policies. Recruited chiefly among the peasantry, and to a lesser extent from the cities and even from the upland minorities, the VPA numbered an estimated 240,000 soldiers in mid-1955, an increase of 60,000 over pre-Geneva figures. United States intelligence officials in 1963 estimated the VPA strength at 380,000 troops, including militia forces of 100,000. The

32. (S) Msg, Hanoi 1364 to State, 23 May 55.

army was organized into 14 infantry divisions and one artillery division with service and support elements. Large shipments of arms and materiel, imported from Communist China in violation of the Geneva Agreements, resulted in greatly increased firepower and mobility. Intensive training programs had been carried out to improve military effectiveness and insure political loyalty. The US intelligence agencies judged that, in the event of hostilities, the VPA was not only capable of maintaining control over North Vietnam, but also of defeating any combination of the military forces of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Of particular interest in the period following the Sino-Soviet rift is the fact that Giap, the VPA strong-man, was outspokenly hostile toward the Chinese. In fact, Giap's agents were reported actively engaged in gathering military intelligence inside China in the interest of DRV security.33

The Opposition

The regime was hampered in its program of political consolidation by the persistent and mounting opposition of several factions. Organized opposition originated among three groups: the Catholics, certain tribal groups, and the intellectuals. A fourth group, the farmers, were unorganized, but hostile to the land reform programs.

The DRV began seeking Catholic support shortly after its establishment in 1945 and registered some early success owing largely to the nationalistic character of Ho's government. When the Vatican granted diplomatic recognition to the Bao Dai government in 1950, however, relations between the DRV and the Catholic population deteriorated. Shocked by the scale of Catholic emigration following the Geneva settlement, the DRV ordered more liberal treatment of Catholic communities, but petty officials ignored these instructions and provoked further evacuations. The DRV resorted to harassments and finally was forced to halt the Catholic emigration. It launched an intensive propaganda campaign, infiltrated Catholic communities, and employed a variety of ruses to attract the laity into state-sponsored activities in order to undermine the authority and prestige of the Catholic hierarchy. At the same time the regime arrested

33. (S) NIE 63-55. (S) US Army Handbook for Vietnam, Sep 62, p. 103.

native priests, expelled some French clergy, and used military force to suppress riots in Catholic villages. Although the church managed to retain its national organization despite these pressures, its membership ceased expanding, and its ability to resist further DRV pressure declined. One author has claimed that Catholic migration to the south worked to the advantage of the DRV, as the French had argued it would. The exodus freed land for redistribution and eliminated potential trouble-makers.[34]

Only loosely organized, North Vietnam's tribal communities, living for the most part in strategic border regions, shared a traditional animosity toward the Vietnamese and current hostility toward the political consolidation of their areas under the DRV. The DRV tried to mitigate tribal opposition by establishing the autonomous regions; it had finally to resort to armed force to suppress resistance. Lacking economic resources and adequate organization, the tribesmen were forced to limit their resistance to sporadic guerrilla activity and passive opposition to the regime's attempts to establish its political control. In 1956 the government claimed that since the Vietnam Agreement more than 300 "bandits" had been killed and some 5,700 captured in minority areas.[35]

The nation's intellectuals, although less organized than either the Catholic or tribal minorities, were potentially more dangerous to the regime. In 1956, emulating Mao Tse-tung's "Hundred Flowers" movement, the DRV announced that it would permit different "tendencies," the freedom to discuss and argue political and cultural topics. In response to this dispensation a group of artists and writers in Hanoi began publishing criticism of the DRV and communism in a number of Vietnamese-language publications. Within the space of three months, however, the DRV retracted its policy of press freedom and smashed the movement. In May 1957 the government once more relaxed its attitude and permitted some writers to publish their material freely, but as a result of bitter criticism of governmental policies the journals were once again closed and the "political thinking

34. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55, p. 55-5. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, p. 154.
35. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55, p. 55-5.

and reactionary ideas" of the artists and writers were ruthlessly suppressed. The regime subsequently launched a campaign against revisionism in art and literature; writers and artists by the hundreds were forced into "re-education" courses, some recalcitrants were made to recant, other leading critics were charged with treason and arrested.36

The opposition to the regime coalesced in open rebellion in 1956. Though the point at issue was land reform, the occasion allowed the disparate groups to make common cause against the government. The excesses and confusion that accompanied the land reform program had resulted in widespread disillusionment and disaffection among those very groups whose loyalty the regime sought to win. Not only were the small landholders and once powerful landlords in opposition, but even the poorest peasants in the tightly organized Vietnamese village society began demonstrating against the government. In some areas local party officials openly supported the dissidents in their complaints. These party members, themselves recently recruited from the rural areas, were repelled by the human suffering resulting from the reforms. The general rural reaction was reflected in the sharp drop in rice-tax collection, an index of rice production.37

Fearing that rural discontent might lead to barren rice fields, the regime admitted in October 1956 to "grave errors" and embarked on a "mistakes correction" campaign to eliminate the worst of the excesses and restore rural confidence. This spectacular campaign was too late. On 13 November open rebellion broke out in Nghe An province, a center of Vietnamese Catholicism. Land reform was the principal issue, but in part it was also a religious uprising and a revolt of North Vietnamese intellectuals. It was the peasants, however, who paid the high cost of the violence. It was estimated that 50,000 peasants were executed, and twice as many arrested. In the end a whole division of regular troops had to be employed to crush the rebellion. Although the DRV

36. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55, p. 55-6. Honey, North Vietnam Today, pp. 82-87.

37. Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam," pp. 118-119.

succeeded in ending organized resistance, a substantial residue of resentment and potential opposition remained.[38]

DRV Foreign Policy, 1954-1960

According to the Vietnam Agreement, the DRV was to be no more than the regime in de facto control of North Vietnam pending the results of all-Vietnam elections in 1956 that would reunite the northern and southern halves of the nation. But as soon as the DRV became ensconced in Hanoi it began to act as a recognized sovereign nation, and by the end of 1955 the DRV had taken on the unmistakable cast of a permanent communist regime.

In its effort to hasten its economic reconstruction and to achieve political unification, the DRV maintained and encouraged better relations with certain nations of the West. Initially Hanoi looked to France for economic as well as political assistance. France was, in fact, the only great power that was a signatory to the Geneva Agreements and at the same time capable of effective action in South Vietnam, thanks to the military, economic, and political assets still at her disposal there. The DRV hoped that France, disappointed and exasperated by the affronts of the Diem government, might gamble on a unified communist Vietnam with the hope of maintaining its interests. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong emphasized the special relationship between France and the DRV when on 1 January 1955 he declared: "It was with you, the French, that we signed the Geneva agreements, and it is up to you to see that they are respected."[39]

In spite of the failure of the Sainteny mission early in 1955, the French for a time continued to enjoy amicable relations with the DRV. Once it became clear, however, that

38. Bernard B. Fall, "Crisis in North Viet-Nam," Far Eastern Survey, January 1957, pp. 12-15. Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam," p. 179. Frank Trager (ed.), Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries (1959), p. 162.

39. P. Devillers, "The Struggle for Unification of Vietnam," The China Quarterly, January-March 1962, p. 8.

France would not grant diplomatic recognition to the DRV or permit the establishment of a DRV diplomatic mission in Paris, relations between the two countries rapidly deteriorated. In 1958 France permitted the DRV to establish a two-man trade delegation in Paris, but like the French mission in Hanoi this delegation did not enjoy diplomatic privileges. Relations worsened in that year when the DRV held a public spy trial involving a French mission staff member, and, following the suppression of a DRV trade organization operation in France in October 1959, the DRV began harassing the French mission in Hanoi. By 1960 few traces of French influence remained in North Vietnam.[40]

As the principal and strongest supporter of South Vietnam the United States became the target for DRV vilification and condemnation. After Geneva, the communists blamed the United States for the partition of Vietnam and, from 1956 on, US intervention in the south was constantly denounced as the principle obstacle to reunification. The Diem regime was condemned as the puppet of the US imperialists. This was a line both palatable to the communist bloc and compatible with a north-south rapprochement, offering as it did anti-Americanism as a national adhesive, and at the same time obfuscating the ideological issue of communism. Thus the US became, and remained, the primary target of almost all Hanoi's propaganda attacks against the West, and the staging of anti-American demonstrations and exhibits took on the features of a concerted DRV program to discredit US motives and activities in South Vietnam.[41]

It will be recalled that the United States, initially at least, did not adopt an unyielding policy toward North Vietnam. After the Geneva Conference, US policy planners had divided over the future course of US policy toward Hanoi. Department of Defense officials argued that the United States should consider North Vietnam as already a part of the communist sphere, but other NSC members favored an approach of exploiting available means to prevent North Vietnam from

40. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55, p. 55-17. Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indo-China, p. 364.

41. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55, p. 55-17. Devillers, "The Struggle for Unification of Vietnam," p. 11.

"becoming permanently incorporated in the Soviet bloc." In the end the latter view prevailed, and the NSC adopted an accommodative policy.[42]

In succeeding years, however, little was actually done to wean North Vietnam from the Soviet bloc. The only policy directly attributable to the NSC decision was the maintenance of the US Consulate in Hanoi. Through this Consulate, the United States hoped to retain some voice and influence in the northern half of the nation. Events soon proved, however, that the DRV was inflexibly hostile to the United States. The DRV harassed the Consulate and its staff continually until the United States had no choice but to close it down in mid-1955.[43]

After the Consulate closed, US policy toward North Vietnam swung gradually around to the hard line suggested by the Department of Defense in 1954. In September 1956 the NSC determined that the DRV should be treated as "not a legal government," that other states should be discouraged from dealing with it, and that the United States should try to contain and subvert the DRV. This policy remained in force until the end of the Eisenhower Administration, reinforced in 1958 by an additional NSC decision to "apply, as necessary to achieve US objectives, restrictions on US exports and shipping and on foreign assets similar to those already in effect for Communist China and North Korea."[44]

Canada and the United Kingdom maintained diplomatic missions in Hanoi after Geneva. Canada's membership on the ICC undoubtedly explained Hanoi's efforts to continue some relationship with that nation. After the cease-fire, some

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42. (TS) Memo for the NSC Planning Board, "Review of US Policy in the Far East," 3 Aug 54, CCS 381 Far East (11-28-50) sec 22. A detailed analysis of US policy toward Vietnam is found in Ch. I.

43. NY Times, 29 Oct 54, p. 5. (S) Msg, Hanoi 1364 to State, 23 May 55. (C) Memo, DepDir Intel to CJCS, 25 Nov 55.

44. (TS) NSC 5612/1, 5 Sep 56, Encl to JCS 1992/565, 11 Sep 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 26. (TS) NSC 5809 2 Apr 58, same file, sec 38. (S) NSC 6012, 25 Jul 60, JMF 9150/9105 (11 Jul 60).

500 Canadian officials entered North Vietnam. For the most part, however, Canadian contacts with the DRV were limited to those meetings and discussions carried on by the combined ICC with DRV officials.

As a co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference, the United Kingdom, although its mission in Hanoi had no official status, enjoyed a special relationship in Hanoi. Moreover, the presence of this mission and occasional visits by British journalists and parliamentarians seemed to impress some elements of the DRV's hierarchy as something approaching de facto recognition of the regime by London. When the British continued to deny the regime formal recognition, the DRV attitude changed. After mid-1959 DRV propaganda began charging that the British Government had failed to fulfill its responsibilities as a co-Chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference.[45]

After Geneva, the DRV made a special effort to attract the support of the neutral countries of Asia and Africa for its national aspirations. The DRV worked hard to achieve respectability and to cultivate the friendship of its Asian neighbors. It was largely successful. India, Indonesia, and even Pakistan accorded de facto recognition to the DRV, and India and Indonesia established Consulates in Hanoi. Indian Premier Nehru and Burmese Premier U Nu made goodwill visits to Hanoi late in 1954, and Pham Van Dong headed a competent Viet Minh delegation to the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in April 1955.[46] However, both India and Indonesia maintained similar representation in the south, and dignitaries visiting the north, such as Indian President Prasad in March 1959, also included South Vietnam in their itineraries. Even in the case of the new African nations the DRV did not succeed in winning acceptance of the Viet Minh regime as the true, and only, Vietnamese Government, although it almost automatically recognized such newly independent states. Yugoslavia was the only country proclaiming itself as "neutral" that extended full recognition to the DRV. Failure to achieve recognition by most of the neutral nations did not discourage

45. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55, pp. 55-16 - 55-17. (S) Msg, Saigon 2597 to State, 28 Jun 58.
46. See Appendix, pp. 277-278.

the DRV from seeking close relations with these countries. Informal contacts were established through the various Afro-Asian conferences, international youth festivals, and professional meetings. United States intelligence sources agreed that Ho's personal magnetism and Hanoi's continued homage to the principles of neutralism succeeded in enlisting at least some support for the regime among the neutrals.[47]

After Geneva, the Viet Minh leaders moved to cement relations with the communist bloc. In short order ten communist countries recognized Ho's government and provided accredited diplomatic representation to Hanoi. Relations with the USSR and Communist China became particularly close. Although North Vietnam was apparently attracted to Moscow and Peking for ideological reasons, it was probably drawn even more for practical reasons, for after the withdrawal of the French the DRV economy was soon in dire need of the economic and technical aid that, in the communist bloc, could be provided only by the USSR and Communist China. The first concrete evidence that such aid would be provided came in December 1954, when by the terms of an agreement signed in Peking the Chinese Government undertook to provide equipment to repair road and rail communications and water conservation works throughout North Vietnam and to restore postal and telegraph communications between the two countries. Special attention was paid to the rail network connecting Hanoi with the interior of China, a project of obvious economic and military importance to the Chinese communists. According to the Hanoi press the first train on the new "intertransport system" left Hanoi bound for Pug Siang, China, on 1 August 1955.[48]

The amount and scope of Communist China's aid to the DRV in 1954-1955 grew to such an extent that by mid-1955 some

47. The DRV constantly reiterated the Five Principles of Coexistence, those international standards of peaceful coexistence subscribed to by the Prime Ministers of China and India in 1954. (S) NIS 43C, sec 55.

48. (S) Msg, Hanoi 1364 to State, 23 May 55. (S) NIE 63.1-55, 19 Jul 55. Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indo-China, pp. 368-369. Shabad, "Economic Development in North Vietnam," p. 49.

foreign observers were guessing that the DRV had come under China's domination. The North Vietnamese army had grown heavily dependent upon Chinese equipment and instructors, and Chinese technicians and trade representatives made such an impact on the DRV economy that even the usually optimistic Sainteny remarked to US Consul Corcoran that "it is the Chinese who will replace us here." However, the benefits that the DRV derived from Communist China's aid did not dispel, apparently, the traditional Vietnamese fear and distrust of its northern neighbor. Moreover, a powerful contender for influence in the DRV was now coming on the field.[49]

Early in 1955 the food situation in North Vietnam had become critical. By summer the situation was so grave that the Hanoi government apparently decided to appeal to its Soviet as well as Chinese friends for help. In the summer of 1955 Ho Chi Minh appeared hat in hand in Moscow. The Soviets proved generous; and in the succeeding two years the USSR gave the DRV more than $100 million in economic aid and sent approximately 1,000 specialists to render technical assistance.[50] In addition to this substantial aid, the Soviets provided the DRV with its only source of gasoline, kerosene, and other petroleum products. For the DRV, trade with the USSR--chiefly Vietnamese tropical products for Soviet machinery--provided not only precious commodities, but also a market for much of the output of North Vietnamese artisans.[51] By the end of 1955 the Soviet presence in the DRV had become so pronounced that Ambassador Reinhardt suggested that the USSR might be moving to substitute Soviet for Chinese communist influence in North Vietnam.[52]

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49. (S) Msg, Hanoi 1312 to State, 17 May 55. Russell H. Fifield, Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, 1945-58 (1958), p. 118. Nguyen Ngoc Bich, "Vietnam, an Independent View," The China Quarterly, January-March 1962, pp. 105-111.

50. Avsenev, The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Economy and Foreign Trade. Hinton, China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam, p. 21.

51. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 2010 to State, 8 Nov 55. Shabad, "Economic Development in North Vietnam," p. 53.

52. (OUO) Msg, Saigon 2010 to State, 8 Nov 55.

Apparently, however, the Vietnamese Communist Party was divided in its loyalties to the USSR and China--a division that increased as the Sino-Soviet rift deepened. Most of the senior Vietnamese communists had been attracted to communism by the power, prestige, and example of the Soviet Union. What is more, the Soviet Union, unlike Communist China, had no history of conflict with Vietnam. On the other hand, it was in Red China that the majority of them had received their political training and their first experience of communism. Further, the DRV had been born on Chinese soil, and the victory over the French had been due, in substantial measure, to Chinese military aid. That Hanoi found dependence on either of its powerful friends neither desirable nor comfortable was apparent in the fact that after 1955 the DRV made a moderately successful effort to increase North Vietnam's trade with other communist nations (30 percent of total trade in 1959) and noncommunist countries (7 percent in 1959).53

During the period 1957-1960 the DRV had considerable success in maintaining comparative freedom of action. Attempting to strike a balance between Moscow and Peking, the DRV press paid approximately equal homage to the USSR and China, and sometimes referred to "the bloc of socialist countries and people's democracies headed by the USSR and China."54 The Sino-Indian border dispute is a case in point. The US Ambassador in Saigon reported in November 1959 that the DRV, which heretofore had remained silent on this question, apparently was now attempting to steer a middle course between the two communist giants. Echoing Khrushchev's 31 October speech, the DRV expressed the hope that the dispute would be settled by friendly negotiations satisfactory to both sides. At the same time Hanoi adopted the Chinese line, that the imperialists, using the "divide and rule" technique, were trying to sow distrust between the Chinese and Indian peoples. The DRV characterized the problem as an "aftermath of colonialism."55

In summary, after five years in power, the DRV had succeeded, with the substantial assistance of the USSR and

53. Honey, North Vietnam Today, p. 14. (S) NIS 43C, sec 60, p. 60-15.

54. Hinton, China's Relations with Burma and Vietnam, p. 17.

55. (C) Msg, Saigon 1809 to State, 28 Nov 59.

Red China, in surmounting its most pressing economic ills. It had also established a tight control over the political, social, and cultural life of its populace. In the military sphere, the DRV had enlarged and improved its army into a powerful force capable of defeating any combination of nations in Southeast Asia. And in the process of building a seemingly viable communist state, the DRV had managed to maintain a surprising degree of independence from its two great patrons. With its house in reasonably good order, the DRV now decided, apparently, that the time had come to move on to the achievement, by violence, of its often announced goal, a unified Vietnam.

CHAPTER VII

THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM: 1956, A YEAR OF PROGRESS

By early 1956, Diem had weathered the worst of the political storms that had raged through South Vietnam since Geneva. He had founded a republic, negotiated the withdrawal of French troops, and was in the process of creating the machinery for a democratic government. He had partially resettled the refugees from North Vietnam, and had launched various social and economic programs. Reporting to the National Security Council in March 1956, on Diem's progress the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) observed that for the first time in Vietnam "there is a degree of stability which may permit implementation of reforms and some long-range planning in US programs." At the same time the OCB cautioned that Diem's position was still far from secure and his government "not yet effective enough to warrant more than sober optimism." Although hedged with reservations, the report indicated a rising optimism about the future of South Vietnam, in contrast to the "desperate situation" that had existed in Vietnam in 1954 when the last NSC policy statement on Southeast Asia had been issued.[1]

United States intelligence officials believed that Diem had done much to create for himself an effective political power base in South Vietnam. His unwillingness to work with leaders who failed to show complete loyalty narrowed the base of his political support, but Diem had nevertheless confirmed his position as the dominant political leader of South Vietnam. He had built the National Revolutionary Movement into a formidable political machine, the principal source of organized political power in the country. On the other hand, criticism of the domination of the GVN by Diem's close relatives was mounting throughout South Vietnam and

1. (S) OCB, "Progress Report, 'U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia' (NSC 5405 and Portions of NSC 5429/5)," 14 Mar 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 21.

was not confined to communist spokesmen. United States intelligence authorities agreed that nepotism was present in Diem's government but took it mainly as evidence of Diem's continued inability to trust individuals beyond the circle of long-time acquaintances and members of his family.[2]

Elections and a New Constitution

In early March, the South Vietnamese elected, for the first time, a National Assembly. The selections went well for Diem and permitted him to assume unchallenged leadership and control of the government. On the morning of 4 March 1956, beating drums and torchlight parades summoned voters to the polls. Although the communists attempted to disrupt the balloting, over 80 percent of the eligible voters assembled in orderly fashion and cast their ballots. The voters chose 123 deputies from a total of 405 candidates. No openly anti-Diem candidate was elected, although nearly one-third of the government-sponsored candidates were defeated. Of the major parties, the National Revolutionary Movement (NRM) won 61 seats and the Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP) 15.[3]

The new National Assembly settled down at once to draft, under Diem's supervision, a constitution for the Republic of Vietnam which would give the President wide powers, including the power to appoint the first Vice President and to suspend certain civil rights during the life of the first Assembly. After nearly eight months of drafting and redrafting, the National Assembly, in consultation with President Diem, completed the new Vietnamese constitution. Nationwide festivities attended its promulgation on 26 October 1956, the first anniversary of the founding of the RVN.[4]

In its basic outline the constitution resembled that of the United States. It provided for division of governmental authority among executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The President and the members of the newly styled Legislative

2. (S-NOFORN) Dept of State, IR No. 7256, 23 May 56, pp. 44-46.
3. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56. NY Times, 4 Mar 56, p. 1.
4. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56.

Assembly were to be elected by universal secret ballot. Citizens were guaranteed most of the basic individual rights contained in the US Bill of Rights. As had been anticipated, however, the constitution lodged most of the governmental power in the executive. It provided, moreover, that during the first legislative term the President had the authority to suspend temporarily the right to strike and the exercise of freedom of speech, association, circulation, and the press. Finally, the constitution specifically outlawed communism.

Vietnamese officials explained that a true democracy was an extravagance that South Vietnam, confronted by the communist menace from within and from without, could not presently afford. As law and order were restored, they said, additional democratic freedoms could be progressively introduced. In the meantime, the Vietnamese would trust President Diem to exercise his power with wisdom and justice.5

The Succession Controversy

Diem's political triumphs had removed all doubt about the future of the French military in Vietnam. The Vietnamese Government had explicitly requested France to complete the withdrawal of French troops at the earliest possible date, and France was complying. By February 1956, the FEC numbered only 15,000 men, with 5,000 scheduled for evacuation in February and 5,000 more in March. The French planned to abolish the High Command in April.

The question thus arose: who would assume France's responsibilities under the Geneva Agreements once the FEC had been withdrawn and the High Command abolished? The French were responsible for protecting and supplying the ICC. They also maintained a liaison mission with the ICC and held co-membership on the French-DRV Joint Armistice Commission (JAC). The ICC Chairman in Saigon believed that, if the French cancelled these obligations and the Vietnamese refused to accept them, the commission would probably have to be dissolved sometime during the summer of 1956.6

5. NY Times, 25 Oct 56, p. 33.
6. (S) Msg, Saigon 2190 to State, 2 Nov 55.

The French wanted written assurance from President Diem that South Vietnam would take over their responsibilities to the ICC and the JAC. Diem, though still refusing to associate his country with the Geneva Agreements, was willing to meet the French halfway. If they would leave a small mission in Vietnam charged with carrying out France's Geneva obligations, he said, the Vietnamese would quietly take over the duty of servicing the ICC.[7]

The United States believed that a plan along the lines of Diem's proposal offered the best hope of solving the problem. In Secretary of State Dulles' opinion, "while we should certainly take no positive step to speed up present process of decay of Geneva Accords, neither should we make the slightest effort to infuse life into them."[8] In short, the United States would not mind if the ICC died, but preferred the death to be gradual and quiet.

There was, however, another aspect of the question. The communists were linking the succession problem to Diem's refusal to cooperate with the DRV in holding elections. The USSR, Poland, Communist China, and the DRV bombarded the British with demands that the Geneva Conference be reconvened to examine both of these matters. The British turned down these demands, but, at India's suggestion, proposed that a co-Chairmen's meeting be held when the Soviet leaders visited London in April 1956. The Soviets agreed and when Khrushchev and Bulganin arrived in London representatives of the British and Soviet Foreign Ministers were already at work trying to reach a solution.[9]

Since the summer of 1955 the British position on elections had changed considerably. The British now seemed to be taking a closer look at the distinction between the Geneva Agreements and the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference. The requirement for elections was contained

7. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2086 to State, 14 Nov 55; 2206, 23 Nov 55. (C) Msg, Paris 3783 to State, 21 Feb 56.
8. (S) Msg, State 1901 to Saigon, 2 Dec 55.
9. (S) Msgs, State 2563 to Saigon, 27 Jan 56; 2914, 27 Feb 56. (C) Msg, State 2789 to Saigon, 15 Feb 56.

not in the Vietnam Agreement, but in the declaration, and this requirement was really little more than an expression of hope. Probably of more influence on British thinking than the US emphasis on this point had been Diem's political victories. Whatever the reason, the British had grown more optimistic of Diem's chances of providing strong leadership for Vietnam and less persistent in urging him to cooperate in holding elections. At the London meeting the British firmly insisted that since consultation between parties had not taken place in 1955, there was no possibility of holding elections in 1956.[10]

The Soviets proved much less aggressive than had been expected. Apparently unwilling to provoke a new crisis over Indochina, they failed to press with their customary vigor the demands of the Chinese communists and the DRV for a new Geneva Conference to consider the election issue. The negotiations in London lasted almost a month, but the British and Soviet diplomats finally agreed on a course of action. In May the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union sent identical letters to the Governments of North and South Vietnam requesting them to prevent any violation of the military clauses of the armistice agreement and to insure that the political terms of the agreement were carried out. The letters urged the two Vietnamese regimes to agree upon an early deadline for consultations on elections, and to give every assistance to the ICC. The co-Chairmen also appealed to the ICC to continue supervising the armistice and requested France to continue its good offices in support of the ICC, to reach an agreement with the Vietnamese Government to facilitate the tasks of the ICC and the JAC, and to preserve the status quo until these arrangements could be put into effect.[11]

This agreement created the framework for retaining the armistice machinery in Vietnam, but left France and Vietnam to resolve the question of succession. Settlement of this issue became possible in the early summer of 1956 when Diem

10. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2137 to State, 18 Nov 55; 2777, 10 Jan 56; State 3432 to Saigon, 12 Apr 56. NY Times, 10 Apr 56, p. 2.

11. (S) Msgs, Paris SECTO 32 to State, 6 May 56; State 3749 to Saigon, 11 May 56. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56.

relaxed his uncompromising stand against publicly associating his country with the Geneva settlement. Replying to the co-Chairmen's notes of May, the President bound South Vietnam to respect the armistice and to provide security for the ICC. With this concession as a point of departure, the French and the Vietnamese found it easier to solve the succession problem. After considerable debate, they reached an agreement in July. In an exchange of notes, Vietnam promised to replace the French liaison mission to the ICC; France agreed to maintain its membership on the JAC and to continue bearing the expenses of the ICC.[12]

The formula adopted by the co-Chairmen and complied with by all the interested parties solved few of the basic problems of the armistice. It merely deferred the ordeal of coming to grips with them. In some respects, the Department of State believed, these problems had been aggravated. For one thing, the accent on elections in the co-Chairmen's messages was expected to make the ICC all the more anxious to get the RVN and the DRV together for consultations, and Diem had not changed his mind on this score. For another, although the armistice machinery was still functioning, Diem was unlikely to tolerate indefinitely France's role on the JAC, and even more unlikely to take over this role himself.

On the other hand, the London solution produced important advantages. It carried South Vietnam safely through the crucial month of July 1956, which many diplomats had feared would be a month of crisis. Agreement had also frustrated, for the time being at least, communist efforts to have a nine-power conference convened to discuss Indochina. Finally, although Diem had been forced to abandon his aloof attitude towards the Geneva Agreements, he still enjoyed, by virtue of the ICC's continued presence in Vietnam, a deterrent to aggressive action by the DRV.[13] On balance, Diem had probably gained more than he had lost.

US Aid to RVN

By the fall of 1956 Diem could take justifiable pride in what he had accomplished against heavy odds. Reviewing

12. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56. (C) Msg, Saigon 287 to State, 24 Jul 56.
13. (S) Msg, State 3749 to Saigon, 11 May 56.

his accomplishments for General O'Daniel in October 1956, Diem noted that 1955 had been his year of "successful decisions." His country had achieved "political stability, internal security and national independence." His army was loyal, and to a degree, battle-tested. "Vietnam is a democratic Republic now," he stated. The solution of the refugee problem was in sight. Nor had Vietnam "neglected altogether" its economic problems. "We are no longer under French economic control; we control the course of our foreign trade, and the flow of foreign exchange; we have our own National Bank and our own monetary system. Above all, with the help of the United States, we have escaped economic chaos during the formative period of our independence."[14]

Actually, although the economic situation in South Vietnam was no longer chaotic, neither was it encouraging. Normally an agricultural surplus area, South Vietnam had suffered a decline in rice exports since the war, and this factor, coupled with large imports of consumer and capital goods, had resulted in a substantial deficit in the country's balance of payments. Economic problems were further complicated by the withdrawal of French military forces, the termination of France's preferential trade status, and the loosening of French-Vietnamese political ties, which combined to curtail the scale of French industrial and commercial activity in South Vietnam. Diem had declared 1956 a year of economic consolidation, but through the first half of the year he continued to focus attention on security and political issues. Nevertheless, the GVN made some progress in building an organizational structure to replace the institutions of the French colonial period, including an independent national bank, an investment fund, a government-owned commercial bank, and an independent currency.

That South Vietnam had escaped economic chaos or worse was almost entirely due to the large amounts of money and capital goods given to it by the United States. Without US aid, Diem readily admitted, "the seeming air of well being would disappear overnight."[15]

14. (C) "Diem's Paper Re Their Needs (Economic) from General O'Daniel," n.d. /Oct 56/ (hereafter cited as Diem's Paper).
15. (C) Diem's Paper.

Beginning in 1954 the United States had, for FY 1955, given South Vietnam $325.8 million in economic aid. Although the United States reduced its contribution for economic support in FY 1956 to $216.3 million, this reduction had been more than offset by the military aid provided during FY 1956. Through its various aid programs the United States was financing by 1956, about 90 percent of the GVN military budget, 75 percent of South Vietnam's imports, and 65 percent of the combined military-civilian budget.[16]

Most of the economic aid furnished South Vietnam was in the form of defense support. Needed commodities were shipped free of charge to South Vietnam by the United States. These commodities were then sold to the people of Vietnam by the GVN to meet its expenses, most of which were military expenditures. For example, the salaries of the regular military forces were paid from these funds. A total of $488.8 million of defense support aid, administered by the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), was made available to South Vietnam under the FY 1955 and FY 1956 programs.[17]

Other forms of economic aid to South Vietnam included development loans, special assistance funds, contingency funds and surplus agricultural products. The United States also furnished technical assistance in agriculture, industry and mining, transportation and community development. Not only had the United States paid the cost of Operation EXODUS ($56.1 million), it also bore most of the cost of feeding, housing and resettling nearly 700,000 of these refugees in the two years that followed.[18]

United States military aid to Vietnam was channeled chiefly through the Military Assistance Program (MAP). Administered by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), MAP aid consisted of the military equipment

16. (U) AID, "U.S. Foreign Assistance and Assistance From International Organizations, July 1, 1945-June 30, 1962," /Revised/, p. 69. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56, p. 8.

17. (U) State-Defense-ICA, "A Summary Presentation, MSP, FY 1960," Mar 59, AID, S&R Div. Rpt by Subcom on State Department Organization and Public Affairs to S. Com on Foreign Relations, 30-31 Jul 59, 86th Cong, 1st sess, pp. 203-204 (hereafter cited as "Situation in Vietnam").

18. "Situation in Vietnam," p. 42. (S-NOFORN) Dept of State IR 7256, 23 May 56, pp. 57-58.

supplies, training, and services given to the Vietnamese armed forces as part of the Mutual Security Program. Military Assistance Program aid to Vietnam for FY 1956, the first year it was programed, totaled $167 million.[19]

President Diem, although grateful for the aid he had thus far received, was not satisfied that the United States was giving South Vietnam the right kind of aid. This was apparently the inspiration for his October letter to General O'Daniel with whom he had enjoyed good relations. Diem probably believed that General O'Daniel would champion his cause in Washington. Thus along with a lengthy diagnosis of South Vietnam's economic ills, Diem provided a specific prescription for their relief.

He began by giving O'Daniel "a realistic look" at the overall state of the economy. The basis of that economy, Diem noted, was agriculture. But South Vietnam's agriculture was at only 70 percent of the prewar level. Rice exports that in prewar years had reached 1.5 million tons annually were now virtually nonexistent. Livestock had suffered "a catastrophic decline." Industrial production, never significant, was now at the vanishing point. "With the loss of North Vietnam," Diem said, "we have lost our coal, cement, glass works, and our cotton mills. We have become importers of almost everything." And the hard fact was that South Vietnam's exports during 1955 had paid for only 25 percent of its imports. Also part of this discouraging picture were a sharp decline in tax collections, a sharp increase in production costs, rising prices reflecting inflationary pressures, and an artificial rate of exchange.

Diem wanted more US economic help--and the implication was help on a massive scale--to rebuild highways and rail lines and to build new ones, so that untapped resources in such remote areas as the High Plateau and the Plaine des Joncs could be tapped. He wanted US help to develop "electric power resources, restore the sugar refineries;

19. (S-NOFORN) ASD(ISA), Mutual Security Program: Fiscal Year 1958 Estimates; World-Wide Summary Statements, No. 105; East and Pacific, No. 105; Non-Regional Programs, No. 105.

create a textile and paper industry, bring in more heavy farm equipment to put our abandoned land back into cultivation etc."

> From now on, therefore, we hope that American aid would assist us in building a balanced agricultural and industrial economy. This is the only way in which we can increase our production and exports, find new sources of employment for our growing population, expand our purchasing power nationally and internationally, develop managerial skills, and give rise to an enterprising middle class.[20]

He intended, Diem told General O'Daniel, to simplify and ease the flow of capital "in full recognition of the profit motive" so that private investment could be persuaded to supplement US aid. He also intended to push ahead with agrarian reform, redistributing land among farmers, but not by seizing it "at the point of a gun" from landlords. He intended to buy it from them when he could find the money. Again the United States could be helpful in furnishing the $20 million which would be needed for the initial payment, about 10 percent of the total value of the land, to the landlords.

South Vietnam had just entered what Diem termed "Year Three of Our Statehood." Almost a century of colonialism had left it nearly devoid of trained native administrative talent. "All the executive and many of the minor posts were in French hands; they neither taught nor encouraged Vietnamese to participate in commerce or industry or practice the liberal professions. The country has hardly any doctors, engineers, technicians and economic specialists of all types and descriptions for private or Government services," Diem stated. Strong efforts were being made to offset the ill effects of this vacuum in native talent by offshore training and inducement of trained Vietnamese to return from France. But again, Diem pointed out, he must have help from the

20. (C) Diem's Paper, pp. 6-7.

United States, in addition to United States Operations Mission (USOM)[21] specialists, to train his people in the many skills that were so desperately needed in South Vietnam.

The types of aid that Diem sought in his letter to General O'Daniel were generally of a long-term nature from which immediate results could not be expected. Nevertheless, the United States geared its economic aid programs for the next several years to the requirements Diem had outlined.

The Security Threat

It was fortunate for the RVN that these efforts to strengthen the economy and to build up an industrial base could take place in a period of relative peace and security, both in South Vietnam's cities and in the countryside. By the summer of 1956, according to a US intelligence evaluation, the security picture in South Vietnam was substantially brighter than it had been a year before. The sects had been all but destroyed; only an estimated 2,000 remained in small bands scattered about the country. The important sect leaders had been killed, captured, driven out of the country, or induced to rally to the government. Ba Cut, once the most feared and elusive of sect chieftains, had been captured and guillotined.

The communist threat, however, was still real. In the midst of their generally optimistic estimates in 1956 US intelligence officials injected an ominous note: in the event of large-scale, concerted guerrilla attack, supported by infiltration of men and supplies from the north, relatively large areas of rural Vietnam probably would be lost to government control.[22]

Although the last Viet Minh units had left South Vietnam on 18 May 1955, a year later US and GVN intelligence

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21. The United States Operations Mission was the field level office of the Foreign Operations Administration, which was established on 1 August 1953 and was responsible for continuous supervision, general direction, and coordination of all foreign assistance operations, under the policy direction of the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury.

22. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56, pp. 9-10.

officials could not estimate accurately the number of active communist agents operating in South Vietnam. The GVN tended to minimize this threat. The VNA Chief of Intelligence maintained that Viet Minh strength in mid-1956 was only 1,360 men in active guerrilla cadres out of a total hostile force numbering 6,000 to 8,000. United States intelligence agencies, however, estimated the communist strength in skeleton battalions and companies at between 8,000 and 10,000 men. Whatever the communists' (now called Viet Cong)[23] numbers, and most sources agreed that they were relatively few in 1956, the communists controlled substantial areas of South Vietnam, particularly the mountain areas along the Cambodian and Laotian borders and the jungle regions of the delta. Since the GVN did not outlaw communism until almost the end of 1956, Viet Cong agents were also able to operate openly in the cities, infiltrating the various worker and business movements.[24]

RVN Forces

The French completed the withdrawal of their forces and abolished the High Command in April 1956, leaving only a small military mission to carry out the remaining French responsibilities under the terms of the Geneva Agreements. The completion of the French withdrawal necessitated, more than ever, a strong, well-trained RVNAF.

There was no question of the necessity for maintaining large regular armed forces and extensive police forces, the

23. Viet Cong (VC) is a derogatory contraction of the Vietnamese term of Vietnamese communist that came into general use in 1956-1957 in referring to the communist guerrillas and terrorists operating in South Vietnam. (U) SORO, US Army Handbook for Vietnam, p. 324. (S) Rpt, Dept of State, RFE 59, "Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam," 3 Dec 63.

24. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56. (S) Dept of State, Intelligence Brief 2070, 13 Feb 57. (S) NIE 63-57, pp. 10-11. (S) Dept of State IR 7197, 6 Apr 56, p. 6. P.J. Honey, "Democracy in the Republic of Vietnam," in S. Rose (ed.), Politics in Southern Asia (1963), p. 204.

high cost of which was borne by the United States. The presence of the Viet Cong within the country and the existence of an enemy state across the northern border of South Vietnam posed formidable dangers to the Republic of Vietnam, and in the judgment of US authorities made the support of adequate, trained military and police forces by Diem's government mandatory.

Regular Forces

The mission of the Vietnamese National Army (VNA) was to maintain internal security. Moreover, as we have seen, it gradually and without NSC sanction was given the added function of temporarily resisting external aggression. As noted earlier, the United States had agreed to support a force goal for all the armed forces of South Vietnam of 150,000 personnel, comprising the Navy and Air Force as well as the VNA, by 1 July 1956. At the beginning of 1956, the VNA alone had almost 156,000 men and officers, including about 16,000 sect troops who had to be integrated into the armed forces by 1 July 1956. The plans developed by MAAG, Vietnam for organization of the VNA within the approved force goals called for a military strength of 142,000 with a civilian strength of 4,919 (see following chart for detailed organization). The South Vietnamese Navy and Air Force, together accounting for about 7,000, completed the 150,000-force structure.[25]

By midyear the VNA had about 145,000 officers and men, organized into four field divisions (8,500 men each), six light infantry divisions (5,225 men each), one airborne groupment (4,000 men), 13 territorial regiments (1,625 men each), five separate sect regiments, and 15 assorted combat battalions.[26]

Any part or all of the VNA might be used at the discretion of the President for maintenance of internal security. The territorial regiments had the sole mission

25. (S) Memo, COL F.F. Evans (OASD/ISA/FER) to Dir FER/ISA, 16 Jun 59, ISA File 200 Vietnam (16 Jun 59), RG 330, case 63A-1672, FRC.

26. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56, p. 9.

PLANNED ORGANIZATION, VNA[27]

Activity	Strength	
	Military	Civilian
Armed Forces Headquarters	2,491	449
Field Divisons (4 at 8,500)	34,000	
Light Divisions (6 at 5,225)	31, 350	
Airborne RCT	4,000	
Army Troops		
Arms	13,279	
Services	6,409	
Military Regions (3)		
Headquarters Units	4,707	134
Territorial Regiments (13 at 1,625)	21,125	
Other Units	8,999	4,336
Schools and Training Centers	6,000	
Pipeline	9,640	
Total	142,000	4,919

27. (S) Country Statement on MDAP, Non-NATO Countries, 15 Jan 56, CCS 092 (8-22-46) (2) sec 24, and BP pt 8. (Hereafter cited as US Country Statement, 1955.)

of internal security while the divisions had the additional mission of resistance to external aggression. The presence of VNA units throughout the countryside was intended to deter subversion. They were to be employed actively as pacification forces only when the local civilian authorities found themselves unable to cope with such activities.[28]

The VNA had evolved from a loose conglomeration of units, primarily of battalion size, that had fought for the French and that had been dependent upon the French Union military establishment in Indochina. To accomplish the missions now assigned to it, the VNA would require a professional skill and competence beyond that currently possessed by its soldiers and officers, regardless of their native ability and past experience under French leadership. The training of the VNA, therefore, was a matter of continuing concern to US military officials. While the Chief, MAAG, had assumed the responsibility for assisting the GVN in training its army in early 1955, he had done so under certain handicaps. His most serious were the shortage of US military training personnel and problems stemming from the integration of French and US training personnel in TRIM.[29]

With the inactivation of the French High Command in April 1956, TRIM ceased to exist. While this permitted US personnel to operate more freely, it was not immediately accompanied by an increase in US military trainers. The ceiling imposed upon the number of US military personnel in Vietnam did not even allow advisers to be placed with all regiments, although two US advisers in each battalion-sized unit would have been appropriate. United States personnel were detailed to VNA training centers, to units at division level, and to major territorial commands, to supervise the training program. Developed by General O'Daniel in 1955, this program called for further reorganization of the VNA along US lines and the regroupment of units for training. The goal was to bring the VNA to a state of readiness that would render it capable by the end of 1956 of maintaining security within South Vietnam, containing Viet Cong border

28. (S) Msg, CHMAAG, Vietnam 1469A to OSD, 11 Jan 56.
29. (S-NOFORN) NIS 43D, "South Vietnam," Ch. VIII

penetrations, and in the event of invasion, of delaying the invaders for at least 60 days while withdrawing from the 17th Parallel to the area of Tourane (Da Nang).[30]

During a visit to Washington in December 1955, General O'Daniel predicted that with six months' additional training the VNA would be able to delay any Viet Cong invasion by two to four months. He also stated that by mid-1956 the caliber of the individual VNA soldier would equal that of the Viet Cong.[31]

These predictions stemmed from the expectation that the VNA training program could be carried out smoothly. The program, based on a 25-week cycle, was designed to take the VNA progressively through individual, company battalion, and regimental advanced training. A four-week division exercise would complete the cycle. Unfortunately, the frequent diversion of VNA units from their scheduled training to field operations against subversive elements considerably slowed the rate of training progress. United States officials could do little about this, but held some hope that the creation and strengthening of paramilitary forces might relieve the VNA of many of these security missions. Among other deficiencies that hampered the training of the VNA were: (1) lack of uniformity in training and standards because of the varied local interpretations of directives and the absence of supervisors; (2) shortage of qualified Vietnamese personnel as instructors and training directors; (3) shortage of suitable training sites and facilities; (4) lack of experienced officers trained for higher staffs and commands.[32]

This last deficiency, lack of qualifed officers, was a very real handicap not only in training but in operations. According to a study prepared by the US Army staff, the VNA required 11,250 officers but had only 7,000. Seventy percent of the company grade officers were qualified for their rank, 30 percent of the field grade officers were qualified, and only 10 percent of the senior officers were qualified. The

30. (S) US Country Statement, 1955.
31. (S) Memo, DDI, JS to ASD(SO) "Emerging Pattern-South Vietnam," 21 Dec 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 17.
32. (S) US Country Statement, 1955.

training of officers for the VNA was therefore an important facet of the overall training program. A combined Staff College and Senior Officers School outside Saigon offered four- to five-month courses for about 100 battalion, regimental, and divisional commanders and staff officers. There were also two officer candidate schools. One at Dalat was conducted in the St. Cyr tradition and turned out "excellent" platoon leaders. The other, at Thu Duc, was for reserve officers and turned out "good" platoon leaders.33

Perhaps the weakest element of the VNA was its logistical system. Patterned after that of the French Army, it was inadequate to support even peacetime operations. To overcome the deficiencies of the system, including an acute shortage of specialists and technicians, the United States was helping the VNA to develop a logistical system based on US practice. As part of this effort the United States was also providing offshore schooling, special courses in Vietnamese schools, and on-the-job training. Until these efforts were realized, however, the VNA would require the assistance of a large number of US and/or other allied specialists and technical advisers in the supply and maintenance fields.

In terms of equipment the VNA was not too badly off, having inherited a large part of the material and weapons that the United States had sent into Indochina prior to 1955. This in itself presented a problem, however. The VNA had an excess of various types of MDAP equipment. To store and maintain these items placed a considerable burden on the weak logistics system. Despite this burden, President Diem was very reluctant to return any part of the equipment to US control. The Chief, MAAG, noted that the GVN, under the terms of the Pentalateral Agreement, retained title to all MDAP equipment in its possession. "Considerable pressure and tact" would be needed to persuade the GVN to return the excesses. Another serious problem existed with regard to automotive equipment, much of which was in serious disrepair as a result of initially French, and subsequently Vietnamese, substandard maintenance.

General O'Daniel's successor, Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams, USA, once he was no longer required to cooperate and compromise with French training officers, was

33. (TS) CSAM 32-56 to JCS, 16 Feb 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 20.

able to carry out his training plans more readily. On 29 April 1956 he redesignated TRIM the Combat Arms and Training Organization (CATO) of the MAAG and gave it sole responsibility for training ground forces.

Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission

An Interagency Costing Team, which returned from Vietnam in January 1956, reported that because of the reduction of French personnel, control of MDAP spares and supplies had been lost. As a result, "the capability of supply of forces in the field in the event hostilities should be resumed in mid-1956 would be virtually non-existent." Furthermore, because of the shortage of US personnel, the French were handling the redistribution of excess MDAP equipment to their own advantage, carefully sorting out the useful items and returning to the United States as excess the unserviceable ones. Secretary Wilson advised Secretary Dulles on 31 Janury 1956 that the immediate dispatch to Vietnam of a team of 150 to 200 Americans skilled in supply and logistics would save the United States not less that $100 million worth of material.[34] Although the Secretary of Defense did not mention it, such a team would also relieve MAAG's personnel problems by releasing officers for training duties.

The Department of State agreed with the creation of a US Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM) with a double purpose of supervising the recovery (identification, inventory,

34. (S) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 31 Jan 56; N/H of JCS 1992/500, 20 Feb 56, same file. The status of the recovery program as of March 1956, according to the Department of State, was as follows: The total cost of equipment sent to Indochina during the war was $1.2 billion, of which $941 million was military hardware. Of this $941 million, $154 million had been turned over to Cambodia and Laos, $198 million was still in the possession of the FEC, and $81 million had been declared excess and shipped out of Vietnam. Of the estimated $508 million remaining the bulk was in the nominal custody of the Vietnamese, but in fact lay in unprotected sypply dumps without proper maintenance. (C) Msg, State 3225 to Paris, 3 Mar 56.

and accounting control) and return of excess MDAP equipment and assisting in the improvement of Vietnamese logistical capabilities. State's acquiesence was conditional upon the understanding that, while TERM would perform certain training functions inseparable from the task of recovering and maintaining US-origin equipment in Vietnam, such functions should in no case be allowed to become the single or even primary duty of TERM, as distinguished from the MAAG. In addition, the State Department strongly desired that TERM personnel wear civilian clothing whenever possible during their assignment in Vietnam.[35]

There was some initial objection by other countries to the introduction of additional US troops into Vietnam. Although France and the United Kingdom vigorously opposed TERM as a violation of the agreement on Vietnam, they moderated their opposition after India and Canada approved the mission and after the United States made it clear that the project would be carried out despite the foreign objections. The ICC, however, delayed granting its formal approval, and the United States, impatient over the ICC's procrastination, in May 1956 dispatched TERM to Vietnam over the Commission's protest. The first increment of TERM, 48 officers and 38 enlisted men, arrived in late May. The TERM eventually grew to a total strength of 350 and its establishment allowed General Williams progressively to divert more and more of his relatively few officers and men from logistical duties in support of the VNA to CATO.[36]

By the end of 1956, TERM had substantially improved the organization of Vietnamese logistical services and had launched an extensive logistical training program. Perhaps of equal importance, TERM had largely freed MAAG of logistical

35. (U) Ltr, DepUSecState to SecDef, 1 May 56, Pentagon Papers, vol. 10, pp. 1057-1058. (C) Jt. State/Def Msg (State 3430) to Saigon, 12 Apr 56.

36. (C) Msgs, State 2950 to Saigon, 29 Feb 56; 2981, 2 Mar 56. (S) Msgs, State 3292 to Saigon, 30 Mar 56, 3722, 7 Apr 56. (C) Msg, Saigon 309 to State, 25 Jul 56. (S) "MAAG Vietnam Quarterly Activities Report No. 1 for period ending 31 May 1956," 10 Jun 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) BP pt 10.

responsibilities, thus enabling critically needed personnel to be assigned to training activities. Thereafter, the training program gained momentum. In the period 1957-1959 TERM also processed about $650 million worth of MDAP equipment, shipped out excess, removed scrap from collecting points, transferred serviceable material to the RVN forces (more than $300 million worth) and other agencies, and shipped repairable vehicles to Japan for rebuilding (more than 9,000 by mid-1958).[37]

With respect to the VNA, US intelligence authorities in mid-1956 were somewhat less sanguine than General O'Daniel had been in late 1955, stating that the VNA would have to undergo at least six months of uninterrupted training before it reached "minimum operational effectiveness" at division level.[38] Nevertheless US officials in Saigon believed that the VNA was capable of performing the two missions of maintaining internal security and of delaying any Viet Cong invasion until help arrived.[39]

VNAF and VNN

The French retained exclusive responsibility for training the Vietnamese Navy (VNN) and Air Force (VNAF), and US influence on these services was limited accordingly. As of mid-1956, the VNN and VNAF were still in an embryonic state. The VNAF boasted 3,336 men with an inventory of 143 planes, mostly trainer-liaison and transport types. Although the VNAF had been receiving F-8-F aircraft (piston fighters), it had so far been unable to mount even limited flight operations because of a lack of qualified maintenance personnel. The VNN numbered, including marine units, 3,616 men with an inventory of three submarine chasers, three coastal minesweepers, 14 amphibious vessels, and 170 smaller amphibious and patrol craft. United States experts considered the VNN

37. (S) US Country Statement, 1956. (S) OCB, "Progress Report on U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1)," 14 Mar 57, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 31. (S) MAAG-Vietnam Narrative Statement, Nov 58--with changes through September 59, pp. 43-43.1.
38. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56, p. 6.
39. (S) US Country Statement, 1956.

in 1956 capable of undertaking river patrol and minor coastal and amphibious operations.[40]

Increase in MAAG Personnel

By the creation of TERM the United States attempted to increase the number of military assistance personnel in Vietnam and at the same time to sidestep the issue of US adherence to the Geneva ceiling. Although the parties to the Geneva Agreements were generally critical of this action, the United States established a new limit of 692 on military assistance personnel in Vietnam, 342 in MAAG and 350 in TERM. In 1957, with the departure of the French Navy and Air Force training missions, MAAG and TERM were reorganized. New Joint Tables of Distribution were approved increasing the combined authorized strength of US military assistance personnel to 736. Of these spaces, 535 were Army, 76 were Navy, 122 were Air Force, and 3 were Marine Corps.[41]

Paramilitary Forces

The Civil Guard

When the war ended in 1954, a number of auxiliary army units with a total strength of nearly 50,000 remained scattered throughout the RVN without specific missions or positive goals. Because these paramilitary units were generally controlled by provincial governors and other regional leaders, and were employed almost as private armies by these men, they represented a potential threat to the central government. At the same time they constituted a potential source of experienced manpower that could be used to advantage in fighting subversion.[42]

On 8 April 1955, Diem had created from these remnant units a Civil Guard (CG). He placed this organization under

40. (S) NIE 63-56, 17 Jul 56, pp. 9-10.
41. (TS) Study, "US National Policy Toward Vietnam, 1945-1962," OCMH, DA, p. 52. (TS) Study, "The U.S. Army Role in The Conflict in Vietnam," OCMH, DA, Ch. III, p. 39.
42. (TS) MS, "U.S. Policy Toward Vietnam Since 1945," 23 Jul 62, p. 43, OCMH, DA.

his Ministry of the Interior. Diem apparently reasoned that by bringing these units under central control in the CG he could eliminate a threat to his government and at the same time create an agency that could relieve the VNA of internal security duties, enforce law and order in the countryside, collect intelligence, and carry out other countersubversive functions.[43]

Several months earlier General Collins had approved the formation of a National Police as one of three law enforcement agencies for South Vietnam. He had not, however, agreed to provide any direct US support for such an organization. When Diem formed the CG, which US officials equated with the National Police, the United States furnished it no weapons or support other than some training assistance and advice.[44]

At President Diem's request, the United States arranged to bring to RVN an advisory and training mission from Michigan State University (MSU). This group, which was under joint contract to USOM and the GVN and which eventually numbered about 25 persons, had begun arriving in RVN in May 1955. The group was charged with providing the GVN with advice and training in government organization and management, specifically including police administration.[45]

The MSU advisers assisted, in coordination with the MAAG and the VNA, in a CG training program, largely in basic military subjects. They insisted, however, that the CG should be a civilian police organization in every respect, located apart from any military encampments and directed and

43. (S) NIS 43D, Ch. VIII, "Armed Forces," p. 29. John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid (1962), pp. 64-70.

44. (S) Memo, DDI, JS to CJCS, "Vietnamese Civil Guard and Police, Origin and Current Status," 3 Jul 56.

45. (TS) Memo, OCB Secretariat Staff to Board Assistants, "Detailed Development of Major Actions Relating to Southeast Asia (NSC 5405 and portions of NSC 5429/5) from March 16 through September 16, 1955," 2 Dec 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 16. (S) NIS 43D, sec 55, "National Policies," p. 11. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, p. 64.

instructed by civilian personnel. They wanted the CG streamlined and armed with weapons and equipment suited to civil police duties. The MSU advisers additionally proposed to the US Mission that the CG be garrisoned permanently in villages rather than being a mobile, transient force. While the CG had a primary mission of maintaining internal security, the MSU advisers hoped that in so doing it could gain for the GVN confidence and allegiance of the people in the countryside.[46]

The recommendations by these US advisers for orienting the CG away from paramilitary organization and operations were not accepted by President Diem. Diem seemed to want a large paramilitary organization deployed widely throughout the provinces and controlled by him through the province chiefs. In November 1955 he transferred the CG from the Ministry of the Interior to his direct control. According to the Deputy Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff, this was only a temporary expedient so that the CG could function as an auxiliary force to the VNA, not as an adjunct of the VNA.

By mid-1956 the CG had a strength of about 51,000, deployed among three military regions of South Vietnam. The majority, 35,000, were stationed in the southern third of the nation, old Cochin-China. In northern South Vietnam, there were about 9,000 CG personnel, and in the central plateau and coastal area about 7,000.[47]

The CG had some fixed post assignments but was basically a patrolling organization. It did not operate in urban areas that had municipal police. Generally, CG units of company size were assigned to each province. From these companies groups of 12 to 40 men patrolled delineated areas of responsibility, operating out of an assigned post. In 1956, however, it had in some instances become necessary to employ companies at full strength in areas being pacified. Once the VNA had established control of an area in which the Viet Cong were engaged in subversion, CG units operating as

46. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, pp. 66-68.
47. (S) Memo, DDI, JS to CJCS, "Vietnamese Civil Guard and Police-Origin of and Current Status," 3 Jul 56.

companies were moved in to assist in further pacification of the area. When pacification was completed, the CG gradually assumed control from the VNA and reverted to normal patrolling in small groups. Chief, MAAG, reported to Washington authorities that in areas in which the CG and the VNA were required to operate simultaneously the commanders coordinated such operations adequately and that there was no duplication between the two. He looked forward to the day when the CG and the other security forces would be trained well enough to handle pacification tasks without VNA assistance. "The VNA can then release its units for much needed combat training," he observed. For the time being, however, pacification requirements exceeded the capabilities of the existing territorial army and CG units.[48]

The MSU advisers and other US personnel involved continued to disagree with Diem over the basic concept of a CG. The United States pressed for a small, centrally controlled civil police force living with the villagers it protected; Diem insisted on a large, decentralized force responsible to him through the province chiefs.[49]

The MSU advisory group gradually accepted the necessity of assigning certain paramilitary responsibilities to the CG, but it continued to stress its civilian character in all recommendations. That Vietnamese police officials and members of the US Country Team agreed with the MSU group did not change President Diem's mind in regard to the CG. In a series of decisions in the summer of 1957, Diem made clear his disagreement. When the US advisers proposed giving the CG powers of arrest and investigation, and authorizing it to serve subpoenas, they were supported by Vietnamese police officials but not by the President. Diem also overruled proposals to assign civilian gendarmerie officers, rather than VNA officers on temporary duty, to lead CG units. Further, he resisted a US suggestion that the CG be reduced to a force of 30,000 or less. He remained determined to build a force of at least 50,000 and to use it to augment his military forces.[50]

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48. (S) Msg, CHMAAG, Vietnam 1469A to OSD, 11 Jan 56.

49. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, pp. 68-70. Montgomery's account of the Civil Guard case is based on the files of the MSU team.

50. Ibid.

These differences of opinion were reflected in the important question of equipment. In July 1957 the GVN asked the United States to furnish the CG $60 million worth of heavy equipment. The MAAG and the MSU team, basing their proposals on their concept of the CG as a civilian police organization, proposed a US aid figure of $14 to $18 million for equipment. A compromise was finally worked out in 1958 in which $14 million worth of equipment, including some of the heavy hardware requested by the GVN, would be issued to the CG over a four-year period, with the understanding that the CG was to be reorganized into a civilian operation along the lines proposed by the US advisers.[51]

Little progress, however, was made in changing the features of the CG following this compromise. The $14 million US program for equipping the CG was held in abeyance for almost two years because of the continuing disagreement with the GVN over its status. In January 1959, when the GVN agreed to transfer the CG back to the Ministry of the Interior, the United States agreed to move ahead with its aid program.[52] On 30 June the MSU group withdrew, leaving the USOM to assume the advisory position.[53]

Two other police agencies maintained by the GVA were the Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation (Surete), a plain clothes force similar to the FBI, numbering about 5,000 men, and the Gendarmerie. This latter force, which in mid-1956 was being trained by the MSU group, had a current strength of only 572, but 1,000 additional men were being recruited. An eventual strength of 6,000 was contemplated.

The Self-Defense Corps

The CG was not designed to provide close protection to the individual villages in South Vietnam. In an effort to furnish the villagers some protection against the Viet Cong, Diem had formed, on 27 November 1955, a special organization, the Village Defense Corps. This soon became known as the Self Defense Corps (SDC). He planned to set up individual

51. (S) Msg, Saigon 400 to State, 29 May 59.
52. Ibid.
53. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, p. 69.

SDC units in villages, to be activated by the military commander of a specific region and to remain under military control. The SDC would be a static force whose members were native to villages in which they were employed. They would know local conditions thoroughly and would be expected to police and defend the village. These men would perform SDC service as an extra duty, meanwhile keeping their regular jobs. The SDC would not be used as a pacification force since it would be established in villages that had already been cleared of dissidents. A SDC unit would be established in each village of 1,000 or more, the unit consisting of one commander and nine members. The total strength of the SDC was not planned to exceed 60,000 men. The SDC would be controlled by the GVN Secretary of Defense in a chain of command running downward through a Director within the Department of Defense. General O'Daniel and Admiral Stump both supported the concept of the SDC as proposed by the GVN, and recommended that the United States furnish the necessary financial material support.[54]

Because US support was being solicited for the SDC and because the relationship between the CG and the SDC was not clear to Washington, the Secretary of Defense asked CINCPAC and Chief, MAAG, to clarify this relationship and to be precise concerning the organization, functions, and employment of the new organization. On 11 January, General Williams furnished the facts to Washington, pointing out that the CG had quite a different mission from the SDC. The latter was being formed to "provide a fixed organization in each village to protect the people therein from indoctrination and intimidation by the Viet Cong, rebels, bandits and other dissident groups threatening the local security, to give needed assistance to villagers, and to organize anticommunist activities among the population." The VNA would work closely with the SDC, setting it up, training it, and controlling its units. There was no prescribed TO&E for the SDC, but in general each unit would have ten men and the total strength would not exceed 60,000. Only rifles, non-US, and some ammunition would be given the SDC by the VNA. No other major weapons or equipment would be supplied.

54. (S) Memo, DDI, JS to CJCS, "Vietnamese Civil Guard and Police-Origin of and Current Status," 3 Jul 56. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 13 Dec 55.

The GVN had no money in its budget, however, to pay salaries of SDC members, averaging about $8.60 per man per month. If the United States were to assume this expense, it would mean a total US expenditure of no more than $6.172 million a year. General Williams stated that, if the United States did not support the SDC, he believed President Diem would nevertheless proceed to build it. He already had some units in being and felt that the SDC was needed to give the villagers the assurance of government protection which was vital to the active popular support of the government in its fight with the Viet Cong.[55]

Following this explanation by Chief, MAAG, and with concurrence by the Country Team, the United States agreed to support a 60,000-man SDC by alloting to the GVN $6.2 million per year for the purpose of paying salaries of the members.[56]

Development of a New Policy Statement

Given the changed and apparently improved situation of South Vietnam by the spring of 1956, the United States undertook the formulation of a new policy statement for the area. Although still recognizing the danger of internal subversion, US Government officials in the course of this policy formulation gave increased emphasis to the threat of external attack against South Vietnam. In devising a new national policy, however, US planners had to consider not only conditions in Vietnam, but the global policies of the US Government. Prominent among US global problems were the thorny issues of the US response to local aggression generally and the US role in limited war. In the latest revision of basic national security policy (NSC 5602/1), the NSC in March 1956 had touched upon these problems in the following language:

55. (S) Msg, DEF 994892 to CINCPAC, (n.d.) Jan 56. (S) Msg, CHMAAG Vietnam 1469A to OSD, 11 Jan 56.

56. (S) OCB, "Progress Report, 'US Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia' (NSC 5405 and Portions of NSC 5429/5)," 11 Jul 56, p. 3, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 24.

> Within the total U.S. military forces there must be included ready forces which, with such help as may realistically be expected from allied forces, are adequate (a) to present a deterrent to any resort to local aggression, and (b) to defeat or hold, in conjunction with indigenous forces, any such local aggression, pending the application of such additional U.S. and allied power as may be required to suppress quickly the local aggression in a manner and on a scale best calculated to avoid the hostilities broadening into general war. Such ready forces must be sufficiently versatile to use both conventional and nuclear weapons. They must be highly mobile and suitably deployed, recognizing that some degree of maldeployment from the viewpoint of general war must be accepted. Such forces must not become so dependent on tactical nuclear capabilities that any decision to intervene against local aggression would probably be tantamount to a decision to use nuclear weapons. However, these forces must also have a flexible and selective nuclear capability, since the United States will not preclude itself from using nuclear weapons even in a local situation.[57]

Almost concurrently with the adoption of NSC 5602/1, the NSC asked the Department of Defense to produce a study in connection with a new statement of policy on Southeast Asia. The Secretary of Defense assigned the Joint Chiefs of Staff responsibility for this study--which was to include

57. (TS) NSC 5602/1, 15 May 56, CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50) sec 61. NSC 5602/1 was superseded on 2 Apr 58 by NSC 5809. The section on Vietnam in the new paper, however, remained the same. (TS) JCS Hist Div, "Vietnam, 1 January 1956-31 March 1963: A Brief Chronology of Significant Events," 24 Apr 63.

estimates of the capability of US forces, with and without nuclear weapons, to deal with local aggression in Vietnam.[58]

Based on the policy outlined in NSC 5602/1, the JCS concept of how to deal with Viet Minh aggression was embodied in an oral presentation made to the NSC by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 7 June. The Chairman told the NSC that success in halting and repelling a Viet Minh attack depended on prompt and decisive intervention by US mobile forces. Some US support would have to be provided in a matter of hours, and certain essential units would have to be in place within a few days at most. While the VNA fought a delaying action from the 17th Parallel to the hill mass around Tourane, the United States would deploy to Vietnam a fast carrier task force; fighter-bomber, intercepter, and transport units totaling two wings and five squadrons; and an army regimental combat team. The RCT would go ashore at Tourane. As soon as possible, two more RCTs (or Marine RLTs) would be put ashore at Saigon and Cam Ranh Bay. . . . . .

Most of the fighting would be done by Vietnamese ground forces supported by US air and naval forces. United States ground forces would be provided mainly to help hold vital areas of South Vietnam; and US officers would act as advisers to the VNA. Operations, however, would be conducted under the banner of SEATO. Admiral Radford stressed the importance of vigorously seeking and widely publicizing the support of SEATO nations, even though their contributions would be small. In fact, a combined SEATO command would direct operations designed to check the Viet Minh battle corps at Tourane and ultimately drive it back across the 17th Parallel. Depending on circumstances at this juncture, the decision would be made whether or not to occupy North Vietnam.

58. (TS) Memo, SecDef to JCS, "Basic National Security Policy - NSC 5602/1," 21 Mar 56, CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50) sec 62. For the relationship of this study to NSC 5519, NSC 5429/5, and NSC 5612/1, see (TS) Encl to Memo, ExecSecy, NSC to NSC, "Current U.S. Policy Toward the Far East (Review of par 5-d of NSC 5429/5)," CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 23.

The US forces would be equipped with nuclear weapons, but according to Admiral Radford, probably would not use them. There were no known military targets in North Vietnam that could not be destroyed by conventional bombing. Only if the Viet Minh concentrated its forces would there be military justification for nuclear warfare. If the Chinese communists entered the war, however, the situation would be quickly and radically altered. In this event, nuclear weapons would be employed against Chinese air and logistical bases at once.[59]

After NSC discussion of Admiral Radford's presentation, the President on 7 June directed US military authorities to encourage Vietnamese military planning for defense against external aggression along lines consistent with approved US policy and to manifest "in other ways" US interest in assisting Vietnam to defend itself against external attack in accordance with the Manila Pact. The Secretary of Defense assigned this responsibility to the Joint Chiefs of Staff who delegated it to CINCPAC, directing him to prepare a contingency plan for US participation in countering Viet Minh aggression using the military concept contained in the Chairman's presentation. In this directive, the Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized the importance they attached to primary reliance on indigenous ground forces and to the necessity of prompt arrival of US supporting forces.[60]

Following its review of US global policy and of the situation in Southeast Asia in the summer of 1956, the NSC Planning Board published a draft statement of US policy (NSC 5612) toward mainland Southeast Asia. It was intended to supersede NSC 5405 and that portion of NSC 5429/5 covering Indochina and Thailand. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the document and informed the Secretary of Defense on 24 August that they found it acceptable from the military point of view subject to several changes. With one exception, the suggested changes were minor. This exception dealt with action in the event of overt communist aggression. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advocated advance Congressional

59. (TS) JCS 2101/233, 9 Jun 56, CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50) sec 63.

60. (TS) Memo, SecDef to JCS, "Capability to Deal with Local Aggression in Vietnam," 16 Jul 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 24. (TS) SM-582-56 to CINCPAC, 11 Jul 56 same file.

authority for the employment of US forces against such aggression rather than waiting until the aggression actually occurred. The NSC did not accept this change, and the draft policy was adopted by the Council on 30 August without substantial revision and approved by the President a week later. The statement, circulated as NSC 5612/1, contained the following guideline for US policy in Vietnam:

> Assist Free Viet Nam to develop a strong, stable and constitutional government to enable Free Viet Nam to assert an increasingly attractive contrast to conditions in the present Communist zone.
>
> Work toward the weakening of the Communists in North and South Viet Nam in order to bring about the eventual peaceful reunification of a free and independent Viet Nam under anti-Communist leadership.
>
> Support the position of the Government of Free Viet Nam and all-Viet Nam elections may take place only after it is satisfied that genuinely free elections can be held throughout both zones of Viet Nam.
>
> Assist Free Viet Nam to build up indigenous armed forces, including independent logistical and administrative services, which will be capable of assuring internal security and of providing limited initial resistance[61] to attack by the Viet Minh.

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61. In response to a Presidential query, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 21 December 1956 defined the term "limited initial resistance" as: "Resistance to Communist aggression by defending or delaying in such manner as to preserve and maintain the integrity of the government and its armed forces for the period of time required to invoke the U.N. Charter and/or SEACDT or the period of time required for the U.S. Government to determine that considerations of national security required unilateral U.S. assistance and to commit U.S. or collective security forces to support or reinforce indigenous forces in defense of the country attacked. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia (U)," 21 Dec 56 (derived from JCS 1992/583), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 29.

> Encourage Vietnamese military planning for defense against external aggression along lines consistent with U.S. planning concepts based upon approved U.S. policy and discretely manifest in other ways U.S. interest in assisting Free Viet Nam, in accordance with the SEATO Treaty, to defend itself against external aggression.[62]

On the same day that the NSC adopted NSC 5612/1, it also revised the paragraph (5-d) of NSC 5429/5 governing US action in the event of aggression in Southeast Asia, the language of which had been somewhat vague. Since NSC 5612/1 contained a more precise statement of US action to meet local aggression in Southeast Asia, the NSC replaced the vague paragraph in NSC 5429/5 with the language of NSC 5612/1. This paragraph, which now appeared in both statements, provided:

> Should overt Communist aggression occur in the Southeast Asia treaty area, invoke the UN Charter or the SEATO treaty, or both, and subject to local request for assistance take necessary military and any other action to assist any state or dependent territory in the SEATO area willing to resist Communist resort to force: Provided, that the taking of military action shall be subject to prior submission and approval by the Congress unless the emergency is deemed by the President to be so great that immediate action is necessary to save a vital interest of the United States.[63]

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62. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia (NSC 5612); Change to Current U.S. Policy Toward the Far East (NSC 5429/5)," 24 Aug 56 (derived from JCS 1992/562), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 25. (TS) Note by ExecSecy, NSC to NSC, "U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia," 5 Sep 56; (TS) NSC 5612/1, same subj, 5 Sep 56, same file, sec 26.

63. (TS) Memo, ExecSecy, NSC to NSC, "Current U.S. Policy in the Far East," 5 Sep 56, same file, sec 26. See revised par 5-d of (TS) NSC 5429/5, 22 Dec 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 90; and par 19 of (TS) NSC 5612/1, 5 Sep 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 26.

During the summer of 1956 CINCPAC was keeping pace with the planners in Washington. As directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he submitted on 1 October OPLAN 46-56, a plan for countering overt Viet Cong aggression in Southeast Asia. OPLAN 46-56 was designed to stop communist aggression against South Vietnam as near as possible to the 17th Parallel. The salient aspect of the plan was its primary dependence on the Vietnamese forces to defeat the Viet Cong and the "timely application" of US forces. In consonance with Admiral Radford's concept, the plan provided for a US contribution consisting primarily of conventional attacks on selected targets by US air and naval forces and support of VNA forces by US ground forces numbering approximately 12,000 men, including one RCT in Vietnam on D-Day plus 3, one HONEST JOHN Battalion, and 1,200 additional military advisers. One RCT would be held in reserve. Finding the plan in agreement with their guidance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved it on 19 March 1957.[64]

These statements of policy and military planning were a codification of policies that had been devised and carried out in the two years since approval of NSC 5429/5, the last general statement of US policy toward the Far East, rather than a change in US policy. In August 1954, the outlook in Vietnam had been very bleak. By August 1956, however, the progress made in restoring security and stability to Vietnam and in strengthening the GVN's armed forces appeared to vindicate US policy. Moreover, the prospects for the future were hopeful. Even as the NSC adopted the new policy statement on Vietnam, the fledgling National Assembly sitting in Saigon was putting the finishing touches on the first constitution of the Republic of Vietnam. The South Vietnamese were successfully avoiding the elections called for in the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference; the Vietnamese economy was beginning a period of rapid recovery; and the GVN military forces were "shaping up." At the same time there were signs that the VC were losing the support and sympathy of the population. The GVN, it seemed, could face the future with some confidence.

64. (TS) CINCPAC OPLAN 46-56, 1 Oct 56, CCS 381 (4-16-49) BP pt 4. (TS) SM-221-57 to CINCPAC, 19 Mar 57 (derived from JCS 2054/164, 19 Mar 57), same file, sec 10.

CHAPTER VIII

SOUTH VIETNAM, 1957-1959

The years 1957-1959 brought a period of apparent calm to South Vietnam. The government of President Ngo Dinh Diem made further progress in economic development and in strengthening the armed forces. Although Diem's authoritarianism became more and more manifest, no crisis arose during the period to challenge his regime or to stir the United States to undertake a thorough examination of the Vietnamese situation.

The United States Government viewed the progress in South Vietnam with enthusiasm. To its policymakers, the stability of 1957 as compared with the chaos of 1954 represented a significant achievement, and the United States was content to continue the policies that had been largely responsible for this progress. Evidence of US satisfaction is found in the fact that the NSC policy on Vietnam, developed in 1956 remained unchanged through 1960.[1]

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Economic Affairs, Howard P. Jones, voiced the optimism that the United States felt toward the situation in Vietnam when he stated on 19 January 1957:

> In Vietnam, even so recently as a year and a half ago, the newly independent government was fighting against tremendous odds for its existence. It was faced with a military and subversive threat from Communist forces

1. (TS) NSC 5612/1, 5 Sep 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 26. NSC 5612/1 was revised and reissued in April 1958 as NSC 5809. The revision dealt with the sections on Laos, Malaya, Singapore, and Thailand, but NSC 5809 made no changes with regard to Vietnam. (TS) NSC 5809, 2 Apr 58, same file, sec 38.

north of the 17th parallel; it was confronted by internal strife. Today we find a firmly entrenched nationalistic government under the leadership of President Diem. This government has proved its capacity to survive in the face of Communist external pressure and subversive efforts and at the same time to assume the responsibilities of independence and representative government.[2]

An Operations Coordinating Board progress report on US policy in Mainland Southeast Asia, covering the period 5 September 1956 through 13 March 1957, presented a similarly sanguine picture. The report stated that the promulgation of the constitution and the convening of a national assembly emphasized the progress in achieving US objectives in Vietnam. The report added that Vietnam had a "stable free government" and there was "no likelihood that the Republic of Vietnam will pass into or become economically dependent on the communist bloc." Vietnam, the report said, seemed "clearly persuaded that its interests lie in greater cooperation and stronger affiliation with the free world." The OCB also reported progress in the training of the Vietnamese armed forces and in the economic aid programs in Vietnam, but warned of several "operating problems or difficulties" facing the United States. South Vietnam continued to face the threat of North Vietnamese aggression and subversion; a budget deficit, a balance of payments gap, and inflation still plagued South Vietnamese economy; and much needed agrarian reform was proceeding extremely slowly.[3]

President Eisenhower in the spring of 1957 joined in the expressions of satisfaction that the United States found with the progress in Vietnam. On 11 May he and President Diem issued a joint statement at the conclusion of a visit

2. Address, Howard P. Jones, DepAsstSecState for Far Eastern Economic Affairs before the Boise Valley World Affairs Association, Boise, Idaho, 19 Jan 57, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 18 Feb 57, pp. 263-268.

3. (S) OCB Progress Report on US Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 14 Mar 57, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 31.

by the latter to Washington. In the joint statement, President Eisenhower complimented Diem on the "remarkable achievements" of the RVN since 1954. The joint statement noted that in less than three years a chaotic situation resulting from years of war had been changed into one of "progress and stability," and it listed the following achievements of the South Vietnamese Government:

> Nearly one million refugees who had fled from Communist tyranny in North Vietnam had been cared for and resettled in Free Vietnam.
>
> Internal security had been effectively established.
>
> A constitution had been promulgated and a national assembly elected.
>
> Plans for agrarian reform have been launched, and a constructive program developed to meet long-range economic and social problems to promote higher living standards for the Vietnamese people.[4]

This US optimism concerning Vietnam prevailed throughout the years 1957-1959. The OCB progress reports for the remainder of 1957 and 1958 continued to find advances in the development of a representative government. Evidences of this progress were seen in the National Assembly's approval of a national budget, the first ever submitted to a constitutionally elected body in Vietnam, and in President Diem's official visits to the United States, Thailand, Australia, and the Republic of Korea, enhancing both his personal prestige and that of his country.[5]

The Vietnamese armed forces also improved significantly. In August 1957, CINCPAC reported to Washington that the

4. Joint Statement, President Eisenhower and President Ngo Dinh Diem, 11 May 57, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 27 May 57, pp. 851-852.

5. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 6 Nov 57, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 35. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 28 May 58, same file, sec 39.

Vietnamese Army had shown "remarkable improvement" during the past year, particularly in logistics and administration, and CINCPAC expected this progress to continue and to extend to the Navy and Air Force.[6]

Despite the overall tone of optimism, the OCB reports cited several problem areas confronting South Vietnam. Although the government had neutralized communist capabilities for "armed resistance," the threat of "political infiltration and nonviolent subversion" remained. This threat precluded any reduction of forces and presented the United States with the prospect of continued heavy military support costs. The economic situation in Vietnam, while improved, was still far from stable. Vietnam continued to depend on foreign aid, the largest part going to support the military establishment. United States aid accounted for approximately 85 percent of imports and two-thirds of the budgetary revenues. The government's agrarian reform program had begun to pick up speed but was still not moving satisfactorily.[7]

In 1958, the OCB reported a new problem facing the United States in Vietnam. President Diem's policy of strict control in the political and economic fields had caused "a certain amount of internal dissatisfaction." Should Diem's exercise of personal authority develop too far, the OCB cautioned, there was a danger that "the resultant frustration of government officials might weaken the united support for his regime . . . ." The OCB also noted that Diem's "stern police measures and his emphasis on internal security" had led to increasing criticism of the government.[8]

The following year the OCB reported substantial progress toward meeting US objectives in Vietnam. There was a stable government and the Vietnamese military forces had made a significant improvement under the MAAG training program. The OCB showed increasing concern, however, over the growing

6. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 18 Aug 57, same file, sec 34.
7. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 6 Nov 57, same file, sec 35. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 28 May 58, same file, sec 39.
8. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 28 May 58, same file.

authoritarian tendencies of Diem. The Board warned that the Diem government's strong political controls, while seemingly necessary because of the internal security threat, were antagonizing certain elements of the Vietnamese population. Although US action to meet this problem was restricted by the sensitivity of the matter, the OCB suggested that the United States Ambassador might make "discreet suggestions" from time to time for some liberalization of Diem's political control.9

During the period 1957-1959, the OCB issued several operations plans for Vietnam outlining detailed courses of action to carry out the provisions of the NSC policy. All of these plans stressed the special importance of Vietnam to the United States because of its "exposed position as an outpost of the free world face-to-face with a powerful and threatening communist regime occupying part of its territory" and because Vietnam was the principal country in the area where a free government and a communist regime competed directly for the same territoy and a whole nation. The United States, the plans stated, had made such a substantial investment in Vietnam's independence, and with such success, that the most determined efforts were justified to preserve the integrity and strengthen the position of the country.10

All the plans called for continued US support of the Government of Vietnam by diplomatic, military, economic, and psychological means. To accomplish the US objectives, primary reliance was placed on continued economic, technical, and military assistance programs. Military assistance was to be provided primarily in the form of "adequate support" to the Vietnamese military budget, the provision of US equipment to the Vietnamese armed forces, and the training of Vietnamese military personnel at schools of the US armed forces or at US-staffed schools in Vietnam.11

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9. (S) OCB Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5809), 12 Aug 59, JMF 9150/9105 (12 Aug 59). (S) OCB Operations Plan for Vietnam, 9 Jan 59, JMF 9155.3/9105 (9 Jan 59).

10. (TS) OCB Outline Plans of Operations with Respect to Vietnam, 12 Apr 57, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) BP 7; 4 Jun 58, same file, BP 9; and 9 Jan 59, JMF 9155.3/9105 (9 Jan 59).

11. Ibid..

Statistics on US aid to South Vietnam for the years 1957-1959 reveal how these plans were translated into financial support:[12]

US Aid to South Vietnam
(in millions)

	1957	1958	1959
Economic	$281.1	$188.8	$207.1
Military	110.5	53.2	41.9
Total	$391.6	$242.0	$249.0

Throughout the period US economic aid remained the major category of US assistance to Vietnam. In NSC 5429/2, the earliest statement of US policy toward South Vietnam, the United States had committed itself to help South Vietnam, along with Laos and Cambodia, to maintain "economic conditions conducive to the maintenance and strength of non-Communist regimes," in order that these states might "compare favorably with adjacent Communist areas."[13] From 1954 through 1959, the United States held to this policy, granting $1.2 billion of economic assistance to Vietnam.[14]

Economic Developments and Agrarian Reforms

As the various political and military crises of 1954-1956 subsided, Diem was able to give greater attention to outstanding economic problems. The severity of these problems was such, however, that Diem's programs, even when well-advised, were only partially successful. Nevertheless, beneficial results were beginning to appear. A key element in the GVN's program was the Five Year Plan for Economic

12. (U) AID, "U.S. Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations, July 1, 1945 - June 30, 1962 (Revised)," p. 69.

13. (TS) NSC 5429/2, 20 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 81.

14. (U) AID, "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants . . . July 1, 1945-June 30, 1966," p. 57.

and Social Development. Initiated at the suggestion of a UN Economic Survey Mission, which visited Vietnam from November 1955 to February 1956, the Five Year Plan was drawn up for the years 1957-1961. Under the plan, 17.5 billion piasters ($500 million at the official exchange rate, approximately $286 million of which would be financed by foreign aid), were to be invested. Primary emphasis, and 43 percent of the funds, were allocated to public works and power development, in accordance with the GVN's desire to establish a base for future economic growth. At the same time, in recognition of the fact that South Vietnam would continue indefinitely to be, primarily, an agricultural nation, the plan called for the allocation of 22 percent of funds to agricultural development. Twelve percent was allocated to health, education, and housing, and 9 percent to industrial expansion; 14 percent of the funds were unallocated.[15]

Among the objectives of the plan were the complete reconstruction of the existing road and railway systems and the start of construction on 1,000 kilometers of new roads. In addition, new factories would be built for the production of textiles, cement, shoes, tires, glass, and paper. Coal production was expected to keep pace with the increased demands for power that these plans would make. Agricultural development was expected to result in an increase in national income from the renewed cultivation of rice on abandoned lands and increased production of sugar cane, silk, cotton, tobacco, oil seeds, and rubber. There were also livestock, forestry, and fishery programs.[16]

The Five Year Plan was put into effect without fanfare. When it was launched in 1957, the GVN denied it was an

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15. Franklin D. Rosebery, "Experiment in Planning Economic and Social Development, 1956-1957," in Richard W. Lindholm (ed.), Viet-Nam: The First Five Years (1959), pp. 193-195. UN Economic Survey to the Republic of Vietnam, Toward the Economic Development of the Republic of Vietnam (1959), p. 5.

16. Francis J. Corley, "Economic Stabilization in Viet Nam," Review of Social Economy, Summer 1958, pp. 154-157. Rosebery, "Experiment in Planning Economic and Social Development, 1956-1957," pp. 294-296. Bernard B. Fall, Two Vietnams (1963), p. 299.

approved program, insisting instead that it was being studied. Thereafter the plan's provisions were kept secret. Only in 1961, the terminal year of the plan, did the GVN announce what projects had been undertaken and what funds had been expended under it.[17]

In the years 1957-1959, South Vietnam made modest progress toward achieving the goals of the Five Year Plan. Roads and railroads were reconstructed and textile and coal production was increased. In addition, construction was begun on the following projects: a cement plant at Ha-Tien; electro-chemical industries in the Nong-Son - An-Hoa area; and in the Saigon area a shoe factory, two textile factories, a paper plant, a glass plant, and a Michelin tire plant.[18]

In a country where 80 percent of the people worked the land, agricultural problems were, understandably, of critical importance. It followed, therefore, that in South Vietnam, where 2 percent of the land-owners held 45 percent of the land in 1955, the government's agricultural policies had an immense social and political, as well as economic, bearing. The Indochina war had disrupted the agricultural economy and vitiated the modest gains made by earlier non-communist Vietnamese attempts at agrarian reforms. Reform programs had been initiated in 1947 and 1953, but in both periods the Viet Minh had actually controlled many of the areas where reforms were planned. The landlords had fled these areas, and the Viet Minh had taken advantage of their absence to deed the land to former sharecroppers or squatters. By 1955 the Viet Minh land program had been in effect in some areas of the south for several years. The more cautious reform programs subsequently instituted by the Diem regime, involving regulation of contracts and reimbursement for expropriated lands, seemed to many peasants reactionary or redundant.[19]

17. Bernard B. Fall, "South Vietnam's Internal Problems," Pacific Affairs, September 1958, p. 249. Fall, Two Vietnams, p. 298.

18. Fall, Two Vietnams, pp. 299-300.

19. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam," Ch. IX in Wesley R. Fishel, Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence (1961), pp. 155-162. J. Price Gittinger, "Progress in South Vietnam's Agrarian Reform (I)," and ". . . (II)," Far Eastern Survey, January and February 1960, pp. 1-5; 17-21.

The Diem government was neither able nor willing to match the radical simplicity of the Viet Minh grants. Its first agrarian reform was a rent reduction and tenure security program initiated in early 1955. Beginning in 1956 a land transfer program expropriated large estates for resale to tenants. Additionally, the GVN inaugurated land development programs for fallow and virgin lands, an agricultural credit system, and farm cooperatives.[20]

Beginning with the "crash program" and the Collins-Ely Seven-Point Program in 1954, the United States consistently supported agrarian reform in Vietnam.[21] It provided the GVN with technical assistance in agricultural programs and paid the administrative costs of many aspects of the program; it did-not, however, provide funds for the purchase of land.[22]

Progress in the agricultural program was at first slow. The landlords were reluctant to cooperate and many of the peasants remained convinced that the land was theirs by order of the Viet Minh. Too, the government program was cumbersome in its bureaucratic detail; its terms were not easy for the peasants to meet, and it was often indifferently pushed by the government's agents.[23]

In 1957, however, the progress of the program was accelerated, owing largely to French agreement to pay one-third of the costs of land expropriated from French landlords. According to an OCB report, by November 1957 the GVN had already set aside about half the total amount needed for the down payments. In the meantime the United States had agreed to pay the administrative costs of the land transfers. Approximately 5 percent of the eligible holdings had been transferred. By the end of 1959, nearly 800,000 tenant

20. Ladejinsky and Gittinger describe agricultural developments in detail. Ladejinsky was Diem's personal adviser for agrarian reform; Gittinger was a USOM Saigon agricultural adviser from 1955 to 1959. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, pp. 122-128.

21. See Ch. III.

22. Gittinger, "Progress in South Vietnam's Agrarian Reform (II)," pp. 17, 21, 22.

23. (S) Msg, Saigon 80 to State, 7 Jul 56. (C) Desp, Saigon 200 to State, 15 Jan 57. Fall, "South Vietnam's Internal Problems," p. 250.

farmers had signed tenure agreements with their landlords, another 118,000 had been designated to share approximately 400,000 hectares (1,100,000 acres) purchased by the government in large estates. In the same period about 600,000 hectares (1,500,000 acres) of land abandoned during the Indochina war had been reclaimed for cultivation.[24]

The wholesome effects of the GVN's agricultural programs began to appear at the end of the decade. From 1955 through 1959 rice production nearly doubled and rubber plantings and production both increased by 20 percent.[25] These gains were largely absorbed, however, by increased domestic consumption. In the period before sharp escalation of Viet Cong activity brought Diem's agricultural programs to a virtual standstill, neither of these two principal crops became available for export in sufficient quantities to reduce appreciably Vietnam's adverse balance of trade.[26]

From the very inception of the GVN's efforts at economic reforms, the design and implementation of the reforms were subjected to severe criticism; so too was the US economic assistance on which these reforms were based. Criticism of the US aid program in Vietnam generally centered on the charge that the Vietnamese had become overly dependent economically and politically upon the aid program, and that they were becoming "permanent mendicants."[27]

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24. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 6 Nov 57, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) BP 8. Gittinger, "Progress in South Vietnam's Agrarian Reform (I)," pp. 1, 4.

25. Milton C. Taylor, "South Vietnam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress," Pacific Affairs, Fall 1961, p. 250.

26. "United States Aid Program in Vietnam," Report by Subcom on State Department Organization and Public Affairs to S. Com on Foreign Relations, 26 Feb 60, 86th Cong, 2d sess (hereafter cited as "US Aid Program in Vietnam," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 26 Feb 60). Taylor, "South Vietnam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress," pp. 242-256.

27. Taylor, "South Vietnam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress," p. 256. (S) Interdepartmental Committee on Certain US Aid Programs, "Vietnam," 25 Jul 56, circulated with NSC 5610, 3 Aug 56, CCS 092 (8-22-46) (2) BP pt 10.

Perhaps the most telling commentary on the GVN's economic progress was made by a Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee headed by Senator Mansfield in February 1960. After acknowledging the "tremendous achievements" of the Diem regime over the past five years, the Mansfield subcommittee puzzled over the "inescapable fact" that "there had not been any significant reduction in Vietnamese economic dependency on large aid grants from the United States, except those which coincide with Congressional reduction in appropriations for the Mutual Security Act."[28]

Critics of the US aid program also charged that the United States insisted too much on private investment in development projects. Among those criticizing this facet of US aid was Diem himself. The gist of the argument was that many potential private investors feared to invest in the existing atmosphere of insecurity; only participation by the state would persuade them to risk their capital. "A more pragmatic American attitude in foreign aid policy would," such critics held, "help to make South Vietnam less dependent on foreign aid."[29]

Nevertheless, few denied that economic progress was being made. In May 1959, NIE 63-59 stated that "South Vietnam has made only limited progress toward basic long-term economic development in the five years since Independence." But, after explaining how the lack of internal security hampered economic progress, the NIE went on to cite the repaired transportation network, land reform and development programs, and the modest industrial development as proof that "South Vietnam is making some economic progress."[30]

The GVN Defense Establishment

In addition to its efforts in the economic sphere, the United States continued to work during the period 1957-1959

28. "US Aid Program in Vietnam," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 26 Feb 60, p. 10.

29. UN Economic Survey to the Republic of Vietnam, p. 246. Brian Crozier, "The Diem Regime in Southern Vietnam," Far Eastern Survey, April 1955, pp. 49-56. Russel H. Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia (1958), p. 316.

30. (S) NIE 63-59, 26 May 59.

toward a strong, effective defense establishment for South Vietnam. This was directly in support of the national policy, expressed in NSC 5612/2 that called for assisting "Free Vietnam" to create armed forces, including independent logistic and administrative services, capable of assuring internal security and of providing "limited initial resistance" to attack by North Vietnam.[31]

Direct US military aid furnished South Vietnam from FY 1956 through FY 1959 from appropriated funds totaled $445.7 million. Because the major expenses were incurred in the early years, owing to initial requirements for equipment and installations, costs in FY 1959 were much less than in FY 1956, the first year of direct military aid. In FY 1956, $166.8 million in appropriated US funds was given South Vietnam but only $43.8 million was given in FY 1959. During the same period the United States furnished South Vietnam a total of $50.5 million worth of material from excess stocks.[32]

Of the $1.2 billion in US economic aid furnished South Vietnam between 1954 and 1959, a significant amount was expended in defense support. This important category of aid amounted to $255.0 million in 1957, $174.7 million in 1958, and $177.0 million in 1959, for a total of $606.7 million.[33]

The RVNAF

The complex structure that had evolved in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) by late 1955 remained virtually unchanged. President Diem as Supreme Commander exercised his authority through a Secretary of State for

31. (TS) NSC 5612/2, 5 Sep 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 26.

32. (C) ICA, OS&R Report, "US External Assistance, Obligations and Other Commitments, July 1, 1945 through June 30, 1959," 16 Mar 60.

33. Ibid. "US Aid Program in Vietnam," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 20 Feb 60, p. vi.

National Defense, a post occupied by himself. He was served by an Assistant Secretary and by the Director of the Cabinet, through whom orders were transmitted to the Central Organizations (comprising the General Staff, the Inspectorate General for the Armed Forces, and various administrative and fiscal agencies), the Logistical Services, and the Ministerial Services. The Chief of the General Staff had as Deputies the commanders of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.[34]

Understandably, President Diem had maintained a close interest in the activities of the RVNAF from the beginning. He participated in all major policy decisions affecting the armed forces, personally approving, for example, all promotions of senior officers.

The ARVN

A General Staff exercised administrative direction over the ARVN. Although this group was actually organized and functioned as an army general staff, it supervised the activities of the small naval and air forces of South Vietnam as well. Since the ARVN represented 94 percent of the strength of the RVNAF no one objected strenuously that the General Staff was composed entirely of ARVN officers. The Chief of the General Staff, top military commander of the armed forces, was served by a Chief of Staff who also served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Army. In theory he was the ARVN commander and adviser on army affairs to the Chief of the General Staff. The US influence on the General Staff was quite apparent in its organization although certain features of the French military system had been retained by the Vietnamese.[35]

In the last half of 1957 Diem activated two corps headquarters, giving the Army its first tactical unit headquarters above division level. A third corps headquarters was established in 1959. These organizations were charged with responsibility for assigned operational areas, for planning future operations, for organizing strategic and tactical defense, for training of assigned or attached tactical units,

34. (S-NOFORN) NIS 43D, "South Vietnam," Ch. VIII, "Armed Forces," Jan 59 (hereafter cited as NIS 43D).
35. (S-NOFORN) NIS 43D, p. 7.

for organizing maneuvers, and for administering organic units. Because of US influence, it was believed that a corps concept very similar to that of the US Army would eventually emerge, with the organization of the corps depending on their particular missions.[36]

On 31 December 1958, President Diem issued a decree creating an ARVN field command. This command was responsible for coordination of the training of all combat units in peacetime and for the direction of combat operations in time of war. This move was made in the realization that no individual could function effectively as Deputy to the Chief of the General Staff and also as Commander of the ARVN. The army staff thus was left free to concentrate on overall army planning.[37]

The strength of the ARVN, within the overall ceiling of 150,000 for all Vietnamese armed forces that the United States had agreed to support in late 1955, fluctuated to a degree but stood at about 138,000 men and officers late in 1958, slightly below its authorized strength of 140,620. The principal elements of the ARVN at the beginning of 1959 were a central command, two corps headquarters with corps troops, six military region headquarters, 4 field divisions (8,100 men each), 6 light divisions (5,800 men each), 1 airborne group (4,000 men), and various combat and service support units.[38]

Increasingly, throughout this period, internal security duties were turned over to the paramilitary forces, so that the ARVN could, under the guidance of the MAAG, devote more time to training and organizational improvement. Training of the ARVN progressed more readily in the period 1957-1959 than in earlier years. Plans for training drawn up by the General Staff with the advice of the MAAG resembled US Army training plans. The 25-week training cycle was increased to 32 weeks and divided into six phases, starting with basic infantry training and proceeding progressively through

36. Ibid., p. 10.
37. Ibid., p. 8
38. (S-NOFORN) NIS 43D, see Chart A - Strength of Vietnamese Armed Forces. (C) MAAG Vietnam Narrative Statement, 25 Nov 58, MAAG Vietnam General Administrative Files, 1958 (Washington National Records Center).

division maneuvers during the last two weeks. A longer, 52-week cycle, initiated upon completion of the shorter cycle, continued the training begun in the 32-week course, providing additional general training and advanced unit training. By June 1958 three of the field divisions, two of the light divisions, and the airborne group had completed the 32-week cycle and were in the 52-week cycle. Remaining divisions were in the shorter cycle at varying phases.39

Strength of Vietnamese Armed Forces

Date*	Army	Navy	Air Force	Totals
1954	200,000	1,522	3,434 (57 pilots)	204,956
1955	170,000	1,522	3,434	174,956
1956	152,000	4,182	3,336 (103 pilots)	159,518
1957	138,481	4,818	4,164	147,463
1 Jul 57	133,016	4,721	4,067	141,804
1 Oct 57	129,982	4,800	4,035	138,817
1 Jan 58	131,343	4,870	4,025 (136 pilots)	140,238
1 Apr 58	134,640	4,892	4,082	143,614
1 Jul 58	136,641	5,152	4,271	146,064
1 Oct 58	138,165	5,100	4,590	147,855

*1 January, unless otherwise noted

President Diem and all of his principal assistants supported a program of developing an ARVN trained by US advisers and modeled along US lines. He had made English language instruction mandatory for all officers to enable

39. (S-NOFORN) NIS 43D, pp. 17-18.

US advisers to communicate with them more readily and to facilitate their attendance at US schools and training installations. Basic US Army field and technical manuals had been translated into Vietnamese to widen the dissemination of US tactical principles and training procedures among ARVN personnel.[40]

Nevertheless, during the period 1957-1959, the lack of qualified officers remained a serious problem. In mid-1958, despite the fact that 2,766 officers were being held beyond their normal date of termination of service, the armed services were short 1,491 officers. Most senior officers were comparatively young, the average age of corps and division commanders in 1958 being only 35. These officers had no experience in handling regimental or larger units in combat, and most had received their training under French tutelage. Consequently, key ARVN officers were being sent by the United States to the US Army Command and General Staff College to acquaint them with US military doctrine.[41]

The principal source of regular officers remained the Military Academy at Dalat, which was changed from a one-year to a four-year school. The Officers Candidate School at Thu Duc provided a six-month course for about 400 students. Graduates were not commissioned immediately but had to serve six months in units before becoming eligible for commission. Graduating classes at Dalat and Thu Duc were too small--the military academy, particularly, had difficulty in securing qualified candidates. The Vietnamese Command and General Staff College, whose staff was made up largely of Vietnamese graduates of the US Army Command and General Staff college, offered a five-month staff officer course and a ten-month course for field grade officers. But it, too, had difficulty in obtaining qualified candidates.[42]

The United States also paid for an overseas training program for Vietnamese military students. Between 1 July 1954 and 1 July 1958, 2,037 Vietnamese Army personnel were sent to schools in the United States. Two hundred sixty-one were sent to US-operated military schools outside the United States. Others were sent on general orientation and observer training visits. Ordnance, signal, and engineer technicians were sent to the Philippines for training.[43]

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40. Ibid., p. 14.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., pp. 4-6, 19.
43. Ibid., p. 19.

The ARVN was equipped almost entirely with US World War II weapons and vehicles. Most of the infantry weapons and artillery in the hands of troops had been used in the Indochina war and by 1959 were, understandably, in poor condition. The GVN had no facilities for production of ordnance materiel of its own. The ARVN, furthermore, continued unable to maintain its ordnance properly. It had too few personnel trained in maintenance. Tools and spare parts were in short supply and ARVN supply distribution and transportation systems were inadequate. The typical Vietnamese soldier had only limited technical knowledge and little appreciation of the need for preventive maintenance. The MAAG, in efforts to remedy these deficiencies, supervised an intensive training program--which included the employment of US Mobile Training Teams and contract civilian technicians from the United States and the Philippines, and the training of Vietnamese abroad. Unserviceable vehicles were still shipped to the US Army rebuild center in Japan.[44]

By early 1957 it had become clear that to build and sustain a truly professional army the GVN must establish a system for conscription. Consequently, on 2 May 1957, Diem instituted a draft. A new law established compulsory 12-month tours of service, with four months of training and eight months with an active unit, for all males 20 and 21 years of age. Conscription began on 1 August 1957 and averaged 480 inductions per week for the remainder of the year; in 1958 inductions reached 720 per week. In March 1958 the GVN set up, under the President, a Permanent Secretariat General of National Defense to plan and supervise mobilization programs. In 1959 the period of service for draftees was extended to 18 months in order to provide more thorough training.[45]

The ARVN divisions, both the field division of 8,100 men and the light division of 5,800 men, were generally

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44. Ibid., pp. 23-25.

45. (C) Quarterly Activities Report of MAAG Vietnam, 1 Jun 57-31 Aug 57, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin Files, 1957. (C) MAAG Vietnam Country Statement, 31 Dec 57, same file. (C) Quarterly Activities Report on MAAG Vietnam, 1 Mar 58-31 May 58, same file, 1958. (S) Msg, Saigon 1471 to State, 24 Jan 59.

considered by US military men to be deficient in firepower, although sufficiently mobile. A test of a larger type division in the summer of 1958 resulted in approval by Army General Headquarters on 1 December 1958 of a new division organization comprising 10,000 men and closely resembling that of the US division. The objective of this revised structure was to achieve organizational standardization and facilitate more economical and efficient employment over the varied terrain of South Vietnam. Additional infantry and engineer troops were added, as well as a 4.2 mortar battalion. A program for converting both field and light divisions to the new organization was begun in 1959.[46]

From 1955 to 1958 MAAG and Washington survey teams pressed financial reforms on the GVN and succeeded in bringing about considerable savings in military expenditures. MAAG also advised the GVN on fiscal and budgetary procedures, and the MAAG Comptroller Advisors Group worked closely with Vietnamese specialists in pay and disbursing functions, internal audit, and budgeting. The following table reveals that in a three-year period dollar savings of 84 million were achieved, and that the average cost per man per year in the ARVN declined from $1,320 in 1955 to $1,144 in 1958.[47]

Budget Status 1955-1958
(in millions)

	1955	1956	1957	1958
Vietnam Request	$ 303.0	$ 336.6	$ 233.9	$ 222.4
Approved Budget	286.0	198.4	187.8	171.6
Vietnam Contribution	79.8	20.0	25.0	27.3
US Contribution	125.4	174.3	161.2	144.3
Savings	62.3	4.3	1.4	none
Average Paid Strength	169,442	152,077	143,649	150,000
Average Cost Per Man Per Year	$ 1,320	$ 1,277	$ 1,296	$ 1,144

46. (S-NOFORN) NIS 43D. (C) Hq MAAG Vietnam, Eighth Quarterly Special TERM Report, 19 Jun 58, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin Files, 1958.

47. (C) Quarterly Activities Report of MAAG Vietnam, 1 Mar 58-31 May 58, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin Files, 1958.

The VNAF

The air arm of the GVN defense establishment, although administered by the Commander, VNAF, was under actual operational control of President Diem in his post of Secretary of State for National Defense. The mission of the VNAF was to provide air support for the ARVN, including transport, liaison, reconnaissance, evacuation, and air-ground support. From 1955 to 1959, however, it was primarily a training force, and its military capabilities were extremely limited.[48]

Until mid-1957 the VNAF was trained and supported logistically by the French. Upon the withdrawal of French Air Force units, the US MAAG assumed both training and logistic responsibility. The VNAF had a total strength in January 1959 of 4,590, of whom 324 were officers. It possessed 148 planes (25 F8F/RF8Fs, 35 C-47s, 10 H-19s, 56 L-19s, 18 AT-6Gs, 1 Morane-Saulnier 500, 2 C-45s, and 1 Aero Commander) and was organized into a transport group, two liaison squadrons, a composite squadron, a training squadron, and a VIP squadron.[49]

The United States, during 1958 and 1959, gave formal training to VNAF personnel in flying, navigation, electronics, communications, and maintenance at an Air Training School in Nha Trang and at base schools at the large fields of Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut. Other students were trained in the United States and with USAF units in the Far East. A total of about 375 VNAF personnel were undergoing these various types of training on 30 June 1958. The United States had set an authorized goal of 208 pilots for the VNAF, to be attained by 1963.[50]

The VNN

As in the case of the VNAF, Vietnamese naval forces were trained and supported by the French until mid-1957. As a result, French influence on doctrine and tactics of the VNN was strong. In April 1958, a reorganization of the VNN, based on plans prepared with the assistance of the MAAG,

48. (S-NOFORN) NIS 43D, pp. 36-37.
49. Ibid., p. 37.
50. Ibid., p. 38.

was effected. Under this reorganization the structure of the VNN provided for a Naval Staff of three divisions--Administration, Operations, and Logistics. This staff served the Naval Deputy to the Chief of the General Staff of the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Five commands were established: Naval Stations and Schools; Naval Supply Center, Saigon; Marine Corps; Sea Forces; and River Forces.[51]

The mission of the VNN was to patrol the coast to interdict junk traffic, to support ground forces, and to mount amphibious landings. United States officials judged the VNN in 1959 to be capable of this mission, including the mounting of a battalion-sized amphibious landing. An important additional function of the VNN was patrolling inland waters. The VNN had proven effective in the Mekong Delta area, using French-developed river warfare techniques against dissident elements.

Training of the VNN in 1959 was progressing at a satisfactory rate, with all training ashore concentrated at the Naval School at Nha Trang. United States Navy advisers served at the school, but the Vietnamese, most of them trained in US Navy schools, performed the actual instruction. Marine Corps training had, until 1959, been generally poor but the arrival of US Marine Corps advisers and the continuing training of Vietnamese marines at US Marine Corps schools promised considerable improvement. The VNN had about 5,100 men and officers, of whom 3,600 were general service and 1,500 were marines. The vessels of the VNN were seven US submarine chasers, three coastal minesweepers, 18 amphibious vessels, and 23 service craft.[52]

Assessment of RVNAF

Throughout the years 1957-1959, US military personnel in South Vietnam were optimistic about the progress made in training and equipping the RVNAF. During this period MAAG quarterly reports, TERM reports, and MAAG country statements all relayed to Washington encouraging assessments of substantial improvements in the readiness and effectiveness of the RVNAF and predicted that these advances would

51. Ibid., pp. 31-34.
52. Ibid., p. 32.

continue. Whereas, in 1955 and 1956, CHMAAG had estimated that the South Vietnamese armed forces could have maintained only limited internal security and would have been unable to retard or delay external aggression without "considerable outside assistance," he noted gradual improvement in 1957, and in mid-1958 he reported that the combat posture of the RVNAF had improved "notably" in the past year. He now considered the RVNAF capable of maintaining internal security as well as containing any minor enemy penetrations across the national borders and delaying a full-scale NVN invasion for a week to a week and a half. In addition, he predicted that the RVNAF could hold the Tourane base area for another three to four weeks while at the same time maintaining control of key communication centers in the plateau and coastal areas of central Vietnam against enemy guerrilla and infiltrated forces.53

While most of this strengthened posture was owing to improvements in the ARVN, MAAG Vietnam also cited advances for the VNN and VNAF in the years 1957 through 1959. When MAAG assumed responsibility for the training of the VNN in mid-1957, it was capable only of protecting inland waterways of the southern delta area and could not provide adequate coastal patrol. But by 1959, the VNN could conduct "moderately effective" coastal patrol as well as protecting inland waterways.54

The VNAF in the period 1957-1959 was primarily a training force, and in 1959, its combat experience was still extremely limited. The MAAG reports throughout the period maintained that the VNAF was progressing as well as could be expected of an organization of its age and experience.55

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53. (C) MAAG Vietnam Country Statement, 15 Jan 56, CCS 092 (8-22-46) (2) BP pt 8. Ibid., 21 Jan 57, 15 Jul 57, and 22 Jan 58, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin Files, 1957 and 1958. (C) Hq MAAG Vietnam, Narrative Study, 24 Aug 58, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1958.

54. (C) MAAG Vietnam Country Statement, 15 Jul 57, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1957. (S) JCSM-368-59 to SecDef, 4 Sep 59 (derived from JCS 2101/367), JMF 4060 (14 Aug 59).

55. (U) Hq MAAG Vietnam, Quarterly Activities Report, 7 Mar 57, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1957. (C) Hq MAAG Vietnam, Narrative Study, 25 Nov 58, same file, 1958. (S) JCSM-368-59 to SecDef, 4 Sep 59 (derived from JCS 2101/367), JMF 4060 (14 Aug 59).

Another area where US military personnel reported significant advancement was the RVNAF logistical system. In 1957, MAAG found the system incapable of supporting the RVNAF in a wartime operation. This stemmed from a lack of trained personnel in all phases of supply and maintenance and inadequate transportation and supply distribution systems. Throughout the remainder of 1957 and in 1958 and 1959, MAAG reported continuing progress in the development of the RVNAF logistical capabilities. United States advisers and technicians stressed US methods and procedures with particular emphasis in the fields of supply and maintenance, and off-shore and on-the-job training were accelerated.[56]

Officials in Washington were, in varying degrees, encouraged by the improvements of the RVNAF. Operations Coordinating Board progress reports between 1957 and 1959 all noted the enhanced military posture of South Vietnam. In January 1959, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that the armed forces of South Vietnam were capable of maintaining internal security and of containing minor enemy penetrations across the national borders.[57] In early September 1959, they fowarded to the Secretary of Defense the following assessment:

> The Army is capable of maintaining internal security and providing initial resistance to a full-scale North Vietnamese Communist invasion across the 17th parallel.
>
> The Navy has a limited capability of conducting a moderately effective coastal patrol and is capable of fulfilling its internal security mission. The Navy has been very effective in river warfare in support of Army operations against dissident elements. Coastal transport would require augmentation in wartime.

56. (C) MAAG Vietnam Country Statement, 15 Jul 57, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1957. Hq MAAG, TERM Reports, 19 Nov 58, and 13 Jan 61, same file, 1958.

57. (TS) JCSM-8-59 to SecDef, 13 Jan 59 (derived from JCS 1992/684), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 42.

> The Marine amphibious capability is limited to the conduct of small-scale landings.
>
> The capability and combat readiness of the Air Force composite squadron is low. Efforts are being made to improve this capability but are limited by the provisions of the Geneva Accord. The Air Force has no appreciable air defense capability. It does, however, have a fair air transport capability in paratroop delivery, evacuation and air ground support.[58]

Several weeks earlier, the Secretary of Defense had submitted a report to the National Security Council on the status of the Military Assistance Program that was optimistic concerning Vietnam and its armed forces. The United States had, he said, developed South Vietnam into a strategic asset and, unless prepared to "dissipate a valuable resource," it had no choice but to coninue support to the Vietnamese armed forces until the situation in Asia permitted a fundamental revision of strategic objectives.[59]

A subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee stated in 1960:

> As a general objective the military aid program is expected to help to develop Vietnamese armed forces adequate for maintaining internal security, for deterring outside aggression, and for offering initial resistance to such aggression if it is not deterred. It is not possible for the subcommittee to say that the military aid program will guarantee achievement of this general goal. But because it operates within a detailed long-range plan it is possible to conclude, at least, that progress is being made toward the creation of the kind of military

58. (S) JCSM-368-59 to SecDef, 4 Sep 59 (derived from JCS 2101/367), JMF 4060 (14 Aug 59).
59. (S) DOD Report to NSC, "Status of the Military Assistance Program," 14 Aug 59, same file.

establishment which those responsible contend will guarantee the goal. Barring unforeseen developments, moreover, it is also possible to conclude, on the basis of the assurances of the head of the military aid mission in Vietnam, that at least the U.S. Military Aid Advisory Group (MAAG) can be phased out of Vietnam in the foreseeable future.[60]

Diem's Attempt at Political Unity

Improvement in the military and economic spheres was only part of the task facing South Vietnam in the late 1950s. While the GVN, with US aid, seemed to be making substantial gains in these areas, it at the same time seemed to be losing the equally vital battle for political unity. In late 1956 a change in the attitude of the Vietnamese toward their government first became discernible. Successively, the people's enthusiasm for Diem gave way to tolerance, and tolerance to antipathy.[61] Some of the reasons for this trend in GVN politics lay in Diem's intolerance of political opposition, in his administrative practices, and in his suppression of civil and constitutional rights in the name of internal security.

As early as January 1957, the US Embassy in Saigon reported that Diem, "never tolerant of opposition or criticism," had become "convinced of his own infallibility" and was growing "even less responsive than heretofore to advice which contradicts his basic ideas."[62] The only advisers that Diem seemed to heed were his brothers: Ngo Dinh Nhu, whom the Embassy considered "the most important and influential member of the assembly"; Ngo Dinh Thuc, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Hue; and Ngo Dinh Can, who "with no legal

60. "US Aid Program in Vietnam," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 26 Feb 60, pp. 8-9.
61. (S) NIE 14.3/53-61, "Prospects for North and South Vietnam," 15 Aug 61, p. 7. Honey, "Democracy and the Republic of Vietnam," p. 215.
62. (C) Desp, Saigon 200 to State, 15 Jan 57.

authority, . . . treats Central Vietnam as his personal domain."[63] The last member of Diem's inner circle was Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu, who served along with her husband in the National Assembly.[64]

United States concern over Diem's increasingly authoritarian tendencies grew during 1958 and 1959. Operations Coordinating Board progress reports for these years warned of mounting dissatisfaction in Vietnam over the government's strict political controls and stern police measures. The 1959 OCB Operations Plan for Vietnam suggested that the US Ambassador might, at appropriate times, press for liberalization of Diem's authoritarian controls.[65]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, too, recognized that Diem's regime left something to be desired. In September 1959 they forwarded to the National Security Council a study that called attention to the similar positions of Diem in Vietnam, Chiang in Taiwan, and Rhee in South Korea. The study, prepared in connection with a review of US policy in the Far East, warned that:

> In the case of these three nations, U.S. policy views the heads of government as being synonomous with the government itself. They have come to power as a result of armed revolution, are firmly entrenched, and, in practice, their systems do not allow a change of chief executives through peaceful constitutional processes. The U.S. thus finds itself without room to maneuver politically in dealing with these countries, since negotiations are with the chief executives whose actions may or may not be influenced by local or world public opinion . . . . Since the three men . . . are

63. Anon, "A New Look at Vietnam," Far Eastern Economic Review, 11 Jan 62, p. 49.

64. Wesley R. Fishel, "Problems of Democratic Growth in Vietnam," Ch. II of Fishel (ed.), Problems of Democratic Growth in Vietnam Since Independence, p. 28.

65. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5612/1), 28 May 58, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 39. (S) OCB Progress Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5809), 12 Aug 59, JMF 9150/9105 (12 Aug 59). (S) OCB Operations Plan for Vietnam, 9 Jan 59, JMF 9155.3/9105 (9 Jan 59).

> so closely identified with U.S. interests and policies, failure to support them in the international arena, or to allow them to be overthrown violently by the opposition in their countries, would have undesirable repercussions . . . throughout the world.[66]

To avoid repetitions of this embarrassing and potentially dangerous situation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the United States in the future avoid "personal commitments" of this sort, and seek instead the "development of governmental institutions in the Far East that can survive changing chief executives with little or no disruption."[67]

Although the 1956 constitution had established republican institutions and basic political freedoms, no system of competitive political parties developed in South Vietnam. Diem imposed administrative requirements so restrictive that in practice only puppet opposition parties, such as the government-controlled Socialist Party, were able to function.[68] After 1956 the only political opposition the regime encountered came from the Free Democratic Party of Phan Quang-Dan, which announced in 1958 that it would participate in the 1959 legislative elections. The GVN rejected the party's application for certification; but Dan persisted, ran for the national assembly as an independent candidate, and was elected by the largest majority of any candidate in the Saigon area. The government reacted to Dan's successful election by prosecuting him for violation of the election laws. Dan was convicted and deprived of his assembly seat.[69]

From 1956 to 1959, Diem fashioned the Movement of National Revolution (MNR) into a potent instrument to counter political opposition. The party's program was concerned, almost exclusively, with supporting fully all the policies

66. (TS) SM-902-59 to SpecAsst to JCS (NSC Affairs), 11 Sep 59 (derived from JCS 1992/730), JMF 9150/9105 (19 Jun 59).
67. Ibid.
68 Robert G. Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam Under the Republic," Pacific Affairs, December 1960, pp. 341, 345-346.
69. Ibid., p. 340.

and actions of Diem. Great pressures were applied to persuade the people to join. In the 1959 elections, for example, party members, often recruited under economic pressure, were compelled to vote for the official candiate or suffer expulsion from the party and loss of economic and civil liberties.[70]

Given the unfamiliarity of the Vietnamese people with free political institutions, the denial of political expression was unfortunate. In the countryside incipient political awareness went unnourished, and in the cities and towns political interest and activity was stifled. Denied any opportunity to develop, the opposition by the end of the decade comprised fragmented and impotent groups of bickering, "coffee-house" politicians.

Repeatedly, during the years 1957 to 1959, the GVN abridged the constitutional and civil rights of its citizens in the name of internal security. For example, observers reported the existence of "Political Re-education Centers" in South Vietnam, internment camps established apparently for the "political re-education" of communists. The centers, however, bore witness to Diem's violation of civil rights, for citizens could be interned without due process and for an indefinite period. Although the majority of the inmates of these centers were communist or communist sympathizers, reportedly some were rigid anticommunists whose only crime had been injudicious criticism of the regime.[71]

Central to the case against Diem was the charge that he had restricted the right of free press. When he took office in 1954, Diem had established mild penalties for violation of the press censorship regulations. The trend seemed to be toward greater freedom of the press, but before long Vietnamese newspapers came under close government control, ostensibly because of their sensationalism and irresponsibility. The administration also kept close watch on the foreign press to prevent "abusive attacks on the presidential family or the regime." In addition to censoring the press, GVN officials banned works of fiction that presented the government in an unflattering light.[72]

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70. Honey, "Democracy and the Republic of Vietnam," pp. 207-208.
71. Ibid., p. 210.
72. Anon, "A New Look at Vietnam," p. 48.

The years 1958 and 1959 saw the seizure of newspapers for having published news "likely to encourage Communism" in Vietnam, the suspension of others because of moral and financial misconduct on the part of their editors, and the arrest of reporters for alleged communist connections. So-called "popular" demonstrations against newspapers especially critical of the regime also tended to inhibit the development of a spirit of free criticism.[73]

A further example of the GVN's growing political repression was its actions against the Chinese and Montagnard minorities. Nearly ten percent of the population of South Vietnam was non-Vietnamese. The two principal ethnic minorities, the Chinese and the Montagnards, occupied positions of special importance, the one economic, the other geographic.

In 1956, South Vietnam had a population of about 650,000 Chinese, most of whom were located in the Chinese city-within-Saigon, Cholon. United States policy toward the overseas Chinese had three aims: to promote anti-communism among them, to encourage them to identify themselves with local governments, and to foster sympathy and support for Nationalist China as a symbol of Chinese resistance to communism.[74] To Diem, however, the Chinese minority represented a group long favored by the French; one with an inordinate influence and, in some respects, a strangle-hold on the Vietnamese economy. Moreover, the separate culture of the Chinese, including separate schools and newspapers, was viewed by Vietnamese nationalists as an affront.[75]

On 21 August 1956, after two years of sporadic harassment, Diem launched a campaign against the Chinese by

73. (C) Desp, Saigon 377 to State, 24 Apr 58. Fishel, Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence, p. 23

74. (TS) NSC 5612/1, 5 Sep 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 26.

75. (S) OCB, "The Overseas Chinese and U.S. Policy" (draft), 6 Sep 56, same file BP pt 7. Joseph Buttinger, "The Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam," Ch. VI in Fishel, Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence, pp. 110-118.

promulgating an ex post facto decree conferring automatic citizenship on all Chinese born in Vietnam. On 5 September he issued another decree restricting eleven specific occupations--in all of which many Chinese were employed--to Vietnamese citizens. At about the same time, the GVN also ordered that all teaching in the Chinese secondary schools would have to be in the Vietnamese language and with designated texts.[76]

These uncompromising decrees immediately antagonized the Chinese community and aroused its solid opposition. Within a few days the Chinese began withdrawing funds from banks and, in a short time, one-sixth of the currency in circulation had disappeared. Commercial transactions in South Vietnam came to a near standstill. Services normally performed by the Chinese, such as the milling and transport of rice were left undone. The country settled rapidly into a business slump.[77]

Almost immediately after the promulgation of the decree, Nationalist China protested to the GVN on behalf of the Chinese in Vietnam.[78] For its part, the United States counselled moderation to Diem.[79] But for both Diem and the Saigon Chinese the matter had become one of "face." The GVN stubbornly refused to modify its decrees, and the Chinese just as stubbornly refused to obey them.[80] Finally, in July 1957, impressed by now with the damage being done to the economy, the GVN ended a full year of stalemate by easing its strictures on Chinese business activities. Under threat of deportation, some Chinese resumed business under the new

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76. (C) Desp, Saigon 200 to State, 15 Jan 57. (U) Msg, CHMAAG Vietnam 5148 to CINCPAC, 5 Jan 57.

77. Ibid. Lindholm, Viet-Nam: The First Five Years, p. 113. Buttinger, "The Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam," p. 110.

78. (C) Msgs, Saigon to State, 823, 8 Sep 56; 1171, 6 Oct 56; 1322, 20 Oct 56. Bernard B. Fall, "South Vietnam's Chinese Problem," Far Eastern Survey, May 1958, pp. 67-68.

79. (S) Msg, Saigon 1001 to State, 22 Sep 56. (C) Desp, Saigon 200 to State, 15 Jan 57.

80. (C) Desp, Saigon 200 to State, 15 Jan 57.

regulations. By 1959, the Chinese had reportedly made their accommodation with Diem; the GVN reported that by that time three-fourths of those eligible had accepted Vietnamese citizenship.[81]

The problem of the Chinese minority could not be solved so simply, however. The Chinese congregations--ethnic associations which, under the French, had exercised considerable administrative, police, and revenue control over the Chinese community--continued to be a cohesive force among the Chinese and to oppose the GVN's restrictive policies.[82]

If the Chinese disdained Vietnamese citizenship and culture, the Vietnamese were equally contemptuous of their other sizable ethnic minority, the Montagnard tribesmen. Numbering between 500,000 and 700,000, the Montagnards encompassed, one US observer stated, "every conceivable degree of economic and cultural backwardness."[83] Given to semi-nomadic patch farming, the Montagnards wandered throughout the hilly backlands of Vietnam, nearly half the country. Like the Chinese, they had received special favors from the French, who had used them as a counterweight against the Vietnamese. The GVN was naturally determined to assert its rule over the areas inhabited by the tribesmen, especially because these areas included four-fifths of the nation's land frontier.

The GVN's problem of asserting its control was made difficult by the head start its communist competitors had among the tribesmen. While the GVN for two years concentrated on establishing itself in the more populated lowlands, Viet Cong agents launched a campaign among the tribesmen to win their loyalty. Tribesmen were recruited and sent to North Vietnam for indoctrination and training. The Viet Cong allowed the Montagnards to retain their native dialects and even broadcast propaganda to the Montagnards in their local speech. The communists also pointed with pride to the

81. Buttinger, "The Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam," p. 119.
82. (S) Msg, Saigon 3479 to State, 18 Jan 60.
83. Buttinger, "The Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam," p. 105.

autonomous regions in the north where the tribesmen's cousins allegedly lived without governmental interference.[84]

The GVN's program to bind the tribesmen to the central government was two-fold: to educate and persuade them to become more loyal and useful citizens; and to resettle in the Montagnard areas small communities of Vietnamese from the lowlands who would serve as examples to the tribesmen and a deterrent to border infiltrators. The first purpose was served by the creation of schools for Montagnards, by demonstration programs in agricultural methods, and by a remarkable insistence that Vietnamese be polite in the dealings with the mountain people. Under the latter program, some 40,000 pioneers from the lowlands had been settled in key locales in the highlands by 1959. Despite the GVN's best efforts, friction persisted between the Montagnards, who claimed that the Vietnamese sequestered their best land, and the Vietnamese, who were not happy in the primitive highlands. On balance, by 1959 the GVN seemed to have made some progress in allaying the Montagnard's traditional fears, but the government's success in cultivating the tribesmen's loyalty had not yet been tested.[85]

The Insurgency in Vietnam, 1957-1959

Despite the brightened economic situation, the strengthened RVNAF, and the seemingly increased government stability, internal security in South Vietnam did not show a corresponding improvement during the period 1957-1959. At first, it did appear that the insurgency had been brought under control. In fact, however, although the first months of 1957 saw the nadir of the South Vietnamese insurgency, by mid-year the insurgency had begun a gradual upward swing that continued throughout the period.

At the beginning of the period there was good evidence that the Viet Cong were withering away under only sporadic

84. Lindholm, Vietnam: The First Five Years, pp. 135-139.

85. Buttinger, "The Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam," pp. 106-107. William Henderson, "The Republic of Vietnam Land Redevelopment Program," Ch. VII in Fishel, Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence, p. 130. (S) Desp, Saigon 295 to State, 12 Mar 59.

pressure by the GVN. The refusal of the GVN to participate with North Vietnam in national elections in 1956 had signalled the failure of the communists' plan to unify Vietnam through peaceful means, and dealt a severe blow to the strength and morale of the insurgents in the south.[86] Defections became numerous: some VC cadres broke away because of disillusionment with the Hanoi regime; others because they faced another extended campaign--now apparently inevitable--after the long years of fighting. According to ARVN reports, guerrillas captured in operations throughout the south in later 1956 were poorly armed. Their weapons were frequently of local manufacture, knives and daggers often substituting for firearms. United States agencies concurred in the estimate that the VC cadres were probably not receiving regular supplies. Early in 1957 GVN officials estimated that the communist military strength had dropped from approximately 10,000 in 1955 to about 1,500.[87]

Captured enemy documents indicated that the VC main preoccupation in the months following the 1956 National Assembly election was survival. In January 1957, a MAAG Intelligence Summary reported that the Viet Cong had been instructed to "lay low, reorganize, propagandize within legal limits, infiltrate government posts including the army, preach peaceful coexistence, and strengthen their cells."[88]

During the first months of 1957, the ARVN claimed to have killed, wounded, or captured large numbers of

86. (S) NIE 63.2/2-57, "The Prospects for North Vietnam," 14 May 57, p. 6. Philippe Devillers, "The Struggle for the Unification of Vietnam," The China Quarterly, January-March 1962, p. 15.

87. (U) Dept of State Pub No. 7308, A Threat to the Peace, North Vietnam's Effort to Conquer South Vietnam, pp. 43-44. (S) Desp, Saigon 243 to State, "Summary of Internal Security Situation in Vietnam: November 1957, #7," 7 Jan 58. (S) SEATO "Rpt of the 12th Mtg of SEATO Security Experts," pp. 66-68. (C) MAAG Vietnam Intelligence Summary (hereafter cited as MAAGV ISUM) No. 1-57, 2 Jan 57, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1957. (S) NIS 43D, Jul 58, p. 57-7.

88. (C) MAAGV ISUMs 1-57, 2 Jan 57; 3-57, 1 Feb 57; 4-57 15 Feb 57; 7-57, 1 Apr 57; 8-57, 15 Apr 57; 9-57, 1 May 57; MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1957.

guerrillas, averaging several hundred a month.[89] For example, for December 1956 and January 1957, the ARVN reported total VC losses of 861, over one-half the currently estimated VC strength in South Vietnam. But despite these losses, the ARVN estimates of VC strength showed no appreciable decrease. MAAG surmised that the ARVN reports of VC losses represented mostly civilian sympathizers, and not "hard-core" armed cadres.[90]

In mid-1957 the communists energetically set about rebuilding and revitalizing the VC political and military structure. New political and military cadres were brought in from the north, recruitment was stepped up, and VC units were assigned more men and equipment. During this reorganization the Viet Cong also significantly changed their tactics. More and more, they turned to the use of force and terror as an adjunct to political and economic subversion.[91]

In late June 1957, MAAG reported "a slight but noticeable increase" in VC activity in the southern provinces, with the formation of new units and stepped-up propaganda and infiltration. In July, intelligence sources stated that North Vietnam had sent to Cambodia 30 cadres, specialists in political and military organizing, for infiltration into South Vietnam.[92]

In October 1957 President Diem reported that in the past year the communists had killed 412 persons, most of whom had been trained and experienced civilian, military, and police officials loyal to the GVN. From October through December there were approximately 70 VC armed attacks and terrorist acts and more than 50 skirmishes initiated by ARVN troops or security forces. By the end of the year a pattern had emerged. Terrorist action was rather clearly focused on

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89. For ARVN reports of VC losses, see MAAG Vietnam Biweekly Intelligence Summaries in the MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin Files.

90. (C) MAAGV ISUM 5-57, 1 Mar 57, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1957

91. (U) Dept of State Pub No. 7308, pp. 3-4. (S) NIE 14.3/53-61, 15 Aug 61, p. 3.

92. (C) MAAGV ISUMs 13-57, 1 Jul 57; 16-57, 16 Aug 57; MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1957.

three principal groups: (1) provincial district, and village officials; (2) rural police and security personnel; (3) community and village leaders. It was discovered, for example, that in the last quarter of 1957, of the 74 acts of terrorism carried out by persons believed to be communist, 67 were perpetrated against Vietnamese falling into the groups enumerated above. Of the remaining seven, four were against ARVN intelligence personnel and three were against members of pro-GVN political groups. In this period, too, US personnel first became targets of VC violence; in October 1957 explosives placed at MAAG installations in Saigon resulted in several casualties. In the same month the US Information Service Center was bombed.[93]

The Viet Cong also undertook a concerted campaign to frighten and coerce the peasants and local officials. Farmers were forced to pay "taxes" either in the form of money or harvested crops, and travelers were often required to pay road, bridge, and river "tolls." The Viet Cong harassed local authorities, burning and robbing their homes and threatening them with assassination if they failed to reveal intelligence information or attempted to inform on VC agents or activities. Reports began to be received in Saigon that in some villages "fear of Communist retaliation has resulted in increasing reluctance on the part of villagers to act as informants and to otherwise assist security forces."[94]

Terrorism was accompanied by a concerted propaganda campaign with the theme of "normalization" of relations between South and North Vietnam and the "reunification" of the divided nation. At the same time VC propaganda cadres called for the elimination of US "imperialist intervention," evasion of military conscription, and opposition to the GVN land reform program, which they claimed would ultimately make the peasants serfs to the Diem regime.[95]

According to US intelligence officials, the upswing in VC activity that took place late in 1957 was the result of a specific plan of the communist leadership. Meeting in

93. (S) NIS 43D, Jul 58, pp. 57-3, 57-11, 57-12. NY Times, 8 Oct 57, p. 5.
94. (S) NIS 43D, p. 57-12.
95. Ibid.

Phnom Penh during October, VC leaders agreed to step up the campaign for reunification, with increased emphasis on terrorism. They hoped that the resulting disorders could be used as evidence of popular desire for reunification, and that, by engendering an atmosphere of insecurity, confidence in the GVN would be eroded.96

Viet Cong activity increased, though still on a relatively small scale, during 1958. United States officials did not appear overly concerned. The MAAG biweekly intelligence summaries indicated no cause for alarm, reporting there had been "no great rush" of peasants to rally to the VC cause, and adding that the VC successes were confined to more remote areas where the maintenance of internal security was, at best, difficult. ARVN intelligence officers still placed the VC strength in South Vietnam at 1,500, although they admitted that the figure might be as high as 2,100 if the dissident Binh Xuyen, who had come under communist control, were counted. A US intelligence survey in July 1958 found that:

> compared with the situation prevailing in late 1954 and early 1955, when South Vietnam was an area torn with bitter conflict between contending forces and when the Saigon government's authority was challenged not only in the countryside but even within Saigon itself, the picture at present is one of relative tranquility.

The survey did warn that there remained "many disquieting indications of subversive strength."97

A MAAG intelligence summary of early 1958 stated that the VC overall plan of action for South Vietnam in 1958 called for development of military activities--including the creation of new units, training of additional fifth-column cadres, and increasing terrorism. The Viet Cong divided South Vietnam into two zones: the Guerrilla Zone, where they had both troops and some influence; and

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96. (S-NOFORN) Desp, Saigon 277 to State, "Summary of Internal Security Situation in Vietnam: December 1957, #8," 3 Feb 58.

97. (C) MAAGV ISUM 3-58, 1 Feb 58, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1958. (S) NIS 43D, pp. 57-1 - 57-3.

the Temporarily Occupied Zone, where local authorities were strong and VC influence weak. In the Guerrilla Zone, the Viet Cong planned expanded activities. These included resisting GVN troops, protecting VC bases, and wooing the people and government troops. In the Temporarily Occupied Zone, the Viet Cong hoped to develop guerrilla bases, aiming at sabotage and winning the people to their cause.98

In 1958 assassinations averaged about 15 per month; kidnappings were somewhat higher. Most of the victims were Vietnamese officials, but US personnel began to attract more attention from the Viet Cong. In mid-year, the Viet Cong launched a propaganda campaign designed to promote anti-Americanism in the ARVN, especially hatred by ARVN soldiers of their US advisers. MAAG sources reported in September 1958 that communist units in South Vietnam had been instructed to: (1) impede the movement of US officers through the countryside by obstructing roads; (2) devise means of terrorizing US military instructors; (3) promote the anti-American movement in South Vietnam. But there was not yet a general call for the slaying or kidnapping of US personnel.99

The Viet Cong also made efforts to penetrate the lower echelons of government, the security forces, labor unions, and political groups. For example, Vietnamese intelligence agents uncovered a communist cell in an SDC unit. The main objectives for the cell were to secure information on troop movements and security operations and to steal arms and ammunition. United States intelligence officials stated that communist penetration efforts were directed at government agencies and "semiofficial groups" for the purpose of gathering "intelligence on government policies and programs and on strength, deployment, and specific missions of

98. (C) MAAGV ISUM 5-58, 1 Mar 58, MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1958

99. (S-NOFORN) Desps, Saigon 295 to State, "Summary of Internal Security Situation in Vietnam: September and October, No. 14," 12 Mar 59; 337, "Summary . . . February and March 1958, No. 10," 24 Apr 58; 401, "Summary . . . November and December 1958, No. 15," 29 May 59. MAAGV ISUMs 5-58, 1 Mar 58; 11-58, 1 Jun 58; 14-58, 16 Jul 58; 16-58; MAAG Vietnam Gen Admin File, 1958.

military and security services, and whenever possible, to subvert or weaken these operations."100

Penetration, terror, depredation, and propaganda, though troublesome, did not threaten the continued existence of the Republic of Vietnam. The real threat lay in the growing military strength of the Viet Cong. Operating in small bands of 5 to 50 men, VC units attacked small government forces and installations. Gradually, however, these units grew larger, and their equipment improved. The motley collection of outdated arms typical of the 1955-1956 period was replaced in 1957-1958 by more modern rifles, grenades, and submachine guns. In 1958 the VC units also began to use bazookas, light machine guns, and mortars, as well as transmitting and receiving sets and powered boats.101

How much of the improved VC arms and equipment was from stolen or captured stocks and how much came across the borders of South Vietnam was not known. There were good indications that an increasing amount of material was entering the country by land and sea. Overland routes from North Vietnam followed a network of trails through border areas of Laos and Cambodia, and thence into South Vietnam. Border crossings were effected at places where difficult terrain and sparse population made the infiltration of small groups of men almost impossible to detect. In 1958 for the first time intelligence sources began to mention the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail. This route was already being used "apparently . . . to smuggle through orders, propaganda material, funds, arms, ammunition, and supplies."102

With the hope of slowing the flow of men and materials into South Vietnam, the GVN deployed units to the border regions, stepped up its countersubversive activities in these areas, and began construction of fortified posts along a portion of the Cambodian border. But given the nature of the terrain and the magnitude of the task, the results were almost predictable. The infiltration of men and material continued; indeed in the late months of 1958, and in 1959, the flow probably increased.103

100. (S) NIS 43D, p. 57-10.
101. Ibid., p. 57-12.
102. Ibid., p. 57-9.
103. Ibid., p. 57-12.

In January 1959 President Diem informed the US Ambassador that the Viet Cong, having failed by other means, were again stepping up terrorism to intimidate the people in the countryside. The tactics being used by the Viet Cong included not only assassinations and kidnappings but increased emphasis on extortions from peasants in the form of "taxes" and "loans". The Viet Cong concentrated also on attacking equipment furnished the GVN by the United States. During the spring of 1959, VC forces damaged by machine gun fire, burning, or explosion 41 tractors, and in a particularly skillful act of sabotage blew up a valuable canal dredge that had been provided to the GVN by USOM.[104]

Unfortunately, the government's handling of the people of the countryside was inept, often alienating the local Vietnamese and making them more amenable to VC influence. South Vietnamese officials at the province and local level frequently dealt with the people by harsh and repressive methods, lessening rather than increasing popular confidence in the government. United States Operations Mission officials were receiving increasingly numerous reports of extortion by police officials, arrests without cause, detention without legal proceedings, and other evidences of police malpractice and corruption. "Excesses and corruption on the part of the lower level security and provincial administrative personnel," the US Embassy reported to Washington in August 1959, "reflect adversely on the GVN and may undo much of what might be accomplished by the GVN's programs designed to assist the people."[105]

South Vietnam's efforts to mount coordinated, supported offensives against the Viet Cong were no more successful in 1959 than they had been in the past. Although plans were developed for such offensives, the GVN failed to provide the required strength, particularly in support forces. The ARVN seemed unable to unsnarl its red tape sufficiently to get logistic support where and when it was needed. Although Diem appointed a central authority to coordinate all internal security activities in GVN, he neither relieved province chiefs of their authority and responsibility for internal security in their own provinces nor made them subject to the central authority.[106]

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104. (S-NOFORN) Desps, Saigon 42 to State, 30 Jul 59; 71, 21 Aug 59.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.

United States Embassy officials were critical of Diem's reluctance to reduce the authority of the province chiefs in the field of internal security. They believed that the effectiveness of paramilitary forces was limited by the direct control by province chiefs of the security agencies in their provinces. It had become more and more difficult to get close cooperation among the ARVN, the CG, the SDC, and the Surete because of provincial autonomy. Without this cooperation the Viet Cong could not, in the view of US Embassy officials, be successfully stamped out.

In the late spring of 1959 US intelligence authorities estimated that the Viet Cong had an active strength of about 2,000 guerrillas, largely in small units scattered along the Cambodian border and the south coast, and in the northern plateau. There were also "several thousand" others, presently inactive, who had access to arms and would participate in guerrilla warfare if directed to do so.[107]

Statistically, VC activity seems to have risen during 1959. A total of 239 assassinations and 344 kidnappings took place in 1959 as compared with 193 assassinations and 236 kidnappings in 1958.[108] In November 1959, however, the US Embassy reported that the internal security situation was showing some improvement but that it nevertheless remained "a serious problem." It is probable that what appeared to be a reduction in the level of VC activity actually reflected a decision by the Viet Cong to withdraw to their secure bases to reequip, regroup and retrain in preparation for the much higher level of effort that was to come. United States Embassy officials tended to attribute this slackening off to the

> increasing pressure of tougher and more effective GVN counteraction. Viet Cong forces have been reported to be pulling back and regrouping their forces, recruiting new cadres to fill their weakened ranks, and giving greater attention to protecting themselves from GVN penetration and counterintelligence activity.[109]

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107. (S) NIE 63-59, "Prospect on North and South Vietnam," 26 May 59, p. 4.
108. (S) SNIE 63.1-60, "Short Term Trends in South Vietnam," 23 Aug 60, p. 3.
109. (C) Msg, Saigon 133 to State, 4 Nov 59.

Proof that this was an overly optimistic analysis of VC motives was to be forthcoming shortly. Even as this moderation in insurgent actions was being noted, the leaders of North Vietnam were preparing to increase the size of their guerrilla apparatus in the south and to step up terrorist activities. This decision to increase pressure on the Diem government may have been taken as early as May 1959, at a meeting of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee. A communique issued from this meeting predicted that "the patriotic movement in South Vietnam will become broader and deeper day by day," and pledged that "the entire people will unite to struggle for national reunification . . . ." Pham Van Dong, the North Vietnamese Prime Minister stated in September 1959 "we will be in Saigon tomorrow" and in November told a western official that North Vietnam would "drive the Americans into the sea."[110]

The growing VC activity and the increasing terrorism in South Vietnam aroused little concern in the United States. In fact, Vietnam received scant notice from the American public during the years 1957 through 1959. The US press gave little attention to South Vietnam, and what coverage did find its way into American pepers and periodicals presented, for the most part, an encouraging picture of the situation. In this period there were only three permanent resident US correspondents--a free lancer and representatives of UPI and Time-Life--in Saigon. From time to time special reporters were sent from the United States, and the larger US newspapers, various magazines, and the wire services had correspondents who covered all of Southeast Asia--operating out of other headquarters, such as Hong Kong--but who only occasionally visited South Vietnam.[111]

In 1957 and 1958 such magazines as Time, Newsweek, Life, US News and World Report, America, and Commonweal all published reports and articles highly favorable to Ngo Dinh Diem and his government. They presented the South Vietnamese President in such glowing terms as, "the tough miracle man of Vietnam," and, "an authentic patriot," and

110. (C) Dept of State Rpt 8276, "North Vietnam Increases Pressure on South Vietnam," 7 Jun 60.

111. Hearings, Situation in Vietnam, Subcom on State Department Organization and Public Affairs of S. Foreign Relations Com, 86th Cong, 1st sess, pp. 26-27.

lauded his "courage" and "tenacity" in meeting the communist threat. These articles all noted the chaos existing in South Vietnam when Diem assumed office in 1954 and reviewed the progress he had achieved since then in creating "an independent national Government." The various articles and reports recognized that Diem still faced significant challenges, but were equally confident that he would overcome them. A recount of Diem's accomplishments of the previous three years, Time magazine said in mid-1957, was "a shining vindication of US foreign aid policies."112

Encouraging US press reports on South Vietnam continued to appear into 1959. A New York Times reporter, Tillman Durdin, went to South Vietnam in April 1959 and filed a series of articles praising the GVN land reform and resettlement programs. Two editorials in the New York Times in the spring also lauded Diem and his land reform. Newsweek columnist Ernest K. Lindley visited South Vietnam in June 1959, after an absence of four years, and wrote enthusiastically of the "striking progress" being made by that "indefatigable, invincible man, President Ngo Dinh Diem." Articles in Business Week and the Wall Street Journal during the summer of 1959 were similarly optimistic over the progress in South Vietnam.113

Amid this symphony of praise for Diem and his government from 1957 to 1959, only an occasional discordant note was heard. David Hotham, a British correspondent, who had spent three years in Vietnam, expressed alarm over the situation there. In two articles in 1957, one in The Reporter and the other in The New Republic, he charged that reports of success in South Vietnam were "Western propaganda" and "totally untrue." He was convinced that "Western

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112. "The Tough Miracle Man of Vietnam," Life, 13 May 57, pp. 156-176. "The Courage of Ngo Dinh Diem," Commonweal, 19 Apr 57, p. 53. "Diem's Achievement," America, 1 Feb 58, p. 501. Ernest K. Lindley, "A Friend Named Diem," Newsweek, 20 May 57, p. 40. "Indo-China: Another Place Where Reds Are Losing," US News and World Report, 1 Mar 57, pp. 83-84. "Foreign Aid Repaid," Time, 20 May 57, p. 25.

113. NY Times, 2, 4, 6, 11 and 12 Apr 59, 19 May 59. Wall Street Journal, 16 Jun 59. Ernest K. Lindley, "An Ally Worth Having," Newsweek, 29 Jun 59, p. 31. "Vietnam's Gains Spur Red Terror," Business Week, 18 Jul 59, pp. 56-58.

policy in South Vietnam has gone completely off the rails, and unless it is radically changed now, will utterly fail in its main objectives." He stated that Diem was not a popular leader and he saw recent terrorist acts as "the red light from which the West should take warning." Bernard Fall, writing in Nation in May 1958, also warned of a developing trend of terrorism in South Vietnam and of a steady deterioration of the economy. He concluded that, despite generous financial and political support by the United States, the Diem government was faced with growing insecurity in the countryside and an economic crisis which threatened to wipe out most of the progress already achieved.[114]

In 1959, a series of articles by Scripps-Howard writer, Albert M. Colegrove alleged mismanagement of, and a lack of direction in, the US aid program in Vietnam. These charges resulted in hearings before a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where Ambassador Durbrow, Arthur Gardiner, Director of the US Operations Mission to Vietnam, and MAAG Chief, Lieutenant General Samuel Williams, all testified that the Colegrove allegations were either false or distorted.[115]

In 1959, US policymakers shared the optimism over Vietnam and its future that was being expressed in the press. Ambassador Durbrow, in testimony before Congress, cited numerous accomplishments wrought by the Diem regime with US assistance. In addition to citing the road construction program and alluding to the nation's economic progress, the Ambassador contrasted the conditions in 1959 with those of five years earlier. "I need hardly tell you," he began,

> about the devastation and chaos that prevailed in Vietnam when President Diem took over in 1954. The Government controlled little more than the main cities and a few of the roads. Communist

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114. David Hotham, "South Vietnam-Shaky Bastion," The New Republic, 25 November 1957, pp. 13-16. Hotham, "Vietnam: Trouble in North, South, and in Future," The Reporter, 21 February 1957, pp. 36-38. Bernard B. Fall, "Will South Vietnam Be Next?," Nation, 31 May 1958, pp. 489-493.

115. Hearings, Situation in Vietnam, Subcom on State Department Organization and Public Affairs of S. Foreign Relations Com, 86th Cong, 1st sess.

and armed sects controlled most of the rest. Today, the opposite prevails.

The Communists must hide out in the deep forests, from where they must carry on their sporadic raids.

The Government is becoming more and more effective in curbing these terrorist acts.116

As already noted, the Secretary of Defense apparently agreed with Ambassador Durbrow, for a 1959 DOD report to the NSC on military assistance was lavish in its praise of the Vietnam Government:

Vietnam is now a going concern politically, a pivot of U.S. power and influence in Southeast Asia and a deterrent to Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, an effective example of American aid to a friendly regime, a symbol throughout Asia of successful defiance of a brutal Communist threat by an indigenous nationalistic government. Having averted almost certain disaster a few years ago, the U.S. now has a valuable and strategic asset in Southeast Asia.117

As it turned out, the progress was more apparent than real. The optimism prevailing in official quarters at this period was based too much on surface appearances. A mere absence of crisis was not necessarily a sign of health; actually, it was a prelude to renewed disturbances of more dangerous dimensions.

Even as US leaders were congratulating the GVN and themselves for a job well done, the Viet Cong were beginning to capitalize on the extensive preparations and careful plans they had made from 1957 to 1959. After more than two years of tearing at the social, economic, and political

116. Ibid.
117. (S) DOD, "Report of Defense Dept to NSC: Status of the MAP as of 30 June 1959," 14 Aug 59, JMF 4060 (14 Aug 59).

fabric of South Vietnam, Hanoi had apparently decided that it was ready to overthrow the GVN and reunify North and South Vietnam under communist rule. At Tay Ninh in January 1960, the Viet Cong successfully attacked a regular South Vietnamese regimental command post. The Tay Ninh attack was an earnest of communist intentions and confirmation, in effect, that a new war had begun; but it was a war whose costs and consequences were and would remain unperceived for some time.

APPENDIX

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIA TREATY ORGANIZATION

The deteriorating French position in Indochina in early 1954 forced upon the United States consideration of a regional security arrangement for Southeast Asia. The basic US aim for this area was to contain communist expansion, and at the beginning of 1954 NSC policy to implement this aim called for every effort to prevent France from ending the war in Indochina on terms inconsistent with US objectives. This included attempts to stiffen French resolve in Indochina as well as continued US military assistance for French forces fighting there. But the decision of the Berlin Foreign Ministers meeting in February to include settlement of the Indochina question in the Geneva discussions, together with the early April decision by the US Government against direct intervention in Indochina, made it highly improbable that France would continue her military efforts.

In commenting for the National Security Council on ways to improve the French position in Indochina, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended in January 1954 that the US Government re-examine national strategy toward Indochina, with a view to developing a collective effort in Southeast Asia to counter communism on a regional basis. During February and March the situation in Indochina grew more alarming. The Viet Minh launched their assault on the exposed French position at Dien Bien Phu during the night of 13-14 March, capturing two French redoubts within two days, and on 4 April, the French Government put forth a "frantic and belated" request for US intervention.[1]

The US decision to proceed with the formation of a regional coalition in Southeast Asia was made during consideration of this appeal for direct US intervention in Indochina. The National Security Council met on 6 April to consider the

1. Unless otherwise stated all information in the introductory section of this chapter is from (TS) JCS Hist Div, History of the Indochina Incident, 1940-1954.

French request. The Council, however, postponed a decision on intervention and focused, instead, on a proposal for a Southeast Asian coalition. There was some belief that the existence of such an alliance would so strengthen the West's position at the forthcoming Geneva Conference that intervention would become unnecessary. It was also believed that, even should Indochina be lost to the free world, a coalition would increase the political strength of the other noncommunist nations in Southeast Asia. In the end, the Council directed US efforts prior to Geneva toward organizing an alliance composed initially of ten nations--the United Kingdom, France, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and the United States.

Joint Chiefs of Staff support of this position was evident in their views concerning US policy toward the Far East submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 9 April 1954. They advised the Secretary that US policy should be directed toward developing the "purpose and capability" of the noncommunist countries of the Far East to act collectively in opposing communism with the "eventual" establishment of a comprehensive regional security arrangement among these noncommunist countries in association with the United States, the United Kingdom, and possibly France.[2]

The United States immediately sounded out its major allies to see if they would be willing to participate in an alliance as envisioned by the National Security Council. Secretary Dulles flew to Europe, conferring first with British Foreign Secretary Eden and then French Foreign Minister Bidault. Secretaries Dulles and Eden agreed that their two countries were "ready to take part, with the other countries principally concerned, in an examination of the possibility of establishing a collective defense, within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, to assure peace, security and freedom of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific." Secretary Dulles obtained a similar commitment from Foreign Minister Bidault.[3]

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2. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "United States Strategy for Developing a Position of Military Strength in the Far East (NSC Action No. 1029-B)," 9 Apr 54 (derived from JCS 1776/452), CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) sec 150.

3. Joint Statements, SecState Dulles and Foreign Secretary Eden, 13 Apr 54; SecState Dulles and Foreign Minister Bidault, 14 Apr 54; reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 26 Apr 54, pp. 622-623.

The Secretary of State returned to Washington convinced that the loss of Southeast Asia could be prevented "if the free nations having vital interests in the area are united in a determination to preserve peace and freedom in the area." But, scarcely had Mr. Dulles arrived home, when Britain hedged on her agreement, claiming that Commonwealth politics dictated the change in policy. The Colombo Powers, including Commonwealth members India, Pakistan, and Ceylon, were scheduled to meet on 26 April, and Mr. Eden subsequently explained that it would be "most undesirable" for Britain to give any public indication of membership in a program for collective action until the conclusion of the Colombo Conference. In addition, Mr. Eden felt that establishment of a working group of the ten nations, not including the three Asian Commonwealth members, would produce criticism which would be "most unhelpful" at Geneva.[4] The British postponement of any consideration of a Southeast Asian coalition until the conclusion of the Colombo Conference dashed any chance for the establishment of an alliance prior to the Geneva Conference.

Upon his return to Washington, after the first phase of the Geneva Conference, Secretary Dulles again raised the possibility of a Southeast Asian alliance. He told a news conference on 25 May that the US position toward collective security in Southeast Asia had long been known, adding that the United States was prepared to participate in such an arrangement under the terms of the Vandenberg Resolution of June 1948--i.e., progressive development of regional collective arrangements for individual and collective self-defense in accordance with the purposes, principles, and provisions of the UN Charter. The United States was not prepared, Secretary Dulles said, to go to the defense of colonialism, but was going to go to the defense of liberty, independence, and freedom. "We don't go alone," he concluded, "we go in where the other nations which have an important stake in the area recognize the peril as we do."[5]

In June 1954, Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Secretary Eden traveled to Washington to meet with President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles. The visit resulted in a

4. Statement, SecState Dulles, 15 Apr 54, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 26 Apr 54, p. 623. (TS) Msgs, Paris DULTE 3 to Actg SecState, 22 Apr 54; Geneva DULTE 7 to Actg SecState, 26 Apr 54; State TEDUL 37 to Geneva, 6 Mar 54.

5. News Conference, SecState, 25 May 54, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 7 Jun 54, pp. 862-863.

British-US agreement to "press forward with plans for collective defense" in Southeast Asia regardless of the outcome of the Geneva Conference. Immediately after this meeting the two governments established a Joint Study Group on Southeast Asia in Washington. Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith headed the US membership, which included OASD(ISA) representation but none from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[6]

This Joint Study Group held six meetings during July and worked out draft provisions of a collective defense treaty for Southeast Asia. The conclusion of the Geneva Conference, with the signing of the Agreements on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia on 20 July 1954, gave increased impetus to the project.[7]

During the course of the Study Group meetings, there was some disagreement between the two nations over membership of the proposed regional alliance, especially over the role of the Colombo Powers--India, Burma, Ceylon, Pakistan, and Indonesia. British representatives believed that the cooperation of these nations was indispensible. The US Government, on the other hand, insisted that, if the treaty were made dependent upon the favorable attitude of the Colombo nations, it would be delayed indefinitely. To support its argument, the United States Government cited the denunciations by both India and Indonesia of a proposed treaty. Indian Prime Minister Nehru had, in fact, predicted that such a treaty would reverse the conciliatory trend of the Indochina settlement, adding that the proposed treaty would give protection to countries that did not want it. In the end, Pakistan alone among the Colombo nations agreed to participate in a conference to negotiate a Southeast Asian regional defense treaty.[8]

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6. Joint Statement President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill, 28 Jun 54, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 12 Jul 54, p. 49. (TS-GP 1) Robert J. Watson, The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1953-1954, vol. V, pp. 487-488.

7. (TS) Report of the Jt US-UK Study Group on Southeast Asia, 17 Jul 54, Att to JCS 1992/360, 22 Jul 54, CCS 091 Asia (6-25-48) sec 75.

8. Ibid. (S) Dept of State, SEAP Special 2, "Summary of Meeting in Secretary's Office," 5 Aug 54; SEAP D-3 "UK Invitations to the Colombo Powers and Replies . . .," 6 Aug 54; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 77A. NY Times, 17 Aug 54, p. 3; 26 Aug 54, p. 1.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed and concurred, on 13 August 1954, in the draft treaty prepared by the US-UK Joint Study Group. They considered it "satisfactory as a point of departure" for negotiation with representatives of the probable initial signatories. They added that the developments at Geneva and in Indochina increased the urgency for a comprehensive US policy with respect to the Far East region as a whole. Until the United States formulated such an overall policy, they said, it would be "severely" handicapped in any negotiation of a collective defense arrangement in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. Before the provisions of such a treaty could be finally drafted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, the United States must make "certain basic decisions" with respect to how far it was willing to go, either in concert with certain noncommunist nations of the Far East or unilaterally, in opposing "further Communist accretions" in this area.[9]

In forwarding the JCS views on the draft treaty to the Department of State, Secretary of Defense Wilson stressed that it should be made clear that no US commitments were implied or intended to equip and maintain indigenous forces or to deploy US forces in such strength as to provide for an effective defense of all the national territory of each signatory. Military aid to the Southeast Asian pact members should be confined, Secretary Wilson believed, to that necessary to permit those nations to raise and maintain the military forces necessary to ensure internal security, provide a reasonably effective defense against attempted invasions, and instill national confidence.[10]

Three days later, on 20 August 1954, the President approved a new US policy toward the Far East (NSC 5429/2)[11] responsive to the changed situation resulting from the Geneva Conference. The new policy included provision for negotiation of a Southeast Asia security treaty with the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France, the Philippines, Thailand, and other appropriate free South and Southeast Asian countries desiring to participate. The objectives of such a treaty, as outlined in NSC 5429/2, were to: commit each member to "act promptly to meet the common danger" in the event of an

9. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Report of Joint US-UK Study Group of Southeast Asia," 13 Aug 54 (derived from JCS 1992/375), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 80.

10. (U) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 17 Aug 54, Encl to JCS 1992/382, same file, sec 81.

11. For detailed coverage of NSC 5429/2, see Ch. I.

armed attack on the treaty area; provide a possible legal basis for US attack on Communist China should it commit armed aggression endangering US "vital interest"; ensure that, in such an event, other nations would be obligated by the terms of the treaty to support such US action; and avoid limitation of US freedom to use nuclear weapons without involving a US commitment for local defense or for stationing US forces in Southeast Asia.[12]

Representatives of the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States together with those of Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines--the only Asian nations willing to join a Southeast Asian regional alliance--assembled in Manila on 6 September to draft a treaty. Although precluded by the Geneva Agreements from participation in military alliances, Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam favored having the treaty accord them collective guarantees. South Vietnam even requested permission to send observers to Manila. While the United States supported this request, the United Kingdom and her Commonwealth partners, Australia, New Zealand, and Pakistan, considered that it would be inconsistent with the "understanding reached at Geneva," and the United States acceded to their view.[13]

A number of issues remained to be resolved at Manila. The United States desired to include Japan, Formosa, and South Korea in the Southeast Asia Pact, if not at the Manila Conference, then at a later date. The other parties to the treaty had made clear their opposition before the conference opened. New Zealand had pointed out that "if a contribution to South East Asian defense were to be sought from Japan, the reaction might well be damaging not only from the point of view of the Colombo countries but also from that of the Philippines, even assuming that public opinion in New Zealand and Australia could be induced to swallow it." Japan had no

12. (TS) NSC 5429/2, 20 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 81.

13. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1954, pp. 257-258. (S) Msgs, State 750 to Saigon, 25 Aug 54; 795, 27 Aug 54; 799, 27 Aug 54. (S) Msg, Manila SECTO 2 to State, 2 Sep 54, DA IN 82471, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 82.

regular military forces, and the United States already had bilateral treaties with Japan and South Korea. New Zealand saw no "overriding military need at this time to have substantial Formosan or Korean forces in SEATO."[14]

The treaty, as finally drafted, did not bar eventual admittance of Japan, Formosa, and South Korea, but any attempt to incorporate them in the treaty area would encounter a number of built-in obstacles. The text of the document delimited a "treaty area" that excluded Korea, Formosa, and Japan, and since unanimous consent of all members was required to expand the treaty area, it appeared unlikely that those governments could be included in the foreseeable future.[15]

A major issue, both at the Manila Conference and in the exchange of views preceding it, was the extent to which the United States would commit military strength to the treaty area. The answer to this question lay in the type of organization that was decided upon. The United States advocated an organization similar to that created by the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) security pact. In ANZUS, military representatives of each nation were accredited to the political council to advise on military matters, to make recommendations to their respective Chiefs of Staff, and to transmit to the council recommendations approved by their respective Chiefs of Staff. The other members of the conference wanted an elaborate permanent organization patterned after NATO, with numerous committees of specialists to develop combined regional military plans. This type of structure would give the smaller countries a forum in which they could express their views at any time. It would also bind their own military plans to those of the United States and commit the United States to specific courses of action in the event of aggression; but specific commitments were precisely what the United States wished to avoid.[16]

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14. (S) Dept of State, SEAP D-4, "New Zealand Memoranda on 'SEATO'," 6 Aug 54, same file, sec 77A.

15. (S) Memo, VADM A.C. Davis, DepASD(ISA) to SecDef, "Report on the Manila Conference," 14 Sep 54, same file, sec 82. (Hereafter cited as Report on the Manila Conference.) (S) Msg, State UNN to OSD, 31 Aug 54, DA IN 81950, same file.

16. (S) Report of the Manila Conference. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 17 Aug 54, Encl to JCS 1992/383, 19 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 81.

The NATO concept meant a combined command and staff, with integrated national armies, trained and equipped through generous US assistance, and deployed for the defense of member states. Such a massive organization, besides creating work for itself, would provide the treaty allies with an organ for pressuring the United States to undertake larger obligations than its global responsibilities permitted. By requiring continuous collaboration, it would reduce, without compensating military advantage, US freedom of action in the employment of forces in the Far East. Moreover, it would give other countries of the treaty area power to veto the type and scope of strategic plans evolved.[17] The NATO formula, finally, might conceivably carry the United States into a war Congress had not declared, a possibility that would hardly improve the treaty's chance of ratification by the Senate. No doubt, with the recent bitter controversy over the Bricker Amendment[18] fresh in his mind, Secretary of State Dulles observed that "it would be extremely unfortunate if Congressional debate were reopened regarding U.S. constitutional questions involving the Executive and Legislative branches, which could well result if the NATO formula were adopted."[19]

The members of the conference were thoroughly acquainted with the US viewpoint when the Manila meeting convened. Most of the nations were apparently resigned to accepting an ANZUS type of council that would meet periodically. Australia, nevertheless, made another attempt to moderate the US stand. The Australian delegation introduced an amendment to empower

17. (S) Memo, VADM Davis to JCS, "Southeast Asian Collective Defense Organization," Encl to JCS 1992/361, 23 July 54, same file, sec 76. (S) Ltr, R.B. Anderson, ActgSecDef to Robert Murphy, DepUSecState, 19 Aug 54, Encl to JCS 1992/385, 21 Aug 54, same file, sec 81.

18. A constitutional amendment proposed by Senator John Bricker of Ohio in the spring of 1953 to limit the Executive Branch's treaty making powers. The proposed amendment would have given Congress the "power to regulate all Executive and other agreements" and required appropriate legislation before a treaty became "effective as internal law." In subsequent congressional debate, a number of revisions were suggested, but the Senate rejected the amendment and the various revisions in early 1954.

19. (S) State Dept, SEAP D-28a, "UK Redraft of Article IV," 27 Aug 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 81.

the council to establish "such subsidiary machinery as may be necessary to achieve the military and other objectives of the Treaty." This proposal, if adopted, would have committed the United States to participation in permanent machinery and was therefore unacceptable to the United States. Several days of deliberation by the working group brought about a compromise. The Australians agreed to delete the reference to "subsidiary machinery" and substitute in its place the concept of "consultation." The Joint Chiefs of Staff, by cable, approved this compromise, and the final text stated that "The council shall provide for consultation with regard to military and any other planning as the situation obtaining in the treaty area may from time to time require." This wording was still loose enough to encourage the Australians to persist, and hardly two weeks after the Manila Conference adjourned they began pressing the United States to develop procedures for "consultation."20

Another issue that proved almost as divisive developed over use, in the US draft of the treaty, of the phrase "Communist aggression" to describe the menace the coalition was designed to combat. All of the conferees recognized that the treaty was aimed at communism, but only the US representatives wished to say so in the document itself. The British declared that "Communist aggression" was not subject to legal definition and was "needlessly provocative." In addition, they feared that it would prejudice the chances of eventually inducing the Colombo Powers to join. Pakistan backed the United Kingdom on this point. But the United States, wanting to avoid treaty forces being drawn into local conflicts, insisted upon inclusion of the phrase. At the conference all seven nations lined up against the United States on the issue. The US delegation nonetheless refused to sign a treaty that did not recognize communism as the enemy in Southeast Asia. The remaining delegations finally accepted a compromise advanced by Secretary Dulles. "Communist aggression" was deleted from the text of the treaty, and for it was substituted an "understanding" that US "recognition of the effect of aggression and armed attack" applied "only to communist aggression."21

Yet another problem, but one easily resolved, was the provision of collective security guarantees to the former

20. (S) Report on the Manila Conference. (S) Msgs, Manila SEATO 1 to OSD, 2 Sep 54, DA IN 82324; Manila SECTO 5 to State, 3 Sep 54, DA IN 82592; DEF 967212 to Manila, 3 Sep 54. Encl to JCS 1992/389, 3 Sep 54; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 82.

21. (S) Report on the Manila Conference. (S) Dept of State, SEAP D-13/1, "UK Cabinet Views Re Article IV, Southeast Asia Treaty," 28 Aug 54, same file, sec 82.

French Associated States. The French delegation, determined to give Peking no pretext for accusing the Manila powers of violating the Geneva Agreements, suggested that specific reference to the Associated States be omitted from the text of the document, proposing instead that the collective protection of the signatories be extended to Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam in a separate annex. The other delegations accepted the French plan, and a protocol to this effect was affixed to the final treaty.[22]

All of the members of the conference agreed that economic provisions had to be included in the treaty, mainly as an inducement to the Colombo nations to join at a later date. Of the members who would bear the burden of financing new assistance programs--the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Australia--none appeared willing to make definite commitments. They agreed merely to "cooperate with one another in the further development of economic measures."[23]

With the various problems successfully solved, the Manila Conference signed the "Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty" (SEACDT) on 8 September 1954. The eight signatory nations declared that an attack upon one would be recognized as dangerous to the peace and safety of the others, and in such an event, each agreed to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." The signing states pledged to maintain and develop their capacity "to resist armed attack and to prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without." If the territory, sovereignty, or political independence of any member were threatened "in any way other than by armed attack," the parties would consult on the measures to be taken. The "treaty area" was defined as "the general area of Southeast Asia, including also the entire territories of the Asian Parties, and the general area of the Southwest Pacific not including the Pacific area north of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude." The SEACDT provided for a council to consider ways of implementing the

22. (S) Report on the Manila Conference.
23. (C) Dept of State, SEAP D-6, "UK Views on Economic Measures for Southeast Asia," 23 Aug 54; (S) SEAP D-6/1, "Australian Memoire on SEATO," 23 Aug 54; (S) SEAP D-11, "French Proposals Re the Preamble and Article III," 26 Aug 54; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 81. (S) Report on the Manila Conference. (S) Dept of State, SEAP D-9, "U.S. Position on Economic Cooperation," 26 Aug 54, State Dept files.

treaty, and as noted above, an accompanying protocol extended the treaty provisions relating to action in case of armed attack or other threat to Cambodia, Laos, and the southern half of Vietnam. In a separate "Pacific Charter," signed on the same day, the parties proclaimed their intention to resist any attempt "to subvert their freedom or to destroy their sovereignty or territorial integrity" and to cooperate in economic, social, and cultural matters.24

The vagueness of the language constituted the real weakness of the treaty. Specific action to be taken in any given situation was not precisely defined, and it was doubtful that aggression would be met with an immediate, decisive, and united response. In explaining this deficiency to the Secretary of Defense, Vice Admiral A. C. Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), pointed out that the United States had tried at Manila to attain goals that were not entirely compatible. It had wanted SEACDT to place the communists on notice that future aggression, by whatever means, would evoke collective counteraction. The mechanics of the treaty had, therefore, to be such as to create a feeling of true strength and unity among the participating countries. Yet this end had to be attained without restricting US freedom of action in Asia, without obligating the United States to military aid programs beyond its capabilities, and without impinging upon US constitutional limitations in a manner that might jeopardize ratification in the Senate. The document signed on 8 September 1954, thought Admiral Davis, was "in effect a reconciliation of these conflicting objectives," and left Southeast Asia "no better prepared than before to cope with communist aggression."

Nevertheless, Admiral Davis emphasized, the treaty had several important benefits. It provided the nucleus for coordinated defense against communism in Asia. It included features that might some day win over the neutralist nations. And at the same time, it expressed economic and political principles that gave the association a broader meaning than that encompassed by its purely military terms. In the final analysis, SEACDT represented more a psychological than a military asset to the regional defense of Southeast Asia.25

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24. Text of SEACDT and Pacific Charter, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 20 Sep 54, pp. 393-396.

25. (S) Report on the Manila Conference.

In the months following the Manila Conference, each signatory nation reatified the Treaty and deposited the instruments of ratification at Manila. On 19 February 1955, the Pact was declared officially in force. To maintain the momentum achieved at the Manila Conference, the signatories had agreed on the desirability of getting on with organizational matters as quickly as possible. Article V of the Treaty had called for the creation of a Council as the supreme organ of the alliance. Subsequently, the members decided that their foreign ministers should meet at Bangkok, Thailand, late in February 1955 to organize this Council and consider basic questions that would determine the future form of the Treaty.

The most important question was that of devising methods to carry out the military provisions of the Pact. For the United States the answer to this question involved a fundamental tenet of its military policy in the Pacific and Far East--retention of an uncommitted mobile striking force to meet military contingencies that might arise in the area.

A Military Concept for Southeast Asia

The United States, having assumed the leadership in promoting the Southeast Asian alliance, found itself caught between conflicting demands. If the members of the Pact, especially the Asian members, were to participate wholeheartedly in collective defense measures, they had to be convinced that the United States was prepared and determined to take military action in the case of an aggression in Southeast Asia. Also, unless the communist rulers of China and North Vietnam were equally convinced of the US ability and willingness to take such action, the primary goal of the Treaty, to deter aggression, could not, probably, be achieved. At the same time, however, US armed forces were strictly limited by budgetary requirements, and the global responsibilities the United States had already assumed were badly straining available forces. Officials of the United States Government believed, therefore, that it was essential that US forces in the Pacific and Far East not be tied down to specific geographical commitments in Southeast Asia.

Underlining this conviction, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 8 October 1954 advised the Secretary of Defense that "the requirement for U.S. freedom of action . . . had been intensified by the terms of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty. U.S. commitments to Formosa, Japan and Korea, which nations have been excluded from the treaty, make it imperative

that the United States not be restricted by force commitments in the . . . treaty area." And the Secretary of State, explaining the Manila Pact to the President on 2 November, stated that "the responsibilities of the United States are so vast and farflung that we believe we would serve best not by earmarking forces for particular areas of the Far East but by developing the deterrent of mobile striking power plus strategically placed reserves."26 This general principle had often been stated by US officials. It was well known in the capitals of the countries allied under the Southeast Asia Pact, and had been widely publicized.

Early in January 1955, with the Bangkok meeting approaching, the Secretary of State asked the Department of Defense to explain how the United States should respond to another war in Southeast Asia. Deputy Secretary of Defense Anderson submitted Secretary Dulles' request to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and asked them to recommend a "Concept and Plans for the Implementation, if Necessary, of Article IV, 1, of the Manila Pact." This concept, he said, should provide for a deterrent to overt aggression against Southeast Asian countries that the United States could realistically apply and that the other SEATO powers would find acceptable enough to warrant their support. The deterrent should not only demonstrate unmistakably US intent and capacity to inflict damage on the aggressor, but should be susceptible to application through US military action with at least token participation by other members of the Pact. Appropriate plans should be developed on the basis that general war would not result from a local conflict unless the aggressor state chose to widen hostilities. Finally, Mr. Anderson asked that the concept be worked out under alternate assumptions that use of atomic weapons would be permitted or that their use "cannot be assured."27

The request for such a concept caused serious disagreement in the military establishment, for the Services could not agree among themselves on how best to create an effective deterrent. The conflicting views stemmed from one basic

26. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Military Consultation under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty," 8 Oct 54 (derived from JCS 1992/400), CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 84. (TS) Encl B to JCS 1992/446, 3 Feb 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48)(2) sec 4.

27. (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to JCS, 6 Jan 55, Encl to JCS 1992/433, 7 Jan 55, same file, sec 1.

issue: should the United States be prepared to enter any renewed hostilities in Southeast Asia with all elements of its armed forces, including ground troops, or should US participation be limited only to naval and air action?

The Services agreed that the conduct of US policy in Southeast Asia had not provided the foundation on which to build a truly effective deterrent. Neither the communists nor the signatories of the Manila Pact had been given any reason to believe that the United States had the means or the intention to block communist expansion into Southeast Asia. As a result, a deterrent could not be created unless the communists were confronted with "demonstrable certainty" that either overt aggression or indigenous rebellion supported by China would trigger instant and effective counteraction by the United States.

The Chief of Staff, US Army, held that "demonstrable certainty" of the capability and intent of the United States to react to either direct or indirect aggression could not be achieved without making specific military commitments to the Treaty area. If either form of communist aggression were to be countered, he reasoned, the enemy had to be defeated on the ground in the area of attack. This meant US ground troops fighting alongside armies of other Pact members on the mainland of Southeast Asia, and supported by US air and naval action against the attacking forces as well as against supply lines in and from China. The Army position, therefore, was that a balanced mobile striking force, composed of land, air, and naval elements, ought to be positioned in the Philippines and earmarked for Southeast Asia. If this force failed to deter aggression, it could be employed in Southeast Asia against aggressor forces.

Opposed to this position, the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps held that US participation in the event of war in Southeast Asia should be confined to air and naval action. In the initial stage of hostilities, the US contribution at the point of contact would be limited to that necessary to help local forces. The principal US effort, however, would be concentrated on air and naval action against facilities in China used to support the aggressors. If a prolonged local conflict developed, additional US forces, including ground troops, might be deployed to the point of contact. But if general war developed, emergency war plans would be put into execution and the main effort shifted to those areas of the world considered strategically more important.

[redacted]

The question was argued at length among the Services, with each side accepting some compromise of their initial positions in an attempt to reach agreement. The Joint Chiefs of Staff twice provided guidance, and in the end an agreed position was endorsed on 11 February.[28]

The concept approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff rejected the Army position that forces should be earmarked for Southeast Asia. The concept for application of US military power under the Manila Pact, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff, should be to deter or counter aggression by being ready to react promptly with attacks "by the most effective combination of US armed forces against the military power of the aggressor." They explained that these attacks would be launched against targets within the aggressor country, but only against military objectives directly supporting the aggressor action. Atomic weapons would be used on these targets as well as on targets in the immediate area of attack. If authority for such use were withheld, the concept would still remain valid. But this denial would prevent the most effective employment of US forces, and as a result require larger forces than the United States might feel justified in committing.

In addition to this central thesis, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended five subsidiary courses of action: (1) continued development of combat-effective indigenous forces, with their structure and training mutually coordinated to develop local leadership and prestige, and with improved capabilities to create a cohesive fighting force through integration of their operations with adjacent indigenous forces and with support by operations of forces of other Manila Pact members; (2) encouragement of other Manila Pact countries to maintain forces in readiness to counter aggression; (3) discussion, in general terms, of unilateral military plans by the military representatives to the council to the extent necessary to insure maximum participation and co-operation by other member nations, but not to the extent that US strategic plans or the availability of US forces for implementing such plans might be revealed; (4) periodic visits by US forces into the area as demonstrations of intent, and for joint and combined training exercises; (5) availability

28. (TS) JCS 1992/422, 25 Jan 55; (TS) Memo, CMC to JCS, "Concept and Plans for the Implementation, if Necessary, of Article IV, 1, of the Manila Pact," 27 Jan 55; same file, sec 3. (TS) JSPC 958/232/D, 31 Jan 55; JCS 1992/446, 3 Feb 55; JSPC 958/234/D, 8 Feb 55; same file, sec 4.

[redacted]

of appropriate mechanisms for the employment of US forces in support of friendly indigenous forces in the general area.[29]

Admiral Radford, briefing the Secretary of State on the concept, went into greater detail on what the Joint Chiefs of Staff had in mind. If the Chinese attacked Southeast Asia, he said, the US response would be chiefly against the Chinese mainland. Land and carrier based air forces would strike air fields, supply depots, and communications lines in South China. To support these operations, Chinese Nationalist troops, assisted by US air and naval units, might invade the mainland in the vicinity of the Formosa Straits, or they might land on Hainan Island or the Straits, or the Liuchow Peninsula. If desirable, another front could be opened in Korea. Thus, the Chinese communists would find themselves engaged on so many fronts close to home that their effort in Southeast Asia would be seriously compromised. The Admiral believed that the same strategy of air and naval action against the enemy logistical complex would be equally valid if the Viet Minh instead of the Chinese communists launched an invasion.

When Secretary Dulles mentioned that the decision to use nuclear weapons might be politically difficult to take, Admiral Radford stated unequivocally that the concept was predicated upon the selective use of such weapons. If approval were withheld, the whole question of US involvement would have to be reexamined. In fact, unless nuclear weapons were used, the United States probably could not cope with the situation employing only the available forces.[30]

The International Working Group

The position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the United States could not afford to sacrifice its freedom of

29. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Concept and Plans for the Implementation, If Necessary, of Article IV, 1, of the Manila Pact," 11 Feb 55 (derived from JCS 1992/448), same file, sec 4.

30. (TS) Memo for Record by RADM G.W. Anderson, "Concept and Plans for the Implementation, If Necessary of Article IV, 1, of the Manila Pact," 15 Feb 55.

action in the Far East by committing forces to SEATO, was unpalatable to the other members of the Pact, especially to the Asians. The countries of Southeast Asia were naturally concerned primarily with their own region, and they sought assurance that they would be defended on the ground in Southeast Asia. Counteraction elsewhere might win the war in the long run, but this would be small consolation if Southeast Asia were overrun in the meantime. What they wanted, therefore, were specific US commitments and a combined planning organization to tie US military plans securely to those of the other members of the Pact. They persisted in the belief that the United States would, in the end, engage its resources in a SEATO patterned after NATO. In fact, within three weeks after the conclusion of the Manila Conference, Australia requested the views of the United States on military machinery to be set up under the Pact.31

This was the central issue when an International Working Group, composed of representatives of the Manila powers, met in Washington during December 1954 and January 1955 to prepare for the SEATO conference to be held in Bangkok in February. Discussions soon assumed a broader framework than the United States had contemplated, for the Asian nations wanted the alliance to establish permanent agencies, especially machinery that would involve the United States in combined military planning for the defense of Southeast Asia.

The Philippine representative was particularly vocal in expressing the Asian viewpoint. He argued insistently that not only must genuine strength be created in the Treaty area, but that this strength must be manifest. He proposed, repeatedly, the organization of a standing military committee, both to handle military affairs connected with the Pact and to deal with antisubversive activities.

The US Delegate, Counselor of the Department of State, Douglas MacArthur II, replied that the United States was opposed to creating machinery simply for the sake of machinery. The ANZUS formula, with military advisers to the members of the council meeting periodically, would suffice. The United States was also opposed to drafting a directive that would in advance dictate to the military advisers any

31. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to JCS, 4 Oct 54, Encl to JCS 1992/399, 5 Oct 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 84.

any organizational machinery. This should be left to their own deliberations. The Philippine Military Adviser, if he desired, could propose permanent organization at the first meeting of the military advisers. Mr. MacArthur eventually won the support of the other delegates for this approach, and the problem was deferred. As for antisubversive activities, the United States felt that these should be the responsibility of each national government, although the members should assist each other unilaterally. Such assistance might, for example, take the form of political action and the exchange of information.[32]

The deep-rooted desire of the Asian members of SEATO for permanent organization also manifested itself in the economic field. Pakistan, strongly backed by Thailand and the Philippines, pointed out that membership in the Treaty, particularly for the Asian members, would impose new strains on the national economies; they proposed that a special section be set up under the council to deal with this matter. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia admitted the validity of this argument. They were reluctant, however, to approve anything that might disturb such existing aid programs as the Colombo Plan and the bilateral arrangements between the United States and its Asian allies.[33]

Despite differences of opinion, the representatives to the International Working Group reached agreement on a number of concrete recommendations to the Council. They agreed on an agenda for the Bangkok Conference and on organization and procedures of the SEATO Council. Probably more important from the US viewpoint, they adopted the ANZUS

32. (C) Dept of State, Minutes of Mtg, "Manila Pact Working Group," 28 Dec 54; Dept of State, Memo of Conversation, "Military Arrangements Under the Manila Pact," 6 Jan 55; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 1. (S) Dept of State, Minutes of Mtg, "Manila Pact Working Group," 6 Jan 55; Dept of State, MP(IWG)D-2/1, 6 Jan 55; MP(IWG)D-2b, 18 Jan 55; Dept of State, Minutes of Mtg, "Manila Pact Representatives," 13 Jan 55; Dept of State, MP(IWG)D-4/3, 26 Jan 55, same file, BP pt 1.

33. (S) Dept of State, MP(IWG)D-5, 21 Jan 55; (S) Dept of State, Minutes of Mtg, "Manila Pact Representatives," 21 Jan 55; (C) 2 Feb 55; 4 Feb 55; same file.

system of military advisers, although the Asian members clearly hoped eventually to buttress the advisers with permanent committees. Sooner or later, the United States would have to meet this issue decisively.

The Bangkok Conference: 23-25 February 1955

The Working Group had charted a course for the foreign ministers to follow at Bangkok, and the ministers' deliberations, for the most part, were concerned with the recommendations of the Working Group. At Bangkok, SEATO began to take shape. The supreme organ, as specified by the Treaty, was to be the Council, composed of the foreign ministers of the signatory powers, or their representatives. Because the Council would normally meet only once a year, some means of continuous coordination seemed necessary. The conferees decided, therefore, upon a system of council representatives, whose headquarters would be in Bangkok, and who would be supported by a permanent secretariat. Directly subordinate to the council representatives were three ad hoc subcommittees, one to deal with economic matters, one to deal with information, culture, and labor, and a third to deal with countersubversion. The military advisers to the council members, who were not subordinated to the council representatives, were left to work out their own organization.[34]

Early in the conference, the Department of Defense delegation sensed that the Asian representatives were preparing to bring pressure on the United States for definite commitment of forces and a NATO type of military organization. To check this pressure, the Defense representative advised the Secretary of State both to take the initiative in proposing a meeting of the military advisers during the Bangkok sessions, and to make a forceful statement of US intentions concerning the military aspects of the Treaty. Secretary Dulles agreed. During the first closed session, he outlined in detail for the delegates the composition of US armed forces stationed in the Pacific and Far East. Emphasizing the interdependence of Southeast Asia and other regions of the Far East, the

34. Dept of State Bulletin, 7 Mar 55, pp. 371-374. The United States Ambassador to Thailand was subsequently designated Council Representative in addition to his other duties.

Secretary of State declared: "It is much better to have mobile power which is capable of being used whenever circumstances require it . . . than having the force committed, in segments, to various areas." The Asian delegates apparently found Secretary Dulles' statement so compelling that they did not try to force the issue.[35]

The delegates also accepted the Secretary of State's proposal that the military advisers meet in separate sessions. The military advisers first meeting was held on 24 February and dealt mainly with organizational matters. The delegates agreed that the SEATO military organization would consist of a group of staff planners and a military liaison group, in addition to the advisers. The function of the staff planners would be to meet in advance of the twice-yearly conferences of the advisers to prepare agenda and formulate recommendations on any subject their superiors wished to discuss. The military liaison group was to be established in Bangkok as soon as possible to "provide point of contact between military advisers and between military advisers and the Council." Its members would be military officers, normally Service attaches, serving on the staffs of the council representatives.

The Philippine military adviser attempted to inject the question of a "permanent planners group" into the discussions. The other advisers, however, persuaded him that this was a topic more properly suited to discussion by the staff planners. In the assignment of position papers for the first staff planners conference, the Philippines were given responsibility for preparing an "Examination into methods of creating a possible future permanent organizational structure."

To demonstrate that the United States sincerely wanted to implement the Manila Treaty as soon as possible, Admiral Felix Stump, who had been designated the US military adviser, in addition to his duties as CINCPAC, took the initiative in proposing an early meeting of the staff planners and military advisers. The conferees agreed to schedule the first staff

35. (S) Msg, Bangkok SECTO 15 to State, 24 Feb 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 5. (S) Memo, VADM Davis to SecA, et al., "Department of Defense Contribution to and Participation in the Bangkok Conference," 29 Mar 55, same file, sec 6.

planners meeting during April, to be followed in May or June by the first meeting of the military advisers.[36]

Despite the atmosphere of cordiality and unanimity at Bangkok, the Asians still had reservations about the future effectiveness of the Pact. Moreover, nations which were opposed to SEATO were actively recruiting adherents and gaining increased attention in Asia and other continents. At the time of the Bangkok Conference, India's Prime Minister Nehru declared that the Southeast Asia Pact actually increased rather than diminished tension and thereby lessened the security of its members. The principal thesis of the neutralists was that the white man's colonialism, not communism, was the chief enemy. They hoped, with this thesis, to challenge SEATO, and the principle on which it was founded, at the Afro-Asian conference, scheduled to be held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955.

The Bandung Conference: 18-24 April 1955

Western diplomats feared that Bandung would produce a collection of platitudes easily interpreted as endorsement of procummunist or neutralist principles, but their fears were only partially realized. The delegates from twenty-nine African and Asian countries represented every shade of political philosophy, but they had in common a fierce independence directed as much against Asian as European domination. The Indian Prime Minister assumed the role of leader of the conference and attempted forcefully, to persuade the delegates to accept his views. When his efforts failed to gain a consensus, Prime Minister Nehru betrayed anger. His failure and his display of temper diminished his prestige and influence.

Shortly before Bandung, Prime Minister Nehru had charged that the Manila Pact and the Bangkok Conference had "upset any possibility of peace--as well as stability--in the Indochinese area." And during the conference, he asserted: "I

36. (S) Memo, VADM Davis to SecA, et al., "Department of Defense Contribution to and Participation in the Bangkok Conference," 29 Mar 55, same file. (S) Msg, Bangkok SECTO 29 to State, 24 Feb 55, DA IN 121333, same file, sec 5.

would consider it to be an intolerable humiliation for any Asian or African country to degrade itself as a camp follower of one side or the other." In effect, Prime Minister Nehru calling the Asian members of SEATO "camp followers." General Carlos Romulo, of the Philippines, vigorously defended the Pact. Condemning "starry eyed visionaries dreaming Utopian dreams," General Romulo gave a penetrating analysis of the nature of the communist threat. He then explained in detail the provisions of the Southeast Asia Treaty, emphasizing its nonaggressive character, and attempting point by point to refute Prime Minister Nehru's allegations.37

Even more effective from the standpoint of the West was the denunciation of communism by Ceylon's Sir John Kotelawala. Sir John, Prime Minister of an avowedly neutralist country that generally followed Prime Minister Nehru's lead in international politics, denounced the form of imperialism practiced by the communists and called for the Afro-Asians to be equally positive and unanimous in declaring their opposition to all forms of colonialism.38

Together with pro-Western speeches by Turkish and Iraqi leaders, General Romulo and Prime Minister Kotelawala made their influence felt in the final communique, and the West fared much better than it had hoped. On the other hand, Chou En-lai, Premier of Communist China, by his affability and apparent willingness to compromise, had made a favorable impression on Asians and Africans alike. Bandung created a climate in which neutralism exerted stronger attraction than ever for both the committed and uncommitted states. In so doing, Bandung had its effect on SEATO. The uncommitted states were now less likely to join the Pact, and committed states grew bolder in demanding more substance to SEATO in return for their continued participation.

Setting Up Machinery

While the Asians and Africans were conferring at Bandung, the SEATO staff planners convened at Baguio, in the Philippines, to lay the groundwork for the meeting of military advisers to

37. NY Times, 23 Apr 55, p. 2. Washington Post, 1 Apr 55. (U) "General Carlos P. Romulo's Speech," Encl 5 to (S) Memo, ExecO, OCB to OCB, "Bandung Conference of April 1955," 12 May 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) BP pt 1.

38. (S) "Speech on Colonialism by Sir John Kotelawala, Prime Minister of Ceylon," Encl 6 to Memo, ExecO, OCB to OCB, "Bandung Conference of April 1955," 12 May 55, same file.

be held in Bangkok during the summer. The question of permanent organization was still a live issue. The Philippines, in fact, proposed that a permanent military working body, headed by a chairman with a combined staff, be organized immediately. The United States, perceiving that compromise was essential if an open split was to be avoided, backed a plan for creating a small permanent secretariat to serve as a clearing house and communications center for SEATO business. Other, and more vital, questions would, however, be dealt with by ad hoc subcommittees; for example, strategic estimates relating to the defense of Southeast Asia against overt and covert communist aggression, and problems such as logistics, communications, and intelligence common to the nations of the Treaty area.

Admiral Stump believed that the United States, by agreeing to this arrangement, had temporarily headed off any determined insistence on a combined permanent planning group. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to authorize him to give US approval to the secretariat when the advisers met in Bangkok. Although the Chief of Staff, Army, protested that the secretariat portended a larger and more authoritative organization, the Joint Chiefs of Staff interposed no objections to the proposal. They made clear, however, that they would not agree to the evolution of this body into a standing group. The military advisers, meeting at Bangkok in July, approved the establishment of a small secretariat that would function under the authority of the military liaison group.19

Despite Admiral Stump's prediction that the secretariat would satisfy the Asians for the time being, it became more and more evident throughout the remainder of 1955 that further

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39. (TS) Rpt, Military Staff Planners Conference, Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, Baguio, P.I., April-May 1955, same file. Hereafter cited as Baguio Staff Planners Report. (TS) Record of Procedures and Decisions Reached at the Military Advisers Meeting at Bangkok on 6-8 July 1955, same file, BP pt 3. Hereafter cited as Bangkok Military Advisers Report. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 150001Z May 55, same file, sec 8. (TS) Memo, CSA to JCS, "Military Staff Planners Conference, SEACDT-April-May 1955," 1 Jun 55, same file, sec 9. (TS) JCS 1992/464, 24 May 55, same file.

compromise was necessary. This was true not only in the military field, but in all activities under the Pact. [redacted] had demonstrated that the Asians were waiting for the United States to prove its good intentions, and this hopeful waiting was generally reflected in the Southeast Asian press. During a meeting of the council representatives in August, the US member observed "A perceptible anxiety and frustration . . . concerning the future development and effectiveness of SEACDT unless substantial progress in Treaty activities can be achieved."[40]

[redacted] the morale of the Asian members was rapidly deteriorating because of the utter lack of accomplishment of SEATO and the allegedly high-handed manner in which the United States was running it. [redacted] the Philippines seemed to have a treaty with CINCPAC instead of with the United States. Admiral Stump labeled this report a gross exaggeration but one that nonetheless probably represented the thinking of at least a segment of Philippine military leaders. Even Thailand, one of the United States' staunchest allies in the Far East, was apparently feeling the attraction of neutralism. In November, the US Embassy in Bangkok reported that any sign of reduced US support of SEATO or the Thai defense program would probably encourage the Thai Government to develop an openly neutralist position. And Pakistan, dissatisfied with the ad hoc arrangements for conducting the business of the Treaty, made known its desire for a "large-scale central SEATO organization at least on the civilian side."[41]

The Asian attitude became quite evident at the second staff planners conference, held at Pearl Harbor in November. The Department of Defense observer at the conference was especially impressed with the fact that the Asians were losing

40. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 150001Z May 55, same file, sec 8. (S) Desp, Bangkok 116 to State, 31 Aug 55.

41. [redacted] (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 17 Sep 55, Encl to Ltr, Cabell to Radford, 20 Sep 55. (S) Msg, Bangkok 1284 to State 4 Nov 55. (C) Msg, Bangkok 2957 to State, 19 Jan 56, DA IN 195109.

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interest in the Treaty because the United States would not "provide more definitive military substance" to SEATO. He feared that the United States would have to assent to the concept of a permanent staff organization and possible participation in combined planning. Otherwise, the objectives sought by the United States in promoting the Pact in the first place could not be attained.[42]

The Department of State, too, was beginning to see that the United States would have to make substantial concessions or watch SEATO fall apart. At an ANZUS Council Meeting, held in Washington in September, Secretary of State Dulles had emphasized the necessity of finding means of adding more "substance" to the treaty organization. He repeated this view in conferences with Admiral Radford and other Defense leaders. It was Secretary Dulles' view that the best opportunity for the United States to breathe life into SEATO lay in the field of countersubversion.[43]

By September 1955, it became apparent that the two SEATO organizations designed to cope with subversion in Southeast Asia were inefficient and confused. The separate military and civil committees dealing with subversion had found the military and civil aspects of the problem so interrelated that it only increased the confusion to try to separate them. Almost all of the SEATO members favored a merger of the civilian and military committees. The Philippines, the United Kingdom, and Australia went even further. They advocated the creation of a permanent civil-military standing group to direct SEATO's battle against communist subversion. The United States, in keeping with its uniform policy on SEATO machinery, opposed a standing group.[44]

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42. (TS) Memo, Dir, OFMA to ASD(ISA), "Report on the SEATO Military Staff Planners' Conference, Pearl Harbor, T.H., 1-15 Nov 1955," 1 Dec 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 15.

43. (S) Dept of State, TAN-MC-1, 30 Sep 55, CCS 381 (2-18-51) sec 4. (S) JIC 579/75/D, 10 Nov 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 15.

44. (TS) Baguio Staff Planners Report. (TS) Bangkok Military Advisers Report. (TS) Rpt, Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, Military Staff Planners Conference, Military Anti-Subversion Committee, Manila, P.I., Sep 55, 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) BP pt 3. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CNO, 090057Z Sep 55; CINCPAC to JCS, 122012Z Sep 55; same file, sec 12. (TS) Memo, GEN G.B. Erskine, USMC, DirOSpOpns to DepSecDef "Meeting of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEACDT) Counter-Subversion Committee," 3 Oct 55. (TS) Philippine Position Paper, MPSPG(E) (55) Baguio,

From the viewpoint of the United States other aspects of the question also had to be weighed. If SEATO became more directly involved in the operational phases of counter-subversion, the bilateral arrangements between the United States and its allies would be endangered, and the functions of several other US agencies dealing with countersubversion greatly complicated. Entrusting such functions to SEATO might also jeopardize the division of responsibility for intelligence and espionage among the Departments of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, and other agencies. Therefore, the United States, while favoring an expanded countersubversive effort and a unified civil-military approach, wished to confine countersubversive activities to exchange of information through a SEATO agency meeting periodically.[45] Yet there obviously existed a need to shore up Asian confidence in SEATO and to increase its activity and efficiency.

On 17 October the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Allen Dulles, circulated a proposal to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, for converting the civilian committee to combat communist subversion into a permanent organization, merging it with the military antisubversion committee, and supporting it with a permanent research center. Commenting on the CIA plan, Admiral Stump advised the Chief of Naval Operations that the "formation of some sort of permanent SEATO staff organization may be inevitable." The United States, he added, might have to "yield on this point or find itself in no position to refute 'paper tiger' charges."[46]

"Military Participation in Combatting Communist Subversion," in Baguio Staff Planners Report. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO 090057Z Sep 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 12. (S) Msg, JCS 988444 to CINCPAC, 13 Sep 55, same file. (C) Msg, Bangkok 1413 to State, 18 Nov 55, same file, sec 15.

45. (TS) Msg, JCS 988087 to CINCPAC, 7 Sep 55 (derived from JCS 1992/478), same file, sec 11. (TS) Memo, Erskine to DepSecDef, "Meeting of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEACDT) Counter-Subversion Committee," 3 Oct 55.

46. (TS) Ltr, DCI to CJCS, 17 Oct 55, Encl to JCS 1992/493, 25 Oct 55, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 14. (TS) Memos, Erskine to CJCS, 13 and 17 Oct 55, Encls A and B to JCS 1992/494, 25 Oct 55, same file. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 230211Z Nov 55, same file, sec 15.

In keeping with the emerging policy of strengthening SEATO, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, although disagreeing with the specifics of Mr. Allen Dulles' proposal, endorsed the general principle. "The need for more substance to SEATO through permanent staff structure extends to all SEATO activities," they said.

> A permanent executive working group should, therefore, be established under the Council to be responsive to the needs of both the Council Representatives and the Military Advisors. The development now of a permanent staff structure for the coordination of countersubversive activities would probably be the first of a series of proposals for other permanent organization. This could lead to the piecemeal development of permanent SEATO staff structure that would become unwieldy and cumbersome. It is therefore, preferable to develop the permanent structure at the top initially.
>
> . . . The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that a high level executive working group with a permanent secretariat be established under the Council, outside the SEATO Committee to Combat Communist Subversion (CCCS), to coordinate the work of the technical committees in the fight against Communist subversion.[47]

Concurrently, the United States was also giving serious consideration to relaxing its opposition to a permanent military planning staff. This problem, the Department of State believed, would probably come to a head at the next council meeting, which was to be held at Karachi, West Pakistan, in March 1956. At the request of the Department of State, Admiral Stump's views, both on a permanent military staff and a permanent council, were solicited.

47. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Recommendations for Broadening the Scope of the SEATO Committee on Countersubversion," 20 Dec 55 (derived from JCS 1992/507), same file, sec 17.

Although he admitted the widespread Asian dissatisfaction with SEATO, Admiral Stump was not convinced that a permanent council and military staff should be created for the time being. In his view, reasons that had prompted the United States to oppose such an organization were still valid, and the ad hoc arrangements were working satisfactorily. Nevertheless, CINCPAC believed that, if political expediency forced a change in the US position, the permanent organization should be developed within a framework acceptable to the United States. He accordingly proposed a plan that provided for evolution of existing ad hoc agencies into permanent agencies. However, this plan was to be executed only if "political pressures made it necessary."[48]

Passing these views on to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations endorsed CINCPAC's recommendations, and enlarged upon the reasons why the United States should not allow itself to become involved in a permanent staff system. The Asian allies, Admiral Burke explained, were themselves unable to commit forces to SEATO or to provide competent personnel for high-level chairmanships. The Chief of Naval Operations asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to approve CINCPAC's concept and recommend to the Secretary of Defense that it be adopted as the US position in the event that establishment of a permanent organization became a matter of political necessity.[49]

The Chief of Staff, Army, disagreed; he believed that Admiral Burke's proposal did not adequately reflect either the current international political and psychological situation or the events that had taken place since the Joint Chiefs of Staff formulated the basic US military position on SEATO in February 1955. He recommended, therefore, that the problem be restudied with a view to revising the basic position. The Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred in General Taylor's proposal.[50]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff again discussed the problem on 21 February 1956. From a strictly military viewpoint, they

48. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CNO, 052218Z Jan 56, Encl B to JCS 1992/519, 25 Jan 56, same file, sec 19.
49. (S) JCS 1992/519, 25 Jan 56, same file.
50. (S) JCS 1992/525, 9 Feb 56, same file, sec 20.

reasoned, their original concept governing US participation in SEATO remained valid. But, because of increasing pressure exerted by Asian allies for a permanent planning staff, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that their previous decision should be reversed. They stated:

> U.S. commitments elsewhere in the Pacific still require that no U.S. forces be earmarked for SEATO. While this fact prevents agreed combined plans, it does not prevent a small permanent SEATO military staff from participating in combined planning studies where commitments of forces is not involved. If a permanent SEATO military planning staff is inevitable, the U.S. might gain by proposing now the type of organization it desires and, thereby, not only be able to direct the development of the organization along the lines desired but, also by this positive approach, to add "substance" to SEATO.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff added, however, that "Inasmuch as the requirement for a permanent organization stems from political and psychological reasons, the minimum possible military effort should be expended."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that, at the Council meeting in Karachi, the United States suggest that the first steps be taken toward setting up a permanent planning staff by modifying existing ad hoc machinery, and that the organizational concept drawn up by Admiral Stump be adopted as the basis for any further expansion. The Secretary of Defense approved these recommendations, and Admiral Stump was authorized to implement them at the Karachi Conference in March.51

At Karachi, once it was clear that the United States no longer opposed the principle of a permanent planning organization, the Council promptly adopted it. Following the Council meeting, the SEATO military advisers convened and drew up a proposal for a permanent planning structure. It provided for a small logistical and operational planning staff functioning

51. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEATO) Staff Organization, 21 Feb 56 (derived from JCS 1992/528); (TS) N/H of JCS 1992/528, 29 Feb 56; CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 20.

continuously under the direction of a chief of staff to the military advisers. The advisers themselves, as well as the existing technical subcommittees of the staff planners, would remain on an ad hoc basis. The staff was to be organized and in operation by the time the military advisers met in September 1956.52

Acting on Admiral Stump's recommendation, the United States accepted the military advisers' proposals for a permanent planning staff, but agreement on the location of and funding for the staff, as well as securing the necessary office facilities, delayed the actual establishment. Finally, on 1 March 1957, the SEATO Military Planning Office (SMPO) was established in Bangkok. Brigadier General Alfredo M. Santos of the Philippines headed the new SMPO, assisted by a deputy, eight senior national planners representing the member states, over a dozen other national planners, and a military secretariat. Now, after nearly two years of effort, the Asian members had secured the beginning of a permanent organization for SEATO.53

With the prospect of more structured planning, the question of US force commitments for SEATO again arose. At conferences in June and September 1956, the military advisers discussed the threat to SEATO under conditions of global war and the need for a strategic concept for this eventuality. At the September meeting, they agreed that each adviser would request his government for political clearance to proceed with such a study. This study would include a review of forces available to SEATO, and on 12 September, the Chief of Naval Operations alerted the Joint Chiefs of Staff that CINCPAC

52. Communique on the Meeting of the SEATO Council, Karachi, 8 Mar 59, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 19 Mar 56, pp. 447-449. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to ASD(ISA), 21 Mar 56, CCS 091 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 21.

53. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEATO) Staff Organization," 4 Apr 56 (derived from JCS 1992/534), same file, sec 22. (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, same subj, same file, sec 23. Report by SecyGen of SEATO, "Development of SEATO in Its Third Year," Mar 58, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 13 Mar 58, pp. 509-516. George Modelski (ed.), SEATO, Six Studies (1962), pp. 24-25.

would require "high level policy guidance" on the matter of force commitments.54

After a review of the matter, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended against any specific force commitments for SEATO, advising the Secretary of Defense on 16 November 1956 that:

> The United States should not duplicate the pattern of NATO and its significant standing military forces by earmarking U.S. forces for Southeast Asia. Instead, the United States should maintain mobile striking power readily available for immediate operations and sufficient, in concert with other nations, to defeat overt Communist-local aggression in the SEATO area.

The US Government adopted the JCS position, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) directed CINCPAC that, although the US policy of making "no specific force commitments" to SEATO remained in effect, he was authorized to reassure the SEATO allies at the next advisers meeting of US support in the event of overt communist aggression. This assurance, the Assistant Secretary added, should be stated "in broad terms of major U.S. forces deployed to the Western Pacific and forces available to CINCPAC for contingency planning with emphasis on the flexibility and mobility of these forces."55

The United States not only wished to avoid specific force commitments to SEATO, but wanted to avoid a SEATO study of global war altogether. On 9 January 1957, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that such a study was impractical "in view of the many imponderables as to Soviet capabilities and courses of action and plans and capabilities of other international defense organizations such as NATO." They recognized, however, that refusal to

54. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CNO, 061005Z Sep 56 and 152006Z Sep 56, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 26. (TS) JCS 1992/567, 17 Sep 56, same file, BP pt 6.

55. (U) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "U.S. Force Commitments to the SEATO," 16 Nov 56 (derived from JCS 1992/576), same file, sec 27A. (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, same subj, 29 Nov 56; N/H of JCS 1992/576, 6 Dec 56; (TS) Msg, DEF 914526 to CINCPAC, 5 Dec 56; same file, sec 28.

participate in such studies risked alienation of the Asian SEATO members, and they recommended that the United States avoid the study if it could be done without seriously undermining the confidence of the Asian members. If the Asian members insisted on the study, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would interpose no objection provided that the study was limited to "broad general terms and that agreement could be reached on assumptions regarding the effects of Soviet nuclear weapons and on plans and forces of free world nations and defense organizations outside the treaty area."56

The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of State approved the JCS position as a last line of resistence, but hoped to convince the other SEATO members that "planning for a war limited to the treaty area would be adequate for defense in a global war." Such a course of action, they believed, would appear "a diplomatic means of disposing of this study" while still affording "a route for graceful retirement should the Asian members indicate strongly held opposition." The State-OSD approach proved successful. At their next meeting in March 1957, the military advisers decided that "our military studies for limited war will be adaptable for global considerations," since "the residual threat to the mainland of Southeast Asia in a global war would be no greater, and may be less, than in limited war."57

In late 1958, the matter of US force commitments for SEATO again arose. At a September 1958 conference, the SEATO military advisers agreed that, for the preparation of outline plans for the introduction of a SEATO force into threatened areas, member nations should agree to base plans on the assumption of an initial requirement for one brigade group or regimental combat team with appropriate naval and air support. They also decided to forward to the SMPO estimates of their forces "which might be available for inclusion in a

56. (TS) Memo, JCS to SecDef, "Proposed SEATO Planning Study Regarding a Strategic Concept for Defense of Treaty Areas under Conditions of Global War," 9 Jan 57 (derived from JCS 1992/586), same file, sec 29.

57. (TS) Ltr, ASD(ISA) to AsstSecState, FEA, 4 Feb 57, Encl to JCS 1992/590, 6 Feb 57, same file, sec 30. (TS-GP 1) JCS Hist Div, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1957-1960, p. 116.

> the continuing struggle against Communist subversion in Southeast Asia, general tranquillity has returned to the area. Quiet conditions have prevailed, and the Southeast Asian nations, relieved of the threat of imminent Communist invasion, have been able to make appreciable progress in programs for social and economic betterment.
>
> With no armed forces of its own and no peacetime military headquarters, SEATO relies upon the mobile striking forces of its members for its defense. Yet SEATO's mere existence has served as an effective deterrent.[59]

In a similar vein, C. Douglas Dillon, Under Secretary of State, proudly pointed out to the SEATO Council in April 1959:

> The true measure of SEATO's worth is the simple fact that since we joined to create its protective shield there has been no Communist aggression against the treaty area. The Nations of Southeast Asia have thus been freed to devote their primary efforts to the development of their national well-being. When we recall the difficult and unpromising situation in Southeast Asia at the time of SEATO's birth, the significance of this accomplishment becomes apparent.[60]

In 1957, the United States had reluctantly acceded to pressure by the Asian members for a more defined SEATO structure, agreeing to the creation of a permanent planning staff (SMPO). During the next two years, the military advisers and SMPO worked on plans for contingencies such as: the defense of Southeast Asia, including East Pakistan, against a Chinese communist-Viet Cong attack; overt communist

59. "What SEATO Means to the United States," an address by G. Frederick Reinhardt, Counselor, Dept of State, before Int'l Relations Club, U. of S.C., 5 Mar 59, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 23 Mar 59, pp. 395-398.

60. Address, USecState C. Douglas Dillon, before 5th SEATO Council, Wellington, New Zealand, 8 Apr 59, reproduced in ibid., 27 Apr 59, pp. 602-604.

SEATO force," and to consider the issue further at their next meeting in April 1959.

As a result, on 1 February 1959, CINCPAC requested US positions on SEATO force availabilities and command relations for the forthcoming military advisers conference. With regard to force availabilities, CINCPAC proposed that the United States limit the size of basic forces estimated to be available and include no major supporting forces in the US estimate. Estimates of available US forces for inclusion in a SEATO force, CINCPAC suggested, should not exceed: (1) one Marine BLT or Army BCT; (2) BLT/BCT lift and/or logistic support as required; (3) USAF composite air lift squadron; (4) communications detachment; (5) technical and advisory personnel as required. The Joint Chiefs of Staff endorsed the CINCPAC proposal and it was adopted as the US position, with the provision that "a SEATO force assembled to counter Communist insurgency would be as broadly representative of the member nations as possible and that U.S. participation would be kept to the minimum required by circumstances . . . ."58

SEATO's Accomplishments and Failures

In August 1959, SEATO marked its fifth anniversary. In promoting the SEACDT after the Geneva settlement of 1954, the United States had sought a means of checking communist expansion and aggression in Southeast Asia, and during the period 1955-1959, no further territory fell under communist control. It is impossible to determine the role of SEATO in that accomplishment, but in 1959 US officials chose to interpret it as a significant one. Department of State Counselor G. Frederick Reinhardt voiced this view in early 1959:

> SEATO has interrupted the Communists' military march in the Far East. Although the organization, unlike NATO, has no combat forces assigned to it, it had brought confidence to its members and despite

58. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 010202Z Feb 59; (S) JCS 1992/702, 13 Mar 59; (S) JCSM-103-59 to SecDef, 23 Mar 59 (derived from 1992/702); (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 7 Apr 59, N/H of JCS 1992/702, 9 Apr 59; (S) Msg, JCS 957702 to CINCPAC, 8 Apr 59; JMF 9060 (20 Mar 59).

aggression against the Philippines; military measures to counter communist insurgency; and the establishment of a SEATO force to assist the Royal Government of Laos in combatting communist insurgency.61

Beginning in 1956, SEATO initiated a series of yearly military training exercises. The first of these, Exercise FIRMLINK held in February 1956, was a ground-air exercise including the forces of all the members except France and Pakistan. During the next several years, the SEATO military exercises fell into three categories: ground-air exercises in Thailand designed to prove and test the capacity of Pact members to aid Thailand in the event of an invasion from the north; combined amphibious operations between the United States and the other members in the Treaty area; and annual naval exercises in the triangle between Singapore, Manila, and Bangkok to standardize procedures and develop cooperation for emergency conditions.62

Although SEATO supporters in 1959 could point with pride to the absence of further communist advances during the five years of the treaty's existence, the SEATO deterrence may, in fact, have influenced the communists to abandon outright aggression for their alternate weapon of subversion, and SEATO's record in the area of antisubversion was not impressive. The United States, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, and Australia helped other states in training police officers and intelligence specialists and members exchanged information about subversive activities. In November 1957, SEATO sponsored a seminar on countering subversion. Philippine President Carlos Garcia opened the meeting in Manila and attendees included officials, educators, publicists, trade union leaders, various other representatives from the eight member states (including Admiral Radford), and three observers from South Vietnam. The main purposes of the seminar were directed toward focusing public opinion on the nature and extent of communist subversion and assisting in the general SEATO effort to expose and counter communist attempts to extend their influence in the Treaty area. But SEATO's principal efforts

61. SEATO Report, "Development of SEATO in Its Third Year," Mar 58, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 24 Mar 58, pp. 509-516. (TS-GP 1) JCS Hist Div, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1957-1960, pp. 161-162.

62. Modelski, SEATO, Six Studies, pp. 40-41. (U) SEATO Pub. 3653P-12, SEATO Military Exercises, pp. 3-16. (U) SEATO Pub. 3653P-22, SEATO Record of Progress, 1958-59, p. 8.

to counter subversion were restricted to exchanges of information, and the occasion of a SEATO intervention in the aid of a government threatened by communist revolution, initially thought by some observers to be the most likely form of SEATO action in the Treaty area, did not occur.[63]

The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty provided for consultation among the members in case of emergencies, but SEATO consultation in the period 1955 through 1959 was primarily limited to annual Council meetings, which did not include issues of national policy. SEATO consultation was not used in the Formosan offshore crises of 1955 and 1958, the 1957 settlement in Laos, the troubles on the Burmese border, or the Indonesian rebellion of 1958. SEATO ambassadors did meet several times in 1959 on the Laotian situation, culminating in an extraordinary Council meeting in Washington in September 1959. This meeting produced a pledge by the members to abide by their "treaty obligations" and to follow closely "any developments threatening the peace and stability of the treaty area," but no substantive action.[64]

The SEACDT also included provision for mutual self-help in economic development, but SEATO activities in this area were modest during the first five years. Australia, alone, instituted a small SEATO-label aid project to strengthen the defense forces of the Asian members with supplies of noncombat material, and there were a handful of small SEATO aid programs concerned with technical training and assistance. SEATO failed to develop an economic aid program largely because the members who would have had to bear the burden of funding such a program, particularly the United States, preferred to channel their aid through bilateral programs.[65]

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63. Final Communique of SEATO Seminar on Countering Communist Subversion, 29 Nov 57, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 23 Dec 57, p. 993. Modelski, SEATO, Six Studies, p. 41.

64. Modelski, SEATO, Six Studies, pp. 28-29. SEATO Press Release, Washington, 28 Sep 59, reproduced in Dept of State Bulletin, 19 Oct 59, p. 565.

65. Modelski, SEATO, Six Studies, pp. 41-42. Richard P. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1958, (1959), pp. 284-285.

The economic provisions had been included in SEACDT in 1954 as an inducement to the Colombo nations to join the Treaty, but this did not occur. Neither did the SEATO umbrella of protection against communist aggression entice any additional Asian nations to accede to the Treaty, and in 1959 the SEATO membership remained the same as at the signing of the Manila Treaty in 1954, with Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand being the only Asian nations represented.

Although available evidence is not sufficient for a precise evaluation, SEATO may have made an important contribution to the peace and stability of Southeast Asia during the years 1955 through 1959. Its creation internationalized opposition to communist aggression in the region, and SEATO's existence was a factor any potential aggressor nation had to consider. In addition, SEATO accustomed potential allies of a future war in Southeast Asia to working together, fostering cooperation in matters of logistics, communications, intelligence, training, and planning. Even though it still left much to be desired, SEATO had enhanced the prospects of a common front against communist aggression in Southeast Asia, at least, as viewed in the context of the period. Its essential weakness, already perceived by some, would be manifest to the world only at a later time, and under more critical pressures and circumstances.

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM

1960-1968

PART I

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This volume is one of several special studies comprising the official history of the actions and activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff relating to the war in Vietnam. It has been prepared by historians in the Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat in accordance with professional standards of historiography. Inasmuch as the content of the volume has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff it is to be construed as descriptive only and not as constituting the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

JAMES A. SHANNON
Brigadier General, USAF
Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

It is reasonable to assume that, after the surrender of France in 1954, the Viet Minh came away from the Geneva Conference believing that they need only wait until the elections projected for 1956 to extend their control over South Vietnam (SVN). The Soviet Union and Communist China would certainly applaud the event, and the United Kingdom and France, as signatories to the Geneva Agreements, would be bound to accept it. Only SVN, and possibly the United States, might stand in the way, and the Viet Minh probably judged that neither would provide a formidable obstacle.

The Viet Minh could feel reasonably confident that the United States would not use its military forces to alter the outcome of the elections. The United States had already refused to commit forces at the side of France in 1953-54. Moreover, the chaos that was almost certain to prevail in SVN in the mid-fifties would virtually preclude intervention by the United States. There was even less to fear from Government of Vietnam (GVN) resistance, for there was no doubt that the experienced Viet Minh army could march through SVN at will.

In the months following Geneva, Viet Minh cadres that had been left behind in SVN worked assiduously to prepare the people in the countryside for the election of 1956. Employing propaganda and coercion, they attempted to insure at least a substantial minority vote for a communist slate. In the north the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) imposed on the body politic a totalitarian government which, among other things, inevitably delivers a majority of ninety plus percent in any and all votes sponsored by such a government. Thus the combination of a procommunist minority vote in the south and an overwhelmingly communist vote in the north would almost certainly have assured victory for the DRV at the polls. But the DRV had not counted on Ngo Dinh Diem.

After the Geneva Conference SVN was plunged into a period of such economic, political, and social chaos that many informed observers predicted it would enjoy only a short life. Even the United States, which had become the principal supporter of the GVN, wavered in its determination to continue providing the assistance essential to the

In 1960, the last year of the Eisenhower Administration, the Viet Cong (VC) ignited the carefully prepared tinder of war. Escalatory actions fueled the blaze until ambush and battle had to be expected in every corner of South Vietnam. Eventually the struggle would preoccupy US policymakers and closely engage world attention, with virtually every aspect of the conflict publicly reported and explored. A number of foreign nations other than the United States would become involved in the conflict, some communist states on the side of NVN and some free nations on the side of SVN, some in direct roles and some in indirect ones.

For the United States, 1960 was the opening stage of a whole new war that would eventually entail human and material levies that exceeded those of the Korean conflict. A less tangible but deeply felt cost of this new war would be the so-called "crisis of conscience" that divided the American people over the political and moral justification of US participation in the struggle. This division would influence the conduct of the war and seriously threaten the very purposes that had inspired and sustained the US commitment to SVN and the rest of Southeast Asia.

the DRV may have viewed developments in SVN with great alarm; not only would Vietnam remain divided for the foreseeable future, but a free and prosperous RVN would invite comparison with North Vietnam (NVN), and perhaps eventually threaten the survival of the communist state.

The DRV evidently decided that it could not wait; it decided on a calculated aggression against SVN, to take by force what it had been denied politically. The principal instrument of this aggression was guerrilla or insurgency warfare, designed to overthrow the GVN and to replace it with a regime that would unite with the DRV under one flag.

To this end, beginning in 1956, special efforts were made to build a communist infrastructure in SVN. Communist cadres were expanded by infiltration from the north and by local recruitment. New political and military organizations were developed. Supplies and arms were brought in clandestinely. Propaganda and political indoctrination were stepped up. Coercion and terror became almost commonplace. Small-scale hit-and-run attacks, against lines of communication, villages, public installations, and small military units became more frequent. Taken together, the many small wounds thus inflicted slowly drained hope, energy, and resolve from a people already weary of war.

The guerrilla war of 1957-1959, though not of great magnitude, played havoc with the social, political, and economic rehabilitation of the countryside. Equally regretable, Diem felt impelled to exercise steadily more authoritarian attitudes and measures. The result was the loss of some earlier gains, a general deceleration of progress, and an erosion of confidence in the GVN. In effect the guerrilla war sapped the convalescing nation of the strength desperately needed to recover from the devastation of earlier years and to build on the progress achieved from 1955 to 1957.

To most observers the damage inflicted by enemy guerrilla activities from 1957 to 1959 seemed to indicate the current strength and fullest reach of the communists. Disposed to expect success, American officials saw reason to project an ultimate fading away of the insurgency. Few if any appreciated that the period was actually one of communist buildup for a showdown. Accordingly, little thought was given to anticipating the conditions and contingencies that would follow an eruption of the guerrilla war.

survival of South Vietnam. But, to the astonishment of friend and foe alike, Premier Ngo Dinh Diem in the short space of two years proceeded to achieve a remarkable degree of political stability, economic progress, and social rehabilitation.

In 1955, Diem defeated the divisive and dangerous sects. The loyal army thrashed the forces of the sects so thoroughly that they never again posed a serious threat to the government. The benefits of this victory were manifold: it assured continued US support; it reinforced Diem's hand in his turbulent but vital negotiations with the French; it contributed to a substantial expansion of his public following and prestige; it removed the grip of the self-serving sects from the public and governmental sectors; it made Diem the recognizable, as well as the recognized, leader of the land; and it gave him the time and means he needed to start the repair of the physical, social, and psychological damage wrought by the Indochinese war.

From 1955 to 1957 the situation in SVN grew more hopeful; indeed prospects were almost bright. The people of SVN deposed the Head of State, Bao Dai, and created the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). Diem became the respected, if not loved, leader of his people. The army underwent successive improvements and remained loyal. And of the many other internal problems, some were solved, some were being grappled with, and the solution of others was on the drawing boards. Of course, the general situation did not yet inspire unrelieved optimism. However, given the resiliency and intelligence of the Vietnamese people, the natural endowments of the land, an extended period of peace, and continued US assistance, there was reasonable hope that SVN would eventually emerge as a prosperous and free nation in Southeast Asia.

From the start Diem was determined that SVN would not participate in the north-south general elections on reunification. SVN had not been a party, nor had it even pledged adherence, to the Geneva Agreements. On the contrary, Diem had vigorously denied that they were binding on his government. For its part, the United States in effect played "hands off," neither encouraging nor discouraging Diem in his stand. The United States, Diem, and the DRV were all apparently convinced that the elections, in reality a plebiscite, would end in a victory for the DRV. In the end Diem proved immovable. Despite pressure from the Geneva Conference participants, and the loud and vehement protests of the DRV, the elections were not held. Bitterly disappointed,

Chapter 1

THE FINAL YEAR OF THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION

US Policy

The problem of resistance to communist expansion in Southeast Asia had been one of the continuing concerns of the Administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Taking office in January 1953, the Eisenhower Administration had been in control during the final year of major US financial and material support to the French effort in Indochina. Following the defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Conference, it had brought the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) into existence and had continued US assistance to the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN). Throughout the period US policy toward Southeast Asia had been subjected to frequent review and restatement by the National Security Council.

At the beginning of 1960, the final year of the Eisenhower Administration, the current statement of US policy toward Southeast Asia was contained in NSC 5809. Its controlling thought lay in the declaration that "the national security of the United States would be endangered by Communist domination of mainland Southeast Asia, whether achieved by overt aggression, subversion, or a political and economic offensive." Accordingly, the United States would seek to prevent the free nations of Southeast Asia from passing into or becoming economically dependent on the communist bloc; persuade them that their best interests lay in greater cooperation and stronger affiliations with the rest of the free world; and help them develop stable, free, representative governments with the will and ability to resist communism.

The NSC statement observed that "at present overt aggression and militant subversion are less likely than an intensified campaign of Communist political, economic and cultural penetration." Nevertheless, should overt aggression occur in the area, the United States would invoke the UN Charter or the SEATO Treaty or both. Subject to request for assistance by any mainland Southeast Asian state willing to resist the communist attack, the United States would take necessary military and other action if Congress approved or, in extremity, if the President deemed the action necessary.

In case of an "imminent or actual Communist attempt to seize control from within and assuming some manifest local desire for U.S. assistance," the United States would take "all feasible measures to thwart the attempt, including even military action after appropriate Congressional action."

The policy committed the United States to assisting the development of a strong, stable, and constitutional government in South Vietnam, so that it might provide "an increasingly attractive contrast" to conditions in the communist zone to the north. At the same time, US assistance to South Vietnam would be directed toward building up armed forces capable of safeguarding internal security and of offering limited initial resistance to external attack. The ultimate goal was peaceful reunification of a free and independent Vietnam under anticommunist leadership.[1]

For some years, South Vietnam had been the recipient of a larger amount of US assistance than any other mainland Southeast Asian nation, although the value of the annual aid deliveries was declining. Including the commitments for FY 1960, the United States had provided a total of over $1.5 billion in economic and military aid to South Vietnam.[2]

The apparent results of the US effort were gratifying. In a report to the National Security Council in August 1959 the Department of Defense presented the following picture:

> South Vietnam is now a going concern politically, a pivot of U.S. power and influence in Southeast Asia, and a deterrent to communist aggression in Southeast Asia, an effective example of American aid to a friendly regime, a symbol throughout Asia of successful defiance of a brutal communist threat by an indigenous nationalistic government. Having averted almost certain disaster a few years ago, the United States

1. (TS) NSC 5809, 2 Apr 58, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2) sec 38.
2. (U) AID Rpt, "US Foreign Assistance 1 July 45-30 June 62"; (U) State-Defense-ICA, "A Summary Presentation, MSP, FY 1960," Mar 59; AID S&R Div.

now has a valuable and strategic asset in Southeast Asia.[3]

The Tay Ninh Incident

Early in the new year, however, any complacency US and GVN officials may have felt about the status of internal security was shattered by the Viet Cong. In the first hours of 26 January 1960, a force of about 300 Viet Cong attacked the command post of a South Vietnamese Army regiment near Tay Ninh, a provincial capital northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border. Using small arms, explosive charges, and fire bombs, the Viet Cong inflicted over 70 casualties, destroyed five buildings, and escaped with a large haul of arms and ammunition. Their own losses were negligible.[4]

This attack, the largest staged to date, gained additional symbolic importance for the Vietnamese people by occurring on the eve of Tet, the Lunar New Year holiday. The further unfolding of events marked it as having signaled the beginning of a new phase, in which the Viet Cong added direct assaults on GVN security forces to their existing program of terrorism, selective assassination, and small hit-and-run attacks.[5]

Even as the GVN moved to appoint a board of inquiry to investigate the Tay Ninh incident, the US Army Attache in Saigon reported that increased VC strength had been detected in southwestern Vietnam, resulting from infiltration through Cambodia. The Attache thought it was now reasonable to expect a rise in VC activity. Washington officials expressed themselves as "shocked" by the magnitude of the Tay Ninh attack; they asked the US Country Team in Saigon to assess its implications.[6]

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3. (S-NOFORN) Rpt, DOD to NSC, "Status of the Military Assistance Program," 14 Aug 59, JMF 4060 (14 Aug 59).

4. (S) Msg, USARMA Saigon CX-9 to ACSI, 27 Jan 60, DA IN 279039.

5. (S) Msgs, Saigon 3380 and 3337 to State, 30 Jan and 6 Feb 60.

6. (S) Msg, USARMA Saigon CX-9 to ACSI, 27 Jan 60, DA IN 279039; (S) Jt State-Def Msg, State 1339 to Saigon, 28 Jan 60.

The survey conducted by the Country Team convinced its members that the situation in South Vietnam had actually been worsening steadily since about August 1959. The monthly rate of assassinations and kidnappings had risen substantially, beginning in September. Viet Cong armed cadre in the southwest had increased from the 2,000 estimated at the end of 1959 to 3,000 at the time the Country Team reported in early March. The Viet Cong were operating in larger groups, and VC tactics now included "rather frequent and daring" attacks on GVN security forces. Captured documents indicated that the Viet Cong were engaged in a drive to overthrow the GVN during 1960.

The Country Team found serious faults in the GVN defense effort. Government officials had seemed unwilling to recognize the existence of a state of "internal war" and had failed to take the necessary measures, such as the establishment of a unified operational command. GVN military operations were chronically slow in starting and poorly coordinated in execution. To US observers it was clear that these disabilities stemmed in large part from the status of the civilian province chiefs, who were outside the regular military chain of command but in control of the local paramilitary forces that often had an important role in the planned operations.

The government received little support in the rural areas. While noncommitment to the GVN's purposes and programs was more common than opposition, the attitudes of the rural population were strongly conditioned by fear of the Viet Cong, resentment toward local GVN officials, and economic difficulties following from a decline in the price received for the rice crop. Without the support of the people of the countryside, the US report said, it was unlikely that the GVN could solve the security problem.

But the Country Team took encouragement from the fact that the Tay Ninh incident and the continuing VC depredations of January and February had awakened President Ngo Dinh Diem to the seriousness of the situation. He had moved to combat it, directing the armed forces of the Republic (RVNAF) to concentrate on antiguerrilla training and tactics and the enforcement of maximum security at all military posts. Diem had also ordered a slowdown in the implementation of certain unpopular programs and a check on the performance of local officials, and he had appointed military officers as assistant province chiefs.[7]

7. (S-NOFORN) Desp, Saigon 278 to State, 7 Mar 60.

After the Tay Ninh attack in January the VC offensive gathered momentum. Assassinations for the first five months of the year totaled 780, almost twice the number for 1958 and 1959 combined. Concentrating at first in the southwest, the Viet Cong stepped up their attacks on village and hamlet officials, plantations, construction projects, and military and security forces. They were also reportedly organizing underground or irregular troops in certain villages. In May, VC operations fanned out to the southeast and the north; Kien Phong and Zone D, north of the Mekong, were reported areas of "lessening government control."[8]

The Viet Cong and the National Liberation Front

By 1960 the Viet Cong were organized politically and militarily from the national level down through military regions, provinces, districts, villages, and hamlets. There were five major base areas that had been under continuous VC control since the Indochina War and that remained virtually unmolested by GVN forces. The Viet Cong had almost complete freedom of action within the boundaries of these areas, which were used for storage and distribution, training and equipping of forces, and rest and rehabilitation.

Trained cadres were infiltrated from North Vietnam, mainly ethnic southerners from an estimated 90,000 who had gone to North Vietnam after the division of the country in 1954. They came to assume duties within a VC military force structure that was organized into three categories: 1) the main force battalions, composed of infiltrated and locally-raised regulars, relied on to carry out most major operations; 2) regional units, operating within their home provinces; and 3) local militia, mustered only for particular missions and returning to farming during intervals between operations.[9]

Captured documents revealed some of the objectives and techniques of the Viet Cong. Their goal was to incite a general uprising by feeding on the Diem regime's "repressive" policies, creating a revolutionary situation that would give them the opportunity to seize power. The means to this end

8. (C-NOFORN) Desp, Saigon 34 to State, 20 Jul 60; (S-NOFORN) Desp, Saigon 37 to State, 25 Jul 60.
9. (S-NOFORN) DIA, SIS-1031-65, Oct 65; (S) SNIE-10-62, 21 Feb 62.

could be political, military, or a combination of both, with the use of force dependent on the situation at the moment. The Viet Cong expected to progress through a preparatory stage, in which guerrilla operations, assassinations, and kidnappings of GVN officials would spread disruption and demoralization. At the same time the communists would present a highly idealistic program to the people, seeking a broad base of support. In the next phase, general revolution and direct assault on government forces would follow, leading to the overthrow of the GVN. Moving to an all-out use of force, the Viet Cong during this stage might elect to show less concern for the well being of nongovernment civilians and might strive for alienation of the people from a government that could not protect them.[10]

Radio Hanoi announced on 20 December 1960 that a National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF) had been formed. This was the political arm of the Viet Cong, the means of spreading propaganda and political indoctrination during the preparatory stage. The NLF proclaimed a ten-point program, in which the first point was the following:

> 1. To overthrow the disguised colonial regime of the U.S. imperialists and the dictatorial Ngo Dinh Diem administration, lackey of the United States, and to form a national democratic coalition administration.

Further points included the election of a new National Assembly through universal suffrage, improvement in living conditions and education, land reform, autonomy for minorities, and equality of the sexes. The phraseology of the NLF document suggested a considerable period of separate government for the South before reunification with the North. Reunification was to be gradual and by peaceful means, through negotiations and discussions. The ten-point program also called for a foreign policy of "peace and neutrality," under which South Vietnam would "refrain from joining any bloc or military alliance." At the same time, however, the prospective government would oppose "all forms of enslavement by the imperialists" and

10. Dept of State, A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam, Dec 61.

would "support the national liberation struggles of peoples in various countries."[11]

The Limitations of the GVN

The grievances of the people that the Viet Cong and NLF sought to exploit often had real substance. Despite the undeniable progress of its early years, Diem's regime had not been successful in giving the bulk of the South Vietnamese reason to identify their personal fortunes with its political cause. The administrators that Diem posted to the countryside were often corrupt. They were seldom natives of the areas to which they were assigned, a fact that made them "foreigners" to the provincial peasantry. Land policies, admirable in concept, were notably weak in execution and frequently operated to the benefit of absentee landlords rather than those who actually tilled the soil. Further, as the GVN increased the severity of the measures used to combat the Viet Cong, it necessarily imposed hardships on the innocent as well. By the very act of attempting to protect the people of the countryside the government complicated the problem of gaining peasant support.

To provide some measure of land reform and to give the rural population better protection, the GVN had initiated a program of agrovilles, or "prosperity and density centers." The first center was established in March 1960. The program involved relocating the peasants to chosen sites, with the government pledged to provide cash incentives, assistance in constructing new homes, and improved facilities.

The communists apparently recognized that relocation and concentration of the population represented a real challenge to their plans for subversion in the rural areas. If "guerrillas are fish, and the people are the water in which they swim," the Viet Cong were in danger of being cut off from the medium in which they must live. They reacted by making the agrovilles a principal target for attack. As a further handicap, the execution of the plan by the GVN had grave faults. The peasants were often resettled in unsuitable areas and compensated insufficiently. Administrative

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11. Committee Print, "Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam" (2d rev. ed.), S. Com on Foreign Relations, 89th Cong, 2nd Sess (1966), pp. 290-294.

talent to operate the program effectively was lacking. As a result, the agroville effort was short-lived. By the end of 1960, with the high hopes for its success unfulfilled, the program was allowed to lapse.[12]

A crucial factor in the GVN's failure to gain widespread popular support was the character of South Vietnam's leader, Ngo Dinh Diem, and the administration he headed. A US intelligence assessment in 1959 stated that although Diem was respected for his courage, dedication, and integrity, he remained to most Vietnamese an "austere and remote figure" who had not generated much popular enthusiasm. His regime was essentially authoritarian, with only the facade of representative government. Its features were a strictly circumscribed National Assembly, an undeveloped and subordinate judiciary, and an executive branch composed of "little more than personal agents" of Diem. Power and responsibility were exercised by a small circle consisting mainly of relatives, the most prominent being Diem's brothers, Nhu and Can. Diem's personal political party, the Can Lao, "structured like the Kuomintang or a communist party," was one of the important control mechanisms.

This highly centralized regime had provided "resolute and stable" direction to national affairs but had alienated many of the country's intellectuals and had inhibited the growth of free political institutions. In the 1959 assessment US officials concluded, however, that dissatisfaction among the people was tempered by enjoyment of a relatively high standard of living, the GVN's paternalistic attitude toward them, and the lack of a "feasible alternative" to the Diem regime.[13]

US Programs

In South Vietnam the United States maintained military and economic assistance programs aimed at developing a viable economy and government and at building armed forces capable of assuring internal security and providing limited initial resistance to aggression from the North. In describing the military effort to a Senate subcommittee in July 1959,

12. Milton E. Osborne, Strategic Hamlets in South Viet Nam (1965), pp. 23-25.
13. (S) NIE-63-59, 26 May 59.

the Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (CHMAAG), Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams, said that the United States was telling the Vietnamese to "come on and learn what we are trying to teach you so we can get out and go home." In its report, the subcommittee praised General Williams for running a program based on a long-range plan, with progressive development designed to "work the American military advisory group out of a job in Vietnam." The subcommittee was not as favorably impressed with the nonmilitary aid program, which had no "intelligible framework" or specific goals against which to measure progress.[14]

The provisions of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 imposed serious handicaps on achievement of the objectives of the US military assistance program. They barred the introduction of any foreign military personnel beyond the number present in South Vietnam on the effective date of the agreements. They also prohibited any reinforcement in the form of equipment, with a specific ban on introduction of jet engines. War materials destroyed, worn out, or used up after the cessation of hostilities might be replaced, but only on the basis of "piece-for-piece of the same type and with similar characteristics."[15]

The policy of the US Government provided that its activities "should not violate limitations imposed by the Geneva Accords." Accordingly, US military personnel in South Vietnam were limited to the 692 already present in the MAAG and in the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM), plus the 44 military personnel assigned to the Embassy--a total of 736. This added to the difficulty of improving the quality of the RVNAF, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed in 1959 as being low in capability and combat readiness.[16]

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14. Hearings, The Situation in Vietnam, State Dept Organization and Public Affairs Subcom of S. Com on Foreign Relations, 86th Cong, 1st Sess (1959), p. 118. "U.S. Aid Program in Vietnam," Report by same Subcom, 86th Cong, 2nd Sess (1960), pp. 8-9.

15. Committee Print, "Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam" (2d rev. ed.), S. Com on Foreign Relations, 89th Cong, 2nd Sess (1966), pp. 41-42.

16. (S) ISA, "Country and Regional Programming Guidance," 1 Aug 59; (C) Memo, ASD(ISA) to SecA et al., "FY 1961 MAP Programming Instructions (U)," 5 Aug 59. (S) JCSM-368-59 to SecDef, 4 Sep 59, JMF 4060 (14 Aug 59). Although separate

There were also difficulties in working with the International Control Commission (ICC), set up to monitor compliance with the Geneva Agreements and composed of representatives of India, Poland, and Canada. In mid-1959 the US Ambassador in Saigon, Elbridge Durbrow, reported that the ICC took the view that subversion and sabotage within South Vietnam were not covered by the Geneva Agreements and that the GVN had failed to link subversion to sources in North Vietnam. In addition, the Commission viewed US activities in South Vietnam with disfavor. At the ICC meeting on 27 June, for example, the Commission agreed to postpone consideration of the legality of the presence of the US MAAG, but it questioned the continuation of TERM. The ICC recommended that TERM be phased out as soon as possible and asked the GVN to provide "final information" on its withdrawal.[17]

For the next ten months, the United States and the GVN nursed the MAAG and TERM problems through the ICC. The United States hoped to increase the MAAG by the number of spaces vacated when TERM was eliminated. In February 1960 the GVN formally notified the Commission that it had requested the United States to expand the MAAG from 342 to 685 personnel to meet the increasing threat of North Vietnamese military buildup and VC subversion. The GVN, using an argument long advocated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of Defense, insisted that the increase would not violate the spirit of the Geneva Agreements, since the number of foreign military advisors would still be below the 888 present in South Vietnam when the accords were signed. When the ICC finally took favorable action on the MAAG ceiling on 19 April, Ambassador Durbrow called the decision a "stunning diplomatic defeat for the DRV /the 'Democratic Republic of Vietnam'--North Vietnam/." TERM liquidated its activities by the end of 1960, but the number of US military personnel in South Vietnam remained approximately the same.[18]

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from the MAAG, TERM was under CHMAAG's control. Its functions were recovery and outshipping of excess US MAP equipment, restoring and preserving US equipment in the hands of the RVNAF, and improving Vietnamese logistic capabilities.

17. (C) Msgs, Saigon 24 and 90 to State, 2 and 11 Jul 59.

18. (C) Msgs, Saigon 1458 and 1534 to State, 24 and 31 Oct 59; (S) Msg, Saigon 2525 to State, 27 Feb 60; (C) Msg, Saigon 3060 to State, 23 Apr 60.

GVN Forces

At the end of 1959, the RVNAF was composed of about 145,000 men, just under the 150,000-man force authorized to receive US military assistance support. The Army (ARVN) had been reorganized in 1958-1959 into a seven-division force under three corps headquarters, at the urging of the US MAAG. Although this organization had not yet been provided with the coordinated and centralized control that they hoped for, US officials considered that the South Vietnamese armed forces had a "marginal capability to accomplish their missions of maintaining internal security against Communist inspired insurgency and of providing limited initial resistance to full-scale invasion from North Vietnam."[19]

In addition to the regular military forces, South Vietnam had a Civil Guard, supported by the United States to an authorized level of 50,000. The Civil Guard was intended under normal circumstances to provide for the internal security of the country while the regular military establishment concentrated on the conventional threat from outside the country. There was also a 40,000-man Self Defense Corps designed to provide protection to the villages of South Vietnam, composed of local people trained and armed for the task.[20]

Up to the Spring of 1960 little had been accomplished in training the regular forces for counterinsurgency operations, and it was recognized that the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps were very poorly trained, equipped, and organized. To remedy some of the inadequacies, by January 1960 the assignment of MAAG advisors down to the level of infantry regiments and separate artillery, armored, and marine battalions had been authorized. The advisors were not to participate directly in combat operations or accompany RVNAF units on operations near the national boundaries. The United States Operations Mission (USOM) had started a program of retraining and reequipping the Civil Guard. A further step was under consideration, the sending of US Army Special Forces teams to act as advisors on antiguerrilla tactics.[21]

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19. (S) FY 1962 MAP Presentation, Vietnam.
20. (S) Msg, Saigon 3412 to State, 10 Jun 60.
21. (S) Jt State-Def-ICA-CIA Msg, State 28 to Saigon, 7 Jul 59.

In this last matter the Chief of Staff, Army, took the initiative, addressing a memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 24 March 1960. General Lyman L. Lemnitzer believed that the "critical situation" in South Vietnam required definite action. He agreed with CINCPAC that an antiguerrilla capability could be developed within the regular armed forces by changing the emphasis in training from conventional to antiguerrilla warfare, but he felt that additional support in specialized fields was warranted and could be introduced overtly as part of the absorption of TERM by MAAG. The Army, he said, was prepared to offer CINCPAC Special Forces mobile training teams, including communications elements, psychological operations advisors, civil affairs advisors, and a language-qualified counterintelligence and combat intelligence training team. The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to the proposal and dispatched the offer to CINCPAC on 30 March, with a request for his views on training assistance, delivery of materiel, and any additional requirements he thought necessary to insure the internal security of South Vietnam.[22]

On 21 April CINCPAC submitted a request for three Special Forces detachments of ten men each and three intelligence officers. These 33 personnel, together with three psychological warfare specialists from PACOM, were phased into South Vietnam in May. There they set up a Counterinsurgency Training Program to train Vietnamese as ranger cadres.[23]

CINCPAC, Admiral Harry D. Felt, recommended also that the Civil Guard be transferred to military control. This was finally accomplished at the end of 1960 when Diem, at the urging of US advisors, removed the Civil Guard from the Department of Interior and placed it under the Department of Defense. There it became a MAAG responsibility.[24]

During the first half of 1960 the United States agreed to modest increases in equipment for the RVNAF, particularly

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22. (S) JCS 1992/791, 30 Mar 60; (U) Note to Control Div "JCS 1992/791," 25 Mar 60; (S) Msg, JCS 974802 to CINCPAC, 30 Mar 60; JMF 9155.3/4060 (15 Feb 60).

23. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 210017Z Apr 60, DA IN 1892, JMF 9155.3/4060 (15 Feb 60). (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1960, pp. 162-163.

24. (S) Ltr, CINCPAC 00212 to JCS, 26 Apr 60, Encl to JCS 1992/798, 3 May 60, JMF 9060/3360 (27 Apr 60). (C) Msg, Saigon 1260 to State, 9 Jan 61.

helicopters. President Diem had asked for much more, but CINCPAC was not satisfied that the GVN was using the resources it already possessed to best advantage. Early in April Admiral Felt recommended against providing all that the GVN asked.[25]

Diem based his requests for aid on the claim that his country was under the threat of both conventional attack and guerrilla warfare. He said that meeting these threats required two different sets of tactics, training, and organization. Whereas the corps-division organization was properly designed to counter invasion, it was inappropriate to the more immediate danger, the VC guerrilla campaign. Early in 1960 Diem had decided that the fastest way to develop a large, well-trained antiguerrilla force was to recruit 10,000 volunteers from the veterans of the Indochina War. The veterans would be formed into companies or platoons and attached to Civil Guard or regular units to train their comrades in actual operations. Had the United States allowed him the 170,000-man force level he had asked for two years earlier, Diem added, he would now have enough effective units to protect the people and continue conventional training as well.

To implement his plan to raise a force of special antiguerrilla fighters, or commandos, with US support, Diem now returned to the idea of raising the 150,000 MAP force ceiling to 170,000 men. The change was unanimously opposed by US officials. In talking to the South Vietnamese President on 12 February, Ambassador Durbrow "frankly" disagreed. There were sufficient security forces in the country already, he said, if they could be properly trained in antiguerrilla operations. There were also financial considerations. Because of "congressional cuts and other reasons," the Ambassador said, "the country team had suggested a military budget of $165 million of which the United States could contribute only about $124 million."[26]

US military representatives backed the Ambassador completely. CHMAAG explained the drawbacks of the commando scheme to Diem on 20 February, and CINCPAC took the same line. Admiral Felt noted that the British in Malaya and the Filipinos in the Huk campaign had developed an antiguerrilla force within the regular organization. He also stressed the

25. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to OSD and JCS, 020430Z Apr 60, JMF 9155.3/4060 (15 Feb 60).
26. (S) Desp, Saigon 251 to State, 12 Feb 60.

importance of paying "equal attention" to the economic, political, and psychological aspects of the counterinsurgency problem.

Ambassador Durbrow, in arguing against the force increase, likewise emphasized the importance of winning the confidence of the people. To Washington he cabled that Diem was "moving in all directions at once" without any plan to use what he had on hand to meet the "deteriorating internal situation," while citing that situation as justification for seeking the 170,000-man force level.[27]

Ignoring American advice, Diem proceeded with his plans. On 24 February he issued the directive for the formation of the commando units, and by the end of May the ARVN was reported to have conducted training for 47 companies, using the companies' own officers as instructors. Two Civil Guard companies were also training as commando units. By June 7,935 commandos had been added to the RVNAF strength of 144,706, and their number was rising steadily.[28]

By agreement with the MAAG, the GVN had always maintained RVNAF strength somewhat below the 150,000-man level authorized for MAP support. Three months after starting the commando program, however, Diem had raised the level of his regular armed forces above the approved ceiling and seemed to be aiming for a Civil Guard of 56,000. This of course collided with the US policy of trying to reduce aid to South Vietnam, and it confirmed Ambassador Durbrow's opinion that Diem was still disposed primarily to the use of force to win control of the countryside. The time had come, the Ambassador said, to put teeth into the US approaches to the GVN on the force-level question. In a message to Washington on 10 June he recommended that the United States take steps to reduce the RVNAF to 144,000 and the Civil Guard to 50,000 and to "regularize" the commandos

27. (C) Msg, CINCPAC to OSD, 142355Z Mar 60, AF IN 43393, (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG, 140459Z Mar 60; (S) Msg, Saigon 2622 to State, 10 Mar 60; JMF 9155.3/4060 (15 Feb 60).

28. (C) Msg, CINCPAC to OSD, 142355Z Mar 60, AF IN 43393, JMF 9155.3/4060 (15 Feb 60). (S-NOFORN) Desp, Saigon 37 to State, 25 Jul 60. (S) Msg, Saigon 3412 to State, 10 Jun 60.

within those levels. The Embassy and the MAAG now parted company on the question of the force level. General Williams wanted the United States to support the full authorized level of 150,000 men rather than 144,000.[29]

Later in June Diem gave way for the moment, agreeing to bring his forces down to 150,000 and to integrate the commandos into the ARVN. As of 31 July the RVNAF strength was reported at 151,973, showing some reduction from the earlier 154,000. Pressure to increase the level to 170,000 soon resumed, however, with the MAAG now siding with the GVN. Ambassador Durbrow was not convinced by the MAAG's case for a 20,000-man increase. He reported that CHMAAG had cited a need for sufficient forces to permit rotation of combat troops without disturbing the four divisions in central Vietnam, which should not be rotated because of their familiarity with defense plans against external attack. The Ambassador argued that external aggression seemed "fairly remote," but guerrilla war was a present fact. Besides, to increase the force level would encourage Diem's tendency to use force to solve his difficulties and would contribute to his government's financial problems as well. The Ambassador believed that what the GVN really needed was a better trained Civil Guard to assist and relieve the ARVN and more political and psychological actions by Diem to win the confidence of the people.[30]

The Ambassador's efforts were directed at fulfilling the conditions President Eisenhower had attached to the initial offer of US aid, in his letter to Diem on 23 October 1954. The United States was willing to assist the GVN "in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means." But the US offer was contingent upon "performance on the part of the Government of Viet-Nam in undertaking needed reforms."[31]

In mid-September 1960 Ambassador Durbrow recommended that the United States propose the following measures to Diem:

1. Remove three controversial government figures by sending them to diplomatic posts abroad, the three being

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29. (S) Msg, Saigon 3412 to State, 10 Jun 60.
30. (S) Msg, Saigon G-79 to State, 25 Aug 60; (S) Msg, Saigon 539 to State, 5 Sep 60.
31. Dept of State Bulletin, XXXI (15 Nov 54) pp. 735-736.

the head of the secret intelligence service, Tran Kim Tuyen, and Diem's brother, Nhu, and the latter's flamboyant and outspoken wife.

2. Appoint a full-time Minister of Defense (currently Diem held the post himself) and tighten up adherence to the chain of command at all levels.

3. Appoint one or two members of the opposition to the cabinet.

4. Disband the Can Lao party, or at least open its activities to normal public scrutiny.

5. Permit the National Assembly more initiative, including the right to investigate and to question all executive officers except the President.

6. Require all government officials to declare their property and financial holdings.

7. Relax control over the press and other media.

8. Adopt a series of measures to help the peasants, including price increases for rice, pay for corvee labor, and subsidies for agroville families.

Some of these measures were drastic, the Ambassador said, but in his opinion drastic action was called for to avert a coup or a collapse. The United States should support Diem as the best available leader, but, if his position continued to deteriorate because of failure to adopt reform measures, the United States should begin to consider alternative courses and leaders.[32]

Ambassador Durbrow presented his proposals to Diem on 14 October. The President received most of them impassively, remarking that they conformed generally with his own ideas but that the VC insurgency made it difficult to put them into effect. Diem took the suggestion of sending M. and Mme. Nhu abroad more grimly; they were loyal supporters, and opposition to them, he said, was part of the communist plot to overthrow his government. Nevertheless the Ambassador had a "hunch"

32. (S) Msg, Saigon 624 to State, 16 Sep 60.

that he had made some progress toward inducing Diem to "save himself and Vietnam" by "regaining his people."[33]

Meanwhile the MAAG had resumed its efforts to secure an increase in the RVNAF force level. On 19 October Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr, who had succeeded General Williams as CHMAAG on 1 September, recommended to CINCPAC that the force level be raised to 170,000. Admiral Felt concurred on 29 October.[34]

Negotiations with the GVN on this matter were interrupted when, at 0300 on 11 November, a paratroop brigade under Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Chanh Thi launched an attempted coup d'etat with an attack on the presidential palace. The coup collapsed the following day, but US-GVN relations were strained by the incident. Diem and Nhu were reportedly bitter over what they felt was a lack of US support during the crisis. US and GVN officials also differed regarding the implications of the abortive coup. A GVN spokesman insisted that the revolt had "no political impact," but the State Department thought that it revealed a serious lack of support for Diem's policies and reemphasized the need for dramatic action to strengthen the regime's appeal to the people.

Diem's disappointment with "some Americans" and his reluctance to unify security forces under a single command were doubtless reinforced by the coup, making US efforts at military and political reform more difficult than ever. Nevertheless, as soon as passions in Saigon had cooled, Ambassador Durbrow resumed his advocacy of reform. On 4 December he repeated his advice against granting Diem the 20,000-man increase. To do so without his having relaxed controls, effected reforms, and begun efficient use of available forces would not save the day, but it would increase Diem's already strong instinct to rely on force. The Ambassador was willing to go along with an increase, but only in exchange for prior reforms. If Diem did not take the steps necessary to increase his popular support, Durbrow thought

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33. (S) Msg, Saigon 802 to State, 15 Oct 60; (S) Desp, Saigon 157 to State, 15 Oct 60.

34. (S) Msg, Saigon 882 to State, 23 Oct 60. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG, 290412Z Oct 60, JMF 9155.3/3410 (18 Jan 61).

the United States should "undertake the difficult task of identifying alternate leadership."[35]

Since Washington officials were reluctant to use the force increase as a bargaining counter to obtain political reforms, the Ambassador tried presenting the two issues separately and on their own merits. In reply, Diem took the line that it was useless to effect reforms and to build factories, roads, and bridges unless these things and the people could be protected.[36]

Late in December Ambassador Durbrow's opposition to the force increase gave way in the face of the worsening situation in neighboring Laos, which convinced him there might well be a need for additional anticommunist forces in Southeast Asia. On 29 December he withdrew his opposition to any increase in the RVNAF "deemed appropriate" in Washington. Two days later the State Department cabled its opinion that for the present the Embassy had pushed as far as possible for "liberalization." Washington officials were now ready to study promptly the question of the 20,000-man increase upon receipt of the Country Team's basic Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP), then being prepared in Saigon.[37]

The Counterinsurgency Plan

The evolution of the CIP had begun in March 1960. As has been recounted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 30 March offered CINCPAC certain Army Special Forces assistance for the struggle in Vietnam and had asked for his views on additional requirements for materiel and training. At a PACOM conference in mid-April, a study on counterinsurgency operations in Laos and Vietnam was prepared, which later provided the basis for the Saigon Country Team's CIP.

CINCPAC sent the study to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 April. He stated that the GVN's main problem was to gain

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35. (S) Msg, State 782 to Saigon, 12 Nov 60; (FOUO) Msg, Saigon 1098 to State, 18 Nov 60; (S) Msg, Saigon G-219 to State, 19 Nov 60; (S) Msgs, Saigon 1143 and 1151 to State, 1 and 5 Dec 60.

36. (S) Jt State-Def Msg, State 862 to Saigon, 9 Dec 60; (S) Msg, Saigon 1216 to State, 24 Dec 60.

37. (S) Msg, Saigon 1231 to State, 29 Dec 60; (TS) Msg, State 961 to Saigon, 31 Dec 60.

permanent control of the population. This could be done only through a well-coordinated military, psychological, socio-economic campaign aimed at winning the confidence of the people and their cooperation with the GVN and its security forces. The basic difficulty in Vietnam, Admiral Felt believed, was not the lack of antiguerrilla training for the ARVN, but the lack of centralized control of counterinsurgency operations. To remedy this, CINCPAC proposed that the United States encourage the GVN to adopt a national emergency organization to integrate civil and military resources under centralized direction for the conduct of antiterrorist operations and to develop coordinated national plans for the progressive reduction of communist influence. The essential military requirement was a well-trained regular military and paramilitary establishment. This need could best be satisfied by putting all security forces under the GVN Department of Defense and assigning the MAAG primary responsibility for their training.[38]

Admiral Felt warned that the communist insurgencies in Laos and South Vietnam threatened the very existence of these nations and the security of all Southeast Asia. The United States and the governments of the two countries must recognize the emergency nature of the situation, direct their full resources to counterinsurgency operations, and be prepared to support the additional expense and effort, perhaps for a protracted period. In South Vietnam, CHMAAG should concern himself primarily with supplying advice on the conduct of operations and providing counsel, training, and support for the development of the regular military establishment, militia forces, psychological and civic actions, intelligence networks, and communications capabilities.

On 6 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that they concurred in CINCPAC's basic recommendation that the United States urge the governments of South Vietnam and Laos to mount a concerted effort against the insurgents, adopting a national emergency organization to integrate civil and military resources for the purpose. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that "the U.S.

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38. (S) Ltr, CINCPAC 00212 to JCS, "Counterinsurgency Operations in South Vietnam and Laos (U)," 27 Apr 60, Encl to JCS 1992/798, 3 May 60, JMF 9060/3360 (27 Apr 60). (S) Msg, CINCPAC to OSD, 272243Z Apr 60, DA IN 3891.

Government provide sufficient material and budgetary support to insure the successful accomplishment of these emergency campaigns."[39]

At the end of June Admiral Felt provided a draft outline plan for counterinsurgency operations by the GVN and the specific steps the US Government should take to develop and promote the plan. He recommended that the outline plan be forwarded to the Country Team in Saigon for further development, after which it would be reviewed in Washington, presented to the GVN, and, if accepted by Diem, supported by the United States to the full extent of South Vietnam's ability to receive and use US assistance.[40]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved CINCPAC's recommendations and on 30 August forwarded the plan to the Secretary of Defense. After discussion and approval within the Departments of State and Defense, it was transmitted to Saigon in mid-October, to be developed in sufficient detail to provide a basis for computing the US support requirements.[41]

The Country Team dispatched the completed CIP to Washington on 4 January 1961. The plan had three objectives: 1) to suppress and defeat the communist guerrillas while maintaining a capability to meet overt aggression; 2) to establish political stability, improve economic conditions, and instill a sense of unity among the people; and 3) to interdict aid flowing to the insurgents across South Vietnam's borders.

To accomplish these objectives the plan outlined a series of actions to be taken. In the political field the tasks were to increase popular support for the GVN, correct the causes of political dissatisfaction, and publicize North Vietnam's role in the insurgency. The economic tasks were to improve living conditions while contriving methods of financing the essential activities of the government,

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39. (S) JCSM-232-60 to SecDef, 6 Jun 60 (derived from JCS 1992/814), JMF 9060/3360 (27 Apr 60).

40. (S) Ltr, CINCPAC 00331 to JCS, "Counterinsurgency Operations in South Vietnam (U)," 30 Jun 60, Encl to JCS 1992/821, 8 Jul 60, same file.

41. (S) JCSM-382-60 to SecDef, 30 Aug 60 (derived from JCS 1992/838); (S) N/H of JCS 1992/838, 20 Sep 60; same file. (S) Jt State-Def Msg, State 658 to Saigon, 18 Oct 60, JMF 9155.3/3410 (18 Jan 61).

including implementation of the CIP. Psychological measures would be employed to improve relations among the people, the GVN, and the RVNAF. The most important security tasks were to institute centralized and coordinated control of military operations and planning, develop intelligence and communications networks, and establish an adequate border and coastal patrol system.

The plan developed by the Country Team represented a departure from the position Ambassador Durbrow had previously held. The "force basis . . . to cope with insurgency" now included the 20,000-man increase so long sought by President Diem, as well as provision for expanding the Civil Guard. Further, the prime objective was now to suppress the communists by force, recognizing that the VC guerrillas offered the greatest immediate threat to the GVN. Governmental stability might be expected to follow from "the eradication of insurgency," and the existing Diem government, however short it might fall of the ideal, must be accepted as the available instrument for defeating the Viet Cong. Ambassador Durbrow's covering message indicated that he still had reservations concerning the force increase. The CIP itself, however, clearly leaned toward the MAAG-Diem position that protection should have priority over reform.[42]

The programs proposed in the CIP were among the first items considered by the new administration of President John F. Kennedy. On 18 January, CINCPAC had summarized CHMAAG's arguments for a 170,000-man RVNAF in a letter to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and had recommended approval of the increase as a separate action. Admiral Felt's letter was referred to the Joint Staff on 26 January, but already the matter had gone through ISA channels to Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. In company with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, he had "accepted the desirability" of MAP support for the higher force level on 23 January. The following day, Ambassador Durbrow sent a strong endorsement of CHMAAG's request for $12.7 million to support the CIP Civil Guard program. President Kennedy, after meeting with the Secretaries of State and Defense on 28 January, approved the expenditure

42. (S) Desp, Saigon 276 to State, 4 Jan 61, JMF 9155.3/3360 (4 Jan 61) sec 1A.

of $28.4 million for the force increase, as well as the $12.7 million for the Civil Guard.[43]

The CIP itself also won quick approval at higher levels. The views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not formally solicited. Nevertheless, on 9 February they informed the Secretary of Defense that they approved the plan in principle, subject to "revision of support requirements for military personnel, equipment, and logistics that detailed review by the Services concerned may indicate is necessary or desirable." This submission did not catch up with the fast-moving plan. Six days earlier the Secretaries of State and Defense had approved the CIP and had so notified the Ambassador in Saigon.[44]

The speedy handling of the CIP reflected an alert concern on the part of the Kennedy Administration for the need to preserve Southeast Asia from communist encroachment. Apart from a more ready disposition to commit funds to the purpose, however, the policy being followed showed no marked difference from that of the Eisenhower Administration. The joint State-Defense message approving the CIP had informed Ambassador Durbrow that the US commitment was for the FY 1961 portion of the plan only. Further, although the immediate purpose was to defeat the insurgents, the GVN must also "move on the political front towards liberatization." Success required carrying out the "entire plan," the political, economic, and social measures as well as the military. If the Ambassador found that the GVN was not fulfilling this requirement, he should inform Washington and make recommendations "which may include suspension of the US contribution."[45]

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43. (S) Ltr, CINCPAC 0041 to JCS, "Increased Force Level for RVNAF (U)," 18 Jan 61, Encl to JCS 1992/908, 26 Jan 61; (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "US Support for Additional Military Forces in Vietnam and Thailand," 25 Jan 61, Encl to JCS 1992/911, 28 Jan 61; (S) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/911, 2 Feb 61; JMF 9155.3/3410 (18 Jan 61). (S) Msg, Saigon 1313 to State, 24 Jan 61.

44. (S) JCSM-62-61 to SecDef, 9 Feb 61 (derived from JCS 1992/917), JMF 9155.3/3360 (4 Jan 61) sec 1. (S) Jt State-Def-ICA Msg, State 1054 to Saigon, 3 Feb 61.

45. (S) Jt State-Def-ICA,Msg, State 1054 to Saigon, 3 Feb 61.

Ambassador Durbrow, accompanied by General McGarr, presented the CIP to Diem on 13 February 1961. As instructed, he made it clear that the GVN was expected to absorb the local currency (piaster) costs of the plan, that certain "fundamental political actions" were contemplated, and that the plan was to be carried out in all its aspects. As expected, President Diem questioned the GVN's ability to raise enough piasters to support the plan. He also complained about rumors that the United States, under its new leadership, was no longer supporting him. The Ambassador replied that the CIP recommended concrete measures for raising piasters and that the $40 million MAP commitment was a tangible sign of US support.[46]

Already, on 6 February, President Diem had announced a program of reforms looking toward a "more adequate readaption of our institutions to the needs of the present situation." This included rearranging the government departments, adding an elected youth member to village councils, decentralizing some provincial powers to lower levels, and encouraging citizen participation in GVN programs through advisory economic aid and cultural councils. Although these measures were mainly administrative, Ambassador Durbrow reported that they were at least steps in the direction he had been urging.[47]

While the Ambassador continued to encourage Diem to "move on the political front," CHMAAG pressed for adoption of the CIP's military provisions. On 6 March General McGarr called on Diem for this purpose, giving the President a written analysis, in French, of the GVN's counterinsurgency effort to date. He told Diem that the GVN concept of static security combined with offensive sweeps was too defensive. President Diem was convinced that the current operations, based on the "lines of strength" concept developed by his brother Nhu, was offensive in nature; it became defensive only when there was a lack of troops to implement it. Diem said that he had "ordered his troops on the offensive against the VC and that they had done this with good results." General McGarr reported, however, that "MAAG's reading is that this is largely wishful thinking." CHMAAG believed that the emphasis on manning blockhouses and pillboxes and on

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46. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1366 and 1367 to State, 13 Feb 61; (S) Desp, Saigon 351 to State, 14 Feb 61.
47. (U) Msg, Saigon 1348 to State, 7 Feb 61.

guarding other fixed installations had caused the troops to go "on the defensive mentally." Tactics that employed mobile striking forces under a comprehensive offensive plan were needed.

Taking up a familiar theme, General McGarr urged that military commanders be given full control of operations within their regions. President Diem insisted that the military commanders already had this authority. "However, it has been the observation of the MAAG advisors . . . that the Province Chief has far too much autonomy in the military area and often circumvents the senior military officer's exercise of his command authority."

Diem also said that he was considering placing the Field Command in complete charge of military operations throughout the country in both peace and war. General McGarr thought this would be "eminently satisfactory provided it is actually implemented." Currently the Field Command was a planning headquarters during peace and became operational only in case of war. CHMAAG wrote that he had "often tried to persuade the President to officially recognize that a state of war exists here now, but for political reasons, this has not been done."

Diem explained that all but six province chiefs were now military men and that they were often better informed and more able than the military commanders.

> The tenor of Diem's remarks were consistently favorable to the Province Chiefs as opposed to the purely military commanders and there is little doubt of his sympathy for and confidence in the former. This, of course, gives warning of inevitable future problems in the actual implementation of command and control, regardless of the expected unity of command edict. The problem is now, and will continue to be the direct and personal contact of Province Chiefs with the President - outside the military chain of command.

In recounting this interview in a letter to General Lemnitzer in Washington, General McGarr said he had repeated for Diem the central military recommendations of the CIP: reorganization of the top command structure to insure unity of command and provide a staff capable of carrying out that concept; conduct of all military operations through this

military chain of command; and development of a national operations plan for control of counterinsurgency operations.[48]

Strains in the US Military-Civilian Relationship

Some lack of unity was also apparent among US civilian and military leaders. In a report to CINCPAC on 3 February 1961, CHMAAG said that the "civilian element" of the Country Team did not understand or accept certain considerations that seemed to him basic: the necessity of gaining military superiority over the Viet Cong before political reform could have any meaning; the absolute necessity of an RVNAF force increase to contain the insurgency; the dependence of anti-guerrilla training on a firm foundation of basic military training; the long lead time required to train new forces; and the ever-present threat of attack from North Vietnam.[49]

Having encountered a disposition by State Department officials in both Washington and Saigon to question whether or not the CIP gave sufficient emphasis to developing anti-guerrilla units as against regular forces, General McGarr on 27 February addressed a letter to the Director, Far East Region, in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA). After an extended analysis of the factors that had been considered in reaching a military judgment regarding the proper balance within the RVNAF, CHMAAG expressed the hope that "opposite numbers in State" might become convinced that "we of the military here are professionally trained in the complex business of warfare - all kinds - and that continual defense by MAAG against overly simplified civilian solutions can be not only time consuming . . . but dangerous militarily."[50]

A proposal of the type General McGarr apparently had in mind was contained in a State Department message to Saigon on 1 March. After stressing the high priority that US foreign policy gave to success in South Vietnam, it said that the President was concerned about the ability of the country to

48. (C) Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 13 Mar 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 60-Jul 61.
49. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 3 Feb 61, Encl to JCS 1992/928, 8 Mar 61, JMF 9155.3/9108 (24 Jan 61).
50. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to RADM Luther C. Heinz, OASD(ISA), 27 Feb 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 60-Jul 61.

resist VC pressures during the 18-24 months before the CIP began to take effect. The message then suggested a number of steps that might be taken without awaiting GVN approval of the full plan. They included giving higher priority to activating the 21 ranger companies in the plan and adding 40 more ranger companies while reducing the infantry regiments proportionately.[51]

CHMAAG was not receptive to these suggestions. General McGarr wrote the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, that carrying them out would be "counterproductive," in that it would confuse and retard GVN actions that were just getting under way. He hoped that Department of Defense officials would not be "stampeded" into going along with the State Department view.

> What we need now is time to implement our present sound plans with the GVN - not directives to make major changes. It must also be understood that neither MAAG or the Ambassador can direct the GVN to follow our recommendations - we can only work through persuasion and advice.[52]

Although in this instance CHMAAG's views received considerable backing from Ambassador Durbrow, a more fundamental divergence remained. General McGarr set it forth in a letter to the Chairman on 22 March. Under Executive Order 10893, 8 November 1960, US Ambassadors were assigned "affirmative responsibility for the coordination and supervision over the carrying out by agencies of their functions in the respective countries." In South Vietnam, General McGarr said, the Ambassador was discharging this responsibility in a way that resulted in his "exercising significant control over our military operations here to include force structure, and the method of conducting operations even down to the tactics of these operations." The Ambassador accomplished this by requiring Country Team coordination of all actions--a procedure, General McGarr said, that involved "continued questioning of our professional judgment."

> I have repeatedly been faced with the problem of securing Country Team approval of

51. (S) Msg, State 1115 to Saigon, 1 Mar 61.
52. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 3 Mar 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 60-Jul 61.

> actions in the purely military field only to find these plans and proposals thwarted or delayed - not for purely political or economic reasons, which would be more understandable - but often on purely military grounds as interpreted by nonmilitary men. This is accomplished by "coordinating" military professional opinion out of a Country Team paper . . . .

In such circumstances General McGarr had more than once felt compelled to express his views to Department of Defense officials through military channels, fulfilling the responsibility he believed he had to provide his military superiors with his "considered, unadulterated military opinions." In three such instances, Ambassador Durbrow had taken official notice of CHMAAG's action as being a contravention of the Ambassador's authority.53

Important backing for General McGarr's viewpoint appeared later in March. On orders of Secretary McNamara, Lieutenant General T. J. H. Trapnell had been sent to survey the military situation and US programs in Southeast Asia. After returning to Washington, General Trapnell submitted a report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 28 March. One of his recommendations carried the heading, "Military Matters to be Decided and Directed by DOD Through Military Channels."

General Trapnell observed that the concept of overall policy coordination and integration through the Country Team was sound in normal situations. In the special circumstances in South Vietnam, however, Country Team review had "sometimes delayed, thwarted, or precluded military plans or recommendations of Chief MAAG which he, in his considered professional opinion, felt were necessary in the best interests of the US in furthering US goals." General Trapnell believed that when deterioration of internal security made military considerations as important as they were in South Vietnam, "the Country Team concept of control and coordination under the Ambassador should not apply and that pure military matters should be the responsibility of the senior US officer in the country

53. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 22 Mar 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 60-Jul 61.

concerned. Military directives should not come through the Ambassador for his review but directly through military channels . . . ."[54]

In commenting on General Trapnell's list of recommendations on 31 March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary of Defense to initiate a study of this problem. They recognized that its resolution would involve interdepartmental discussion and might ultimately require Presidential approval. Secretary NcNamara subsequently informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) was taking up the matter with the Department of State.[55]

An approach made to the State Department on 7 April was described in a later OSD report as an "abortive effort." The Department of Defense representatives addressed only the possibility of sending a joint State-Defense message to Saigon that would stress the need for rapid reporting of military information through military channels, "including information relating to divergences of view which might produce delays in required actions." They found the spokesman for the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs "adamantly opposed to any communication which could be construed or misconstrued as a challenge of the Ambassador's 'absolute' authority and responsibility for supervising all US activities in the country."

OSD officials concluded that to press the State Department further on this or any other aspect of the problem would bring the definition of the Ambassador's authority contained in Executive Order 10893 into question. When worked out in November 1960 after long interdepartmental discussions, that Executive Order had been regarded as containing the best provisions obtainable from the Department of Defense point of view. To reopen the question now "would serve no useful purpose and might, in fact, be highly counter-productive." But OSD officials did not, in consequence, turn a blind eye to the problem.

> Legal advisors in State and Defense agree that authority for direct communication between program chiefs abroad and their respective agencies already exists. Thus, there is no

54. (S) Memo, LTG T. J. H. Trapnell to CJCS, "South Vietnam," 28 Mar 61, Encl to JCS 1992/937, 28 Mar 61, JMF 9155.3/9108 (28 Mar 61).

55. (S) JCSM-202-61 to SecDef, 31 Mar 61 (derived from JCS 1992/942); (S) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/942, 14 Apr 61; same file.

actual prohibition against the use of military communication channels by the Chief MAAG in Viet-Nam for any information that he cares to transmit. Discussions with officers who recently visited Viet-Nam, however, reveal that current procedures established by the Ambassador have the effect of strongly inhibiting the free flow of military information and views from the Chief MAAG through military channels. The Ambassador requires that he "coordinate" all communications emanating from the official Embassy family, regardless of channel used or addressee.

While the legal aspects of the problem had real substance, investigation had suggested that an unsatisfactory personal relationship between the Ambassador and the incumbent and previous CHMAAGs was also a factor, and this offered a promising avenue to resolution. Mr. Frederick E. Nolting had already been designated to succeed Ambassador Durbrow in mid-May, and he was expected to appear in Washington for orientation briefings in late April.

Optimum prospects of enhancing the ability of the Chief MAAG to perform his mission more effectively lie in establishing close rapport with the new Ambassador. If Mr. Nolting fully understands, prior to his departure for his new post, the true nature of the military emergency in Viet-Nam and the desirability of treating the counterinsurgency aspect of the situation as an essentially military operation, he will likely appreciate the need for entrusting to the Chief MAAG a considerable measure of delegated responsibility in military matters.

The OSD report recommended that Secretary McNamara, General Lemnitzer, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) participate in the orientation conversations with Ambassador-designate Nolting, and also that General McGarr be recalled to Washington to take part. They should stress that the effectiveness of US support to the counterinsurgency effort would be enhanced if the following two objectives were achieved:

1. The Chief MAAG is delegated a considerable measure of responsibility for decisions in military matters and for providing military advice

to Vietnamese Armed Forces relative to counter-insurgency operations, providing the actions and programs of the Chief MAAG are completely in consonance with broad policy guidance furnished by the Chief of Mission.

2. The Chief MAAG is able to communicate on an unrestricted basis directly with the Unified Commander and the DOD through military channels, providing the Ambassador is kept informed of all communications sent and received through these channels.[56]

On 21 April the Secretary of Defense requested that General McGarr fly to Washington "for urgent high-level consultations on US policy and actions re Vietnam," arriving not later than 25 April.[57] The available records do not indicate to what extent the recommended orientation conversations with Ambassador Nolting were carried out. General McGarr's recall for consultation appears to have been related mainly to a major reassessment of US policy in South Vietnam then in progress. It was the first of several that were to occur during the Kennedy Administration.

56. (S) No sig /ASD(ISA) ?/, "Report: Relationships between the Chief MAAG and the Ambassador/Country Team in Viet-Nam," n.d. /prior to 18 Apr 61/, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 60-Jul 61.

57. (S) Msg, JCS 994578 to CINCPAC and CHMAAG, 21 Apr 61, same file.

Chapter 2

REASSESSMENT: KENNEDY'S PRESIDENTIAL PROGRAM FOR VIETNAM

In late 1960 and early 1961, despite a notable increase in violence in Vietnam and increased concern by the United States, the communist threat to South Vietnam did not loom large as a world problem. Looking back, Vietnam was conspicuous by its absence as a campaign issue in the Kennedy-Nixon contest of 1960. The focus of attention in Southeast Asia was Laos, and when President Eisenhower briefed the President-elect just before the inauguration, he spoke at length of Laos, but reportedly did not even mention Vietnam.[1]

Related to both these problems, however, was the new President's long-standing interest in the threat posed by communist insurgent movements, the relevance of which was strongly underscored by a speech that Premier Khrushchev made on 6 January 1961. Under the policy of peaceful coexistence, Khrushchev said, general and local wars must be avoided at all costs. But he made an exception for "wars of national liberation" that involved an effort to throw off the domination of a "colonial" power. "We recognize such wars and are helping and will continue to help the peoples fighting for their freedom . . . . Communists fully and unreservedly support such just wars and march in the van of the peoples fighting wars of liberation."[2] Thus the Soviet Union could avoid direct confrontation with the United States while supporting communists all over the world who were striking at the foundations of governments in newly-independent and developing nations. President Kennedy believed strongly that the way to combat these communist tactics was to increase limited war capabilities and special skills in guerrilla warfare. From the start of his administration he took a personal interest in the training of US Special Forces and pressed the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to expand and refine antiguerrilla training. As the President expressed it:

1. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (1965), p. 320.

2. Quoted in Richard P. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1961 (1962), p. 64.

> This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin--war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration instead of aggression; seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him . . . . It requires a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of military training.[3]

This type of insurgency sought to impose an ideological and political system by applying irregular warfare methods, using both guerrilla tactics and political action. According to one White House advisor of the period, President Kennedy never forgot Mao Tse-tung's warning that guerrilla actions must fail "if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation and assistance cannot be gained."[4]

Reports on Vietnam in Early 1961

Almost immediately after his inauguration the President was informed about the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam. Early in February he read a report by Brigadier General Edward Lansdale, USAF, an Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, who had gone to South Vietnam in January and returned discouraged by what he saw there.

General Lansdale had been a friend and advisor of President Magsaysay during the Huk rebellion in the Phillipines. [redacted] and was a close friend of President Diem. He had been appointed a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense in 1957. President Diem made a personal request that General Lansdale be sent to South Vietnam for consultation, and Lansdale visited there for two weeks at the beginning of January 1961. According to one White House advisor, Lansdale's report "shocked" President Kennedy.

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3. Speech at West Point graduation, 6 Jun 62, quoted in Roger Hilsman, To Move a Nation (1967), p. 411.

4. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 342.

5. (C) Msg, Saigon 1599 to State, 12 Apr 61. After an interview with Diem on 11 April 61, Joseph Alsop told the US Ambassador that Lansdale was the only American Diem liked and that Diem thought it too bad Lansdale was not ambassador since he understood Asians and was one of the best US experts in

General Lansdale was alarmed by the progress of the Viet Cong, who appeared to be closer to seizing control of South Vietnam than reports reaching Washington had indicated. In his report to the Secretary of Defense on 17 January 1961, he said South Vietnam could be kept free, but it would require a changed US attitude, hard work, patience, and a new Vietnamese spirit.

General Lansdale reported that Ambassador Durbrow was out of favor with the GVN. He suggested that Durbrow be replaced by someone who could influence Asians and make the Country Team function harmoniously. Lansdale also recommended the replacement of USOM Chief Gardiner, whom the Vietnamese regarded as "a nice man who has fallen asleep in our climate." General Lansdale also stated that the MAAG's potential was not being realized. US advisors needed to move out of "snug rear areas" and earn their way into positions of influence with the Vietnamese in the field.

Ngo Dinh Diem, said Lansdale, was still the only Vietnamese with enough ability and determination to be an effective President. His brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, was the strongest influence on Diem, but not the only one. If the United States did not like Nhu, it should "move someone of ours in close," but this someone would have to propose better solutions than Nhu and merit Diem's confidence.

Lansdale recommended that the United States recognize Vietnam as a "combat area of the cold war," send better people to South Vietnam, send the MAAG deeper into the field, and back Diem to the hilt until another strong executive could replace him legally. "We have to show him by deeds, not words alone, that we are his friend. This will make our influence effective again."[6]

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antiguerrilla warfare. (U) Biog, AF Office of Info. (U) DOD Press Release No. 1441-63. (S) Msgs, DEF 976200 to CINCPAC, 262326Z Apr 60, and CINCPAC to OSD, DA IN 4110, 282059Z Apr 60; JMF 9155.3/4060 (15 Feb 60). Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 419

6. (S) Rpt, Lansdale to SecDef and DepSecDef, "Vietnam," 17 Jan 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam. On 2 Feb. W. W. Rostow gave the President Lansdale's report on Vietnam. Arthur Schlesinger reports: "Kennedy read it in Rostow's presence and said, 'This is the worst yet.' Then he added, 'You know Ike never briefed me about Vietnam.'" Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 320. Ambassador Durbrow was replaced by Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., on 15 Mar 61. If Lansdale's memorandum had any effect on this decision, we have no evidence of it.

There was no immediate action on General Lansdale's memorandum. In February and March negotiations on the Laotian situation occupied the center of attention in Southeast Asia. Evidence continued to mount, however, of deteriorating conditions in the Indochinese peninsula generally.

Lieutenant General T. J. H. Trapnell, a former CHMAAG Indochina, was sent to survey conditions in Southeast Asia in March at the direction of the Secretary of Defense.[7]

There was nothing new in what General Trapnell reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff later in the month on the weaknesses of the GVN's counterinsurgency operations: lack of adequately trained and equipped forces, poor intelligence, open borders, a defensive concept of operations, poor leadership, and fragmentation of command by Diem. Trapnell also echoed CHMAAG's complaints about over-control of military matters by the Country Team, lack of Defense Support funds for the 20,000-man increase requested for the RVNAF, and a possible reduction in MAAG strength.[8]

Roger Hilsman reports that President Kennedy all but decided to send General Lansdale as the new US Ambassador to South Vietnam, but the suggestion "raised a storm in the Pentagon, where Lansdale was viewed as an officer who through his service with CIA had become too 'political.' Since there was, of course, a certain amount of truth in the charge, McNamara was persuaded and Lansdale was put aside." He continues that Durbrow clearly had to be relieved because he had been required to bear so many messages of disapproval from the US that he had not been welcome at the presidential palace in Saigon for several months. Following the November 1960 coup, things had gotten even worse, since Diem believed, wrongly, that Durbrow had known of the plans for the coup in advance, but had not warned the regime. Nolting, a career foreign service officer, was considered ideal for the job of restoring good relations with Diem and attempting to influence him toward measures that would bring his regime wider support within Vietnam and make it politically easier for the US to give him the aid he requested. Hilsman, To Move a Nation, pp. 419-420.

7. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 Mar 61; (TS) CM-133-61 to LTG T. J. H. Trapnell, 14 Mar 61; OCJCS File 091 Laos (2). Trapnell was in Vietnam 21 Mar, Laos 22-23 Mar, Bangkok with CINCPAC 24 Mar, saw Rusk in Honolulu 25 Mar, and briefed the JCS at the Pentagon on 27 March.

8. (S) Rpt, Trapnell to CJCS, "South Vietnam," 28 Mar 61, Encl to JCS 1992/927, 28 Mar 61, JMF 9155.3/9108 (28 Mar 61).

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved Trapnell's recommendation that the United States finally give its full support to the CIP, and requested the Secretary of Defense to "initiate such further action as may be required" to carry it out. They also opposed any decrease in MAAG strength, noting instead the possible need for an increase. They sent recommendations for increase in MAP support to CINCPAC for comment and directed him to expedite delivery of certain materiel already approved, including 24,000 M1 carbines.[9]

On 11 April 1961, after receiving CINCPAC's comments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent the Secretary another memorandum on the Trapnell report. In accordance with CINCPAC's views, they recommended Defense Support for the 20,000-man increase in Vietnamese forces, MAP support for a 68,000 man Civil Guard beginning in FY 1962, and MAP POL support for the Civil Guard.[10]

MAP support and Defense Support funds for the 20,000-man increase still depended on an agreement concerning the CIP, a matter the Embassy and the MAAG continued to view through different colored lenses. On 15 April the Country Team reported to Washington that some progress had been made by the GVN in meeting the conditions set by the United States for full support of the CIP programs, but a number of important objectives were yet to be achieved: the GVN 1) had not given its field command control of military operations and had not activated corps logistical commands; 2) had not appointed a chief for the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO); 3) had not effected the reorganization and decentralization of government announced in February; and 4) still seemed to prefer pressing for more Defense Support to making the financial reforms necessary to raise the money locally.[11]

To CHMAAG, however, the "significant" and "rather impressive" accomplishments of the GVN constituted an "acceptable degree of agreement" on the military side of the CIP. He realized that the United States was not going to get complete acceptance, or even all it would like, and that the "real pay-off" would lie in the GVN's performance. He felt, however, that the Country Team should not "unduly attempt to force GVN

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9. (S) JCSM-202-61 to SecDef, 31 Mar 61 (derived from JCS 1992/942), same file.

10. (S) JCSM-228-61 to SecDef, 11 Apr 61 (derived from JCS 1992/951), same file. The Embassy had recommended support for the CG in (S) Msg, Saigon 1444 to State, 8 Mar 61.

11. (S) Msg, Saigon 1606 to State, 15 Apr 61.

acceptance of other parts of the plan (political and economic) by claiming failure to 'get enough' military commitments."[12]

As Ambassador Durbrow saw it, Diem was dragging his feet on the CIP. The Ambassador questioned whether Diem really intended to carry out the essential elements of the plan that he had accepted in principle. The indications were that he had reverted to his "basic belief": "Give me the men and arms and I can lick the VC." Nevertheless the Ambassador believed that enough had been accomplished to proceed with MAP procurement for the 20,000-man increase, but without "tipping our hand" to the GVN. He hoped to use his "one remaining lever" to insure that Diem did not "place all emphasis on the military aspects of the insurgency and ignore the political factors."[13]

Meanwhile, the military situation, aggravated by the critical developments in Laos, grew worse. After a relative lull from September 1960 to March 1961, the Viet Cong attacks were renewed in earnest. Incidents and casualties increased. The MAAG estimated the strength of the hard-core Viet Cong at 12,000, up from 9,800 at the end of 1960. An estimated 58 percent of the country was under "some degree of communist control or influence." Diem had recalled 6,000 reservists to active duty, but claimed he could call no more for lack of funds. A National Intelligence Estimate reported that in South Vietnam the internal security problem had reached "serious proportions." Discontent prevailed among the intellectuals and was increasing in the army. The odds favored a noncommunist coup attempt in the next "year or so."[14]

On 13 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that the "distinct possibility" of a political settlement in Laos made it necessary to consider countermeasures

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12. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 15 Apr 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

13. (C) Msg, Saigon 1599 to State, 12 Apr 61. (S) Msg, Saigon 1606 to State, 15 Apr 61.

14. (S) Memo for Record on COL Flesch's visit to Vietnam 31 Mar-7 Apr 61, I-13678/61, 12 Apr 61, OASD(ISA) File 333 Vietnam. (S) Rpt, "Outline Chief MAAG Vietnam," n.d., OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (28 Apr 61). (TS) Ann A to Draft Program of Action, 26 Apr 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam. (S) NIE 50-61, 28 Mar 61. Diem was reelected on 9 April to a new five-year term by a majority of over 80%. United States in World Affairs, 1961, Chronology.

to the military disadvantages that would arise from such a settlement; these disadvantages might include "intensified counterinsurgency problems" in Thailand and Vietnam.[15]

To the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Lemnitzer, who was in Saigon early in May, the situation in Vietnam had reached a critical state. The problem, he said in a message to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was clear and simple: Did the United States intend to take the necessary military action now or

> do we intend to quibble weeks and months over details of general policy, finances, Vietnamese Gov't organization, etc., while Vietnam slowly but surely goes down the drain of communism as North Vietnam and a large portion of Laos have gone to date?[16]

A Program of Action for Vietnam

Already concerned by the gravity of the reports being received, the President had turned to the Secretary of Defense on 20 April, the day after the failure of the Bay of Pigs venture, and asked him to provide within a week an appraisal of the communist drive to dominate Vietnam and a series of recommendations to prevent it. Mr. McNamara delegated the job to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Roswell Gilpatric, who set up an interdepartmental task force under the leadership of General Lansdale.[17]

Within the week 20-26 April 1961 the task force put together a draft "Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam." Since it was impossible to develop a detailed program in such a short time, Mr. Gilpatric proposed making periodic refinements on the basis of specific recommendations from the field by General Lansdale, who would proceed to Vietnam immediately after presidential approval of the program. The new program was

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15. (TS) JCSM-242-61 to SecDef, 13 Apr 61 (derived from JCS 1992/953), JMF 9155.2/3100 (30 Mar 61). For day-to-day details of the Laotian crisis see (TS) Hist Div, "Chronological Summary of Significant Events Concerning the Laotian Crisis."

16. (TS) Msg, CJCS to JCS, 080639Z May 61, DA IN 111134, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

17. (TS) Memo, SecDef to DepSecDef, 20 Apr 61, Encl to JCS 1992/965 JMF 9155.3/9108 (20 Apr 61).

designed to build on existing programs and include as much of the CIP as could be agreed on by both the United States and the GVN. Primary emphasis for the time being would be placed on solving the internal security problem, but military measures would be accompanied by strong political-economic measures.[18]

After a series of refinements at NSC meetings and decisions by the President, a list of 33 approved actions was forwarded to Saigon on 19 May as the Presidential Program for Vietnam. Its objective was "to prevent Communist domination of Viet-Nam by initiating, on an accelerated basis, a series of mutual supporting actions of a political, military, economic, psychological, and covert character, designed to create in that country a viable and increasingly democratic society and to keep Viet-Nam free."

Even before the final approval of the Presidential Program, the basic decision had already been made. During the first week in May it had been determined that the first US political action, or "first commandment," as Ambassador Nolting later styled it, would be to "Seek to increase the confidence of President Diem and his government in the United States by a series of actions and messages relating to the trip of Vice President Johnson," who went to South Vietnam on 11 May.

The rest of the political provisions of the program were to: 1) attempt to strengthen Diem's popular support within Vietnam by "reappraisal and negotiation," under the direction of the Ambassador; 2) negotiate without commitment, on a new bilateral arrangement; 3) negotiate to improve Vietnam's international relations, especially with Cambodia; 4) strengthen border-control arrangements with Cambodia; 5) plan with the GVN the effective use of outside aid; 6) examine the diplomatic "setting" for a possible commitment of US forces; 7) assess the political implications of an increase to 200,000 men in the RVNAF; and 8) obtain the recommendations by Ambassador Nolting on any necessary reorganization of the Country Team.

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18. (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to Pres, "Program for Action for Vietnam," 27 Apr 61; (TS) Draft, "A Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam," 26 Apr 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

The economic proposals included a series of "impact" projects in the field of rural development coupled with assistance in making the best use of available resources. To this end the United States would send to Vietnam "a group of highly qualified economic and fiscal experts . . . to work out a financial plan on which joint US-GVN efforts can be based." The group would also discuss with GVN officials a long-range economic development program and assess the economic implications of a force increase to 200,000.

Psychological measures were designed to bolster public confidence in Diem, document and publish accounts of communist infiltration and terrorism, and exploit the rehabilitation of Viet Cong taken prisoner by the RVNAF.

Specific military measures approved were:

1. MAP support for a 170,000-man RVN force.

2. An initial increase in the MAAG of about 100, from the current 685.

3. MAAG support and advice for a Self Defense Corps of 40,000.

4. MAP support for the entire 68,000-man Civil Guard.

5. Installation of a radar surveillance capability.

6. MAP support for the South Vietnamese junk force.

7. Activation of a special staff element in the MAAG to concentrate on border control.

8. Establishment of a Combat Development and Test Center to develop new techniques for combatting the communist guerrillas.

9. Provision of civic action mobile training teams (MTT's) to assist the ARVN in health, welfare, and public works projects.

10. Deployment of a US Special Forces group to accelerate GVN special forces training.

11. Assessment of the military utility of a further increase in the RVNAF to 200,000.

12. A full examination of the size and composition of forces that would be desirable in the event of a commitment of US forces to Vietnam.

The Program of Action would increase US aid to an estimated $301 million in FY 1962, consisting of $161 million in Defense Support and $140 million MAP.[19]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had commented twice on the draft Program of Action, first on 28 April, when they endorsed the military section of the first draft. On 9 May they approved the military actions in the final draft, "subject to later revisions in detailed implementation that may prove desirable or necessary after CINCPAC and CHMAAG, Vietnam, have had an opportunity to comment and advise as to their implementing action." Details on troop deployments and training detachments, they said, should be decided only after recommendations by CINCPAC. They also recommended deleting from the program a reference to British participation.[20]

To coordinate the Program of Action on a continuing basis, the Lansdale task force had suggested a presidential task force directed by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, with General Lansdale as operations director, and including members from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, State Department, ICA, CIA, USIA, and the White House Staff. This arrangement would have, in effect, given the Department of Defense the dominant voice in the development of US policy in Vietnam. Understandably, the State Department found the proposal unacceptable, and submitted a revised draft that moved the proposed task force firmly back under State Department control. The State draft also eliminated an immediate trip to Vietnam by Lansdale and proposed that refinements in the program be made instead upon recommendations from "the Ambassador in the field." As finally approved by the President, an interdepartmental Task

19. (TS) NSAM 52, 11 May 61, Encl to JCS 1992/991, 16 May 61, JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 3, pt 1. (TS) Msgs, State 1423 to Saigon, 20 May 61; 1432, 23 May 61.

20. (TS) JCSM-288-61 to SecDef, 28 Apr 61 (derived from JCS 1992/970), JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-312-61 to SecDef, 9 May 61 (derived from JCS 1992/980), same file, sec 2 for paper; sec 3, pt 1 for memo. The President, in a letter to President Diem, had already promised cooperation with the GVN in planning the most effective use for the "welcome assistance" of the British.

Force Vietnam was established in the Department of State with Sterling J. Cottrell, recently CINCPAC POLAD, as director and Chalmers B. Wood, the Department's Vietnam desk officer, as executive. General Lansdale was made Deputy Director of the new task force. Ambassador Nolting was directed to set up a counterpart (Task Force Saigon) to the Task Force Vietnam in Washington, to include the Country Teams and any special missions that might be sent to Vietnam in connection with the Presidential Program.[21]

The Johnson Visit

Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson's arrival in Saigon on 11 May marked the beginning of the US attempt to rebuild a relationship of confidence with Diem. He delivered a letter that the President had signed on 8 May giving Diem in "broad outline" the Presidential program. The President said he was sending Vice President Johnson to visit Vietnam personally "to give you my warmest greetings, to witness the valiant struggle of your people against communist aggression, and to assure you" that the United States would give more than moral support. He added that he understood certain of the proposals in the CIP "may not entirely reflect your own judgment." Nevertheless he had been able to approve MAP support for the 20,000-man increase and was ready to consider a new joint effort, including a further increase in the force level and the other points in the proposed program.[22]

In reply, on 15 May, Diem applauded these "wise and farsighted" proposals, many of which, he reminded the President, he had been advocating himself for four years or more. He was gratified, too, by Vice President Johnson's "gracious gesture" of asking for his suggestions, "particularly as we have not become accustomed to being asked for our own views as to our needs."[23]

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21. (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to Pres, 21 May 61, Encl to JCS 1992/975, JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 1. (TS) NSAM 52, 11 May 61, Encl to JCS 1992/991, same file, sec 2. (C) Msg, State 1387 to Saigon, 12 May 61.

22. (TS) Ltr, Pres to Diem, 8 May 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

23. (TS) Ltr, Diem to Pres, 15 May 61, Encl to (TS) JCS 2339/1, 8 Jun 61, JMF 9155.3/5420 (15 May 61). Diem's formal reply to the proposals of the Presidential Program was delivered to Washington on 12 June by Nguyen Dinh Thuan, SecState for the Presidency in Charge of Security Coordination. Dept of State Bulletin, XLV (3 Jul 61), p. 28.

Despite Diem's sarcastic tone, Ambassador Nolting felt that the purpose of the Vice President's visit, to reassure Diem and the Vietnamese people of American support, had been "excellently served" and the results were "all that we could have hoped for." He was convinced that Diem's confidence had been greatly increased. But to those in Washington who felt that reform was as vital to the counterinsurgency effort as increased military might, the rest of the Ambassador's appraisal must have been disappointing. The "general expectation" left with Diem, he said, was that additional aid would be forthcoming. Notwithstanding the Vice President's stress on economic and social measures, Nolting thought Diem would be inclined to put the main emphasis on the "military side." In the joint communique, the Ambassador reported, Diem had watered down language calling for more rapid "social, political, and economic liberalization measures." As for any change in his methods of organization and operation, Diem would probably insist on governing "in his own manner."[24]

The joint communique issued at the end of the Vice President's visit announced that the two governments had reached a "large measure of agreement" on the means to accomplish their joint purpose. The communique then listed some of the measures agreed to in principle, including the expansion of the RVNAF and MAP support for the entire Civil Guard. Diem had also agreed that a group of US and Vietnamese economic and fiscal experts would meet in Vietnam to work out a financial plan on which to base the new joint effort.[25]

On his return from Southeast Asia, Vice President Johnson recommended "a major effort to help these countries defend themselves." He reported, however, that US combat involvement was not only unnecessary but undesirable at this time. President Diem had categorically rejected consideration of the question of introducing US combat troops. The South Vietnamese leader had said he wanted foreign troops only in case of overt aggression, explaining that their introduction otherwise would mean the end of the Geneva accords. He made it clear, however, that his remarks applied only to combat troops. He indicated that as many military personnel as needed could be brought in for training and advising GVN forces.[26]

24. (S) Msg, Saigon 1748 to State, 15 May 61.
25. (U) Joint Communique, 13 May 61, Dept of State Bulletin, XLIV (19 Jun 61), 956-957.
26. (S) Msg, Saigon 1743 to State, 15 May 61, JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 3, pt 1.

In accordance with one of the provisions of the Presidential Program and in response to events in Laos, there had already been some consideration of sending US troops to South Vietnam. On 27 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed CINCPAC to be prepared to land troops in southern Laos, South Vietnam, and Thailand in case Vientiane fell. On the following day, in response to Mr. Gilpatric's request for approval of the military section of the Program of Action, the Chief of Staff, Army, had recommended the deployment of a US infantry division (minus two battle groups) and other measures in addition to those recommended in the program. The NSC had discussed the question, but had taken no action, and after a cease-fire had been agreed to in Laos on 3 May, the decision was made that no troops would be sent to Vietnam prior to the opening of the Geneva conference on Laos. A few days later, however, the Deputy Secretary of Defense had solicited JCS views on the desirability of sending a US force to South Vietnam.[27]

Although CINCPAC opposed commitment of US forces at this time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 May recommended that Diem be encouraged to request the immediate deployment of US troops, "to prevent the Vietnamese from being subjected to the same situation as presently exists in Laos, which would then require deployment of US forces into an already existing combat situation." The force should be sufficient to 1) provide a visible deterrent to DRV or Chinese Communist action; 2) release South Vietnamese forces from static defense positions for counterinsurgency action; 3) assist in training the Vietnamese forces to the maximum extent possible consistent with their mission; 4) provide a nucleus for the support of any additional US or SEATO operations in Southeast Asia; 5) indicate the firmness of US intent to all Asian nations. Their recommendation did not undergo further consideration because of President Diem's decision against the intervention of US troops.[28]

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27. (TS) CSAM-324-61, 28 Apr 61, JMF 9155.3/9180 (27 Apr 61) sec 1. (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 8 May 61, Encl to JCS 1992/979, 8 May 61, same file, sec 2. (TS) Memo for Record, COL Levy, 5 May 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam. COL Levy was JCS Representative on the Task Force Vietnam.

28. (TS) JCS 1992/983, 9 May 61; (TS) JCSM-320-61 to SecDef, 10 May 61 (derived from JCS 1992/983), JMF 9155.3/9180 (27 Apr 61) sec 3, pt 1.

On 29 May Dr. Eugene Staley, Research Director of the Stanford Research Institute, accepted the chairmanship of the financial mission proposed in the Presidential Program and agreed to by Diem. This Special Financial Group (SFG), working with the Country Team and under the policy guidance of the Ambassador, would consider the costs of "supporting the armed forces and civilian services needed to maintain security and other major program objectives" and recommend means of paying for them, together with necessary economic and financial reforms.[29]

After preliminary discussions in Washington the SFG went to Saigon on 19 June. There it met with its South Vietnamese counterpart for about three weeks and produced a joint report for Presidents Kennedy and Diem. The SFG briefed Diem on 11 July and on 20 July Dr. Staley presented his report to the Task Force in Washington.[30]

The Staley Report was based on three "central considerations": 1) security requirements, for the time being, had to come first; 2) military operations without economic and social programs would not achieve lasting results; and 3) it was in the joint interests of the US and the GVN to achieve a self-sustaining economy and a free and peaceful society in Vietnam. The "developing situation" in Laos indicated an urgent requirement for a further increase in the RVNAF. After consulting their respective military authorities, the joint SFG had adopted for economic planning purposes two alternative force levels. Under alternative A, which assumed no increase in insurgency and a holding of the line in Laos, the force level would rise to 200,000 in 1962 and remain there. Under alternative B, which assumed an increase in VC insurgency and de facto communist control of Laos, the force levels would rise to 200,000 in 1962 and to 278,000 by 1965.

The joint SFG estimated the additional costs for the military portion of the program from July 1961 through December 1962 at $42 million for the United States and 3.7 billion piasters for South Vietnam. Total additional costs for the entire program--military, emergency, economic, and long-range development--for the same period were estimated at

29. (S) Msg, Saigon 1828 to State, 1 Jun 61.
30. (U) Dept of State Bulletin, XLV (3 Jul 61), p. 28. (S) Msg, Saigon 46 to State, 12 Jul 61. (S) Minutes, TFVN Mtg, 20 Jul 61, Vietnam Working Group Files, Dept of State.

$85.5 million and 6.5 billion piasters. Despite outside assistance, there was an urgent need for "an additional supply of local currency to cover the increase in piaster expenditures." This money, the SFG had decided, should be raised by tax reform, exchange reform, and borrowing, but there was some doubt that such measures would increase revenues to the amount required.

The economic proposals of the Staley Report were divided into two parts, an emergency action program and a long-range development program. The emergency program dealt with information and communications, agrovilles and land development, rural medical programs, civil administration in rural areas, and the youth corps. Longer range programs included the improvement of agricultural productivity, economic and social services to the rural population, and the creation of a stronger industrial base.[31]

The Deputy Secretary of Defense sent the Joint Chiefs of Staff a copy of the Staley Report on 26 July. The report was already under "active consideration" at the White House, and because of time limitations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff restricted themselves to the military question of the proposed force increase. On 21 June they had already recommended a force level of 200,000, subject to a "continuing assessment of demonstrated GVN and RVNAF capabilities." In the meantime CHMAAG had reported that the 170,000 level would be reached by the end of 1961 and had requested immediate approval of the 200,000 level so that the increase could begin in January 1962.[32] After a briefing by Dr. Staley on 2 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended immediate approval of an increase in the force objective up to 200,000 to begin in January 1962, and periodic assessments during the buildup to "ascertain the requirement for these additional forces." Addressing the question of an eventual increase to 278,000, the Joint Chiefs

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31. (S-GP 1) JCS 2343/7, 27 Jul 61, JMF 9155.3/9105 (26 Jul 61).

32. (S-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 26 Jul 61, Encl to JCS 2343/7, 27 Jul 61; (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/9, 31 Jul 61; (S-GP 4) Msg, CHMAAG 1139 to CINCPAC, DA IN 135658, 290525Z Jul 61; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-422-61 to SecDef, 21 Jun 61 (derived from JCS 2339/6), JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 3.

recommended that the force level remain at 200,000 (9 division equivalent), based on CINCPAC's view that a 15-division force was unnecessary.[33]

On 4 August the President pledged US support for an increase in the RVNAF to 200,000 men, accepting the assumptions of the Staley Report. He set three conditions for the increase, however: there should be 1) a mutually agreed upon, geographically phased strategic plan for bringing the Viet Cong under control; 2) an understanding on the training and use of the 30,000 additional men; and 3) regulation of the rate of increase to insure efficient absorption.

Any decision on an increase beyond 200,000 would be postponed until 1962, while the buildup of the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps to agreed levels would be expedited. "Within the limits of available funds," the US Government would provide the necessary external resources for the Presidential Program. The South Vietnamese should be strongly urged to generate more piasters, reform taxes, and establish a single and "realistic" rate of exchange. The Ambassador was directed to make it clear that the United States considered a higher exchange rate indispensable, but to assure Diem that an increased piaster yield would not be used as justification for reducing US aid. USOM was directed to review the emergency social action proposals as well as those programs already under way. The Ambassador should urge Diem to create more effective machinery for long-range planning. He should also try "discreetly" to get Diem to use the program for maximum political advantage, for instance by employing noncommunist political oppositionists in the civic action program. President Kennedy wanted to be informed of matters requiring his attention "so that they may receive his immediate consideration."[34]

As an attempt to get the Vietnamese to reform their fiscal and monetary policies and to bring about a dramatic mobilization of Vietnamese resources for the war against the Viet Cong, the Staley mission was hardly an unqualified success. The GVN agreed not to increase its foreign reserves,

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33. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-519-61 to SecDef, 2 Aug 61 (derived from JCS 2343/9), (TS) JCSM-518-61 to SecDef, 3 Aug 61 (derived from JCS 2343/5); JMF 9155.3/9105 (26 Jul 61).

34. (S-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to JCS, 18 Aug 61, Encl to JCS 2343/16, 21 Aug 61; JMF 9155.3/9105 (26 Jul 61). (S) NSAM 65, 11 Aug 61, Encl to JCS 2343/13, 14 Aug 61; JMF 9155.3/9106 (27 Apr 61) sec 4. (S) Msg, State 140 to Saigon, 4 Aug 61.

to prohibit luxury imports, and to raise the exchange rate from 45-1 to 60-1. This, said Dr. Staley in his presentation to the Task Force, was an improvement, but not enough. It soon became clear that the GVN would continue to be more amenable to aid than advice, and that policy would be made not by pronouncements in Washington, but by hard day-to-day negotiations between the two governments.[35]

The actual increase in the RVNAF now began to take place, reaching 152,600 by 15 July, 157,000 by 15 August, and 169,800 by the end of October. Concurrently, the CG and SDC also grew. The CG reached a level of 65,000 men and the SDC 52,000 by 15 August. As the RVNAF approached the 170,000 level, the question arose whether or not the GVN had satisfied the President's requirements for a further increase. On 30 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported to the Secretary of Defense that the rate of increases had been agreed upon with the GVN, and there was general agreement on the priority of activation of units; but GVN officials had not produced a national strategic plan for bringing the Viet Cong under control, and it was questionable whether they would do so before the deadline. Diem, who did not interpret the three points in the President's decision as conditions to the force increase, was planning to go straight ahead toward 200,000. Although the United States should have "reasonable satisfaction" on these points, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it was undesirable to halt or delay the progressive build-up of GVN forces. But the United States should continue pressing at "highest levels" for a national counterinsurgency plan.[36]

Already CHMAAG was assuming the 200,000 level would be approved and had asked for an additional 5,000-man allocation on 17 November to give him flexibility in working out the force structure. This allocation was approved in January 1962. Thus from the middle of 1961 to the beginning of 1962 the approved RVNAF force level jumped from 150,000 to 205,000 and US MAP from a proposed $49.3 million to $101 million.[37]

To authorize higher force levels was relatively easy but to turn these additional men into efficient fighters

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35. (S) Minutes, TFVN Mtg, 20 Jul 61, Vietnam Working Group Files, Dept of State.

36. (S) Status Rpts of the President's Program, 15 Sep 61; 27 Oct 61; JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 1A. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-821-61 to SecDef, 30 Nov 61 (derived from JCS 2343/48), same file, sec 5.

37. (S) Msg, MAGPO 4012 to CINCPAC, DA IN 174456, 17015Z Nov 61: (TS) JCSM-28-62 to SecDef, "Increase of GVN

was another problem. Training of these forces, especially the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps, was hampered by a lack of facilities and trained leaders. Special Forces training suffered from a lack of qualified candidates and the reluctance of the GVN to release existing Special Forces for retraining or to detach committed regular units for Special Forces training. Some of these deficiencies were met by increasing the size of the US MAAG.

The increase in the number of US military personnel in South Vietnam to aid the buildup contemplated in the Presidential Program was small at first. By 10 November 1961 the initial authorized increase of 100 in the 685-man MAAG had not yet been completed. In all, there were about 900 US military men in South Vietnam, including US personnel sent to help carry out other military aspects of the Presidential Program, such as the provision of radar surveillance facilities, civic action teams, and a center to test new techniques of guerrilla warfare. In contrast, a little over one month later (after the Taylor Mission and further decisions on US assistance), the MAAG had a strength of 1,124 men. Including support units of various types, the United States then had a total of 2,275 military personnel in South Vietnam.[38]

Border Control

One aspect of the South Vietnamese insurgency that was to have more and more emphasis as time went on was the problem of infiltration from North Vietnam, which in 1961 came mostly through Laos. Estimating that the Viet Cong were infiltrating into the RVN at the rate of about 700 a month, some US officials recommended breaking off the Geneva Conference on Laos, and using both local and, if necessary, US forces, to clean out the communist forces in southern Laos.[39]

forces (U)," 13 Jan 62 (derived from JCS 2343/67), same file, sec 5.

38. (TS) CINCPAC Command History, 1961, pp. 33, 174. (TS GP 3) SM-1394-61 to SecDef, 20 Dec 61, JMF 9155.3/9105 (28 Nov 61). (S) Status Rpts of the President's Program, 13 Oct; 27 Oct; 10 Nov; JMF 9155.3/9105 (27 Apr 61) A.

39. (S) Minutes, TFVN Mtgs of 22 & 26 Jun 61, Vietnam Working Group Files, Dept of State.

The argument for attacking the problem of Vietnam by preventive action in Laos gained support from the seeming hopelessness of trying to seal the Laos/RVN frontier. In August, asked by Mr. McNamara for their comments on the border-control aspect of the Presidential Program, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not encouraging. The MAAG's concept of relying on border patrols and intelligence would help, they said; but aerial surveillance was handicapped by difficult terrain, vague boundaries, and a lack of aircraft. Two weeks later the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that the United States could cut the flow of communist support to the Viet Cong substantially if it chose to intervene openly. They believed, however, that such action would probably provoke open Chinese Communist countermeasures.[40]

By the fall of 1961 the problem of border control had assumed such proportions that the United States began consideration of stronger and broader measures. Early in October the Deputy Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their views on two concepts calling for the employment of SEATO forces in border control. One would put SEATO forces on the 17th parallel to free the ARVN for offensive operations; the other would put them at the greatest possible number of entry points along the entire South Vietnamese frontier. The Joint Chiefs of Staff found neither feasible. Any concept for the defense of Southeast Asia that did not include Laos, they said, was militarily unsound. "What is needed is not the spreading out of our forces throughout Southeast Asia but rather a concentrated effort in Laos where a firm stand can be taken saving all or substantially all of Laos which would, at the same time, protect Thailand and protect the borders of South Vietnam." They recommended intervention in Laos or, if that was considered politically unacceptable, deployment of a SEATO force of about 11,000 (one division) to South Vietnam, concentrated initially in the high plateau region around Pleiku. This would free some South Vietnamese forces for offensive action against the Viet Cong and would secure an especially vulnerable border area. These

40. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-529-61 to SecDef, 9 Aug 61 (derived from JCS 2343/8), 9 Aug 61, JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 4. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-583-61 to SecDef, 24 Aug 61 (derived from JCS 2343/15), 24 Aug 61, same file, secs 4 and 5.

recommendations were shelved because the United States Government decided to continue to seek a negotiated settlement in Laos.[41]

On 8 November CHMAAG submitted to CINCPAC an elaboration of his patrol bases plan, calling for 25 bases on the western border of South Vietnam, each one consisting of two or more companies of ARVN, rangers, or trained Civil Guards. CINCPAC approved the plan and on 4 December President Diem did also, but by the end of the year the GVN still had not released 5,000 Rangers needed to put the plan in operation. However, 3,000 Montagnards had been recruited and were in training at the beginning of 1962 for patrol work in the northern part of the country.[42]

Aggressive patrolling action on both sides of the Laos border was the key to the plan. Full use would be made of ambush, especially at night, using all standard and experimental harrassing agents that might prove effective and could be supplied. Mobility and flexibility would be important, with Rangers, ARVN elements, and Civil Guards operating out of patrol bases. Rangers would operate in the more rugged border areas, blocking known crossing points and trails. Less active areas would be manned by the ARVN and Civil Guard.

At the first Honolulu meeting in December 1961, Secretary McNamara stated that the border control plan impressed him as a very important phase of operations in South Vietnam, and he urged immediate action. General McGarr warned against expecting too much of any border control program, pointing out that while it would reduce infiltration, it could not place a tight seal along the border.[43]

The Uncertainties of Mid-1961

By the end of the summer, the ceasefire in Laos was tremely precarious, and the Viet Cong in South Vietnam had sumed the offensive.

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41. (S) Desp, Saigon 351 to State, 14 Feb 61. (S) Status Rpt of the President's Program, 13 Oct 61, JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 1A. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 5 Oct 61, Encl to JCS 2343/24, 6 Oct 61; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-716-61 to SecDef, 9 Oct 61 (derived from JCS 2343/25); JMF 9155.3/9105 (5 Oct 61).

42. (S-GP 4) MAAG, "Plan for Reduction of Border Infiltration," 5 Nov 61, Encl to JCS 2343/41, 16 Nov 61, JMF 9155.3/9105 (8 Nov 61). (TS) CINCPAC Command History, 1961, pp. 182-183.

43. (TS-GP 2) Rpt, Honolulu Conference, 16 Dec 61.

In August the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent Brigadier General William A. Craig to Southeast Asia with a team to survey the areas in Laos, Thailand, and South Vietnam where US troops might be located if SEATO Plan 5, for intervention in Laos, were put into effect. General Craig reported that Laotian leadership, logistics, training, discipline, and morale were all poor or nonexistent. The enemy was in a position to take any city or area in Laos at will. There was a strong possibility of the resumption of combat at the end of the rainy season, with the enemy concentrating on the route into the RVN through Laos. General Craig recommended that Plan 5, or "suitable variations," be set in motion so that SEATO forces could be in position by the end of the rainy season.

In South Vietnam, General Craig had found Ambassador Nolting in agreement with him that the immediate problem was "positive action in Laos." He also reported that President Diem would now accept a US brigade or division in South Vietnam as "school troops." He definitely wanted US troops on the ground "when the balloon goes up."[44]

But the United States decided against a military solution in Laos and made renewed efforts to negotiate a settlement. The situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. In mid-August an intelligence report on Vietnam described a restive political situation in the RVN. Chances of a coup had been reduced, but dissatisfaction among military officers and other government officials remained. On the fighting front there was a formidable VC hard core of more than 12,000 men, augmented by several thousand irregulars, with good intelligence and probably good morale, since few defected to the GVN. More than half of the Mekong delta as well as several areas northwest of Saigon were controlled by the Viet Cong. In those areas they collected taxes, directed the harvest, controlled the distribution of farm produce, conducted indoctrination programs, and drafted recruits. They had also begun setting up overt party organizations and local governments. The USIB judged that the combination of noncommunist disaffection and the communist political and psychological campaign being

44. (TS) Msg, JCS 1126 to Craig, 142236Z Aug 61, JMF 9050/5420 (10 Aug 61). (TS) Craig Rpt, Encl to DJSM-1259-61, 13 Oct 61, same file.

waged in the name of the National Liberation Front (NLF) was as great a threat as the VC paramilitary effort. The NLF could become the nucleus of a government set up in a "liberated" area or a replacement for the GVN in the event of a successful coup.[45]

September saw a sharp upswing in VC activity, including a successful large-scale attack at Ban Me Thuot, a provincial capital 55 miles from Saigon. The new offensive seemed to be concentrated in the central plateau where VC attacks were increasing in size and frequency. Their units were more aggressive, better organized and directed, and better equipped. CHMAAG reported what looked like a significant increase in VC capabilities on the plateau along with unconfirmed reports of a sizable DRV troop concentration in southern Laos. A J-2 report surmised that the Viet Cong had entered a new phase of operations, one in which they would use battalion-sized units organized more nearly on conventional lines. Hard core VC strength was estimated in September at 16,500. Early in October a CIA operations officer back from Vietnam reported to the Task Force Vietnam that the situation was worse than generally thought in Washington. He cited the "alarming growth" of VC strength in the last few months and a lack of cooperation by the GVN. Colonel Levy, the JCS Representative on the Task Force, also recently back from Vietnam, was not as pessimistic, but said that the United States clearly would have to do more than it was doing. The temperature of the Southeast Asian problem, which had subsided somewhat with the ceasefire in Laos in May and the onset of the monsoon, was again on the rise. And the end of the rainy season was at hand.[46]

By 22 September the State and Defense Departments had told their representatives in Saigon that the deterioration in Laos, the Viet Cong attacks in the RVN in September, and the end of the rainy season required an emergency US program. They asked for a list of actions, to be taken within 30 days, that would help prevent the establishment of a VC base on RVN territory near the Lao border, stop VC infiltration, and "maintain offensive momentum" against the Viet Cong. General McGarr thought the message indicated that State Department

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45. (S-GP 1) NIE 14.3/53-61.

46. (S) J-2 Current Intelligence Briefs, 11, 22, 25, 26, 28, and 29 Sep 61. (S) Minutes, TFVN Mtg of 4 Oct 61, Vietnam Working Group Files, Dept of State. Another indicator of stepped-up activity was that both GVN and VC casualties were running 700-1,200 a month by mid-1961.

officials had only recently begun "reading their mail" about the situation in Vietnam. In a letter to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 12 October, he reviewed his running battles with the GVN, the British, and officials in the State Department. He condemned the "Washington civilians" who he claimed were now pressing for a timetable for victory in Vietnam. He did not want the military blamed for a situation "which is not of its own making and for which it has not been adequately supported by our country."[47]

American officials charged with helping the RVN survive in 1961 faced paradoxical difficulties. The needed increase in GVN military counterinsurgency efforts would require involving more people in a war that to many South Vietnamese seemed undesirable. Any increase in US assistance to the GVN also lent support to the charge of colonialism, which the Viet Minh had used so successfully against the French. Perhaps most perplexing of all was the problem of Diem himself, given the complex of qualities that on the one hand made him the pre-eminent leader of his country and on the other inhibited the fulfillment of his responsibilities. Americans, both civilian and military, agreed that in order to organize effectively against the Viet Cong, Diem must delegate more authority and allow more initiative to subordinates, especially to his military commanders. But Diem, both because of his temperament and in order to forestall a coup, retained all power in his own hands.[48]

The Presidential Program had been aimed primarily at improving US relations with Diem as the means of improving the performance of his government and military forces. As Ambassador Nolting put it, the "first commandment" of the program was to build Diem's confidence. The United States would be able to bring about "ameliorations and improvements" gradually, "in proportion to the confidence which he has in us and in his ability to make concessions without slipping." General McGarr had been delighted with this new approach to the Diem problem and thought the Embassy's assessment "logical and sound." But he had warned that the insurgency would not be defeated overnight and not before "the necessary degree of material support has been both received and committed to the fight."[49]

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47. (S) Msg, State-Def 337 to Saigon, 22 Sep 61. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 12 Oct 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

48. (S-GP 4) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 1 Aug 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

49. (S) Msg, Saigon 70 to State, 14 Jul 61. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 15 Jul 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

Apart from the increasing size of the RVN forces during the latter half of the year, the measurable results of the Presidential Program were small. Ambassador Nolting had reported on 14 July that although the announcement of the program had probably reduced the likelihood of a coup, the net security situation appeared no better than it had been two months before. Despite some noteworthy improvements in RVNAF operations at Bonh Vinh and Kien Phong in June and July, the outlook of US officials in Saigon was uneasy.[50]

As conditions in both Laos and South Vietnam continued to deteriorate in August and September, US officials in Washington began to look for alternatives.

50. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 15 Jul 61; (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 24 Jul 61; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam. (S) Msg, Saigon 70 to State, 14 Jul 61.

Chapter 3

A NEW PHASE: POLICY AND MILITARY OPERATIONS

The intensified pace of the guerrilla war brought South Vietnam forcefully to the attention of the President in the fall of 1961. In a dramatic demonstration of what they could do, the Viet Cong on 18 September overran Ban Me Thuot, a provincial capital 55 miles from Saigon. They beheaded the province chief, captured a supply of arms and ammunition, and departed before a relief force arrived.

President Diem warned that the communists might succeed in cutting South Vietnam in half, isolating Hue from Saigon. He declared a state of national emergency and requested an increase in US aid. He also asked for US troops or at least a formal commitment to send them, "because of Laos situation." Diem specifically asked for tactical aviation, helicopter companies, coastal patrol forces, and logistic support.[1]

On 25 September 1961, in an address to the United Nations, President Kennedy singled out the situations in Southeast Asia and Berlin as the foremost threats to the peace of the world. He linked the problems in Laos and South Vietnam and made a special point of the fact that Laotian territory was being used to infiltrate South Vietnam.[2]

Taylor-Rostow Mission

On 11 October President Kennedy decided to raise the US ante in the war against the Viet Cong. He directed the introduction of the USAF JUNGLE JIM Squadron for the "initial purpose" of training South Vietnamese forces. He also ordered guerrilla ground action, "including use of US advisors if necessary," against communist aerial resupply missions in the Tchepone (Laos) area. Other decisions included planning for presenting evidence of North Vietnamese aggression to the ICC

1. Hilsman, To Move A Nation, p. 421. (S) Msg, Saigon 508 to State, 18 Oct 61.
2. Public Papers of the Presidents, John F. Kennedy, 1961, p. 624.

and the United Nations, and preparation for publication of a report on North Vietnamese support and direction of the insurgency in South Vietnam. Before taking further action, the President decided to send General Maxwell D. Taylor, the Military Representative of the President, to South Vietnam to "explore ways in which assistance of all types might be more effective." General Taylor was accompanied by Mr. W.W. Rostow of the White House staff, Sterling Cottrell, Director of the Task Force Vietnam, and representatives of the Departments of State and Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, ICA and CIA. The group was in Southeast Asia from 15 October to 3 November 1961.3

General Taylor characterized the situation as serious but salvageable. The Laos negotiations had produced uncertainty in South Vietnam about the determination of the United States to defend the RVN. This feeling had exacerbated an already serious problem brought on by the recent VC offensive and a disastrous flood in the southwest. The factors had combined to create a pervasive crisis of confidence and loss of South Vietnamese national morale. General Taylor cited most of the same military problems that the United States had been trying to solve for the past two years: the absence of reliable intelligence, poor command and control arrangements, and poor mobility, all reinforcing one another, leading to a "defensive military disposition of resources and a progressive deterioration in the military position of the ARVN."

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3. (TS) NSAM 104, "Southeast Asia," 13 Oct 61, Att to (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/30, 18 Oct 61, JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Oct 61). JUNGLE JIM was an AF unit organized to support antiguerrilla and paramilitary operations, to train native air forces in antiguerrilla techniques, and to participate in R7D testing. The first detachment consisting of 8 T-28's, 4 SC-47's, and 4 RB-26's with about 230 men began arriving in South Vietnam on 14 Nov 61.

The State Department had sent William Jorden, a member of its Policy Planning Council, to gather evidence of DRV aggression in the RVN. He was in South Vietnam from 26 Aug to 22 Sep. His report, showing that the insurgency in the RVN was directed by Hanoi, was published as a State Department white paper on 8 Dec 61. (S) Minutes, TFVN Mtgs of 6 and 20 Sep 61, Vietnam Working Group Files, Dept of State. Dept of State Pub 7308, A Threat to the Peace, Dec 61.

The fact that there was no one of comparable rank to Taylor and Rostow from the State Dept is cited by both Roger Hilsman and Arthur Schlesinger as evidence that the SecState

across international boundaries and the direction of guerrilla war from outside a sovereign nation" a new form of aggression. He had also warned that "this is a fact which the whole international community must confront and whose consequent responsibilities it must accept. Without such international action those against whom aggression is mounted will be driven inevitably to seek out and engage the ultimate source of the aggression they confront."5

The basic question raised by the Taylor Report was how far the United States was willing to go to prevent the fall of South Vietnam to the communists. By 7 November the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed on a memorandum for the President proposing acceptance of the strong implication of the Taylor Report that US ground forces were necessary to sustain the small nation. Furthermore, they believed South Vietnam was important enough to justify committing US troops. They stated that the fall of South Vietnam to communism would lead to the fairly rapid extension of communist control in the rest of Southeast Asia; the strategic implications of this would be "extremely serious." They believed that short of introducing US forces on a substantial scale, the chances were sharply against preventing that fall. They were "inclined to recommend that we do commit the U.S. to the clear objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to communism and that we support this commitment by the necessary military actions." In the event the commitment was agreed upon, they supported General Taylor's recommendations as the first steps toward its fulfillment. The Defense officials also concluded that "the other side can be convinced we mean business only if we accompany the initial force introduction by a clear commitment to the full objective . . . , accompanied by a warning through some channel to Hanoi that continued support to Viet Cong will lead to punitive retaliation against North Vietnam."6

The Secretary of Defense discussed the proposed policy with the Secretary of State, who initially agreed, but subsequently opposed sending US troops to South Vietnam. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Taylor insisted

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5. Speech, 28 Jun 61, Dept of State Bulletin, XLV (7 Aug 61) pp. 233-238.

6. (TS) Memo, SecDef to President, "South Vietnam;" 7 Nov 61; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-685-61 to SecDef, 9 Nov 61, Encl to JCS 2343/36, 9 Nov 61; JMF 9155.3 (13 Oct 61) sec 1.

that a US presence was essential to save South Vietnam, the State Department view carried the day. In their joint recommendation to the President on 11 November Secretaries McNamara and Rusk recommended a clear US commitment to prevent the fall of South Vietnam, but they divided their proposals on the commitment of US forces to South Vietnam into two categories. "Units of modest size required for the direct support of South Viet-Namese military effort, such as communications, helicopters and other forms of airlift, reconnaissance aircraft, naval patrols, intelligence units, etc. . . . should be introduced as speedily as possible." They recommended, however, that the President defer the decision to send "larger organized units with actual or potential direct military missions," at least until after agreement on a Laotian settlement. Another reason for delaying this decision was to allow time to arrange for a multilateral commitment, possibly within the context of SEATO.[7]

As a result of these recommendations, a program that was to govern US policy for the next two years was approved by the President on 15 November, as NSAM 111. Ambassador Nolting was instructed to tell President Diem that the United States was prepared to join the GVN in a "sharply increased joint effort" to cope with the Viet Cong threat and the ravages of the flood if the GVN was prepared to "carry out an effective and total mobilization of its own resources." Specifically, the United States expected the GVN to take the following steps:

a. Prompt and appropriate legislative and administrative action to put the nation on a wartime footing to mobilize its entire resources. (This would include a decentralization and broadening of the Government so as to realize the full potential of all non-Communist elements in the country willing to contribute to the common struggle.)

b. The vitalization of appropriate governmental wartime agencies with adequate authority to perform their functions effectively.

7. (TS) Memo, Secys State/Def to Pres, 11 Nov 61, Encl to JCS 2343/40, 13 Nov 61, JMF 9155.3 (13 Oct 61) sec 1.

c. Overhaul of the military establishment and command structure so as to create an effective military organization for the prosecution of the war and assure a mobile offensive capability for the Army.

The GVN's obligations were purposely "broadly phrased," Ambassador Nolting was told, but he was instructed to make it quite clear that the US contribution to the program depended heavily on "real administrative, political, and social reform." Diem was to come forth with changes that would be "recognized as having real substance and meaning." As in the Presidential Program, however, the details of these reforms and the manner of their negotiation with Diem were left to the judgment of the Ambassador. In any case, the decision to support South Vietnam against the communist insurgents had been made because it was considered important to US interests, and the United States prepared to deliver the goods before Diem began to deliver on his promises.

On its part, the United States would immediately take the following actions in support of the GVN:

a. Provide increased air lift to the GVN forces, including helicopters, light aviation, and transport aircraft, manned to the extent necessary by United States uniformed personnel and under United States operational control.

b. Provide such additional equipment and United States uniformed personnel as may be necessary for air reconnaissance, photography, instruction in and execution of air-ground support techniques, and for special intelligence.

c. Provide the GVN with some small craft, including such United States uniformed advisers and operating personnel as may be necessary for operations in effecting surveillance and control over coastal waters and inland waterways.

d. Provide expedited training and equipping of the civil guard and the self-defense corps with the objective of relieving the regular army of static missions and freeing it for mobile offensive operations.

e. Provide such personnel and equipment as may be necessary to improve the military-political intelligence system beginning at the provincial level and extending upward through the Government and the armed forces to the Central Intelligence Organization.

f. Provide such new terms of reference, reorganization and additional personnel for United States military forces as are required for increased United States military assistance in the operational collaboration with the GVN and operational direction of U.S. forces, and to carry out the other increased responsibilities which accrue to the U.S. authorities under these recommendations.

g. Provide such increased economic aid as may be required to permit the GVN to pursue a vigorous flood relief and rehabilitation program, to supply material in support of the security efforts, and to give priority to projects in support of this expanded counter-insurgency program. [The Ambassador was told that this could include increases in military pay, a full supply of a wide range of materials such as food; medical supplies, transportation equipment, communications equipment, and any other items where material help could assist the GVN in winning the war against the Viet Cong.]

h. Encourage and support (including financial support) a request by the GVN to the FAO or any other appropriate international organization for multilateral assistance in the relief and rehabilitation of the flood area. (One objective here would be political objective of engaging widest possible multinational interest in and concern with GVN.)

i. Provide individual administrators and advisers for the Governmental machinery of South Viet-Nam in types and numbers to be agreed upon by the two Governments.

j. Provide personnel for a joint survey with the GVN of conditions in each of the provinces to assess the social, political, intelligence and military factors bearing on the prosecution of the

counterinsurgency program in order to reach a common estimate of these factors and a common determination of how to deal with them.[8]

On 13 November, even before formal approval of the new program, the Secretary of Defense had directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to launch the military actions "with all possible speed." Two weeks later Mr. McNamara instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to proceed on the assumption that Diem would agree to the US proposal. In a message to CINCPAC and CHMAAG, the Secretary explained that political uncertainty about Diem "must not prevent us from going ahead full blast . . . on all possible actions short of large scale introduction of US forces. Cost considerations particularly should be secondary in your search for new approaches."[9]

On 4 December Ambassador Nolting came to an agreement with Diem on the new program, but the "specifics" Diem agreed to fell far short of the changes "having real substance and meaning" called for in Nolting's instructions. Regarding the command structure, for instance, Diem agreed only that "a reorganization of the military command structure is necessary, and the GVN will consult with the U.S. on specific measures to this end." Among the other measures agreed to were joint provincial surveys, directed "principally to military and intelligence matters"; the release of enough ranger companies to form a border ranger force for the northwest of about 5,000 men (see above, p. 3); and exclusive US command of US naval and helicopter units. There would be closer collaboration, including the participation of US personnel in operational missions, but with the caveat that "the fundamental responsibility of the GVN for the conduct of the war will not be impaired." With regard to winning public support at home and

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8. (TS-GP 1) NSAM 111, 22 Nov 61, Encl to JCS 2343/49, 25 Nov 61; (TS) Msg, State 619 to Saigon, 15 Nov 61; JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Oct 61) sec 1.

9. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Nov 61, Encl to JCS 2343/39, 13 Nov 61, JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Oct 61) sec 1. (TS-GP 4) DJSM-1425-61 to Dir, J-1, et al., 28 Nov 61; (TS) Msg, SecDef to CINCPAC and CHMAAG, DEF 906345, 28 Nov 61; same file, sec 2.

abroad, Diem agreed to no new actions, but he cited several that had been taken in response to earlier proddings by US officials.[10]

Although Ambassador Nolting was under no illusions about this agreement, he believed that the "limited concessions" Diem was prepared to make now, and others that could be obtained "piece meal," represented "considerable headway" and justified "moving confidently ahead," as the United States had in fact begun to do. The Diem-Nolting agreement was immediately approved in Washington.[11]

The agreement was followed on the part of the United States by a flurry of diplomatic activity designed to warn the communist powers of the consequences of continued support of the Viet Cong, and to justify to the world the great increase in military assistance that the United States was undertaking. The two most important elements of the public campaign were the release of the Jorden report (see above, p. 2) as a State Department white paper entitled A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam, and a public exchange of letters between Presidents Kennedy and Diem announcing the new joint effort.

The State Department publication, in the words of the Secretary of State:

> ... documents the elaborate program of subversion, terror, and armed infiltration carried out under the direction of the authorities in Hanoi. . . . This report shows that this already considerable effort by North Viet-Nam has been accelerated sharply in recent months . . . . The pace of infiltration from the north, across the demilitarized zone, through Laos, and by sea, has been stepped up. These documents show clearly that the North Vietnamese Communists have repeatedly violated the Geneva Accords. I believe this report makes it clear that South Viet-Nam needs additional help in defending itself.

10. (S) Msg, Saigon 756 to State, 4 Dec 61, JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Oct 61) sec 2.

11. (S) Ibid. (S) Msgs, Saigon 754 to State, 3 Dec 61; State 725 to Saigon, 4 Dec 61.

Secretary Rusk also called on other countries to aid the South Vietnamese in their fight against aggression.[12]

The exchange of letters, published a week later, was a formal request for further aid from President Diem, and a reply by President Kennedy pledging a prompt increase in US assistance. Both letters again stressed the support and direction of the insurgency from Hanoi and North Vietnamese violations of the Geneva Accords. President Kennedy based the US commitment on the official declaration in 1954 that the United States "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."[13]

Although the President had turned down the Taylor recommendation for a US military presence in Vietnam, the new program represented not only a great increase in US support but a deeper US commitment. An approved FY 1962 MAP of $108 million became $144 million, with economic aid raising the total for FY 1962 to $278 million. Within a year the number of US support forces generated by the new program was to surpass the figure of 8,000 combat troops envisioned in the Taylor recommendation. It would be another three years before US ground combat forces went ashore in Vietnam, but US helicopter and other support units were going into action.[14]

The Taylor program was a big step forward in US involvemen in the war in Vietnam. In the CIP the United States had offered a prescription for defeating the Viet Cong with a promise of more US aid. In the Presidential Program the United States increased its aid in order to increase Diem's confidence and his freedom of action. The Taylor program reflected a deeper US commitment to win the war, but it was not unambiguous. Despite the increased commitment the President had refused to commit the United States explicitly to prevent the fall of South Vietnam, and for the time being, at least, had refused to employ US combat troops. A White House staff member at the time, Arthur Schlesinger, says the President believed the war could only be won so long as it was "their" war; if it became a white man's war, the United

12. Dept of State Bulletin, XLV (25 Dec 61), 1053.
13. Ibid., XLVI (1 Jan 62), pp. 13-14.
14. (U) Special Rpt, "US Overseas Loans and Grants, 1 Jul 45-30 Jun 64," AID, Stat & Rpts Div, p. 69.

States would lose as the French had done. But although he complained occasionally about being "overcommitted" in South Vietnam and Southeast Asia, he would not refuse to give more of the same kind of assistance that had been given in the past, if it was necessary to avoid disrupting the balance of power and security structure of the region, where so many countries had based their policies on continued US involvement. Perhaps larger considerations also affected the President's decision--the recent truculence of the USSR over Berlin and the resumption of nuclear testing may have made him feel that retreating in Asia would upset the whole world balance of power.[15]

Operations: McNamara Takes Command

The Secretary of Defense assumed personal command of the US effort in the RVN in late November 1961. In matters large and small he made decisions that, in other times, would have been taken by CINCPAC, the Service Chiefs, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In a personal message to CINCPAC and CHMAAG he said, "Situation in Vietnam causing great concern here. I have consulted with JCS on creating continuous personal contact to review progress and see what more we can do within framework of present policy." He informed them he had decided to meet with them in Honolulu at Headquarters PACOM each month, starting on 16 December.[16]

Of the ten broad joint undertakings set forth by the President in NSAM 111, six were essentially military. On 27 November, Secretary McNamara charged the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop and submit to him concepts, plans, and specific requirements for carrying out the actions to accomplish these

15. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 547, who also quotes the President as follows: "They want a force of American troops. They say it's necessary in order to restore confidence and maintain morale. But it will be just like Berlin. The troops will march in; the bands will play; the crowds will cheer; and in four days everyone will have forgotten. Then we will be told we have to send in more troops. It's like taking a drink. The effect wears off, and you have to take another." Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 420.

16. (TS) Msg, SecDef to CINCPAC and CHMAAG, DEF 906345, 28 Nov 61.

military aims. He also asked them to submit semiweekly status reports on RVN military actions, to be passed on to the White House.[17]

Assuming that US-GVN agreement on the new joint program would be reached by 10 December, the Secretary of Defense met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 November to decide the first specific measures in Project BEEF UP, the name given to the program in NSAM 111. Some of the measures taken by the United States were aimed at immediate ends. Others, by broadening the support base, could support contingency operations by US forces if necessary. Immediately after the 4 December agreement between President Diem and Ambassador Nolting, the buildup began. By the first of the year, largely as a result of the decisions taken on 27 November, greatly increased amounts of US equipment and numbers of military personnel were flowing into South Vietnam to implement the first three objectives of the Presidential decision: i.e., increased airlift; improved air reconnaissance, air-ground support, and special intelligence; and better coastal surveillance and control. The flow of additional men, weapons, and materiel to South Vietnam was accompanied by an increase in the size of the US MAAG, despite limitations set by the Geneva Accords. The President had approved exceeding the authorized force ceilings, without publicity, and at the 27 November meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff the Secretary of Defense had approved a MAAG strength of 1,905 men by the end of FY 1962.[18]

The three other US objectives of a military nature concerned GVN intelligence capabilities, training of paramilitary forces, and reorganization of the US military assistance operations in South Vietnam. Implementation of US plans to improve the GVN's military-political intelligence system at all levels would begin about 1 January 1962. This would include placing US intelligence personnel at all levels of the RVNAF. provided Diem gave his approval.

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17. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to SecArmy et al., "First Phase of Viet-Nam Program," 27 Nov 61, JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Oct 61) sec 2. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-814-61 to SecDef, 22 Nov 61, same file, sec 1.

18. (TS) Note to Control Div, "South Vietnam" 28 Nov 61; (TS-GP 3) DJSM-1425-61 to Director, J-1 et al., 28 Nov 61; (TS-GP 3) Talking Paper for CJCS, 4 Jan 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (21 Oct 61) sec 2.

The program of training the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps was especially urgent, because these paramilitary forces were to relieve the ARVN of static defense missions and free it for mobile offensive operations against the Viet Cong. Even before the President's November decisions the United States had greatly increased its aid to these forces, but at the end of 1961 they were still poorly equipped and few were trained. CHMAAG had reported that, of the total 68,000-man force planned for the Civil Guard, 32,000 would be trained by the end of 1962, the remainder not until the end of 1963.

The slow pace of the training program prompted Mr. McNamara to ask if using more US personnel would speed up training. General McGarr explained that getting the GVN to release men for training and a lack of facilities were slowing him up, not a shortage of US trainers. However, following Secretary McNamara's insistence that the training of these forces be hastened, CHMAAG cut the length of the training period in half, from twenty-four to twelve weeks. In this fashion, the proposed 72,000-man force could be trained by the end of 1962, using 12 Mobile Training Teams (MTT) to supplement six training centers. CHMAAG felt that the Civil Guard's training time could not be reduced further without impairing its effective employment.

By February 1962 the Civil Guard had a strength of 67,300. CHMAAG had recommended an increase in this strength to 72,000 by the end of FY 1962. President Diem, however, had said he needed 101,000 men in the Civil Guard, and General McGarr had agreed that further increases would probably be necessary as the tempo of clearing actions increased.

Although the Civil Guard was under the GVN Defense Department for training and operations, in actual practice it was assigned to province chiefs for operational employment. In operations involving Civil Guard cooperation with the ARVN, this practice put the province chief in the chain of command, an undesirable feature in the view of US officials.

The Self Defense Corps was authorized a MAP-supported strength of 49,200 but had an actual strength by February 1962 of 61,700. General McGarr had recommended a supported strength of 60,000 men while President Diem wanted 115,000. The SDC recruits, whose training was even less thorough than that of the Civil Guard, were given only a six week course, mainly designed to increase their confidence and to instruct them in firing their individual weapons. Thirty provincial training sites for training the Self Defense Corps had been completed by 15 February. Obsolete French weapons formed the principal

part of their armament, but the United States planned to furnish the Self Defense Corps with carbines, pistols, shotguns, and submachine guns under the MAP. SDC forces, however, received no weapon issue until they had been trained. In January 1962 Secretary McNamara noted that only half of the Self Defense Corps had any US arms and said that some means should be found to speed the provision of weapons for the SDC. General McGarr observed that to give them arms without training would amount to furnishing arms to the Viet Cong. Secretary McNamara nevertheless directed that 40,000 additional carbines (37,000 were already in the country) be made available from US sources. He directed at the January meeting that as additional training facilities and weapons became available, they should go first to the Self Defense Corps, then to the Civil Guard, and lastly to the ARVN.[19]

The GVN had wanted to bring in special forces troops from the Republic of China to live with and train the Self Defense Corps. On 11 November 1961 the GVN had told Ambassador Nolting it wished to import between 3,000 to 5,000 of these troops from Taiwan if the United States approved. Both McGarr and Nolting had urged prompt and serious consideration, with a view to approval, but the State Department, fearing the political consequences, had vetoed the idea.

By mid-February CHMAAG had recommended a phased expansion of the GVN force capability to a total strength of the Civil Guard at 90,000 by the end of 1964 and for the Self Defense Corps a strength of 80,000 by the same date. He believed that the ARVN, with a current strength of 186,000, should be at a level of 225,000 men by that time.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense on 13 January 1962 that all of the support actions promised Diem by President Kennedy in November and December had either been put into effect or authorized. With the machinery in motion, growing numbers of advisors and technicians and quantities of new weapons and equipment continued to swell the US investment in the RVN during January and February.

A primary concern of the United States had been to place more Americans in close contact with RVN military commanders and soldiers. Although Diem had expressed concern about

19. (TS-GP 3) Records, Honolulu Conference, Jan and Feb. 62.

giving the impression that the United States was directing the war effort, thus "giving the monopoly on nationalism to Ho Chi Minh," he had agreed to allow this increase in the advisory effort, so long as each category of advisors was cleared with him on a case-by-case basis. CHMAAG had determined that three officers and two enlisted men should be sent to each battalion, one officer and two enlisted men to each regiment. The Civil Guard was to have 12 teams of three men and 20 additional advisors in each of six training centers. Three US advisors would be stationed in each province. In the field of Special Forces training, one of growing importance, five teams totalling 68 men would be assigned, most of them with the mountain tribal groups operating as border control elements. At Honolulu on 15 January, the Secretary of Defense directed that these advisors be sent to RVN as soon as possible.[20]

By 10 February 1962 the MAAG had 1,622 men and officers in the RVN and other military units and support agencies had 3,441, for a grand total of 5,063. The projected strength total for Americans in RVN by the end of June 1962 stood at 8,326 with 3,418 in MAAG and the remainder to serve in the other military units and agencies.[21]

The New Command

In November 1961 the President had also decided that the new program would require a new command "to organize all US bits and pieces in South Vietnam . . . ." Consequently, the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to recommend a command structure and a commander, who would report directly to them. CINCPAC objected to this arrangement, however, on the grounds that Southeast Asia should be treated as a strategic entity and that US contingency plans were geared to the area as a whole. Supporting CINCPAC's position, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended on 22 November a subordinate unified command similar to those in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, with access to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense through CINCPAC.[22]

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20. (TS-GP 3) Record, Honolulu Conference, 16 Dec 61 and 15 Jan 62.

21. (TS-GP 3) SM-192-62 to SecDef, 14 Feb 62, (hereafter cited as "Rpt Project 'Beef-Up' 14 Feb 62"); JMF 9155/9105 (28 Nov 61) sec 2.

22. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 141212Z Nov 61; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Nov 61, Encl to JCS 2343/38, 13 Nov 61; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-812-61 to SecDef, 22 Nov 61, (derived from JCS 2343/46); JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Nov 61).

In January 1962 the Secretary of Defense approved the JCS recommendation. He asked them to nominate a commander for the subordinate unified command as soon as possible, approving four-star rank for the commander. The President approved the terms of reference for the new commander, who was given direct responsibility for all US military policy, operations, and assistance in South Vietnam. He was also granted authority to discuss both US and GVN military operations directly with President Diem and other GVN leaders, and given responsibility for advising the GVN on all matters relating to the security of South Vietnam and to the organization and employment of the RVNAF and of counterinsurgency or other paramilitary forces.

On 3 February Ambassador Nolting reported that President Diem had concurred in the establishment of the new command. To avoid giving the impression that the United States had taken over the direction of the war effort, however, Diem insisted that it be made clear that a civilian remained the head of the US mission in South Vietnam. According to the final State-Defense agreement on the functions and command relationships of the new command, the US Ambassador was responsible for "political and basic policy matters," but if a difference of view existed, both the Ambassador and the military commander were free to communicate their positions to Washington through their separate channels for decision. Each was responsible for keeping the other fully informed, especially on all high-level contacts with the GVN, major military matters, and pending operations. The title of the new command was US Military Assistance Command (USMACV). CINCPAC was authorized to establish, effective 8 February 1962, this subordinate unified command, which would "exercise operational command over all US military forces in Vietnam, including MAAG, South Vietnam." General Paul D. Harkins, USA, was designated COMUSM

Trouble with Diem

Within a week after the first Honolulu meeting in December 1961, Admiral Felt had complained that the GVN was not holding up its end of the bargain. "An important part

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23. (S) Msg, Saigon 1008 to State, 3 Feb 62; (S)Msg, JCS 3180 to CINCPAC, 062339Z Feb 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Nov 61) sec 2. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1962, pp. 152-153.

of the CIP," he stated, "was the establishment of an overall military command to control the military counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam. The provision of broadened authority to the Army Field Command under General Minh was to meet this requirement." But Diem refused to delegate the appropriate authority or to permit a concentration of military forces under a single commander for fear of a coup against his regime. By thus negating the possibility of an effective command structure, he was adversely affecting military planning and operations. "Unless Diem is willing to permit his military commanders to plan for and conduct operations within clear-cut military channels, victory against the VC certainly is doubtful within a reasonable time frame," said Admiral Felt. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to "facilitate" Department of State direction to Ambassador Nolting to induce Diem to cooperate more openly and frankly.

Diem found a supporter in General Lansdale, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations. General Lansdale told the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 27 December that "US policy is to support Diem and he has been so informed by the President. We know that Big Minh has been outspoken about a coup. Diem certainly knows about the way Big Minh has been talking, also. Now we ask Diem to give practical control of his military forces to a man who has talked about a coup. What realistic assurances can we give Diem that the action he fears won't take place"? General Lansdale declared that the increased US military stake in Vietnam should afford some means for stabilizing the political relationships within the GVN long enough for all concerned to get on with the war.[24]

When Ambassador Nolting visited Washington early in January 1962, he met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and discussed the military problem in RVN. He stated that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should not be too concerned by Diem's failure to implement the outline campaign plan (see Chapter 4); Diem had some hard military choices to make. Insofar as the Diem/Minh relationship was concerned, all the Ambassador could say was that Diem claimed to have given General Minh full authority; Minh said he had not.

24. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Lansdale to CJCS, 27 Dec 61, "Vietnamese Cmd. Prob.," OCJCS File 091 Korea (27 Dec 61).

The Ambassador believed that the strength of the RVNAF should level off at 205,000 men, and that the US effort should then be to strengthen the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps, and free the seven divisions of the ARVN to go c the offensive. He also believed that Washington must find some way to reduce the pressure for a quick victory in RVN, pointing out that the counterinsurgency was not the kind of a war in which such results could be expected.[25]

In spite of Ambassador Nolting's optimism about Diem, the Joint Chiefs of Staff remained seriously disturbed by the signs of disunity and lack of firm military progress. Just prior to the second Honolulu meeting on 15 January 1962, they gave the Secretary of Defense a detailed statement of their views along with some unusually strong recommendations.

After warning of the serious, specific dangers to US security that would result from the fall of South Vietnam and the mainland of Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Mr. McNamara that, with few exceptions, all of the military actions directed as a result of the President's decision to "advise and support South Vietnam but not at this time engage unilaterally in combat," had either been implemented or authorized for implementation. "Unfortunately, our contributi are not being properly employed by the South Vietnamese Govern ment and major portions of the agreement have either not been carried out or are being delayed by Diem." So far, no militar or diplomatic efforts at any level had motivated Diem to act on US advice or to use properly the resources sent him by the United States. To the Joint Chiefs of Staff it appeared that Diem gave lip service to saving his country but took no positi action to accomplish this. He displayed an uncompromising inflexibility and doubted the judgment, ability, and loyalty of his military leaders; recent intelligence reports of coup d'etat plotting among senior RVNAF officers had tended to conf his doubts concerning the loyalty of some of his military lead

However, "if Diem goes," the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointe out,

> we can be sure of losing his strengths but we cannot be sure of remedying his weaknesses. Achievement of

25. (TS-GP 3). Talking Paper, J-3 for CJCS, "Current Actions and Requirements in Viet-Nam (U)," 4 Jan 62, w/hand-written Summary of Discussion on reverse, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (4 Jan 62).

> US objectives could be more difficult without Diem than with him. . . .the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that there is an immediate requirement for making a strong approach to Diem on a Government to Government level. If we are to assist South Vietnam, we must convince Diem that (a) there is no alternative to the establishment of a sound basis upon which both he and the United States Government can work and (b) he has an urgent requirement for advice, as well as assistance, in military, political and economic matters.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff then proposed that the United States pledge to support Diem and seek to prevent his overthrow if, in turn, Diem would let his military commanders carry out the approved plans to defeat the Viet Cong, stop procrastinating, and assure that the advice and assistance from the United States was used by all echelons of the GVN. Ambassador Nolting should warn Diem that if he did not cooperate, "the United States foresees failure of our joint efforts to save Vietnam from communist conquest." If Diem cooperated and used his armed forces effectively, but "the Viet Cong is still not brought under control," the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw no alternative but to introduce US military combat units along with those of other free Asian nations.[26] The Secretary of Defense was less pessimistic about the situation in RVN, feeling that US aid and the new program had not yet had time to show their effects. On 27 January 1962 he forwarded the JCS memorandum to the President saying, "I am not prepared to endorse the views of the Chiefs until we have had more experience with our present program in South Vietnam."[27]

Coup Attempt

An abortive attempt to kill President Diem and members of his family took place in the early morning of 27 February when two dissident fighter-bomber pilots attacked the Presidential Palace in Saigon, bombing and strafing for nearly 25

26. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-33-62 to SecDef, 13 Jan 62 (derived from JCS 2343/70), JMF 9155.3/9105 (30 Nov 61) sec 1.
27. (TS) Memo, SecDef to the Pres, 27 Jan 1962, JMF 9155.3/9105 (30 Nov 61) (1).

minutes. Although they succeeded in damaging the building heavily and in wounding 16 palace officials, the pilots failed in their mission. Diem, M. and Mme. Nhu and their children were not harmed. One of the pilots was shot down and captured; the other flew to safety in Cambodia.[28]

The attack was apparently an isolated incident, not part of a larger coordinated plot. Nevertheless, Diem temporarily grounded all fighter bombers of the VNAF and forbade them to carry bombs.

The incident, although not particularly significant in itself, was part of a vicious circle whereby Diem's administrative policies engendered discontent, and fear of a coup prevented him from loosening the reins of his personal control. As time went on, President Diem's political troubles and temperament would interfere more and more, in the eyes of US officials, with efficient conduct of the war against the Viet Cong--a war that would increasingly absorb the attention and resources of the United States and would eventually make Ngo Dinh Diem himself a casualty of the struggle.

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28. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, (Feb 24-Mar 3, 1962). p. 18616.

Chapter 4

SEARCH FOR STRATEGY

Simultaneously with efforts to build up the South Vietnamese armed forces in late 1961 and 1962, US advisors were trying to develop, and persuade the GVN to pursue, an overall strategy in the fight against the Viet Cong. The central problem was finding a way to cut off the Viet Cong from their local and outside support. Unfortunately, there was no unanimity of opinion on how best to proceed. American and South Vietnamese officials, and even the British, became involved in the debates revolving primarily around the issues of counterinsurgency training, command arrangements, regions to be emphasized in military operations, strategic hamlets, and border control.

The programs and plans developed by the United States during 1960 and 1961, embodied primarily in the CIP, had not resulted in much progress against the communist insurgency. In large part this was due to the unwillingness or inability of the GVN to carry out the provisions of the plan. Despite the increased assistance the United States was providing to South Vietnam, the United States had little positive influence on the development of GVN strategy. For example, Diem had issued directives based on the CIP that should have: 1) broadened the authority of RVNAF field commanders; 2) created corps and division tactical zones; 3) created logistic commands instead of regional commands; and 4) increased the authority of military commanders to operate within province boundaries. But these measures were put into effect with the GVN's "customary reluctance" and US officials considered them ineffectual.[1]

US Counterinsurgency Training and Planning

President Kennedy's personal interest in the problems of counterinsurgency continued to make itself felt in the innovative planning and organization of the counterinsurgency effort of the Defense Department. On 11 January 1962, the President

1. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1961, p. 170.

informed Secretary McNamara that he was not satisfied that the Department of Defense, and in particular the Army, was "according the necessary degree of attention and effort to the threat of Communist-directed subversive insurgency and guerrilla warfare. . . . The effort devoted to this challenge should be comparable in importance to preparations for conventional warfare." He instructed the Secretary of Defense to assure that this emphasis was made effective in the organization, training, equipment, and doctrine of the US armed forces. Specifically, the President directed that a general officer be designated within the Joint Staff as "the focal point" for activities dealing with problems of insurgency and guerrilla warfare, and that an Army general be assigned similar responsibilities within the Office of the Chief of Staff.[2]

Accordingly, the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA) was established in the Joint Staff on 23 February 1962, with its nucleus supplied by transferring the Subsidiary Activities Division from the J-5 Directorate. Major General Victor H. Krulak, USMC, was designated to head the new agency.[3]

The formal statement of SACSA's duties, responsibilities, and authority was approved by General Lemnitzer on 12 March 1962. SACSA would assist the Director, Joint Staff, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in all matters pertaining to insurgency and counterinsurgency operations, unconventional warfare, and psychological operations, and in related special military activities, including planning, programming, resource development and allocation, and doctrinal guidance. The Special Assistant was to furnish the Director and the Joint Chiefs of Staff with independent evaluations of DOD and national policies and recommendations on strategy, organization, and doctrine in the field of counterinsurgency.

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2. (S) Memo, Pres to SecDef, 11 Jan 62, Att to JCS 1969/287, 15 Jan 62, JMF 3360 (10 Jan 62).

3. (TS-GP 3) Briefing Sheet for CJCS, 25 Jan 62; (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Counter-Insurgency," 24 Jan 62; JMF 3360 (10 Jan 62) sec 2. (U) CM-560-62 to CSA et al., "Establishment within the Joint Staff of the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities," 23 Feb 62, JMF 5052 (17 Jan 62).

General Krulak was expected to keep himself informed on the national security aspects of politico-military developments worldwide and to identify and analyze critical areas along with programs and courses of action which the United States should follow. He would serve as the Joint Chiefs of Staff point of contact with the related activities in the Military Departments, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and other agencies of the government.[4]

Included in SACSA's duties was the provision of staff assistance to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in fulfilling his responsibilities as a member of the Special Group (Counterinsurgency), which President Kennedy had established in January 1962. The purpose of this group was to direct and unify the US effort to aid friendly countries in preventing and resisting subversive insurgency and related forms of indir aggression. It was composed of the Military Representative of the President (General Maxwell D. Taylor), the Attorney Genera (Robert F. Kennedy), the Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs (U. Alexis Johnson), the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Roswell Gilpatric), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (General Lyman L. Lemnitzer), the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (John A. McCone), the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (McGeorge Bundy), and the Administrator of the Agency for International Development (Fowler Hamilton).[5]

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, believed, however, that the degree of emphasis on counterinsurgency was excessive In mid-1962, a CIA report on the progress of the war against the Viet Cong prompted General Lemnitzer to an explicit ..... expression of his views on the subject. The report, passed or by General Lansdale, had stated:

> It is apparent that strategic hamlet and irregular defense programs are beginning to put pressure on the Viet Cong. While these will never be handled with the optimum of coordination, planning, and political delicacy, believe the GVN is doing generally

4. (U) DJSM-366-62, 12 Mar 62, w/encl, JMF 5052 (17 Jan 62).
5. (S-GP 1) Att to JCS 1969/288, 22 Jan 62, JMF 3360 (18 Jan 62).

effective job of organizing itself to engage active participation of citizenry in their own defense. Some problems may arise from fact that this technique, which is probably best method of this type of subversive war, essentially leaves regular military out of the picture. At moment regular military is active where can find targets but believe it will be increasingly obvious that it has secondary role in subversive war. (emphasis added)

The Chairman took issue especially with the underlined portions of the statement. He said,

> Recently, I have detected efforts on the part of individuals and agencies to minimize the importance of the regular military forces of a nation in counterinsurgency operations. I have taken issue with such approaches on every occasion when the opportunity presented itself. Most of the comments along this line come from Washington where I am able to deal with the situation personally. Recently, however I find that the tendency is coming from the field.

General Lemnitzer disagreed with the implication that there were two distinct kinds of combat operations - "irregular" (or "paramilitary") operations, in which the regular military establishment had no place, and conventional operations, which were the province of the regular military, and had limited application in insurgent war. He told General Lansdale: "The reality is that they are both essential, that the range of operations in this type of conflict tends to be broader than in conventional operations, and that success depends upon the application of a fully balanced mechanism--exactly as we are seeking to do in Vietnam." He denied that the regular military forces lacked capabilities for unconventional operations. He reinforced his point in a memorandum to General Taylor: ". . . the time has come for emphasizing the virtues of wider use of this valuable regular military capability for

unconventional and covert operations, and under straightforward military auspices."[6]

Civilian and military leaders in the United States and the GVN were never able fully to agree on the nature of the war in Vietnam and the best way to cope with the admittedly virulent insurgency. One widely held view was expressed by General Earle G. Wheeler, Chief of Staff, Army, in a speech at Fordham University in November 1962. What the United States was committed to support in Vietnam, he said, was

> military action. . . . It is fashionable in some quarters to say that the problems in Southeast Asia are primarily political and economic rather than military. I do not agree. The essence of the problem in Vietnam is military.

Others, especially in the State Department, viewed the problem in Vietnam as essentially political and economic. As the United States became more deeply involved in the conduct of the war in Vietnam these differences in approach affected the development of strategy for the conduct of the war.[7]

The Outline Campaign Plan

After the increased US commitment to South Vietnam in late 1961, the search for a feasible strategic concept to cut off support from the Viet Cong and eliminate them by military action began again in earnest. At Honolulu on 16 December 1961, CINCPAC presented an Outline Campaign Plan developed in cooperation with CHMAAG. The plan was intended as a guide to the RVNAF in implementing a geographically-phased field campaign against the Viet Cong. It was based on the reasoning that South Vietnam fell into two areas for the purpose of field operations. One area, the north and central sections of South Vietnam (I and II Corps Tactical Zones), was sparsely

6. (TS-NOFORN) Memo, BG Lansdale to SecDef and DepSecDef, "Situation in Vietnam," 4 Jun 62; (TS) Ltrs, CJCS to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 3 Jul 62; (TS-GP 1) CM-727-62 to BG Lansdale, 12 Jun 62; (TS-GP 1) CM-728-62 to GEN Taylor, 12 Jun 62; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Mar 62-Sep 62).

7. (U) Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 426.

populated and underdeveloped. In operations there, forces would spread thinly over wide areas, relying heavily on accurate, timely intelligence and on mobility to defeat the enemy. The other area, the southern part of the country (III Corps Tactical Zone), contained 63 percent of the population and two-thirds of the Viet Cong. Fighting there would take place in built up areas, concentrated in heavily-populated terrain where the support of the people was fundamental to success against the Viet Cong.

The strength and distribution of the RVNAF did not provide in any single tactical area "the 15-18 to 1 preponderance of forces which precedents have established as necessary for anti-guerrilla operations." Taking into account the limited resources available and the "limited pool of leadership talent," the plan envisaged establishing priorities for operations and concentrating resources at the proper time and place to defeat the enemy.

Since operations in the III Corps Tactical Zone would afford greater probability of early success than operations in the other zones, the first phase of the campaign would concentrate in that area, starting with Zone D, the VC base area northeast of Saigon. At the same time, the RVNAF would conduct border control operations and attacks against located VC bases in I and II Corps Tactical Zones. The second phase of the campaign was designed to concentrate military operations in the central and northern parts of the country, while mopping up and consolidating the rest of South Vietnam.

General McGarr had developed a detailed plan for Zone D operations. He would isolate the zone, use defoliation techniques, and conduct intelligence probes. Once this was accomplished, strong pressure would be applied around the zone perimeter, while operations were pressed deeper into Zone D to uncover strong points and to destroy the main force of the enemy. Then South Vietnamese forces would move in and secure the zone.

CINCPAC and CHMAAG believed Zone D was especially important because it was a VC command center and posed a direct threat to Saigon and the governmental structure. The morale value of securing the area would be very great. In Secretary McNamara's view, however, the Zone D operation was not a good choice to initiate the campaign because it was too complex. Indicating a strong preference for simple plans with specific, limited objectives, he directed that a plan be developed for clearing and holding a single "test" province. A smaller operation

would have a chance for early success and contribute to the Zone D operations. Secretary McNamara also believed it would be easier to persuade Diem to agree to specific courses of action than to get him to agree to "general concepts involving delegation of authority." At the January 1962 Honolulu Conference he ordered the Zone D operation cancelled.[8]

The Thompson Plan

Even as US planners labored to produce a strategy that would bring victory in the field, a British Advisory Mission in South Vietnam was trying to develop its own formula for victory. The mission was headed by the former Secretary of Defense of Malaya, Mr. R.G.K. Thompson, who had first been invited to South Vietnam by President Diem in April 1960 to give advice on counterguerrilla training and operations. The US State Department, anxious to have third-country participation in the South Vietnamese effort, had succeeded in having a provision encouraging such aid written into the Presidential Program (see Chapter 2). This had been done over the objections of CHMAAG, CINCPAC, the US Ambassador, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who feared that confusion would result from such an arrangement. When it became clear in August 1961 that the Thompson Mission was inevitable, Ambassador Nolting secured assurances from the British Ambassador in Saigon that the group would confine itself to advice on civic action. General McGarr, speaking with Diem, expressed pleasure that Diem's instructions to the British specifically excluded them from military matters. He also took the opportunity to refresh Diem's memory on the US counterinsurgency concept.[9]

The Thompson Mission arrived in Saigon at the end of September 1961. A month later Thompson submitted to Diem his first "appreciation" of the situation in South Vietnam. In the appreciation, which he also provided to General Taylor during the latter's visit to South Vietnam in October, Thompson

8. (TS-GP 1) Record, SecDef Conference, 16 Dec 61, JMF 9155.3/ 9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 1. (S-GP 4) Rpt of CHMAAG, Vietnam, for period 2 Sep 61-8 Feb 62, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Mar 62-Sep 62). (TS-GP 1) Record, Honolulu Conf, 15 Jan 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 2.

9. (S) Msg, CHMAAG 1222 to CINCPAC, DA IN 138767, 090745Z Aug 61, JMF 9155.3/3360 (9 Aug 61). (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 9 Aug 61, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

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[redacted]

After reading Thompson's appreciation Ambassador Nolting told the State Department early in November that the "general thrust" of the paper was toward emphasizing the civil side of the expense of the military. This change of plans could affect not only GVN confidence in the United States, but also power relationships within the RVN, and could conceivably bring on a coup.

General McGarr took even stronger exception to the appreciation. In a letter to CINCPAC he expressed concern about Thompson's "far exceeding" his terms of reference and delving into "purely military" matters. Also, McGarr said, Thompson misjudged the extent of the insurgency and leaned too heavily on his experience in Malaya. Furthermore, he had not uncovered any problems that the MAAG and the Country Team had not already identified and begun working on. General

10. (S) Rpt, Br. Adv. Mission to Diem, "Appreciation of Vietnam November 1961-April 1962," 27 Oct 61; JCS 2339/47, 13 Dec 61; JMF 9155.3/3360 (9 Aug 61).

McGarr objected specifically to two of the five Thompson recommendations: [redacted] B1 A3

Acceptance of the Thompson thesis at this juncture, he said, would cause confusion, delay, and the possible loss of Vietnam.[11]

In the meantime President Diem, apparently impressed by the appreciation, had requested and received from Thompson a plan for the pacification of the delta. [redacted] B1 A

[redacted]

11. (S-GP 4) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 18 Nov 61, Encl to JCS 2339/47; (S) Msg, Saigon 597 to State, 5 Nov 61; JMF 9155.3/3360 (9 Aug 61).

12. (S) Memo, Br. Adv. Mission to Diem, 13 Nov 61, and (S) Ltr, Thompson to Diem, 11 Nov 61, Encl to Desp, Saigon 205 to State, 20 Nov 61; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

In his comments to CINCPAC on the delta plan, CHMAAG continued in a medical vein. In the case of the Thompson mission, he said, "we have a doctor, called in for consultation on a clinical case, actually performing an amputation without consulting the resident physician" and without assuming responsibility for the patient. CHMAAG agreed with much of the Thompson plan, [redacted] General McGarr had been striving for months to get the Field Command established and to persuade Diem to delegate authority so that military units would be removed from day-to-day palace control. CHMAAG also took strong exception to Thompson's proposal that [redacted] General McGarr believed that the Saigon area and Zone D should receive first priority; the next priority should probably be given to an area to the north of Saigon where large VC units capable of establishing a base for a shadow government were operating. In general CHMAAG thought that Thompson underestimated the problem of infiltration and was too cavalier about the "military facts of life," the urgency of the situation, and the difficulty of getting Diem to follow through on any recommendation.[13]

On 2 December, CHMAAG sent a critique of the Thompson delta plan to Diem, setting forth the divergent views on the chain of command and priorities. By 6 December, the GVN had decided "at least at the moment" to give first priority to the Saigon area and Zone D. By this time also, Thompson had agreed to support the US position on the Field Command. Thus, for the time being the two main differences were apparently resolved in favor of CHMAAG. It soon became evident, however, that on the question of priority of operations Thompson had tacked rather than changed course.[14]

[redacted]

13. (S-GP 4) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 27 Nov 61, OCJCS File Vietnam.

14. (S) Ltr, CHMAAG to Diem, 2 Dec 61; (S-GP 4) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 6 Dec 61; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam. (S) Msg, Saigon 794 to State, 12 Dec 61.

By 6 January 1962 General McGarr believed that the British Advisor was coming around to his way of thinking, although he still differed with Thompson on the length of time it would take to win. [redacted] General McGarr claimed that he was not "downhearted or defeatist." Without setting a time for winning, he said, "There has never been any doubt in my mind that we can and will win here--this is especially true in view of the considerable progress made during the last six months."16

15. (S) Ltr, Thompson to GEN Taylor, 3 Jan 62, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

16. (S-GP 3) Ltr, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, 6 Jan 62, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.

The Binh Duong Plan - Operation SUNRISE

In mid-January CHMAAG presented President Diem with a plan for securing and pacifying Binh Duong Province, north of Saigon, which had also been mentioned by Thompson. As the Secretary of Defense had predicted at Honolulu in December, Diem found this specific plan more to his liking than the original Zone D plan, which he characterized as too "militarily oriented."

Operation SUNRISE appears to have evolved from a GVN operation which actually began in August 1961. The operation had been designed to secure three provinces, of which Binh Duong had first priority. With the refining and revision of the plan by General McGarr and General Van Thanh Cao, who was the GVN official in charge of the operation, the objective narrowed to Binh Duong only.[17]

In the first, preparatory, phase of the Binh Duong plan, local forces would conduct intelligence probes against the Viet Cong and prepare for the offensive. During the first part of the second phase, two ARVN regiments would deploy along the east side of the province to prevent the Viet Cong crossing in or out of Zone D, and would cut communications between Zone D and Tay Ninh province. The second part of phase two would aim at gaining control of population centers and LOCs in the eastern portion of the province. Once this had been done, the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps would move in and take over security. Twenty-man civic action teams would then move into villages to win the allegiance and support of the people. Once the eastern portion was under control, the two ARVN regiments would expand operations through the rest of the province. The consolidation phase would see a shift from military authority to that of the province chief, who would be responsible for mopping up operations. The entire plan called for a substantial resettlement of the population.

Talking to CHMAAG early in January 1962, Diem had estimated that the Binh Duong operations would take from eight to twelve months. He favored it over Zone D, because the ground work for "sound infrastructure" had already been

17. (C) Report, "Summary of Inspection Visit to Recently Organized Village Ban Tuong on 9 and 11 Apr 62," Encl to Ltr, GEN Harkins to CSA, 19 Apr 62, CSA File 091 Vietnam.

laid. Diem criticized the United States for pushing too fast for a military solution, and warned that he would not expect permanent results without a long-range approach. He remarked that Thompson claimed the British lost three years in Malaya by not building infrastructure and by relying on a military solution. The secret to winning, he said, was to separate the Viet Cong from the people. General McGarr ironically noted, "This has been the keystone of MAAG advice to GVN for the past eighteen months."

By the time of the January Honolulu Conference, preparations for the Binh Duong operation were well under way. After being briefed on the Binh Duong plan, Secretary McNamara asked General McGarr to submit a detailed written plan for review. He finally received it at the end of February, but by then implementation of the plan had already begun.[18]

The Hilsman Report

In February 1962, the stress on the political aspects of the struggle in South Vietnam, together with emphasis on pacification and "clear and hold," gained more support in the US Government. In the previous month the President had sent Roger Hilsman, Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, to South Vietnam to report on the situation there. While in South Vietnam, Hilsman talked with Thompson and incorporated many of his views in the report he submitted to the President on 2 February. According to Hilsman, "the President was impressed with Thompson's ideas and agreed that this was the direction we should go in developing a strategic concept for Vietnam. He told me to write the whole thing up as a formal report under that title - 'A Strategic Concept for Vietnam' -."[19]

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18. (TS-GP 3) Record, Honolulu Conference, 15 Jan 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 2. (S-GP 4) "Rpt of Chief, MAAG,V, for Period 2 Sep 61-8 Feb 62 (U)," 8 Feb 62, Encl to Ltr, CHMAAG to CJCS, 6 Mar 62, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Mar 62-Sep 62). (S) Memo, Mil Asst to SecDef to JCS, "Weekly Status Report on South Vietnam Actions," 20 Feb 62 JMF 9155.3/9105 (13 Oct 61) sec 2. (S-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, "Pacification Plan for Binh Duong Province (South Vietnam) (S)," 24 Feb 62, Encl to JCS 2343/87, 28 Feb 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (22 Feb 62).

19. Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p. 438.

With this Presidential sanction Mr. Hilsman prepared a report that ranged across the entire spectrum of RVN problems. He assessed the military and political situations and the effectiveness of the US Mission, then set forth basic principles for a strategic concept based on Thompson's ideas. Mr. Hilsman proceeded from three basic assumptions: 1) the problem presented by the Viet Cong was a political, not a military problem--or, more accurately, a problem of civic action; 2) nevertheless, an effective counterinsurgency plan must provide the people and the villages with physical security; 3) counterguerrilla forces must adopt the tactics of the guerrilla himself. Conventional military tactics were ineffective against guerrillas.

The plan that Mr. Hilsman outlined called for emphasis on the delta area and the area around Hue just south of the demarcation line. It followed the Thompson line of reasoning throughout. Essentially, there would be five separate military tasks. The first was static defense, guarding the installations necessary to keep the economy functioning. The second task "was the guts of the strategic hamlet program": pushing regular Viet Cong out of a district so that civic action teams could go to work in the hamlets, and protecting them until a solid bloc of strategic hamlets was capable of defending itself. The third task called for the regular military forces to reinforce strategic hamlets or Civil Guard units under attack, and to set up ambushes on escape routes. The fourth and fifth tasks would be to seek and destroy remaining Viet Cong and to provide permanent border protection.

Hilsman acknowledged that the ARVN would be tied down on static missions, but saw no help for it until the CG and SDC were greatly increased. He stated that, whatever their numbers, regular troops could not win the war until the villagers themselves were protected and the VC cut off from their sources of men and supplies. He pointed out that with a population of 14 million people, there was only one Civil Guard for every 210 people. The SDC was maintained at a ratio of one for every 240 people. Hilsman recommended training more of these forces by reducing their training time. At this time, CHMAAG had cut CG training time to 12 weeks and the SDC was receiving only 6 weeks training. Nevertheless, Mr. Hilsman recommended that this short training period be reduced further, with the CG training at province or district level and the SDC being trained in their own villages. He

added that more US advisors would be needed in the districts and villages to help build defenses and to train the CG and SDC.[20]

Hilsman's advocacy of the Thompson approach was followed closely by a GVN decision to proceed with the implementation of the delta pacification plan submitted to Diem by Thompson three months earlier. On 24 February, Ambassador Nolting reported that at a meeting of the NISC, President Diem had spoken favorably of the Thompson Plan for pacifying the delta. According to CIA reports, Diem told the Council he would like to see the plan executed without delay. He had ordered all necessary studies on the subject completed on a priority basis.[21]

In answer to a question from the Department of State as to the general validity of Thompson's plan, Ambassador Nolting replied, on 9 March, that the plan "accords in essence with counterinsurgency operations plan worked out and approved by Task Force Saigon." He added that all agencies represented in Saigon could therefore "be considered as concurring in the general validity of the Delta Plan approach."[22]

On 16 March, President Diem signed a special directive ordering the Thompson Delta Plan carried out in ten selected provinces between the Bassac River and the mountains. Despite its powerful backing, the Thompson Plan soon became submerged in the also new, but broader and more loosely conceived, strategic hamlet program.

The Strategic Hamlet Program

On 3 February 1962, President Diem had created an "Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets" to plan for the

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20. (S) Rpt, Dir of Intelligence and Research, Dept of State to GEN Taylor, "A Strategic Concept for South Vietnam," 2 Feb 62, OCJCS File Admin 1962.

21. (S) Msg, Saigon 1084 to State, 24 Feb 62. (S) Msg, CAS Saigon 16722 to CIA, 9 Apr 62; Encl to Ltr, Asst to CIA, to Dep SecDef 16 Apr 62. JMF 9155.3/3700 Apr 62.

22. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1159 to State, 9 Mar 62; 429, 16 Apr 62.

coordinated establishment of strategic hamlets. Regional and provincial committees were also created. Diem appointed his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, to head the Committee and give the strategic hamlet program priority over all other programs.[23]

No US official strongly disagreed with the hamlet program, which was already under way at this time on a local basis. The only significant difference between the program that the GVN carried out and the program US representatives advocated was that the United States had urged that the program include priorities for the establishment of strategic hamlets, while the GVN proceeded generally to locate and build hamlets without reference to a rational plan. Despite this difference the United States agreed to support the strategic hamlet program on 13 April 1962 at a meeting between the US Inter-Agency Province Rehabilitation Committee and the GVN Inter-Ministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets.[24]

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23. (S) Msg, Saigon 1031 to State, 10 Feb 62. In his latest revised guidance to MAAG advisors on counterinsurgency on 10 Feb 62, General McGarr had spelled out his concept of what he termed the "Secure Village." Within a village complex several hamlets would be located. In most major respects, this concept and that forwarded by Hilsman to the President were identical. But it is obvious that at this time no precise definition of just what constituted a "strategic hamlet" had been developed. (C) Report, CHMAAG Guidance Papers to Field Advisors on Counter-Insurgency," Tactics and Techniques of Counter-Insurgent Operations, Fourth Revision, 10 Feb 62; JCS Hist Div files. Original planning, such as that done by Thompson and McGarr saw the strategic village as an area comprising several strategic hamlets and protected as a single complex, but the term "strategic village" tended to be replaced by "strategic hamlet" until it finally disappeared from use. When General Taylor sought an exact definition of a strategic hamlet two years later he was told by the MACV J3 that a hamlet was "an organized subdivision of a village consisting of a group or part of a group of dwellings and the people who live in them. It is the smallest population unit in the civil government organization." (C) Memo, MACV J-3 to GEN Taylor, "Definitions and Criteria Pertaining to Hamlets," 12 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (May 1964).

24. (C) Msg, Saigon A-289 to State, 27 Apr 62. The CJCS called the strategic hamlet program a static defense concept; he feared it would not be backed up with military operations to keep the VC off balance in the rest of the country.

There were approximately 16,000 hamlets and 2,000 villages in South Vietnam. A CIA report on the status of the program in early April said

> there are an estimated 530 defensive hamlets throughout the country. The effectiveness of their defenses varies considerably, and positive civic action has taken place in relatively few. An additional 600 are now being constructed and Ngo Dinh Nhu's Committee is speaking of developing 6,000 to 10,000 by the end of 1962. One hurdle there is financing, which some elements would like to be met by Americans.

A typical village cost about $12,000 to build.[25]

A first-hand assessment of the strategic hamlet program was made by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, who visited the RVN in mid-May 1962. They inspected military activities in the field and visited the area of Operation SUNRISE and other strategic villages and hamlets. It was plain to the visiting officials that the resettlement process being employed by the GVN involved some forced movement and regimentation. They were nevertheless

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CINCPAC noted that this was especially necessary in the northern part of the country. (TS-GP 1) Rpt, Honolulu Conference, Feb 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 3.

25. (S) Msg, CAS Saigon 16722 to CIA, 9 Apr 62. Considerable confusion arises in attempting to justify statistics on numbers of hamlets (strategic, defensive, or otherwise) completed as of specific dates. This is apparent throughout the entire period of the program, and undoubtedly stems from the inaccurate reporting system within the GVN, and different interpretations of just what constituted a "completed strategic hamlet" or, for that matter, "a strategic hamlet." The CIA figure of 530 defensive hamlets completed by 2 April is, for example, at variance with a report of the US Embassy which stated that the GVN had claimed 750 strategic hamlets completed before the end of 1961, three months prior to the official beginnings of the strategic hamlet program. (C) Msg, Saigon A-88 to State, 9 Aug 62, forwarding Rpt, Manfull to CINCPAC for POLAD, "Strategic Hamlet Program-Status Report," 9 Aug 62 (hereafter cited as "Manfull Report").

satisfied with the progress of the SUNRISE project. They believed that the strategic hamlet program promised solid benefits and might well be the key to success of the pacification program. It would provide physical security for the villagers from the communists, preclude extortion by the Viet Cong, promise a certain tranquility and improved economic and living conditions, and greatly impede the Viet Cong from living off the land and gathering information on the GVN.

Mr. McNamara and General Lemnitzer were not, however, blind to certain weaknesses in the strategic hamlet program. The persons resettled had not been given adequate reasons why they should leave their homes and fields and surrender some of their liberties, there were too few competent GVN administrators to operate the communities properly, and construction methods were neither efficient nor standardized. But these flaws seemed to be on their way to on their way to correction through training in a National Academy for Strategic Hamlets, opening 17 May.

Mr. McNamara and General Lemnitzer also noted two other deficiencies that would require special effort and attention by the United States because of their magnitude and complexity. First was the problem of training GVN paramilitary forces to stand up to the Viet Cong in the hamlet areas so that regular military forces could be freed for offensive missions. As of May 1962 there had been virtually no replacement of ARVN units by Civil Guard or Self Defense Corps units, nor did such replacement appear imminent. The second deficiency was the lack of a communications network to relay intelligence and to report VC attacks in the countryside quickly and reliably. Communications in South Vietnam were planned from the metropolitan level to the district and from the district to the village. The hamlet, where the problem of subversion was most acute, had not been linked into the communications systems. Secretary McNamara asked the Ambassador and General Harkins for a plan that would provide radios down to the hamlet level.[26]

By May, however, it became apparent that the GVN was letting its enthusiasm for the strategic hamlet program get

26. (TS-GP 1) Rpt, "Visit to Southeast Asia by the Secretary of Defense, 8-11 May 1962," JMF 9150/5420 (14 May 62) sec 1.

out of hand. At a meeting of the NISC in mid-May, the decision was made to "incorporate the Delta Plan into Strategic Hamlet program." This seemed to mean the abandonment of the concept of pacification in priority areas first in favor of constructing strategic hamlets in every part of the country. Disturbed by this drift, the Secretary of State on 22 May cabled Ambassador Nolting that "From here it appears strategic hamlets essential part victory over VC but concept of doubtful value if abstracted from whole fabric Delta Plan. Particularly concerned that Nhu may try to set up too many strategic hamlets too fast. See grave danger VC may knock over number inadequately equipped and defended strategic hamlets . . . . Believe here that success in guerrilla conflict depends on rational plan applied steadily over long haul." He urged Ambassador Nolting to encourage the GVN strongly to hold to the Delta Plan.

Before the July Conference in Honolulu General Harkins met with President Diem on 18 July and stressed the importance of having a coordinated plan for carrying out the strategic hamlet program. Diem countered with the familiar plea that what he really needed was more money. In his turn General Harkins indicated that stronger US support might be forthcoming after preparation of a sound plan. Although such a plan was not prepared by the time of the July Conference, US officials decided that financial support from the United States was essential to the success of the strategic hamlet program. Secretary McNamara was informed that the Country Team was developing an add-on to the FY 1963 MAP budget of $4 million for the construction of 1,500 additional hamlets, to be funded partially by MAP and partially by AID.[28]

A few days later, however, the Country Team revised upward its estimate of the needs for the strategic hamlet program. It now recommended that the materials for a total of 5,000 hamlets be funded in FY 1963. Originally AID had agreed to finance the defensive construction part of the hamlet kits. But early in August, AID stated that in view of the very small amount of Supporting Assistance (formerly known as Defense Support) funds

27. (S) Msgs, State 1367 to Saigon, 22 May 62; Saigon 1504 to State, 23 May 62.

28. (S) Memo for Record, COMUSMACV, 31 Jul 62, "Meeting at Gia Lang Palace, Saigon--18 July 1962," OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Mar 62-Sep 62).

it had requested in its budget, it could not help pay for either the 1,500 kits at $13 million or the 5,000 kits at $42 million. AID asked that the Department of Defense take up the entire funding for the kits, and immediately allot $13 million for the first 1,500.[29]

On 11 August Secretary McNamara approved the AID request that the Department of Defense undertake the entire funding of the first 1,500 hamlet kits; ten days later he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to start the review necessary to determine whether or not the other 3,500 kits were actually needed, and if so, whether or not these kits should be funded by MAP. Following CINCPAC's advice, on 22 September the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary approve the funding of 2,000 of the additional hamlet kits called for by the Country Team. At the same time, however, they recommended that he make strong representations to the Secretary of State that the construction portion of the costs entailed be assumed by AID.[30]

In August the GVN finally established a national program for the development of strategic hamlets. South Vietnam was divided into four major priority zones which, in turn, were divided into priority sub-zones. Within these priority sub-zones there was a further priority breakdown by province. Reporting to Mr. McNamara on the new program on 28 August, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that selected priorities did not appear to be based on the degree of control by the Viet Cong or GVN or on the current province rehabilitation operations such as Operation SUNRISE.[31]

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29. (C) Memo, ASD(ISA) to SecDef, "Funding of Strategic Hamlet Kits, Vietnam," 9 Aug 62, JMF 9155.3/3700 (16 Apr 62).

30. (C) Memo, DepASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Funding of Strategic Hamlet Kits, Vietnam," 21 Aug 62, Encl to JCS 2343/149, 27 Aug 62, JMF 9155.3/3700 (16 Apr 62). (C) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 082356Z Sep 62. (C) JCSM-734-62 to SecDef, 22 Sep 62, JMF 9155.3/3700 (16 Apr 62). The requirement for 2,100 kits was later reduced to 1,050 because of slippage in deliveries. (U) NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1962.

31. (S) SM-917-62 to SecDef, "GVN Strategic Hamlet Program," 28 Aug 62, Encl to JCS 2343/155, 5 Sep 62. Although the Tabs giving details of GVN Program are unavailable in JCS files, information contained in (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J-3 2495 to JCS, 8 Sep 62, strongly indicates that the priority for "clear and hold" operations and agreed US/GVN support of Strategic Hamlet Program were: (1) Eleven Delta Provinces around Saigon, (2) Ten Coastal Provinces, (3) Ten Border Provinces, (4) Eight remaining Provinces; JMF 9155.3/3700 (16 Apr 62). The US Inter-Agency Committee for

Also in August the US Embassy Counselor for RVN Political Affairs, Mr. N. L. Manfull, reported that the strategic hamlet had become the GVN's major counterinsurgency effort "outside the purely military field." More and more the concept was being expounded as a "national philosophy" by GVN officials. More and more it absorbed their thoughts and energies, and received the support of the central government.

The chief architect and theoretician of the program was President Diem's brother, Nhu. According to Manfull, Nhu saw the program not only as a temporary security measure, but also as the primary means of carrying out a "personalist revolution" in the countryside, reforming and democratizing local administration, replacing bureaucrats and local interest groups with younger, more progressive personnel, and altering the existing social structure to conform to modern needs. Nhu envisaged the program as basically a local "self-help" undertaking, with the central government providing policy, guidance, cadres, and "limited material assistance." Nhu had "turned virtually all of his personal and political efforts to seeing that his 'revolutionary' approach to the program permeated all levels of the GVN."

Manfull also stated that hamlets were being scattered throughout the RVN with areas of concentration in the coastal provinces of Central Vietnam, in the Mekong Delta, and in Darlac Province in the Highlands. The GVN had plans to tie the hamlets into district and provincial security systems to provide inter-hamlet defense; to improve the hamlet's internal organization, such as its self defense forces and hamlet administration; and to make social and economic improvements. These goals had not yet even been approached. Hamlet self-defense forces remained very poorly armed, trained and supported. In the majority of "completed" strategic hamlets, Manfull reported, no aid stations, schools, markets, or other social and economic amenities existed.[32]

Province Rehabilitation concurred in the GVN priority plan as a basis for planning and utilization of US assistance in the strategic hamlet program. (C) Msg, Saigon A-110 to State, 27 Aug 62.

32. (C) Manfull Report.

Despite these faults, by October COMUSMACV considered that the overall program was progressing satisfactorily. At the Honolulu Conference of 8 October he reported that the hamlet program was proceeding particularly well among Montagnard tribesmen. President Diem, he said, was exercising better control of the program, and COMUSMACV had developed a plan to insure that US equipment was phased into each hamlet project in an orderly manner.33

Toward the end of 1962, General Maxwell D. Taylor, who had succeeded General Lemnitzer as Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 1 October 1962, reported to the Secretary of Defense that "limited progress" was being made in the strategic hamlet program. Construction of strategic hamlets, General Taylor reported, had expanded rapidly as a form of interprovince competition with little planning and less coordination. Numbers appeared to be the prime objective. Many hamlets had been improperly constructed and were inadequately defended. Little attention had been given to the psychological, sociological, and economic preparation of the populace or to the proper qualification of administrative personnel. As a result, a basically sound idea got off to a weak start.

The GVN program approved in August included measures to overcome these deficiencies, and General Taylor stated that there was some evidence of progress. As of mid-November 1962, 10,971 localities in SVN had been earmarked for development as strategic hamlets, and 3,353 had been reported completed. These varied widely in the quality of their defenses, of the security forces guarding them, and of their administration.

"Of the entire number," the Chairman told the Secretary of Defense, "probably not more than 600 can be viewed as fulfilling the desired characteristics in terms of equipment, defensive works, security forces and, possibly most important, government." Taylor said that 1,897 strategic hamlet kits had been provided for in the current MAP/AID programs, and that properly conceived hamlets were now being built at the rate of 300 per month. With regard to the radio problem that had so concerned the Secretary during his May visit to RVN, General Taylor reported that over 1,200 village radios had been installed and that installation of hamlet radios at the rate of 1,000 per month was now beginning. Improvement in the

33. (S) Rpt, Honolulu Conference, 8 Oct 62, JMF 455.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 6.

quality of the SDC, CG, and the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) was also noted by General Taylor.

The real strength of the program, the Chairman believed, was more in "prospect than reality." During the past three months, the Viet Cong had attacked a few of the hamlets regularly, destroying defenses, stealing food, and kidnaping officials or assassinating them. Significantly, however, while strategic hamlets as a whole sustained an average of five such attacks each week, undefended rural communities were attacked on an average of nine times weekly. Analyzing the pattern of the attacks and the measure of success achieved by the defenders in beating off the attacks, General Taylor noted that there seemed to be no reason for modifying the views of General Harkins and Ambassador Nolting regarding the long-term virtues of the strategic hamlet program. He concluded:

> It is only now commencing to mature and vigorous reactions against it--both reported and forecast--suggest that the Viet Cong also perceive its potential. Certainly the current Viet Cong actions with respect to hamlets, involving terrorism, theft, murder and kidnaping are direct attacks against people. In this sense they are inconsistent with the avowed communist principle that the affection and confidence of the populace are essential to their program.[34]

In early December, Mr. Hilsman also produced an analysis of the strategic hamlet program that sketched a less favorable and less hopeful prospect. Mr. Hilsman, whose analysis was provided to the Secretary of State, said that

> despite improving the peasant morale in many hamlets particularly as the benefits of security against Viet Cong intimidation and taxation become evident, there are continuing reports that GVN officials have exacted too heavily from local resources and have not compensated the peasants for material and labor required to build the hamlets, that the peasant's ability to earn a living has declined because of the time

34. (TS-GP 1) CM-117-62 to SecDef, 17 Nov 62, JMF 9155.3/3700 (16 Apr 62).

> he is required to spend on construction, and that the government has been more concerned with controlling the hamlet population than with providing services and improving living conditions.

He charged that some GVN leaders, particularly Diem and Nhu, tended to place exaggerated importance on the strategic hamlet program as the universal panacea to communist insurgency rather than as merely one means of cutting off the Viet Cong from peasant support.

Hilsman concluded that the war had not abated, nor had the Viet Cong weakened. "On the contrary," Hilsman said, "the Viet Cong has expanded the size and enhanced the capability and organization of its guerrilla force--now estimated at about 23,000 in elite fighting personnel, plus some 100,000 irregulars and sympathizers." He estimated that the Viet Cong still controlled about 20 percent of the villages and about 9 percent of the rural population, and exerted varying degrees of influence among an additional 47 percent of the villages. VC access to the peasants had not been seriously weakened by the GVN program; the Viet Cong still had good intelligence and a high degree of mobility, initiative, and striking power.35

The National Campaign Plan

As a result of the rapid military build-up in South Vietnam during 1962 (see Ch. 5), COMUSMACV believed the GVN was ready for a more ambitious campaign against the Viet Cong. Therefore, in October General Harkins devised a new plan, the National Campaign Plan (NCP), an integrated, all-out effort against the Viet Cong. The concept of the plan was not new. Sometimes called "Operation Explosion," it called for a series of coordinated political, economic, and military operations to be undertaken at an accelerated pace by each commander in his own area. This increased tempo of operations was made possible, General Harkins believed, by the success of US training and assistance efforts over the past two years.

35. (S) Memo, Hilsman to SecState, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam." 3 Dec 62, RFE 59, JCS Hist Div files.

The National Campaign Plan had four main elements: 1) to seek out and destroy VC strongholds, 2) to clear and hold areas currently dominated by the Viet Cong, 3) to build strategic hamlets in these areas and protect them from VC attack, and 4) to gain and hold the plateau and mountain areas and achieve a degree of border control by training and employing mountain tribesmen.

Before the plan could be carried out, General Harkins believed that certain readjustments in the GVN's military command structure were necessary. These involved: 1) revamping the JGS, including three service component commands, 2) creating an Unconventional Warfare Directorate to coordinate and control the special forces and irregular units, 3) eliminating the Field Command Headquarters from the command structure, 4) establishing a fourth Corps Headquarters for operations exclusively in the Delta region, and 5) assigning tactical and logistic support elements to each corps.[36]

President Diem agreed to the broad concept of the plan, and on 26 November 1962 he issued directives realigning the military command structure and streamlining the chain of command in line with COMUSMACV's recommendations.

The military effort in Harkins' outline operation plan for carrying out the NCP lay in all four corps tactical zones. To increase mobility, each division would employ an airborne battalion with airlift, supported by tactical aircraft. Each division would also keep at least one infantry battalion, with helicopter lift, on 15-minute alert to react against any target of opportunity in the division zone. Smaller units would also keep forces on alert for rapid commitment by helicopter or truck. Liaison planes would be used throughout the division zone to observe and to provide strike control for tactical air. Helicopters would patrol, carrying troops to provide a show of force and for quick use if needed. Attack

36. (S) CM-104-62 to SecDef, 12 Nov 62, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Oct 62-Jul 63). (S) CM-178-63 to SecDef, 4 Jan 63, "Honolulu Conference," Encl Rpt on Talks at PACOM, Dec 62, JMF 9155.3/3100 (19 Dec 62).

plans would be geared to intelligence on known VC locations immediately before jumpoff.[37]

Some officials in Washington, particularly in the State Department, viewed the plan as an overly ambitious undertaking, one whose success might have dramatic effects, but whose failure could be correspondingly disastrous to RVN morale. The Acting Secretary of State cabled his reservations to Ambassador Nolting, expressing fear that the new operations would divert resources and attention from province clear-and-hold plans and from the strategic hamlet program. He also doubted that the GVN was capable of such a large-scale operation, and anticipated "confusion and waste of resources." He concluded, "Fear encouraging GVN plan nationwide offensive will reinforce VN tendency conduct overlarge, over-elaborate military operations."[38]

Ambassador Nolting reassured his superiors that there was no thought of any overlarge or wasteful operations.

> General Harkins and the rest of us have fostered and watched the really formidable build-up of Vietnamese military and paramilitary capabilities over the last year, and we are very conscious of the fact that these increased capabilities have not yet been fully used. . . . There is no thought of diverting resources from clear-and-hold operations or the Strategic Hamlet Program. On the contrary a fuller employment of available forces should bring more rapid progress in overall pacification. This is not meant to be a dramatic operation but it appears timely and necessary in the near future to spur on a sustained, vigorous offensive.[39]

Implementation of the NCP was already under way early in 63, and a JCS team analysis of the plan stated:

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37. (TS-GP 3) Rpt of Visit by JCS Team to South Vietnam, Jan 63, JMF 9155.3/3360 (1 Feb 63) sec 1. (S) CM-104-62 to SecDef, 12 Nov 62, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Oct 62-Jul 63).
38. (S) Msg, State 603 to Saigon, 14 Dec 62.
39. (S) Msg, Saigon 604 to State, 19 Dec 62.

> Operations under the National Campaign Plan are expected to result in an ever-increasing measure of control by the Government of Vietnam over its people and its territory. Since the basic concept is one of many small operations, with decentralized control, activity has been increasing in those areas where trained units have been available and where the initiative of local commanders has been most pronounced. The tempo of small scale operations has now reached 450 per month. This tempo should increase substantially in the months ahead, as the strength of South Vietnam, developed over the past year, makes itself felt. However, the successful completion of the strategies listed will take considerable time and will demand much in resolution and perseverance. There appears to be no quick or easy solution.[40]

At the beginning of 1963, the US strategic concept for victory in Vietnam was still a combination of four elements that had been cited early in 1962:

> . . . to retain control of key areas now under GVN control such as routes of communication, population centers and important economic facilities. . . . primarily accomplished by the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps. . . .
>
> . . . the progressive clearing and holding of additional portions of South Vietnam in accordance with priorities established by the country team and the GVN.
>
> . . . to destroy specifically located Viet Cong units, to eliminate the hard core regular and territorial forces, to keep the Viet Cong off balance, prevent them from achieving any further buildup and prevent them from establishing a Viet Cong government in any part of South Vietnam..

40. (TS-GP 3) Rpt of Visit by JCS Team to South Vietnam, Jan 63, JMF 9155.3/3360 (1 Feb 63) sec 1.

> . . . the reduction of infiltration and resupply of Viet Cong by land and sea. . . . [by] consolidation of small indefensible outposts into battalion sized posts from which strong patrols radiate to interdict trails and routes currently in use and to ambush and engage VC encountered.[41]

US officials were generally agreed that the strategic concept remained valid. The problem was that it had not been carried out effectively at least up to the beginning of 1963. The United States did not control the conduct of the war, and its influence on the GVN was often minimal. Nevertheless, in 1962 the GVN effort against the Viet Cong had shown improvement, and as 1963 began most US officials were cautiously optimistic about the eventual outcome of the struggle.

41. (S-GP 4) Memo for Record, MAAG, "Briefing for Mr. Bundy . . . , 1 March 1962," OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (30 Mar 62).

Chapter 5

GROWTH OF US MILITARY INVOLVEMENT: 1962-1963

Concurrently with the development of a strategic concept, the buildup of RVNAF strength through US support continued during 1962. The decisions made in November 1961 continued to govern US policy and assistance and shape US involvement in the Vietnamese war well into 1963. The military buildup, which involved vastly increased quantities of materiel and increasing numbers of US advisors, saw the United States becoming more and more involved in the war effort on all levels. Participation by US personnel in military operations inevitably brought US casualties (the first came in February 1962), and national and world attention began to focus on the situation in South Vietnam. The GVN achieved a degree of success in 1962 and optimism about the progress of the war prevailed in most US official circles into 1963. This optimism prompted longer-range planning for eventual US withdrawal from South Vietnam.

The MAP and GVN Force Levels

At the beginning of 1962 GVN military forces had been authorized MAP support for an RVNAF of 205,000, a Civil Guard of 68,000, and a Self Defense Corps of 49,000 (see above Ch. 3). After the mid-January 1962 Honolulu Conference, CINCPAC asked CHMAAG to review GVN force levels. General McGarr replied in early February that the GVN needed a total strength of 395,000 well-trained and equipped troops, including the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps. He added, however, that this would have to be a time-phased buildup because a shortage of officers continued to be the factor that most limited the ability of the GVN to expand its forces.

At the 19 February Honolulu Conference CHMAAG presented his proposal for raising authorized MAP support of the RVNAF and the GVN paramilitary forces to the following levels:

	End FY 1962	Mid FY 1963	End FY 1963	End FY 1964
RVNAF	206,600	210,000	215,000	225,000
CG	72,000	77,000	81,000	90,000
SDC	65,000	70,000	80,000	80,000

Admiral Felt recommended approval of long-term force levels, stressing the need for firm planning and programming figures. All present agreed in general that the MAAG-proposed force levels were required and could be supported. Secretary McNamara stated, however, that he could not make a decision until he knew specifically how much more money these levels would require for the rest of FY 1962 and FY 1963.[1]

On 9 March 1962 the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he approve the MAAG-proposed force levels. They justified the increases by citing the VC expansion in RVN and in Laos; the great progress being made by the GVN in planning and conducting operations; the improved capacity of the GVN to train, maintain, and use its forces effectively; and the increased US determination to win in South Vietnam. Within a week the Department of State also concurred in the force level recommendations. On 15 March the Secretary of Defense approved support for FY 1963 force levels in SVN of 215,000 for the RVNAF, 81,000 for the Civil Guard, and 80,000 for the Self Defense Corps. Decision on the long-term buildup of GVN forces was put off for the time being.[2]

The US stake in South Vietnam had grown to sizable proportions by the middle of 1962. In terms of military assistance in dollars, over $600 million worth of equipment and assistance had been delivered from 1956 to 30 June 1962. The FY 1962 MAP was valued at $177.1 million, with the proposed FY 1963 MAP only slightly less at $166 million. CINCPAC's FY 1964-1968 MAP proposed deliveries of approximately $560 million.

1. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1962, pp. 170-171. (TS-GP 1) Record, Honolulu Conference, 19 February 1962, JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 3.

2. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-179-62 to SecDef, 9 Mar 62, (derived from JCS 2343/91), JMF 9155.3/9108 (27 Apr 61) sec 6. (S-GP 3) Briefing Sheet for CJCS, 14 Feb 63, JMF 9155.3/3410 (10 Jan 63).

In addition to the MAP, AID (and its predecessor, ICA) had provided in excess of $1.5 billion to South Vietnam for improvements and new construction of roads, railroads, airports, canals, ports, electric power and distribution systems, water supply facilities, telecommunications, hospitals, schools, training facilities, and other public works and facilities.3

Long-Range Program

Addressing his key advisors and the responsible commanders in mid-July 1962 at Honolulu, Secretary McNamara expressed satisfaction with the buildup of US support to date. In a period of only six months the United States had made tremendous progress in strengthening the GVN. But this progress had been accomplished by short-term "crash" programs, said the Secretary, and the United States must now look ahead to a carefully conceived, long-range program for training and equipping the RVNAF, in order to phase out the US combat, advisory, and logistic support activities.

He asked the field commanders how long it would take before the VC would be eliminated as a "disturbing force." COMUSMACV estimated that this could be accomplished in about one year from the time the United States had succeeded in getting the RVNAF, Civil Guard, and Self Defense Corps fully operational and "really pressing" the Viet Cong in all areas. Secretary McNamara thereupon directed COMUSMACV to prepare a comprehensive three-year plan to provide for a gradual scaling down of his staff and forces and the development of South Vietnamese forces capable of maintaining internal security without US assistance. In the meantime, the Secretary of Defense directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to ensure that US training programs for the RVNAF, and the companion materiel programs, were in all respects adequate to support the effort in South Vietnam until December 1965 on the basis of the current scale of operations.4

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3. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/139, 7 Aug 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (1 May 62).

4. (TS-GP 3) Record, Honolulu Conference, Jul 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 5. (S-GP 1) JCSM-617-62 to SecDef, 13 Aug 62, JMF 9155.3/3100 (7 Aug 62).

CINCPAC finally submitted COMUSMACV's Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam (CPSVN) on 29 January 1963. The plan detailed the special military assistance and equipment that the GVN would need to carry on an effective counterinsurgency program with very little help by US personnel after 1965. The CPSVN depended for success upon parallel development of the several mutually supporting national plans and programs of the GVN. These included the National Campaign Plan (NCP), the strategic hamlet program, and the CIDG program.

The CPSVN called for a peak armed strength for the GVN of 575,000 in FY 1964-1965. This included the CIDG at a strength of 116,000, which would be phased out as the goal of 90 percent control of the population came closer to realization. The plan also provided a balanced, residual national military strength of about 368,000.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the CPSVN to the Secretary of Defense on 7 March 1963, saying that

> the CPSVN provides an adequate basis for defining the five-year MAP and a realistic framework for integrating the efforts already being expended in related and mutually supporting nation wide programs such as the National Campaign, Strategic Hamlet and the CIDG Programs.[5]

The Secretary of Defense discussed the plan with the military commanders at the May Honolulu Conference. He believed that the CPSVN assumed an unrealistically high level for GVN forces in the post insurgency period. A country of 12 million people, he said, could not support a quarter of a million men under arms; after the insurgency had been brought under control, perhaps in FY 1965, the US investment in the GVN ought to be on the order of $50 million per year for MAP. For FY 1965 the MAP figure should be on the order of $50-75 million--all of this on the assumption that the current counterinsurgency programs proceeded satisfactorily. He directed CINCPAC to develop two alternative MAP budgets--one for about $50 million a year to take effect after FY 1965 and the second for whatever dollar figure he considered necessary before FY 1965. Secretary McNamara emphasized that the

5. (S) Rpt, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 19 Jan 63, "Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam," JMF 9155.3/3360 (25 Jan 63) sec 1. (S) JCSM-180-63 to SecDef, 7 Mar 63 (derived from JCS 2343/201), same file, sec 2.

United States was not going to let lack of money keep the GVN from winning the war against the VC. But he said that the FY 1965-1969 MAP contained in the CPSVN ($573 million) was at least $270 million higher than an acceptable program.[6]

On 11 May 1963 Admiral Felt submitted the revised CPSVN. Although the Secretary of Defense had expressed the hope that the insurgency in RVN could be brought under control as early as FY 1965, CINCPAC thought this was overly optimistic and assumed in his new plan that this could not be accomplished until mid-FY 1966. CINCPAC's new plan did not reduce the MAP figure but raised it to $585 million.[7]

The Secretary of Defense, however, had advised the Office of the Director of Military Assistance that the MAP for this period should not total more than $365 million. Subsequently the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) recommended to Secretary McNamara that a more realistic MAP for this period would amount to about $450 million.

Because of these substantially different figures, the Secretary of Defense directed CINCPAC to prepare alternative MAP plans for FY 1965-1969 using the figures of $585, $450, and $365 million respectively.[8]

On 18 July 1963, CINCPAC sent the Joint Chiefs of Staff the three alternative military assistance plans, a Joint Staff plan based on a figure of $450.9 million, and a fifth plan developed by COMUSMACV, called the Model Plan, projecting the expenditure of $400 million for FY 1965-1969. Admiral Felt recommended that the Joint Chiefs of Staff support COMUSMACV's Model Plan.[9]

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6. (S) Msg, JCS 9820 to CINCPAC, 9 May 63. (S) Record, Honolulu Conference, 7 May 63, JMF 5410 (8 May 63).

7. (S) Memo, CINCPAC to JCS, 11 May 63, "Revised Plans for Republic of Vietnam (U)," JMF 9155.3/3360 (25 Jan 63) sec 2.

8. (S-GP 3) DJSM-941-63 to CINCPAC, 6 Jun 63, same file. (S) Msg, DEF 928638 to CINCPAC, 27 May 63.

9. (S-GP 1) Memo, CINCPAC to JCS, 18 Jul 63, "Transmittal of FY 65-69 Alternate MA Plans for Republic of Vietnam (U)," JMF 9155.3/3360 (25 Jan 63) sec 3.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with Admiral Felt that the Model Plan appeared to be the best solution. On 27 August 1963 they forwarded CINCPAC's comparison and analysis of the five plans to Secretary McNamara, recommending that the Model Plan be approved as the basis for development of the FY 1965-1969 MAP Plan for South Vietnam. In their judgment, it provided the optimum program for the money. On 6 September the Secretary of Defense approved this recommendation as the basis for developing the FY 1965-1969 MAP for South Vietnam.[10]

Comparisons of the force levels and costs recommended in each of the plans are in the tables on the following two pages. The Model Plan had been developed on the basis that the top priority task was the neutralization of the insurgency. To accomplish that, the current organization and strength of the RVNAF would be maintained at a high level at least until mid-FY 1966. Later, through FY 1969, a high priority task would be containment of the insurgents in the four VC base areas and their gradual elimination. The Model Plan gave a high priority also to border control, especially through the use of Ranger units.[11]

More US Support

The initial US commitment of men and equipment was followed during 1962 by additional shipments of support units, specialists, and special equipment. After the January 1962 Honolulu meeting it was decided that, because of requirements in South Vietnam, CINCPAC's 100 percent readiness requirement for contingency operations in his command could be relaxed. On 17 January the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Admiral Felt that they would accept any degradation of his military posture caused by sending his men and materiel to RVN. He had full authority through his component commanders to support training and operations in RVN. He was reminded, however,

10. (S-GP 1) JCSM-640-63 to SecDef, 27 Aug 62; (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Sep 63, "Approval of 'Model Plan' for Vietnam"; same file, sec 4.

11. (S-GP 1) Memo, CINCPAC to JCS, 18 Jul 63, "Transmittal of FY 65-69 Alternate MA Plans for Republic of Vietnam (U)," JMF 9155.3/9360 (25 Jan 63) sec 3.

COMPARISON OF PLANS
RVNAF-MANNING LEVEL
FY 65-69
(Figures in Thousands)

	ARMY	NAVY	MARINES	AIR FORCE	RVNAF TOTAL
FY 65					
A (585)	202.5	7.0	6.1	9.9	225.5
B (450)	201.9	7.0	6.1	9.9	224.9
C (365)	147.8	7.0	6.1	9.9	170.8
J (JCS)	201.9	7.0	6.1	9.9	224.9
M (COMUSMACV)	202.5	7.0	6.1	9.9	225.5
FY 66					
A	193.9	7.0	6.1	9.9	216.9
B	193.2	7.0	6.1	9.9	216.2
C	126.9	7.0	6.1	9.9	149.9
J	154.1	7.0	6.1	9.9	177.1
M	202.5*	7.0	6.1	9.9	225.5
FY 67					
A	164.7	4.9	5.0	9.0	183.6
B	124.9	4.9	5.0	9.0	143.8
C	64.4	4.6	3.0	8.8	80.8
J	133.4	4.9	5.0	8.9	152.2
M	126.8	4.0	4.0	8.0	142.8
FY 68					
A	149.2	4.7	4.0	8.8	166.7
B	82.4	4.7	4.0	8.5	100.6
C	64.4	4.6	3.0	8.5	80.5
J	113.7	4.7	4.0	8.5	130.9
M	106.8	4.0	3.2	8.0	122.0
FY 69					
A	120.8	4.6	3.0	8.6	137.0
B	66.4	4.6	3.0	8.3	82.3
C	64.4	4.6	3.0	8.3	80.3
J	95.3	4.6	3.0	8.3	111.2
M	106.8	4.0	2.4	8.0	121.2

* ARVN to be 178,500 on 1 January 1966 (mid-FY 66).

[redacted]

RVNAF MAP COST
MODEL PLAN
($ MILLIONS)

	FY 65	FY 66	FY 67	FY 68	FY 69	Total
OPERATING COST						
Army/CG/SDC	86.6	69.5	23.9	20.1	20.1	220.2
Navy/Marines	4.1	3.8	1.5	1.4	1.4	12.2
Air Force	28.1	24.2	10.0	9.7	8.8	80.8
Other 1/	17.0	15.0	10.5	9.0	5.8	57.3
Sub-Total	135.8	112.5	45.9	40.2	36.1	370.5
INVESTMENT COST						
Army/CG/SDC	5.1	.5	0	0	0	5.6
Navy/Marines	.02	0	0	0	0	.02
Air Force	4.3	4.2	5.3	4.9	5.2	23.9
Sub-Total	9.4	4.7	5.3	4.9	5.2	29.5
Total	145.2	117.2	51.2	45.1	41.3	400.0

1/ Supply operations, MAAG support and OICC administrative costs. (Same as Plan A)

[redacted]

that he should send no organized combat units to South Vietnam.[12]

Air Augmentation

Much of the US support for the RVNAF involved provision of aircraft and crews to improve the mobility of ground forces. General Harkins believed that the three light helicopter companies deployed to South Vietnam by February 1962 were inadequate to support the "quick reaction" tactics being urged upon the RVNAF and, at the same time, to fly administrative missions for the growing US advisory group. On 28 February he requested a fourth unit and enough four-place helicopters to enable the corps advisors to commute by air throughout their sectors. By March he had received the additional airlift capability.[13]

The distances between helicopter companies in South Vietnam prevented effective massing of helicopter lift for quick reaction operations without stripping other areas of vitally needed helicopter support. With only four helicopter companies in RVN, COMUSMACV could not collocate helicopter companies with RVNAF alert-forces in a proper dispersal pattern throughout RVN. Therefore on 1 June 1962 General Harkins called on CINCPAC for three more helicopter companies, pointing out that the use of helicopters in operations was paying "good dividends". From the RVN side province chiefs and RVNAF commanders were enthusiastic and were even requesting support for CG units when helicopters were available. When two new ARVN divisions currently being trained became operational an even greater need for helicopter lift would exist. "Present troop lift capabilities have proved inadequate in I and II Corps," Harkins told Admiral Felt, "to land sufficient assault troops in one lift. Unless troops are moved in one lift, surprise is lost and the VC disappear." Airlift was especially vital in South Vietnam, General Harkins said, because of poor road nets, large areas of operation, and insufficient forces.[14]

12. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2935 to CINCPAC, 172121Z Jan 62 (derived from JCS 2343/71), JMF 9155.3/9105 (17 Jan 62).
13. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 280217Z Feb 62; (S-GP 3) Dec On JCS 2343/89, 2 Mar 62; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 140712Z Mar 62; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3699 to CSA, CMC, CINCPAC, 192142Z Mar 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (31 Oct 61).
14. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, MACJ-3 283, 1 Jun 62.

[redacted]

Ambassador Nolting supported General Harkins' request fully. "There are many indications that present helicopter units are paying off handsomely, and more are needed." He pointed also to the need for additional mobility arising from the construction of strategic hamlets, which were sure to be the targets of increasing VC attacks. The Secretary of Defense gave his approval for the deployment of two more helicopter companies in late July. [15]

As US helicopter units became more involved in actual military operations in Vietnam, the problem of protecting them came to the foreground. After their initial surprise and confusion, the VC were learning to attack helicopters with ground fire. By the end of March 1962, Secretary McNamara expressed interest in actively countering the increasing threat to helicopter operations posed by VC ground fire, and directed that the Army investigate the problem. On 22 June the Army proposed deploying a company of armed helicopters to RVN.[16]

The Chief of Staff, Air Force, objected to the Army proposal and refused, initially, to concur. "Helicopters employed as combat escort for troop transport helicopter operations in South Vietnam would be an unwarranted and unnecessary risk," he said. He pointed out that there were enough fighters and B-26 type aircraft in RVN to provide necessary protection and close combat support for heliborne operations. They were faster, less vulnerable, and more powerful than helicopters.[17]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff eventually concurred in the Army proposal, stipulating, however, that the purpose was to conduct a field test of the Army's concepts, tactics, and techniques in escort of transport helicopters and indigenous

15. (S) Msg, Saigon 1554 to State, 4 Jun 62. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 092347Z Jul 62, DA IN 246370; (S-GP 4) JCSM-535-62 to SecDef, 23 Jul 62, (derived from JCS 2343/133); (S-GP 4) Memo, DepASD/ISA to D/JS, "Additional Helicopter Companies for South Vietnam," 1 Aug 62; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5515 to CINCPAC and CSA, 312309Z Jul 62; JMF 9155.3/4123 (9 Jul 62).

16. (S-GP 3) JCS 2343/122, 28 Jun 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (28 May 62).

17. (S-GP 3) CSAFM-194-62 to JCS, 3 Jul 62, JMF 9155.2/9105 (28 May 62).

[redacted]

ground troops involved in air mobile operations. They informed the Secretary of Defense on 20 July that they regarded employment of armed helicopters as escort for transport helicopters in RVN as a defensive mission, even though the primary mission of the entire operation might be offensive in nature. Suppressive fire from armed helicopters was, in their view, self-defense within the terms of reference that guided US operations in RVN. On 26 July 1962 the Secretary of Defense approved the deployment of 15 armed HU-1A helicopters to South Vietnam.[18]

The Secretary of Defense had already directed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff begin an urgent study of the need for arming all US helicopters operating against the VC. COMUSMACV had indicated a pressing need for arming the helicopters in view of "recent VC successes against helicopters." Most of the damaging fire from the VC came from underneath the aircraft during approaches to landing zones and during take-off after discharging troops. It was not feasible to maintain suppressive fire by fixed-wing aircraft during these short periods. Firing .30 caliber machine guns from the doors of the helicopters against the Viet Cong directly beneath had not proved effective.[19]

In a preliminary evaluation, the Army judged that helicopters in combat units, such as air cavalry, should be armed; helicopters with dual purpose units, such as air mobile companies, should be armed with removable systems. Transport helicopters should not normally be armed because of the weight problem and the reduced payload. One of the most effective methods of protecting transport helicopters from enemy fire was to assign armed helicopters as escorts along the route of flight and in the objective area.[20]

At the conference in Honolulu in October 1962, CINCPAC described a growing demand for air support of the counter-insurgency operations in RVN. The Secretary of Defense stated

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18. (S-GP 3) JCSM-543-62 to SecDef, 20 Jul 62; (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 26 Jul 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (28 May 62).

19. (TS-GP 3) Record, Honolulu Conference, Jul 26, JMF 9155.3/9105 (16 Dec 61) sec 5. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to OSD, AF IN 50028, 18 Jul 62.

20. (S-GP 3) JCSM-815-62 to SecDef, 29 Oct 62, JMF 9155.3/4123 (21 Jul 62).

that steps should be taken to develop a wholly adequate VNAF. He noted specifically that the number of officers in flight training should be increased. CINCPAC also recommended that the FARM GATE (formerly JUNGLE JIM) effort be increased. Since this would involve more US planes and pilots in the fighter-bomber categories and more direct US operational roles, Secretary McNamara directed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider the proposal. He stated that he was personally cool to the idea, recalling that it was contrary to the policy position taken by the President; he wished to return to the original concept--helping the South Vietnamese help themselves rather than doing it for them--as soon as possible.[21]

In line with the Secretary's instruction to present a detailed case for providing FARM GATE augmentation, on 9 November CINCPAC asked specifically for 18 aircraft and 117 USAF personnel.[22] He had started a program to increase the VNAF capability, but said it would take at least 12 months to see any significant results. "We are daily losing opportunities to destroy Viet Cong due to inability of VNAF to answer valid requests for air strikes," CINCPAC said. The Joint Chiefs of Staff fully supported CINCPAC in the matter of FARM GATE augmentation. They told the Secretary of Defense that practically all ground operations by the ARVN within the past six months had been coordinated with some air support effort. They cited the increase in the use of VNAF fighter planes from 150 sorties in January 1962 to 628 in September. The Joint Chiefs of Staff expected the demand for air support to increase in the next few months. The RVNAF would increase offensive operations; a ninth Army division would be added by the end of 1962, and the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps would expand; the two recently added helicopter companies would increase the scope of air mobile operations. The National Campaign Plan would get under way in early 1963, the CIDG and paramilitary programs were expanding, and improved weather would favor military operations supported by air. The Joint Chiefs of Staff

> have noted the continual growth of coordinated ground and air operations induced by the increasing numbers of heliborne operations and

21. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2339/92, JMF 9155.3/9106 (16 Dec 61) sec 6.

22. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 090340Z Nov 62.

> the steady increase of air support capabilities in SVN over the past year . . . . Prior to the influx of air support/heliborne operations, military planning on the part of the Vietnamese forces basically was isolated, noncoordinated, "do what you can" action with very little rapport between the armed forces and other elements of the GVN.

The growth of air capabilities had brought a marked improvement in military planning and its coordination with the use of all national resources. It had also given US advisors a firm entree into RVNAF planning, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted this entree continued and exploited. Although they understood the concern over direct US commitment, they felt it could ultimately be avoided by building up the VNAF. On 31 December the President approved the additional US aircraft for General Harkins' command.[23]

The bolstering of the Army and Air Force units supporting the RVN effort continued into 1963. In January CINCPAC asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to deploy various additional transport and tactical aircraft to South Vietnam. They were required, he said, to support a systematic government offensive against the Viet Cong. Most of his requests were approved and the forces deployed by mid-1963.[24]

Rules of Engagement and Restrictions on US Air Operations

In addition to dealing with the deployment of aircraft, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also established rules of engagement for US aircraft assigned to South Vietnam. The general mission of all the various types of US aircraft and air crews deployed to RVN was to train and support the RVNAF in its counterinsurgency effort. Nevertheless there were degrees of definition within this general mission. In March 1962, after American-operated radar detected unidentified aircraft over RVN, four F-102 interceptors were temporarily deployed to a base near Saigon. The arrival of these jets raised questions

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23. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-960-62 to SecDef, 4 Dec 62; (TS) Memo, Special Asst to Pres (NSA) to SecDef, 31 Dec 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (4 Jul 62).

24. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 290023Z Jan 63; (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9106 to CINCPAC, 161434Z Mar 63; JMF 9155.3/3440 (29 Jan 63).

concerning the rules of engagement under which they would have to operate. Although US planes might defend themselves against attack, only aircraft with South Vietnamese markings could intercept and destroy hostile intruders. Rather than alter the markings of the interceptors deployed to Vietnam, CINCPAC recommended the adoption of new rules of engagement.[25]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that the recent radar sightings justified a change. Following review by representatives of the Department of State and the White House, new rules of engagement were promulgated on 26 March. They permitted US planes, "where means of deviating or bringing the aircraft under control are not practically possible," to down hostile planes operating over South Vietnam. Hostile aircraft were defined as those: 1) "visually identified as communist bloc aircraft over-flying sovereign RVN territory without proper clearance . . ."; 2) observed attacking "RVN or friendly" ground installations, aircraft, or vessels; 3) detected laying mines in territorial waters; 4) seen releasing parachutes or gliders over South Vietnamese territory; or 5) declared hostile by the US Director, JOC.[26]

After receiving this authority, CINCPAC took immediate steps to avoid publicity in the event a US interceptor should shoot down an intruder. The United States would remain silent about its role in the fray, allowing the VNAF to claim credit for the kill. "To establish plausibility," a South Vietnamese T-28 was to be airborne whenever the F-102s roared skyward. This plan was never tested, for the intruders ceased operating immediately after the arrival in RVN of the F-102s. Although the US jets occasionally returned, propeller-driven ADs modified to carry radar assumed responsiblity for routine night defense.[27]

More general rules of engagement were promulgated by COMUSMACV on 24 November 1962. As a general policy, no mission was to be undertaken using US men or planes unless it was beyond the capabilities of the VNAF. In his directive

25. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 230340Z Mar 62, DA IN 213993; (TS-GP 3) Memo for Record, ViceD/JS, 22 Mar 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (23 Mar 62).

26. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-220-62 to SecDef, 23 Mar 62 (derived from JCS 2343/100); (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3796 to CINCPAC, 270251Z Mar 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (23 Mar 62).

27. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1962, p. 169.

COMUSMACV reminded all US pilots and crews that "nothing shall infringe upon the inherent right of the individual to protect himself against armed attack." In the event of such an attack the individual concerned would take immediate aggressive action against the attacking force with any means available.

There were specific provisions for specific aircraft. FARM GATE aircraft could be used for combat support missions only with a combined US and South Vietnamese crew and would carry VNAF markings. C-123s would be US-marked and manned with a combined crew when on combat support missions. US Army transport helicopters might be armed and used for defensive purposes only. Armament in such aircraft would not be used to open fire upon any target. However, if the aircraft was fired upon, it could return the fire. These aircraft were to be US-marked and -manned. The same restrictions on initiating fire were placed on other combat support aircraft.[28]

While in RVN in January 1963, a JCS team reported that CINCPAC and COMUSMACV had placed additional restrictions upon rules of engagement for the armed helicopters. The helicopter must be fired upon before it could engage a target, even when an enemy target was clearly identified. FARM GATE units in South Vietnam did not have these specific restrictions but could attack identified VC targets so long as: an RVN observer was aboard, the VNAF was unable to engage the target, the aircraft carried VNAF markings, and targets were designated by RVN personnel. The team felt that the restrictions unnecessarily risked US lives and equipment and gave the enemy an advantageous option. They suggested that CINCPAC allow armed helicopters to fire on clearly identified VC targets during combat operations without being fired on first. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the recommendation and directed CINCPAC to revise the rules of engagement accordingly.[29]

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28. (S) HQ USMACV Directive No. 62, 24 Nov 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (28 May 62).

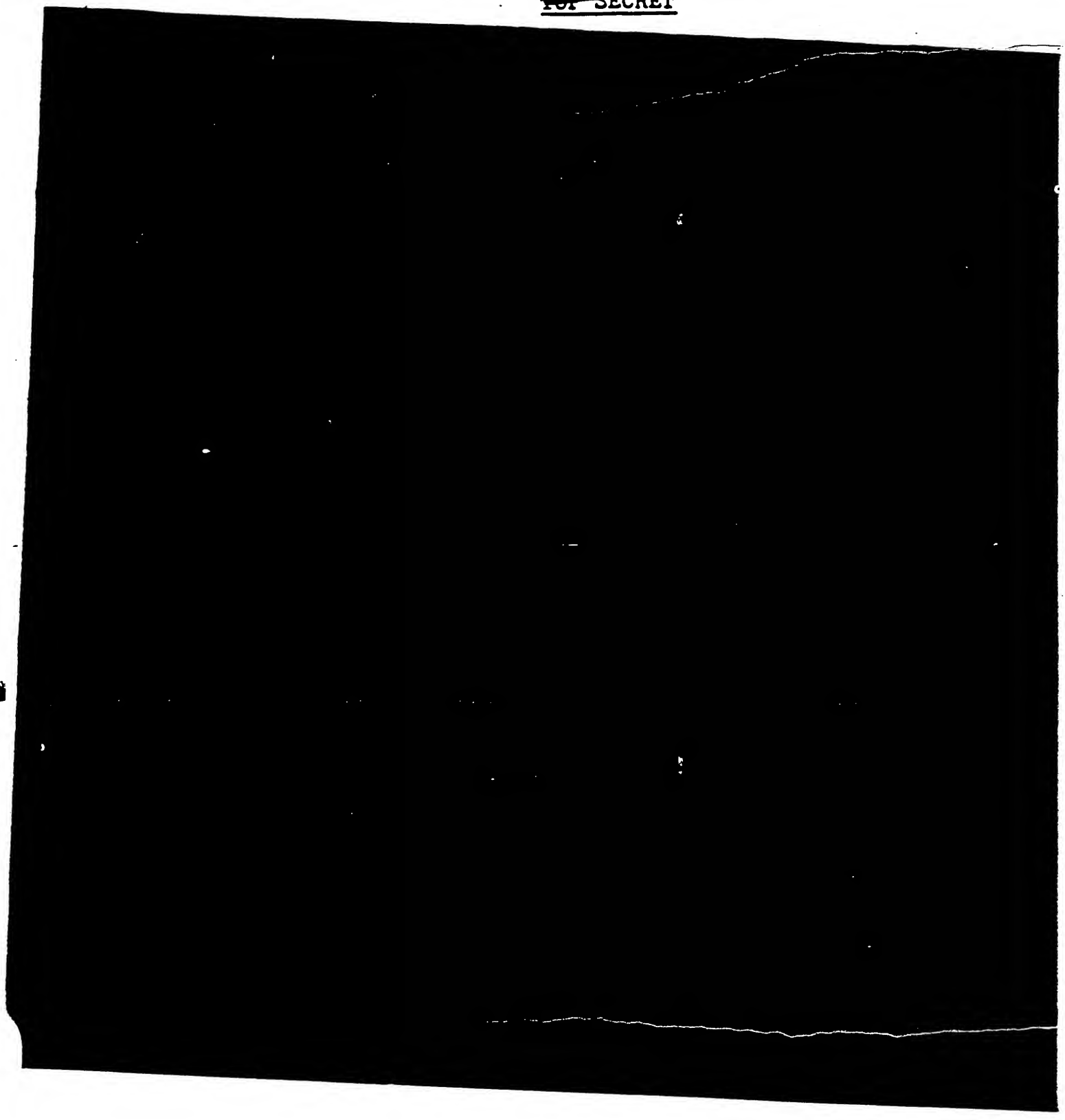
29. (TS) Rpt of Visit by JCS Team to South Vietnam, Jan 63, JMF 9155.3/3360 (1 Feb 63) sec 1. (S) Msg, JCS 8678 to CINCPAC, 161946Z Feb 63 (derived from JCS 2343/196), JMF 9155.3/9105 (28 May 62).

Intelligence and Communications Buildup

As a further aid to the buildup of the RVNAF in the fight against the VC, one of the provisions of the Taylor program had been for the development of a joint military intelligence system. By the end of May 1962 the system was operational and was reducing dependence upon GVN resources for intelligence on the Viet Cong. Having made this much progress, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked CINCPAC to examine the entire program and report on what should be done to expand the use of US intelligence assets in Southeast Asia.

The review showed that the most urgent need was for intelligence on the routine activities of the Viet Cong. CINCPAC pointed out that the RVNAF was not doing much to collect intelligence on the Viet Cong and ordered more US aid placed behind this collection effort. He also recommended that US intelligence personnel coming to RVN be given training in guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency operations, and the Vietnamese language.[30]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were also concerned that the communications/electronics base in the RVN be modernized and enlarged to meet the immediate defense needs of the RVNAF in counterinsurgency operations, and to allow expansion to satisfy US needs in support of CINCPAC and SEATO contingency plans. Through the MAP the United States provided much needed equipment in 1962. A US Army Signal Battalion was also deployed to South Vietnam, to provide communications for US forces supporting the RVNAF.[31]



Use of Napalm

On 12 September 1962 CINCPAC had told COMUSMACV that he believed Zone D, northeast of Saigon, should be returned to top priority for operations. He warned that intelligence reports showed that Zone D was being used as a major safe haven for the VC threatening Saigon, Bien Hoa, and adjacent areas. He suggested that COMUSMACV start planning for operations that would harass and destroy the VC in Zone D.[33]

General Harkins prepared these plans and prevailed upon the RVNAF to step up its operations in Zone D. The plans called for using large quantities of napalm against well-established targets, but the VNAF lacked the necessary aircraft to deliver the napalm. CINCPAC on 11 November 1962 asked for authority to divert two C-123s for a short period in order to deliver napalm. These planes would be assigned temporarily to FARM GATE, marked with VNAF insignia, and would be employed with a minimum of three VNAF personnel aboard. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to Secretary McNamara that he approve this action "subject to the concurrence of the Ambassador." The Secretary approved the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommendation on 27 November.[34]

Opposition came from the State Department, however. Disturbed by what appeared to be plans for large-scale use of napalm and fearing adverse reaction from other nations, the Secretary of State sought from Ambassador Nolting an explanation of why the operation was necessary. Nolting replied that detailed intelligence had been used in evaluating Zone D targets; that napalm had been used extensively and effectively against the VC in the past and that its use, even in large quantities, would not provide the communists with a propaganda lever.[35]

Still not convinced, the Secretary of State told Nolting on 8 December that political considerations suggested that napalm should be limited to high priority targets that had clearly been identified as VC installations. He directed, "in future, plans for using large amounts napalm in any one

33. ([illegible]-NOFORN-GP 1), CINCPAC Command History, 1962, p. 152.
34. ([illegible] GP 4) CM-136-62 to SecDef, 26 Nov 62; Msg, JCS 7573 to CINCPAC, 27 Nov 62; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 62-Jul 63.
35. (S) Msg, State 569 to Saigon, 1 Dec 62; Msg, Saigon [illegible] to State, 4 Dec 62.

operation to be cleared with Department." The Ambassador objected strenously to the order that use of "large amounts" of napalm be cleared with the State Department. Nolting said "COMUSMACV feels that restraints already imposed are making it difficult enough to carry the war to the heart of the enemy and tend to set up inviolable sanctuaries where the VC can take a breather. . . . we feel discretion in this important matter should be left with Task Force Saigon."[36]

Secretary Rusk modified his earlier instructions to a degree, notifying Nolting on 21 December that he could use his discretion, but requesting that the State and Defense Departments be advised in time to approve in advance any operations which, in his judgment, were of a size or type likely to have "significant political repercussions."[37]

Political Developments in 1962

On 4 April 1962 the US Ambassador to India, Chester Bowles, proposed to the President a revision of US policy in Southeast Asia, focusing on seeking a political solution to the problem of communist penetration of RVN through neutralization of that country. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reply to this proposal urged that the current US policy of fighting the VC threat should be "pursued vigorously to a successful conclusion." They stressed that the various measures approved for implementation in support of US policy in RVN had not been in effect long enough to test their effectiveness. They believed that any reversal of US policy could have disastrous effects, not only upon the US relationship with RVN, but with the rest of the allies of the United States, especially those in Asia.[38] The Bowles proposal apparently was not seriously

36. (S) Msg, State 567 to Saigon, 8 Dec 62; (S) Msg, Saigon 598 to State, 15 Dec 62.
37. (S) Msg, State 598 to Saigon, 21 Dec 62.
38. (S-GP 3) JCSM-282-62 to SecDef, 13 Apr 62 (derived from JCS 2343/108); (S-GP 4) Memo, ASD/ISA to D/JS, "US Policy Toward Vietnam (U)," 10 Apr 62, Att to (S-GP 1) JCS 2343/105, 11 Apr 62; JMF 9155.3/9105 (30 Nov 61).

considered by the President, although a similar solution was being actively sought in Laos. Agreements on the neutralization of Laos were finally reached at a 14-nation conference in Geneva in July 1962.

To cope with the new situation in the area, on 16 June 1962 the Secretary of State set up an interdepartmental Task Force to coordinate US activities in Southeast Asia. The group was headed by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, W. Averell Harriman, and included representatives from the Departments of State and Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA, AID, and USIA. The purpose of the new Task Force was to develop programs to carry out established US policy with respect to individual countries in Southeast Asia; coordinate, guide, and follow closely the execution of those programs to insure maximum cooperation and expeditious completion; and develop new policy recommendations which would further US objectives in these countries. Task Force Southeast Asia took over the jurisdiction of the former Task Force, Vietnam; its Chairman, Sterling Cottrell, had been appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and would be Deputy Chairman of Task Force, Southeast Asia. Two main working groups would serve the Task Force: one, a Thailand-Laos-Cambodia-Burma Working Group under Mr. Henry Koren and the second, a Vietnam Working Group under Mr. Ben Wood.[39]

As the scale of US involvement in Vietnam continued to increase through the early months of 1962, authorities in Washington were compelled to answer a mounting volume of criticism at home and abroad. In response to Republican charges that the United States was practically being involved in war without the consent of Congress, President Kennedy repeatedly explained the purposes and the limits he had tried to prescribe for US action in South Vietnam. American troops were not there to engage in combat, he said, but primarily for "training and transportation"; they were, however, authorized to use firearms when necessary for self-protection. By March, they were also accompanying South Vietnamese flyers on combat missions and using helicopters to ferry South Vietnamese troops into action. The first two GI deaths were reported on 8 April, and the Pentagon warned that there would be others. "But we cannot desist in Vietnam," the President said as he expressed his regret at these inevitable casualties.

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39. (C) Ltr, SecState to CJCS, 16 Jun 62; (C) Ltr, Under SecState to CJCS, 21 Jun 62; JMF 9150/9105 (16 Jun 62).

There were also complaints from communist quarters, where it was contended that US actions violated the 1954 armistice agreement on Vietnam, amounted to an "undeclared war," and urgently required discussion on the international level. To such objections, US authorities replied that the root of the problem was not the action of the United States but the "illegal and aggressive activity" directed from North Vietnam. Any international discussions, the United States insisted, must start from this basic fact. As an initial step in this direction, the United States was endeavoring without much success to persuade the tripartite International Control Commission on Vietnam (established by the 1954 armistice and comprising an Indian Chairman together with one member each from Canada and Poland) to let the world know the facts concerning communist machinations against South Vietnam's integrit

Allied governments had also to be reassured about US intentions. This was all the more true because increased US aid to South Vietnam was being matched by an apparent increase in Chinese Communist encouragement to North Vietnam, a state of affairs that raised the possibility of an "escalation" into large-scale war involving the great powers. Great Britain and France had thus far maintained an attitude of somewhat disapproving aloofness concerning US actions in South Vietnam, and in general gave the impression that despite their membership in SEATO, they did not particularly favor a strong stand against communist advances in Southeast Asia.[40]

In June 1962 the ICC for Vietnam finally issued a report concluding that

> there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the object of supporting, organizing and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks, directed against the armed forces and Administration of the Zone in the South. . . . there is evidence to show that the PAVN [People's Army of Viet-Nam] has allowed the Zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging and supporting hostile activities in the Zone in the South, aimed at the overthrow of the Administration in the South.

40. The United States in World Affiars, 1962, pp. 195-196.

The Commission also concluded that

> the Republic of Viet-Nam has violated Articles 16 and 17 of the Geneva Agreement in receiving the increased military aid from the United States of America. . . . The Commission is also of the view that, though there may not be any formal military alliance between the Governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Viet-Nam, the establishment of a U.S. Military Assistance Command in South Viet-Nam, as well as the introduction of a large number of U.S. military personnel beyond the stated strength of the MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group), amounts to a factual military alliance, which is prohibited under Article 19 of the Geneva Agreement.

On balance, the ICC finally concluded, "Fundamental provisions of the Geneva Agreement have been violated by both Parties, resulting in ever-increasing tension and threat of resumption of open hostilities."[41]

Communist propaganda now began to develop the themes of neutralization and "national unity" on the Laotian pattern as the ideal solution for Vietnam as well. The expanding military strength of the VC had been accompanied by the political growth of the National Liberation Front (NLF). On 1 January 1962 a component of the NLF known as the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) was established. The reason for the emergence of this openly communist element within the Front is unclear, for the NLF was obviously striving to develop a program that would win as wide a Southern audience as possible.

The NLF held its first formal congress from 16 February to 3 March 1962. The congress endorsed a program that elaborated on the NLF declaration of 20 December 1960 (see Ch. 1), demonstrating a continuing sensitivity to the strong regional sentiment in the South and the special conditions existing there, an emphasis symbolized in the Front's adoption

41. (U) Command Paper 1755 "Special Report to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China," (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), pp. 7, 10, quoted in George M. Kahin and John W. Lewis, The United States in Vietnam (1967), p. 130.

of a different flag from that of the North. The program once more called for the "correct implementation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements." It viewed reunification as a step for the distant future and one that would have to reflect the interests of the South Vietnamese as well as those of Hanoi. The 1962 program also underscored the previous emphasis on a neutralist foreign policy for the South.

The neutralization of Laos in the summer of 1962 strengthened the NLF's interest in a similar settlement for South Vietnam, one that presumably would provide, as in Laos, for a coalition government as well as for neutralization. The NLF's advocacy of such a solution was publicized on 20 July 1962, the eighth anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Agreements of 1954. On that day the Front issued "four proposals for national salvation": 1) an end to US "acts of armed aggression" and withdrawal of all US military personnel from South Vietnam; 2) a cessation of hostilities and restoration of peace in South Vietnam through a "settlement of internal affairs by the South Vietnamese themselves"; 3) the establishment of a government made up of representatives of "parties, sects and groups belonging to all political tendencies, social strata and classes, religions and nationalities existing in South Viet Nam"; 4)

> . . . a foreign policy of peace and neutrality, [to] establish good relations with all States, first of all with the neighbouring countries, refrain from joining any military bloc, refuse to all countries the right to set up military bases on its territory, receive economic aid from any country without political conditions attached. A badly-needed international agreement will be quickly concluded to enable the powers from different camps to guarantee respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and neutrality of South Viet Nam which is ready to form a neutral zone together with Cambodia and Laos, three States enjoying full sovereign rights.

For President Diem and his US supporters, however, neutralization under a coalition government was not a conceivable answer to South Vietnam's problems. Its only effect, in their view, would be to pave the way for communist rule in South as well as North Vietnam. They therefore gave no encouragement to the peace efforts of Prince Sihanouk of

[redacted]

Cambodia, whose idea it had been to gain international support for the guarantee of a neutralized zone composed of Cambodia, South Vietnam, and Laos.[42]

US authorities did not know how far, if at all, the communists' new emphasis on neutrality and coalition governments might reflect a reappraisal of the military outlook in South Vietnam, where the US buildup had by this time reached a total of about 10,000 men. Nor was it clear as yet how far the Viet Cong might be taking advantage of the new situation in Laos to increase the infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam by way of Laotian territory.

Progress Reports

The full head of steam that many US officials believed would sweep the GVN to victory over its shadowy enemy had been largely achieved by late 1962. At the end of 1962 South Vietnam had over 400,000 men under arms; 204,000 in the RVNAF, 75,728 in the Civil Guard, 95,922 in the Self Defense Corps, and some 25,000 in the CIDG. Aiding them were 11,295 US military personnel. Of this number 301 were in MACV Headquarters, 3,065 in the MAAG; the remainder served in various support units.

By the last months of 1962 many US observers were interpreting the signs in RVN as encouraging and were prophesying the defeat of the VC. The strength of the GVN military and paramilitary forces, in terms of numbers of men and units and in terms of hardware, could be measured with fair accuracy. The degree of support available to these forces from US advisors and units, the state of training, even morale, could be assessed by logical means. But the answer to the question of whether or not they were winning could not be found in statistics on the size of GVN military forces. There were no confrontations of opposing forces with a clear victory for one side or the other. As the counterinsurgency had to be fought with unorthodox political and military methods, so did progress toward victory have to be measured by unorthodox or at least unusual standards. US officials had devised "indicators," by means of which they hoped trends in the counterinsurgency could be evaluated. Among the indicators used for any given period were the following: 1) GVN offensive operations of

42. Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, pp. 132-137.

[redacted]

having diminished somewhat the intensity of their activity . . . might have been expected to lose fewer rather than more of their arms.[43]

The Wheeler Report

In January 1963 the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a team headed by the Chief of Staff, Army, to RVN to evaluate the prospects for a successful conclusion of the war in a reasonable period. They asked for specific appraisals of the effectiveness of existing military programs to meet US objectives in the RVN. Included in the review were the command and control arrangements of US and GVN military forces, the effectiveness of US and VNAF aviation, the quality and validity of military intelligence, and the readiness of plans to meet contingencies in the area. The team's point of reference was General Taylor's report of November 1961.

General Wheeler's team found the RVNAF much improved since early 1962. The ARVN had improved its planning procedures, and its commanders were consulting US advisors and showing greater understanding of the value of supporting air operations. Most operations now took place at lower echelons; 26 percent were of company size and 58 percent of platoon size. Much progress had been made in solving the problem of freeing regular units for pursuit of the Viet Cong. The team reported that six or seven of the average division's nine battalions were usually free for such operations, their static tasks having been assumed by the CG and SDC. The VNAF, the VNN, and the South Vietnamese Marines had shown similar improvements in planning and operations during the year.

The CG and SDC had also increased in size and ability. However, General Wheeler said he "noted with sympathy" General Harkins' generally unsuccessful efforts to persuade the GVN to give up its concept of holding many SDC units in small, isolated posts. "This inheritance from the French provides tempting, lucrative targets for the Viet Cong."

More important than strength increases was the improved state of training of the RVNAF and the paramilitary forces.

43. (S-GP 1) Rpt, SACSA to JCS, 1 Feb 63, "Facts Bearing on the Progress of the Counterinsurgency in South Vietnam," JMF 9155.3/3360 (31 Dec 62), sec 1A.

battalion size or larger, 2) GVN small unit operations making actual contact with VC, 3) incidents of VC terrorism, sabotage

[redacted]

GVN-controlled areas. The VC were short of medical supplies and ammunition. Defections to the GVN had grown steadily during the year from about 75 per month in January to a peak of 215 in December 1962. The level of VC offensive activity had diminished from a peak of 1,900 incidents in March 1962 to 1,340 in December, while VC casualties had risen from 1,900 a month in January to 2,750 in December.

The principal adverse indications were the continuity of VC strength in spite of their sizable reported losses, the growing numbers of Chinese Communist weapons appearing in VC hands, and the increased size and sophistication of the VC communications system. It could not be ignored that the improved GVN intelligence system was uncovering VC elements that had been in South Vietnam all the time. Nevertheless, the team decided, there was still reason to conclude that the conscription base of the VC was substantial, particularly in the Delta, and the infusion of cadre, leaders, technicians, and materiel from outside the country continued at a significant rate.

> These indications show that the communists are engaged in a slow, though perceptible, increase in effort. This suggests that the headquarters in Hanoi is not yet persuaded that the Americans are any different from the French; and that if they will but respond to our efforts with a determined reaction from outside the official battle areas, we will ultimately lose our confidence and our resolution.

The JCS team reported that while President Diem fully understood the interlocking nature of the military-economic-political relationships involved in the counterinsurgency effort, many of his subordinates did not. As a result, all of the US-GVN programs were not advancing abreast. But here also, the US advisory effort was bearing fruit. In the clear-and-hold operations, for example, efforts were now being made to have seed and fertilizer at hand to allow RVN farmers to exploit their newly liberated fields. Strategic hamlets were being encouraged to elect their own hamlet chiefs, thus removing one common target of VC propaganda. Schools for civil administrators were being conducted to raise the standards of province, district, village, and hamlet governments. The village and hamlet radio system was functioning for intelligence, administrative and emergency warning. "These developments," the team noted, "mark a small beginning in weaving the military solution into the nap of the politico-economic situation."

More than any other factor, the strategic hamlet program was credited with bringing the GVN and the people into closer touch. Not only did the JCS team believe that the program was providing security and isolation from the VC, it was the vehicle by which the GVN could carry forward a political, economic, and social revolution. "In 1962," the JCS team reported, "this program was instrumental in bringing an additional 500,000 people under the control of the government." Nevertheless, and in spite of elections being held throughout the hamlets and with US advisors on civic action and economic development going down into the provinces, democracy, in the team's view, could not be legislated in RVN, and the political development program would prosper only if the GVN achieved results in improving the living conditions of the people and in satisfying their basic aspirations. The RVN farmer, even when liberated, was still encumbered with countless restrictions by the GVN. "Until he is freed of these, the Viet Cong will continue to have volunteers from a disgruntled fringe of the society."

The JCS team praised the efforts of the US Country Team under Ambassador Nolting's leadership. This group was slowly causing the GVN to "reach the people, and the people are beginning to reach the government." American advisors seemed to have the confidence of Diem. "All-in-all, this attitude at the very top of the government represents a vast change from the aloofness and suspicion with which American advisors were received by senior Vietnam officials a year ago."

The JCS team would have preferred to see the MAAG absorbed into MACV and saw "some virtue" in the formal designation of the Assistance Command as a formalized subordinate unified command. Both General Harkins and Admiral Felt were opposed to these steps, however, and the team believed their views should prevail.[44]

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44. The JCS later decided "MAAG/MACV and component command arrangements in force in the Republic of Vietnam are adequate, and sufficient flexibility exists within the terms of reference for CINCPAC to permit any necessary adjustment, in light of foreseeable operations." (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/203, 4 Mar 63, JMF 9155.3/3360 (1 Feb 63) sec 2. The AsstSecState for FE Affairs, W. Averell Harriman, suggested on 9 Feb 63 that COMUSMACV report directly to the JCS.

Noting that the President and the Secretary of State had also raised this question at a recent meeting, Mr.

The JCS team concluded and recommended:

> The situation in South Vietnam has been reoriented, in the space of a year and a half, from a circumstance of near desperation to a condition where victory is now a hopeful prospect. . . . there are no areas of assistance which are deficient in a quantum degree. This leads to the conclusion that the current support program in Vietnam is adequate, and should be retained with only minor alterations as may be recommended by the Advisory Command. This view derives from the conviction that we are winning slowly on the present thrust, and that there is no compelling reason to change.
>
> At the same time, it is not realistic to ignore the fact that we have not given Ho Chi Minh any evidence that we are prepared to call him to account for helping to keep the insurgency in South Vietnam alive, and that we should do something to make the North Vietnamese bleed. . . . The more reasonable course [is to authorize] . . . the Assistance Command to build up a much stronger unconventional warfare capability in the Vietnamese military, and then directing it in a coordinated program of sabotage, destruction, propaganda, and subversive missions against North Vietnam.

Harriman told General Taylor, "What bothers us is that the basic command concept, namely that there must be the closest cooperation and coordination between our military and civilian activities, is not being carried out fully." Although there was cooperation between military and civilian officials in South Vietnam and in Washington, CINCPAC's location, said Harriman, slowed up decisions and led to military decisions that had not been "concerted" sufficiently with political and economic considerations. On 2 April the CJCS told Harriman that neither CINCPAC nor COMUSMACV believed the present command arrangements should be changed. The JCS were also satisfied. Harriman agreed not to pursue the subject further for the time being, but reserved the right to reopen the question if he judged it necessary. (C) Ltr, AsstSecState for FE Affairs to CJCS, 9 Feb 63; (S) Memo for Record, CJCS, "Meeting with Under Secretary Harriman with regard to Command Relationships between CINCPAC and COMUSMACV," 2 Apr 63.

> The team believes that unless the Viet Cong chooses to escalate the conflict, the principal ingredients for eventual success have been assembled in South Vietnam. Now, perseverance in the field, and at home, will be required in great measure to achieve that success.

General Wheeler's team added that the National Campaign Plan was a logical outgrowth of the marshalling process that had taken place in response to the Taylor report. It should not create requirements for great increases in US support and would offer reasonable prospects for greatly improving the military situation. "As such, it deserves to be supported." They also recommended that COMUSMACV's Comprehensive Three Year Plan for South Vietnam (CPSVN) of 19 January 1963 be accepted as a generally sound basis for planning the phase-out of United States support.[45]

Hilsman-Forrestal Report

Several weeks after the JCS team returned from RVN, a report on the situation in South Vietnam from a different point of view was submitted to the President by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Roger Hilsman, and a National Security Council Staff Assistant, Michael Forrestal. They agreed with the Wheeler team that the war in Vietnam was clearly going better than it had been a year earlier. But their final conclusion was mixed:

> Our overall judgment, in sum, is that we are probably winning, but certainly more slowly than we had hoped. At the rate it is now going, the war will probably last longer than we would like, cost more in terms of both lives and money than we had anticipated, and prolong the period in which a sudden and dramatic event could upset the gains already made.

The impact of US aid was beginning to be felt. Military aid, advisors, helicopters, and air support had given the RVNAF new confidence and for the first time since 1959 these

45. (TS-GP 3) "Report of Visit by Joint Chiefs of Staff Team to South Vietnam, January 1963," JMF 9155.3/3360 (1 Feb 63) sec 1.

forces were capturing more weapons than they lost. US aid for the strategic hamlet program was just starting to arrive, a US military advisor had now been placed with each province chief, and 20 of the 41 provinces would soon have a US advisor on rural development. "The government claims to have built more than 4,000 strategic hamlets, and although many of these are nothing more than a bamboo fence, a certain proportion have enough weapons to keep out at least small Viet Cong patrols and the rudiments of the kind of social and political program needed to enlist the villager's support."

Both men told the President that the program to arm and train the Montagnards should go far toward choking off the border infiltration routes. Twenty-nine US Special Forces teams were already training Montagnards and 11 more teams were on the way. By mid-autumn 1962 training camps had been set up in all the provinces bordering Laos, and a system of regular patrolling, it was hoped, would one day cover the entire network of trails in the mountain region. Already 35,000 of an eventual 100,000 Montagnards had been trained, armed, and helped in setting up their village defenses.

On the negative side of the ledger, the VC were still aggressive and effective and had recently inflicted stinging defeats on the RVNAF. Despite GVN claims of 20,000 Viet Cong killed and 4,000 wounded during 1962, the VC apparently still had the same number of regular forces--". . . it is ominous that in the face of greatly increased government pressure and US support the Viet Cong can still field 23,000 regular forces and 100,000 militia, supported by unknown thousands of sympathizers."

The Washington visitors were doubtful of the attitude of the people toward the GVN, pointing out that while they might resent VC tax collections, there might be just as much resentment and suspicion directed toward the GVN.

> No one really knows . . . how many of the 20,000 'Viet Cong' killed last year were only innocent, or at least persuadable villagers, whether the Strategic Hamlet Program is providing enough government services to counteract the sacrifices it requires, or how the mute mass of villagers react to the charges against Diem of dictatorship and nepotism.

Hilsman and Forrestal believed that the basic strategic concept developed in 1962 was still valid. The trouble was in the implementation of the concept. They criticized the

GVN for not having an overall plan keyed to the strategic concept instead of a variety of regional and provincial plans. They criticized the GVN also for wasting its available manpower, pointing out that there was a confusing multiplicity of armies in RVN: the ARVN, the CG, the SDC, the CIDG, the Hamlet Militia, the Montagnard Commandos, the Force Populaire, the Republican Youth, the Catholic Youth, several independent groups under Catholic priests, and even a small army commanded by a private businessman to protect his property in Cap St. Jacques. In all, there were half a million men under arms in South Vietnam, enough for 51 divisions if properly organized. "South Vietnam does not need any more armed men, but it does need to reorganize what it has."

Commenting on the domestic political situation in RVN, the Washington observers noted that while it was true that the Diem government was a dictatorship, it was doubtful that the lack of parliamentary democracy bothered the average RVN villager very much. The real question was whether the concentration of power in the hands of Diem and his family, especially his brother Nhu and his wife, and Diem's reluctance to delegate were alienating the important middle and higher level authorities of the GVN. The United States did not really have as much information as it should have on this subject. There was evidence on both sides, but at the moment the important thing was that US aid had encouraged all GVN officials and they seemed to be getting on with the job. "Both the American and British missions, for example, feel that Brother Nhu's energetic support of the Strategic Hamlet Program has given it an important push," the President's advisors informed him.[46]

In an annex for the President, Hilsman and Forrestal made several criticisms of the US effort in South Vietnam.

> (1) There is no overall planning effort that effectively ties together the civilian and military effort. (2) There is little or no long-range thinking about the kind of country that should come out of a victory and about what we do now to contribute to this longer-range goal. . . . (3) Among both civilians

46. (S) Memo, NSC Staff Assistant Forrestal for Pres, n.d. [25 Jan 63], Att to CM-243-63 to D/JS, 28 Jan 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 62-Jan 63.

> and military there is still some confusion over the way to conduct a counter-guerrilla war. . . . The American military mission must share some of the blame for the excessive emphasis on large-scale operations and air interdiction which have the bad political and useless military effects described in our report. . . . (4) In general, we don't use all the leverage we have to persuade Diem to adopt policies which we espouse. . . .

They went on to recommend the appointment of an Ambassador to South Vietnam who could coordinate the US effort effectively, although they emphasized "not to make any sudden and dramatic change but to keep the problem in mind when changes are to be made in the normal course of events."[47]

Balance Sheet

In general, by early 1963 there was widespread optimism among US officials, both civilian and military, about the progress of the war in South Vietnam. As the Secretary of Defense had said earlier in 1962, "Every quantitative measurement we have shows we're winning this war." The President said in his 1963 State of the Union Message, "The spearpoint of aggression has been blunted in Viet-Nam."[48]

The communists themselves acknowledged that "In terms of territory and population, Diem made a considerable comeback in 1962," and at one point the NLF almost decided to evacuate the delta and retreat to the mountains.

> If 1961 was a 'Front year' in terms of territory and population gained, 1962 however must be largely credited to Saigon. With United States aid in men and materials pouring in from the end of 1961, a major effort was made to destroy and isolate the Front's armed forces, to push Front influence back from the gates of Saigon and other provincial capitals and to re-install Diemist power in the countryside. The use of helicopters and amphibious tanks to increase rapidity of

47. Hilsman, To Move a Nation, pp. 465-466.
48. Public Papers of the Presidents, John F. Kennedy, 1963, p. 11.

movement and to avoid the devastating ambushes that the Diemist troops invariably fell into when they moved by road or river, caught the guerrillas off balance at first.[49]

Also by early 1963, however, the war effort in South Vietnam was coming increasingly under the scrutiny of the US press, much of which was far from optimistic. Press reports caused friction with the GVN, and even prompted President Kennedy to ask Roger Hilsman to examine the problem in his report on the progress of the war.

The situation would deteriorate in 1963 and be further complicated by political troubles in South Vietnam. Many of the conditions for continued progress in the war effort would disappear as internal divisions in RVN intensified.

49. Wilfred G. Burchett, Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War (2d ed., 1965), pp. 189, 193.

Refer NSC for concurrence

Chapter 6

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIETNAM THROUGH AUGUST 1963

The year 1963 opened with an incident that in many ways was a harbinger of things to come. An unsuccessful RVN military operation against the Viet Cong, followed by severe press criticism of the RVNAF, focused worldwide attention on the GVN, intensified the conflict between President Diem and the press, and caused a deterioration in US-GVN relations.

American efforts to support the GVN ran into more heavy going in mid-1963 when political-religious turmoil rose to dangerous levels in South Vietnam. The smoldering opposition to the Diem government that US authorities had deplored in the past flared, fanned by Buddhist protests against alleged GVN oppression. As the Diem regime grew more obstinate and intractable, many US officials gradually lost confidence in Diem's leadership. American public opinion became increasingly impatient with the GVN's actions against the Buddhists, and signs began to appear that US policy in South Vietnam would become unpopular. Third countries, France in particular, criticized the US role in Vietnam more openly, and began more serious efforts to encourage a negotiated settlement to the troubled situation in Southeast Asia.

The Battle of Ap Bac

Ap Bac was a settlement in Dinh Tuong Province, 35 miles southwest of Saigon in the Mekong Delta. Its name became the symbol for "one of the most costly and humilitating defeats of the South Vietnamese army and its United States military advisers," and for "the bloodiest single battle of South Viet Nam's four year war against the Communist Viet Cong." These were, of course, opinions, but once expressed, their reverberations were felt around the world.[1]

The objective of the Ap Bac operation, which was mounted on 2 January 1963, was to destroy a Viet Cong concentration and radio station. Although it was not known at the time, the

1. Washington Post, 1 Apr 63. Philadelphia Inquirer, 1 Jun 63.

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enemy concentration was a regular VC battalion. In the judgment of the senior US advisor to the ARVN 7th Division, Lieutenant Colonel John P. Vann, USA, the Ap Bac operation was a failure--the mission had not been accomplished and friendly casualties were higher than VC casualties. Although the GVN force was much larger, the VC force escaped with few losses. He attributed the failure chiefly to the poor state of training of ARVN and CG units; a system of command that never placed a Vietnamese officer above the rank of captain on or over the battlefield; a reluctance to incur casualties; the inability of the RVN forward air controllers to assess the situation and bring air strikes to bear on the actual targets; and a complete lack of discipline in battle that resulted in commanders at all levels and even individual soldiers refusing orders they considered distasteful. In more detail, these complaints were backed by the more than a dozen US advisors on the ground and by the air liaison officer.

The senior US advisor to IV Corps Headquarters, Colonel Porter, endorsed LTC Vann's critique and added his own observations of the "many glaring weaknesses" that had been noted during the majority of other operations in the delta. Most important among these were the refusal of the corps and division commanders to accept at their remote command post the situation reports and tactical advice of US advisors on the battlefield; the failure of the senior commanders to act decisively and enforce orders; and the failure of commanders at all echelons to instill in their units aggressiveness, dedication, and, above all, a will to win. Many of these weaknesses appeared to the senior corps advisor to be "characteristic of virtually all of the senior officers of the Vietnamese armed forces."[2]

The Viet Cong subjected the Battle of Ap Bac to a searching critique of their own. A captured document revealed that the insurgents were operating on the basis of sound principles of command and control, superb intelligence and security, good communications, and adequate logistics. They left nothing to chance. For every contingency, alternate plans were ready in advance. Orders, with few exceptions,

2. (UNK) After Action Report by Sr Adv 7th Inf Div (LTC John P. Vann), 9 Jan 63; Comment on 7th Div AAR by Sr Adv IV Corps, 16 Jan 63.

were promptly executed. The Ap Bac battle was anticipated, though details were not known to the Viet Cong.[3]

CINCPAC stated on 4 January "that only lack of aggressive leadership on the part of two Vietnamese commanders prevented complete annihilation of the Viet Cong forces . . . [and] that he would request Vietnamese Secretary of Defense Thuan to relieve both commanders." On 5 January, General Harkins remarked ". . . it might appear that we lost a battle but we didn't."[4]

American advisors were highly critical of the manner in which US press representatives handled the affair. It appears that the first reports on the "debacle" were filed from what MACV's information officer described as the "incestuous gloom of the Saigon bars," even before correspondents had reached the division command post. Subsequent reports were more objective, but in publicizing US criticism of the RVN performance, they did severe harm to US-RVN relations.[5]

Diem's Public Image

The foreign press in South Vietnam, largely American, found themselves in a situation where government officials alternately ignored them, accorded them cavalier treatment, or fed them cut and dried, euphemistic handouts. Resentful of this treatment, some newsmen reacted by reporting the activities and views of the Diem government in a critical vein. In short, Diem had a "bad press." During 1963 it grew worse.

The JCS team that visited the RVN in January 1963 had cited the poor relationships between the Diem government and the foreign press as one of the major problems of the GVN. "The mutual distrust and dislike between the Diem government and the foreign press," the JCS team reported, "particularly United States press representatives, has created serious public relations problems which impact directly on the war effort, both in the United States and in Vietnam."

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3. (C) DOD Intelligence Info Rpt, IR 2903011563, "VC Document on Ap Bac Battle, 2 Jan 63," dated 1 May 63.
4. (S) Ltr, SecA to Hon. Carl Vinson, Chairman, Com on Armed Services, H.R., 2 Feb 63.
5. (TS) MACV, Summary of Highlights, 8 Feb 62-7 Feb 63, p. 172.

Newsmen charged the GVN with repressing the freedom of the press, with being unduly secretive, with issuing deliberately false bulletins, and with trying to use the press as an instrument of propaganda. On the other side of the fence, GVN officials regarded the foreign press as untrustworthy, prone to publish secret and false information from private sources, and biased to the extent that only the bad aspects of events in the RVN were carried in the press reports.

The RVNAF had been severely criticized in the press for poor performance. According to the JCS team, even members of the press were appalled at the flood of editorial punditry and cries of doom following the Ap Bac incident. But newsmen insisted that their information came from US sources. The JCS team admitted that this was true but said that the stories were based on ". . . ill-considered statements made at a time of high excitement and frustration by a few American officers." Nevertheless, great harm had been done, with public and Congressional opinion in the US influenced by the press toward believing that the war effort in the RVN was misguided and lacking in drive, and that GVN officials flouted the counsel of US advisors. The GVN naturally resented press reports that raised doubt as to the courage, training, and spirit of its armed forces. "Moreover," the JCS team reported, "relations between the United States diplomatic and military representatives on the one hand and the press representatives on the other is somewhat strained."[6]

The Hilsman-Forrestal report confirmed what the JCS team had reported. They assured the President that in general the US diplomatic and military officials in South Vietnam had good relations with the press. This was not true, unfortunately, of press relations with the Diem government. Hilsman and Forrestal believed that much of the fault for this lay not with the American newsmen, but with Diem. According to them, Diem wanted only adulation and was completely insensitive to the desires of the foreign press for factual information. He was equally insensitive to his own image and and to the political consequences of the activities of Madame Nhu and other members of his own family. He himself had shown tendencies to arbitrariness, failure to delegate, and general pettiness, all of which were reflected in his relations with the foreign press. After much effort,

6. (TS-GP 3) Report of Visit by Joint Chiefs of Staff Team to South Vietnam January 1963, JMF 9155.3/3360 (1 Feb 63) sec 1.

Ambassador Nolting had persuaded Diem to let the Defense Ministry give regular military briefings. Unfortunately, these briefings presented nothing more than "saccharine eulogies" of Diem and gave no real facts. "It would be nice if we could say that Diem's image in the foreign press was only his affair," Hilsman and Forrestal told President Kennedy, "but it seriously affects the U.S. and its ability to help South Vietnam. The American press representatives are bitter and will seize on anything that goes wrong and blow it up as much as possible."[7]

Ambassador Nolting had reported that the daily briefings of newsmen by RVN information officers had been slow and occasionally deliberately misleading. On at least one occasion the GVN spokesman had cut in half the true GVN losses in an engagement and had rectified his false statement only after persuasion by MACV officers. American officials limited their briefings of newsmen to matters directly involving US personnel and equipment. The US position was that the counterinsurgency was a GVN war and that it would, therefore, be improper for the United States to release facts or conjecture on "strictly GVN matters."[8]

The Press and US Military Participation in the War

News stories emanating from the RVN in early 1963 also placed increasing emphasis on the active role of US military personnel, particularly pilots, engaged in helicopter and FARM GATE operations in combat against the Viet Cong. The US Ambassador told the Secretary of State in mid-February that these stories were to be expected and that they reflected the gradual and inevitable "uncovering of facts by US journalists." By February 1963 the US-GVN air effort had reached a level of over 1,000 sorties a month. American casualties in FARM GATE operations were being revealed, and the chances were increasing that reporters would feature the combat role of US pilots and airmen. "General Harkins and I will continue to answer

7. (S) Memo, NSC Staff Asst. to Pres., n.d. [25 Jan 63] Att to CM-243-63 to D/JS, 28 Jan 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 62-Jul 63.
8. (C) Msg, Saigon 656 to State, 8 Jan 63.

queries by sticking to the operational training role of FARM GATE," Nolting assured the Secretary of State.[9]

The State Department notified Ambassador Nolting that the United States was concerned by these news reports of the US air combat role because: 1) it was a clear violation of the Geneva Accords; 2) the United States had stated repeatedly in public that no US combat forces as such were in the RVN, and these stories gave the lie to all high officials who had made this statement and gave substance to communist charges that the war was a US war on the people of the RVN; 3) the combat role of US forces might cause a Congressional investigation, since the Administration had repeatedly stated that the US role was limited to advisory and logistic matters.[10]

News accounts emphasizing the US combat role continued, and on 27 February President Kennedy took steps to curb them. As a result of a news story stating that US personnel now had authority to "shoot first," Secretary Rusk told Ambassador Nolting:

> These news reports are very damaging both here and abroad, and we must do everything possible to prevent them in the future. Our policy remains that American role in Viet-Nam strictly limited to advisory, logistic, training functions. Any activities such as FARM GATE which may be construed as an American combat role are not to be discussed with newsmen. This policy set at highest level at time of initiation of increased aid to Viet-Nam. It has not changed.

Nolting was instructed to inform all "official Americans" that they were expected to observe the policy rigorously.[11]

The Ambassador and General Harkins were fully aware of the problem posed by these news stories, but did not see how carrying out the instructions from the State Department would solve the problem. General Harkins had already briefed all of his command who were involved in the relevant operations on the US policy and its importance. But to instruct all "official Americans"--more than 12,000 if the term were interpreted literally--would not only be physically difficult, it

9. (S) Msg, Saigon 749 to State, 14 Feb 63.
10. (S) Msg, State 807 to Saigon, 15 Feb 63.
11. (S) Msg, State 828 to Saigon, 27 Feb 63.

would highlight the matter to a vast number of Americans who were at this stage only dimly aware of it. This would be counterproductive to the overall public relations problem; newsmen would charge "official clamp-down." Since it was evident that "secret instructions re chopper rules of engagement were leaked, an investigation is now underway here."[12]

Meanwhile, public attention was also focused on Vietnam by the report of a group of four US Senators headed by Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana. They had gone to Southeast Asia in late 1962 at the request of President Kennedy, and they published their report on 24 February 1963. Although the report concerned aid programs and policies throughout mainland Southeast Asia, its main focus was on US support of the RVN in its struggle against the Viet Cong.

While deploring the magnitude of military aid and economic assistance required to counter the communist guerrillas, the Senators conceded that cutting it was a risky undertaking. Even when victory had been won over the Viet Cong, they said, "a massive job of social engineering" would remain. "In the best of circumstances, outside aid in very substantial size will be necessary for many years."

The principal concern of the authors, however, was with the prospect that the same intensification of US support of the GVN could only end in the conversion of the struggle into an "American war."

> If we are to avoid that course it must be clear to ourselves as well as to the Vietnamese where the primary responsibility lies in this situation. It must rest with the Vietnamese Government and people. What further effort may be needed for the survival of the republic in present circumstances must come from that source.
>
> If it is not forthcoming, the United States can reduce its commitment or abandon it entirely, but there is no interest of the United States in Vietnam which would justify, in present circumstances, the conversion of the war in that country

12. (S) Msg, Saigon 778 to State, 1 Mar 63.

primarily into an American war to be fought primarily with American lives.

Criticisms of the Diem regime in the report caused a flurry of displeasure in South Vietnam and further strained US-GVN relations.[13]

Within a few weeks, the US Government Accounting Office (GAO) submitted to the State Department a report of findings on US operations in the RVN from 1958 to mid-1962 that severely criticized several AID operations, GVN shortcomings in mobilizing its resources, and GVN personalities. The report also impugned the good faith of the GVN in several US-GVN negotiations. The State Department, wary of offending the GVN, sought the advice of Ambassador Nolting on publication of the GAO report. "We realize such a report in the aftermath of the Mansfield Report could have bad effect . . . ." Nolting replied immediately, pointing out that the general political situation in South Vietnam, "though improving, is still fragile and subject to dangerous deterioration. We are not out of the woods yet." Continued foreign press criticism of the GVN and of US policy, followed by the Mansfield report and by signs of reluctance and disillusionment on the part of certain segments of US public opinion, had, he said, encouraged coup plotting. The result had been to force the Diem government to tighten, rather than ease, its restrictions. The Ambassador believed that an overthrow of the GVN would redound to the benefit of the enemy and would be a "bonanza for Hanoi." He recommended deferring publication of the GAO report indefinitely. This apparently was done.[14]

Signs of Friction

The problem of US-GVN relationships came to the forefront in early April 1963 when President Diem told Ambassador Nolting that the number of Americans in the RVN should be cut back gradually to "restore control at the top." In Diem's warning was implicit proof that the GVN was sensitive to the

13. "Viet Nam and Southeast Asia," Rpt by Sen. Mike Mansfield et al., to S. Com on Foreign Relations, 88th Cong, 1st Sess. NY Times, 25 Feb 63, p. 1.

14. (C) Msgs, State 871 to Saigon, 15 Mar 63; Saigon 820 to State, 18 Mar 63.

American presence, particularly at the lower levels. The United States by this time had 13,143 military personnel in the RVN, with about 1,900 more on the way.[15]

This matter had arisen as a result of negotiations that had been going on for some months between Ambassador Nolting and the GVN on counterinsurgency funding. The United States had insisted that the GVN establish a fund to take care of the costs of the strategic hamlet projects and certain other counterinsurgency programs. The United States was prepared to furnish only part of the money, and wanted a voice in how the money was spent. Diem said that if the United States had any say in how the funds for the counterinsurgency program were spent, it would undermine the authority of his government. He told Ambassador Nolting that US military and civilian advisors at the lower levels were already, by their "very number and zeal," creating the impression among the population that the RVN was becoming a US protectorate. He charged that while the senior US officials in the RVN understood his country's problems, many junior advisors were prone to "insist" upon their own views even though they did not have sufficient experience. These advisors were causing Diem's people to disregard the authority of local GVN officials, and were confusing, delaying, and disrupting GVN operations. There were too many advisors, Diem said; the United States should give him more elbow room to run his own affairs and develop his own institutions according to South Vietnam's background and traditions. Ambassador Nolting warned Diem that he was striking at the root of the US-GVN cooperative effort, which could bring a downward spiral of mutual confidence, cause curtailment of US aid, and jeopardize the effectiveness of the effort against the VC insurgents.[16]

Although agreement on the counterinsurgency fund was reached in May, Ambassador Nolting reported at the 6 May 1963 Honolulu meeting that US-GVN relations were somewhat "less good" than they had been six months earlier. The crux of the problem appeared to be Diem's increasing sensitivity to the US presence and an increased sense of nationalism. The Ambassador told the Secretary of Defense that the GVN did not really want the United States to pull out but would be happy to see some sort of a reduction. The problem was becoming increasingly serious because at times the United States appeared to be tampering with Diem's "political base."

15. (S-GP 3) Msg, Saigon 882 to State, 5 Apr 63.
16. Ibid.

Despite the authoritarian nature of the Diem regime, the Ambassador said, the US Country Team was unanimous in the opinion that the current GVN leadership was the best the United States could get.[17]

In the midst of this crisis, Diem's controversial brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, struck another blow at US-GVN relations. In an interview with Warren Unna of the Washington Post, Nhu reportedly observed that there were "too many American advisers in Vietnam, that half of them could be sent back to the US, and that the other half exposed themselves too readily to enemy fire." He also criticized US advisors, stating that in such matters as guerrilla warfare "Americans don't know as much as we do." In other words, he said publicly some of the things Diem had told Nolting privately.[18]

Realizing that Nhu's inflammatory statements would increase congressional and public resistance to the US program in the RVN, Secretary Rusk took immediate action. He cabled Ambassador Nolting that there had been a "very strong reaction" to Nhu's interview on Capitol Hill, and instructed him to protest to President Diem in the strongest possible language. "Public call for cut in US forces by high officials like Nhu is likely to generate new and reinforce already existing US domestic pressures for complete withdrawal from SVN . . . ," Rusk pointed out. He suggested that if Diem agreed that US forces should not be cut, Nolting should persuade him to make a public statement to that effect. " You may say it will be difficult for us to justify to Congress greater US forces than GVN apparently wishes and that a public statement is therefore important."[19]

Nolting did see Diem, but the President would not repudiate his brother's remarks. Nhu did deny publicly that he had said what Unna reported, claiming he had been misunderstood. And in a joint communique of 17 May announcing the agreement on counterinsurgency funding, the GVN agreed to insert a statement that the "present level of the advisory and support effort is still necessary." Explaining his failure to get a stronger statement from Diem regarding his

17. (TS-GP 3) Record, Honolulu Conference, 6 May 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 62-Jul 63.
18. Washington Post, 13 May 63.
19. (S) Msgs, State 1084 and 1098 to Saigon, 13 and 14 May 63.

brother's charges, Ambassador Nolting told Secretary Rusk on 20 May, "Given family situation here, I am convinced that any more direct public repudiation by Diem of Nhu would have been impossible."[20]

Ambassador Nolting also told Washington that he was impressed by the vast difference between what was actually happening in the RVN and the impressions in the outside world of what was happening there. He felt that actual events were vindicating US and GVN policy and that the classical pattern of communist subversion was being broken.

> There is a fierce concentration on the internal problems here and a consequent neglect of, or insufficient attention to, the factors forming international opinion which are way beyond the grasp or control of the Government. It goes without saying that, even on internal matters, there continues to be "snafus" but the general average of internal performance is improving constantly, I am convinced.[21]

Diem's Domestic Political Troubles

The concentration on internal problems reported by Ambassador Nolting did not stave off for long a crisis in the domestic politics of South Vietnam. Opposition to President Diem's authoritarian and highly personal administration had been simmering for some time, although there was no strong alternative candidate on whom dissatisfied elements could focus their support. In August 1962 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already heard reports of behind-the-scenes political maneuvering and warnings of a serious struggle for political power if Diem should be removed.[22]

The true crisis was not precipitated until the spring of 1963, when arbitrary and injudicious GVN handling of a

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20. (S) Msg, Saigon 1031 to State, 17 May 63. (U) Msg, Saigon 1038 to State, 17 May 63. (C) Msg, Saigon 1040 to State, 18 May 63. (S) Msg, Saigon 1043 to State, 20 May 63.
21. (S) Msg, Saigon 1036 to State, 17 May 63.
22. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/139, 7 Aug 62, JMF 9155.3/9105 (1 May 62).

Buddhist protest demonstration touched off a series of events that led ultimately to the downfall of the Diem regime. What had begun as a religious protest broadened, eventually unifying and hardening all the factions in opposition to Diem.

The immediate cause of the crisis was the GVN reaction to a Buddhist demonstration on 8 May 1963 in Hue, 400 miles north of Saigon. The Buddhists were protesting a government ban on the display of religious flags and denial of permission to make a radio broadcast on the occasion of the birthday of Buddha. Since Catholic flags had recently been displayed on Archbishop Thuc's (another of Diem's brothers) anniversary, the Buddhists charged that Catholicism was the officilal government religion and was being favored positively over Buddhism. RVN troops assigned to break up the demonstration fired into the crowd. Buddhist priests charged oppression and brutality by the Diem government. Since an estimated 70-80 percent of the South Vietnamese people were at least nominally Buddhists, the Catholicism of the Ngo family and many other government leaders was thrown into sharp relief.[23]

That the Hue incident merely focused long-held Buddhist resentment was evident from the demands that Buddhist leaders presented to President Diem on 14 May. These were: 1) to rescind the order against flying religious flags; 2) to grant Buddhists equal rights with Catholics; 3) to halt arbitrary arrests of Buddhists; 4) to grant Buddhists equal rights to worship and propagate their creed; and 5) to pay compensation to the families of the demonstrators killed at Hue. Diem was noncommittal; the most he would do was to agree to have the incident investigated.[24]

In the next few weeks the crisis worsened as Diem temporized and the Buddhists organized more demonstrations and became more self-confident. Meanwhile the United States, through Ambassador Nolting and Charge d'Affairs Trueheart, urged the Diem regime to give public assurance to the Buddhists that their religious freedom would be respected.[25]

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23. (S-NOFORN) Dept of State RFE-75, "Diem Versus the Buddhists: the Issue Joined," 21 Aug 63. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1005 and 1047 to State, 9 May 63 and 21 May 63. (S) SNIE-53-2-63, 10 Jul 63.

24. (C) Msg, Saigon 1038 to State, 18 May 63.

25. (S) Msg, State 1159 to Saigon, 29 May 63. (S) Desp, Saigon A-776 to State, 10 Jun 63.

On 11 June the self-immolation of a Buddhist monk in protest against the GVN treatment of Buddhists caused a shocked, worldwide reaction to the events in South Vietnam. The United States found it necessary to threaten the GVN, "if Diem does not take prompt and effective steps to reestablish Buddhist confidence in him we will have to reexamine our entire relationship with his regime." Diem agreed to negotiate with the Buddhist leaders.[26]

Although rioting by Buddhists and mass arrests by the GVN continued, the discussion between the GVN and the Buddhists resulted in a formal agreement signed on 16 June 1963 by President Diem and Thich Thien Khiet, President of the General Association of Buddhists of Vietnam (GABV). The GVN recognized the Buddhist demands, and a special committee headed by Vice President Tho was directed to implement the accord and to investigate all complaints by the Buddhists. This accord ostensibly cleared up the entire problem.[27] But elements on both sides took up arms against the agreement. On the GVN side, evidence piled up that dissatisfied persons, encouraged and organized by Ngo Dinh Nhu, were intent on nullifying or circumventing the agreement. On the other side, "younger activists" in the Buddhist ranks were not content to see the rift settled so easily and expressed great dissatisfaction. Trueheart reported that these people had "without doubt tasted the blood of politics" and either saw the religious issue as a way for political changes or had discarded the religious issue for an outright political objective--a change in regime.[28]

Acting on instructions, Charge d'Affairs Trueheart called on President Diem on 3 July and asked him to make an address to the people of the RVN designed "to bridge the gap of understanding" between the GVN and the Buddhists by making further concessions to the Buddhists. He urged Diem to make a public statement soon, warning that if another serious Buddhist incident occurred before the statement had been made, "my government believes that the situation in Vietnam would soon

26. (S) Msg, Saigon 1168 to State, 12 Jun 63.
27. (S-NOFORN) Dept of State RFE 75, 21 Aug 63.
28. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1231 and 1259 to State, 22 and 29 Jun 63.

get out of control. The United States Government would also have to make its own position perfectly clear." Diem replied to the effect that he understood that the United States had a problem with its public opinion but that he felt this was largely a matter of exaggerated and inaccurate reporting of the news. He did promise to consider the proposition, however.[29]

The next day, a meeting on the situation in South Vietnam was held at the White House. President Kennedy was briefed on developments in the RVN by a team of State Department officials, including Under Secretary Ball, Assistant Secretary Hilsman, and Ambassador Nolting. The President had already announced Nolting's replacement as Ambassador by Henry Cabot Lodge, but Nolting was to return to Saigon until Lodge could take up his new post in late August.

Mr. Hilsman informed the President of the extremely heavy pressure being placed on Diem by the United States. He also told him that there was an activist element in the Buddhist movement and some basis of truth in Diem's view that the Buddhists might push their demands so far as to make his fall inevitable. Hilsman believed that no matter what Diem did there would be more coup attempts within the next four months. Ambassador Nolting believed, however, that if the United States repudiated Diem on the Buddhist issue, his government would fall. Diem would live up to his agreement unless he believed he was dealing with a political attempt to overthrow him.[30]

Ambassador Nolting's arguments carried the day; when he returned to Saigon on 9 July, he carried with him a personal message of confidence in President Diem from President Kennedy. After a call on Diem, Nolting reported that Diem's confidence in US intentions had been badly shaken by recent events. Diem was hurt by what he considered to be lies and calumnies; he was torn by conflicting advice, resentful of US pressure, and not completely in control of his government's actions. Nolting believed that Diem's intentions were good and that some of his resentments and suspicions of the Buddhists were well founded. Nolting still seemed to feel that patience was the answer and he cautioned against further strong pressure.[31]

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29. (S) Msg, Saigon 24 to State, 3 Jul 63.
30. (TS) Memo for the Record, "Situation in South Viet-Nam," 4 Jul 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Oct 62-Jul 63).
31. NY Times, 10 Jul 63, p. 1. (S) Msg, Saigon 85 to to State, 15 Jul 63.

Fearing that Washington might order some drastic action regarding "disassociation" without having all the facts at hand, Ambassador Nolting pointed out bluntly to the Secretary of State his view that the Buddhist agitation was now predominantly controlled by activists and radical elements whose aim was the overthrow of the Diem government. "It may or may not be deliberately connected with coup plots by military officers," Nolting stated, "but Buddhists almost certainly aware of these."[32]

Nolting did convince Diem to make conciliatory efforts, however. On the night of 18 July Diem made a brief speech asking his special committee to work closely with Buddhists to resolve Buddhist complaints, and calling on GVN officials at all levels to carry out scrupulously the terms of the 16 June agreement. Barricades around three main pagodas came down on the morning of 19 July, presumably following up on Diem's speech.

Nolting believed that, in making the public address as the United States had been urging him to do, Diem had made a major concession and should be in some way rewarded for so doing. On 19 July Nolting urged the State Department to have its official spokesman make a statement that would call Diem's broadcast "forthright and statesmanlike" and would term it an unmistakable affirmation of the GVN's intention to carry out the 16 June agreement.[33]

Secretary Rusk felt much encouraged by the progress that Nolting seemed to be making with Diem, but felt that the Buddhist demands were reasonable "even if motivated by political aims." The Secretary of State was willing now to let matters drift.

> It seems to us that the outcome remains obscure. We do not know whether Diem really will do the things he must if his regime is to survive. We are, therefore, inclined to continue for the present a public posture of noninterference in this internal affair, neither favoring Buddhists or Diem in public statements, but merely expressing approval of all helpful steps and hope for a peaceful settlement.[34]

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32. (S) Msg Saigon 95 to State, 17 Jul 63.
33. (S) Msg, Saigon 109 to State, 19 Jul 63.
34. (S) Msg, State 103 to Saigon, 19 Jul 63.

Ambassador Nolting was "very much disappointed." A "wait-and-see" attitude by the United States at this point would, he believed, further undermine the stability of the situation and jeopardize US vital interests. It would encourage more agitation by the Buddhists and increase the prospects of a coup. Nolting conceded that the GVN had badly underestimated and bungled the Buddhist problem and it might, although he did not believe so, have gotten out of hand. But at last Diem had come up with something concrete and had publicly committed his government to a conciliatory course. The United States should take all available measures to encourage him in this course. Diem's statement and the response to it might offer the last chance to get the situation "back on the tracks."[35]

In reply to his protest, Ambassador Nolting was told that the State Department had now carefully considered the Buddhist problem against the backdrop of a successful counter-insurgency program. The current State Department "thinking" was summed up as follows:

> We are inclined to anticipate further Buddhist demonstrations and resulting unrest and believe more protest suicides should be expected. This view based on 1) continuing GVN failure to act promptly to meet legitimate Buddhist grievances and to show a true spirit of conciliation; 2) belief that Buddhist movement likely to become increasingly militant. Buddhists probably more and more inclined to regard the overthrow of regime as only possible solution, thus attracting growing support (and conversely) from other major elements plotting regime's overthrow, particularly in armed forces. We also expect that Buddhist unrest and demonstrations will increasingly agitate the urban populace, and that this agitation, to a degree, may be expected to extend to countryside also, with resulting slowdown in war effort. In these circumstances and in light growing crop of reports on coup plans, we judge odds favor attempted coup within the next few months if not weeks.

35. (S) Msg, Saigon 117 to State, 20 Jul 63.

For the time being, the United States would hold to its posture of "watchful waiting" while continuing privately to press the GVN to "demonstrate proper spirit" and to take all necessary measures to finally resolve the issue. A more active role

> runs the obvious risk of putting us in the position of having backed a loser, and even of prolonging crisis and increasing violence, with all the bad effects on the war effort that would flow from such an error. We may well come to the point where we would want to throw all our influence behind either Diem or an acceptable alternative leader or junta (preferably Constitutional successor supported by military) in order to stabilize the situation as rapidly as possible. But in light of the information available to us here, we do not believe the situation has yet jelled to that point. At this moment, though alternatives to Diem seem to be emerging it is not yet clear who and what they are.[36]

Ambassador Nolting took a more sanguine view of the prospect of Diem's settling the Buddhist problem and avoiding a coup d'etat. He believed that the heat was slowly going out of the crisis and that Diem was quite likely to survive this crisis as he had many others in the past. He reminded the State Department of his firm conviction that, despite its shortcomings, the GVN was the government with the best chance of carrying the counterinsurgency to a successful conclusion. "Therefore, without putting all our eggs in one basket, or alienating possible successor governments or leaders," he urged, "we should . . . help, by all means consistent with our own principles, to maximize this government's chances of survival."[37]

Although Ambassador Nolting reported on 28 July that he had learned that the GVN was "now solidly behind policy of conciliation (including Nhu, at least at the moment),"[38] the crisis took a turn for the worse on 4 August. A second bonze, a 20-year old novice, burned himself to death in protest against GVN policies. Madame Nhu told a CBS reporter that the Buddhists "barbecued one of their own monks whom they

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36. (TS) Msg, State 112 to Saigon, 23 Jul 63.
37. (TS) Msg, Saigon 134 to State, 24 Jul 63.
38. (S) Desp, Saigon A-89 to State, 28 Jul 63.

intoxicated. And even that burning was not done with self-sufficient means, because they used imported gasoline."[39]

Nolting took a stern stand with Diem on Madam Nhu's conduct and told him he could not expect to maintain the present relationship with the US Government unless he took the matter into his own hands. Diem hinted that perhaps Madame Nhu needed a rest but would go no farther.[40]

The schizophrenic nature of the GVN Government and of Diem himself became more and more evident as further pressures to reform were placed on him by the US Ambassador in mid-August. He seemed genuinely confused, yet obstinately opposed to any further concessions to the Buddhists or to any effort to control his family's damaging actions.[41]

The ritual suicides continued amid mounting resentment on both sides. Madam Nhu greeted these acts contemptuously, declaring "If they burn thirty women we will go ahead and clap our hands." By 19 August a total of five Buddhist bonzes had burned themselves to death, and emotions were running at fever pitch. By this time also Ambassador Nolting had left his post and Ambassador Lodge had not yet arrived in Saigon.[42]

At midnight on 20 August, government forces struck the Buddhists a blow that was obviously intended to crush all further restistance. The main pagoda in Saigon was attacked by police and a GVN Special Forces group. All pagodas in Saigon were seized and surrounded by barbed wire. Fighting broke out in Hue and was quickly crushed by government forces. At least 1,000 Buddhists and students were arrested. The GVN was clearly in control. The policy of conciliation had been abandoned and no pretense remained.[43]

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39. (S) Msg, Saigon 178 to State, 5 Aug 63. Time, 9 Aug 63, p. 21.
40. (S) Msg, Saigon 240 to State, 10 Aug 63.
41. (S) Msg, Saigon 208 to State, 12 Aug 63.
42. Time, 16 and 22 Aug 63.
43. (U) Msg, Saigon to State, unnumbered, 20 Aug 63. (C) Msg, Saigon 267 to State, 21 Aug 63. (S) Msgs, Saigon 269 and 299 to State, 21 Aug 63.

President Diem had signed a decree establishing martial law in South Vietnam during the afternoon of 20 August, during a meeting with his top military leaders. The exact mechanics by which the crushing of the Buddhist movement came about remain hidden. What is apparent is that the GVN, exasperated by its failure to resolve the problem neatly and irritated by US pressure, took measures known to have been espoused by Madame Nhu and her husband, rather than make further concessions. Diem had openly challenged the United States and repudiated the advice given him by the US Ambassador.

The first US action was a public statement issued by the State Department on 21 August:

> On the basis of information from Saigon it appears that the Government of the Republic of Vietnam has instituted severe repressive measures against the Vietnamese Buddhist leaders. These actions represent a direct violation by the Vietnamese Government of assurances that it was pursuing a policy of reconciliation with the Buddhists. The United States deplores repressive actions of this nature.[44]

President Kennedy then directed General Taylor to find out from General Harkins just what was going on in the RVN. Specifically, he wanted to know whether the declaration of martial law meant that Diem had full confidence in his armed forces or whether he had become a hostage to them. Also, he wished an estimate of the effect of recent events on the US-GVN programs in South Vietnam. General Taylor posed these questions to Harkins on 21 August 1963.[45]

In an immediate reply COMUSMACV stated that, in his view, Diem still had confidence in his armed forces or he would not have put them in charge at such a critical time. He had talked with General Don, new Chief of the JGS, who could not tell him how long martial law would last. Don had asked for General Harkins' support, however, and had assured him that the political crisis would not affect operations against the Viet Cong. Turning to the effect on US-GVN programs, General Harkins said: "As you know, our programs are completed. We

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44. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1963-1964, p. 20020.
45. (S) Msg, JCS 3284 to MACV, 21 Aug 63.

have accomplished our part of everything we set out to do after your visit in the fall of '61--all except ending the war, and that is not far off if things continue at present pace." All that was needed now to end the conflict was the will and determination of the Vietnamese people to win.

General Harkins even felt the present situation might be a blessing in disguise since it had set the stage for a military takeover with a minimum of violence.

> Few bones were bruised as the police and military took over the main pagodas yesterday. Not that I'm for the military taking over--no indeed--but with the state of affairs as they were, it was becoming evident things were getting out of control, and some measure of authority had to be established. That it was done without firing a shot and thru the nominal chain of command precluded a lot of bloodshed which would have spilled if the rival factions tried to take over.[46]

Reappraisal of US Policy

The attack on the pagodas confronted the US Government with the necessity to make a decision on the question that had been developing since the Buddhist crisis began: could the war in South Vietnam be won under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem? The United States had patiently endured Diem's refusal to heed its advice to reform his government and to improve its image at home and abroad. In nearly every instance in which US officials had approached him on these matters, Diem had adroitly turned aside from the suggested course and gone his own way, heedless of the dangerous discontent spreading among his people. The declaration of martial law and the attacks on the pagodas, latest and most serious evidence of the Diem government's totalitarian nature, brought the United States face to face with some very hard facts. Diem, apparently influenced by the Nhus, had rejected out of hand the most earnest advice of the US Government. Diem's actions could endanger the joint counterinsurgency effort into which the United States had poured hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of men. More important, Diem's actions threatened the long-range security plans of the United States by

46. (S) Msg, MAC 1495 to CJCS, 22 Aug 63.

weakening the US position in Southeast Asia. Diem's value as a leader of his people against the Viet Cong was, in the eyes of US authorities, seriously damaged. If he could not command the loyal, willing support of the people of the RVN, he could scarcely carry the difficult and complex counterinsurgency program to a successful conclusion, regardless of US aid.

"The present crisis," intelligence officials of the Department of State said on 26 August, "has clearly altered the balance of power within the government and seriously damaged its inner cohesiveness. . . . The generals, heretofore essentially non-political in their actions, have suddenly been introduced into the power structure."[47]

On 22 August the State Department directed Ambassador Lodge, who had just arrived in Saigon, to find out what the distribution of power was in the RVN at the moment. The next day Lodge reported that the military leaders were ostensibly supporting the Diem regime and working together. He did not believe this surface indication counted for too much, however, as there were at least three power elements in the ARVN, represented by General Don, the new Chief of the JGS; General Dinh, the Saigon area commander; and Colonel Tung, commander of the Special Forces group in Saigon, generally regarded as Nhu's personal hatchet man.[48]

On 24 August Ambassador Lodge informed Washington that there was strong disaffection among regular army officers and said he had definite indications from RVN military leaders that they wanted Nhu removed. They reportedly had said that if the United States took a clear stand against Nhu and in support of an army action to remove him from the government, the ARVN (with the exception of Colonel Tung), would unite and carry out such an action. Diem could be retained, but only if all Nhu influence was permanently removed.[49]

Lodge did not accept all this at face value. He had no information to prove that the troop commanders in the Saigon area were disposed to revolt or that the military had agreed

47. (S) Dept of State RFE-76, 26 Aug 63 (hereafter cited as RFE 76).
48. (TS) Msg, State 235 to Saigon, 22 Aug 63. (S) Msg, Saigon 314 to State, 23 Aug 63.
49. (TS) Msgs, Saigon 320 and 324 to State, 24 Aug 63.

on a leader. Any action by the United States would be a "shot in the dark," Lodge cautioned, saying that the United States should bide its time and continue to watch the situation closely.[50]

On the basis of these messages from Lodge, however, State Department officials developed a draft message for Lodge containing instructions of an extraordinary nature. The message was cleared with all concerned departments (but not personally with the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who were on vacation) and the President, and was sent to Saigon at 2136 on 24 August.

> It is now clear that whether military proposed martial law or whether Nhu tricked them into it, Nhu took advantage of its imposition to smash pagodas with police and Tung's Special Forces loyal to him, thus placing onus on military in eyes of world and Vietnamese people. Also clear that Nhu has maneuvered himself into commanding position.
>
> US Government cannot tolerate situation in which power lies in Nhu's hands. Diem must be given chance to rid himself of Nhu and his coterie and replace them with best military and political personalities available.
>
> If, in spite of all of your efforts, Diem remains obdurate and refuses, then we must fact the possibility that Diem himself cannot be preserved.
>
> We now believe immediate action must be taken to prevent Nhu from consolidating his position further. Therefore, unless you in consultation with Harkins perceive overriding objections you are authorized to proceed along following lines:

50. (TS) Msg, Saigon 329 to State, 24 Aug 63.

(1) First, we must press on appropriate levels of GVN following line:

(a) USG cannot accept actions against Buddhists taken by Nhu and his collaborators under cover martial law.

(b) Prompt dramatic actions redress situation must be taken, including repeal of decree 10, release of arrested monks, nuns, etc.

(2) We must at same time also tell key military leaders that US would find it impossible to continue support GVN militarily and economically unless above steps are taken immediately which we recognize requires removal of Nhus from the scene. We wish give Diem reasonable opportunity to remove Nhus, but if he remains obdurate, then we are prepared to accept the obvious implication that we can no longer support Diem. You may also tell appropriate military commanders we will give them direct support in any interim period of breakdown central government mechanism.

(3) We recognize the necessity of removing taint on military for pagoda raids and placing blame squarely on Nhu. You are authorized to have such statements made in Saigon as you consider desirable to achieve this objective. We are prepared to take same line here and to have Voice of America make statement along lines contained in next numbered telegram whenever you give the word, preferably as soon as possible.

Concurrently with above, Ambassador and country team should urgently examine all possible alternative leadership and make detailed plans as to how we might bring about Diem's replacement if this should become necessary.

Assume you will consult with General Harkins re any precautions necessary protect American personnel during crisis period.

You will understand that we cannot from Washington give you detailed instructions as to how this operation should proceed, but you will also know we will back you to the hilt on actions you take to achieve our objectives.

Needless to say we have held knowledge of this telegram to minimum essential people and assume you will take similar precautions to prevent premature leaks.[51]

On 25 August, Ambassador Lodge called for a modification of his instructions, telling Washington, "Believe that chances of Diem's meeting our demands are virtually nil. At the same time, by making them we give Nhu chance to forestall or block action by military." Lodge and his advisors in Saigon did not believe the risk was worth taking, since Nhu was in control of the combat forces in Saigon. Lodge proposed instead that he go straight to the Generals without informing Diem. He would tell these men that the United States was prepared to accept Diem without the Nhus, but that the Generals could make that decision when the time came. "Would also insist Generals take steps to release Buddhist leaders and carry out June 16 agreement," Lodge continued. "Request immediate modification instructions. However, do not propose move until we are satisfied with E and E [Escape and Evasion] plans. Harkins concurs. I present credentials President Diem tomorrow 11 a.m." The State Department approved the modification in plans.[52]

Ambassador Lodge made his first call on Diem on 26 August. He conveyed to Diem, but apparently not in a "tough" manner, the displeasure of the US Government over the persecution of the Buddhists and particularly over the conduct of Madame Nhu. Diem said that he had done his best to keep Madame Nhu quiet and had spoken to her several times. He said jokingly that he had even threatened to take a wife. Lodge pressed Diem to make a dramatic gesture, such as liberating the Buddhist prisoners, which would have a good effect on US opinion. Diem said he had liberated most of them. He then rambled on for two hours revealing a definite distrust of his own officials and of the intellectuals of the RVN. It

51. (TS) Msg, State 243 to Saigon, 24 Aug 63.
52. (TS) Msg, Lodge to State, number and date unknown [probably 25 Aug 63], quoted in Memo, Forrestal for COL Berry, 7 Oct 63, OCJCS File, Vietnam Cables, Aug-Dec 63.

was obvious that he believed the Buddhists represented only a small minority of malcontents and that he was determined to crush them. He said he had decreed martial law to defend Saigon. He would give Ambassador Lodge no estimate of when martial law would end. At the end of the meeting Diem expressed hope that US activities in Saigon would remain disciplined and that there would be an end to reports of various US agencies interfering in GVN affairs.[53]

Meanwhile, officials in Washington were beginning to have doubts about the policy and plan embodied in the message sent to Ambassador Lodge on 24 August. President Kennedy, although he had approved the message containing the instructions to Lodge, was concerned particularly with the feasibility of splitting Diem off from his brother. The President had also learned that the telegram had not been cleared at the highest levels in the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency: Mr. McNamara and Mr. McCone had been on vacation when the cable was cleared. They had misgivings about the plan, and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, was also beginning to be doubtful. At White House meetings on 26 and 27 August the policy was discussed again at some length. The President finally decided to reaffirm the basic policy of supporting a coup by the Generals, because there was a consensus that although the present course was dangerous, to do nothing would be even more dangerous. He did, however, want assurances that the coup had a good chance of succeeding, and reserved the right to withdraw US support of the Generals if it seemed they would not be able to carry through their plan. In any event, the United States would not take any overt action in support of a coup against Diem and Nhu. Secretary McNamara, General Taylor, and General Krulak (SACSA) all favored making one more approach to Diem to urge him to remove his brother's influence, but this was apparently not done.[54]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were especially concerned that there was a lack of depth and quality in the planning for a coup. They cited "the hazard to US military personnel implicit in the situation, the military implications of the term 'direct support' used in the 24 August cable, the apparently fragile nature of the State plan and the possibility of improper involvement of CINCPAC in the planning."[55]

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53. (S) Msg, Saigon 340 to State, 26 Aug 63.
54. (TS) SACSA Chronology, Aug 63.
55. Ibid.

The question of improper participation by CINCPAC arose on 26 August. General Taylor learned that Admiral Felt had expressed opinions on the coup planning directly to Mr. Hilsman of the State Department on 24 August. On 27 August the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed on a message reprimanding CINCPAC. Although they recognized his need for occasional direct contact with Washington agencies out of normal channels on nonsubstantive matters, they did not "view favorably the expression of your views, other than to themselves, on substantive matters as reflected by your statement 'I was favorably inclined to a course of action such as that indicated in paragraph 6 of SAIGON 320'. . . ."[56]

During the next few days Washington sought daily assessments from Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins on the balance of forces between coup and countercoup elements in South Vietnam, on the determination of the coup participants, and on the security of the planned coup. There continued to be a divergence in view between the State and Defense Departments and between Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins on the wisdom of supporting a coup. In answer to a query from the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Harkins revealed on 28 August that he was not in total agreement with Ambassador Lodge. General Harkins still believed that the Ambassador should give Diem a final chance to rid himself of Nhu before going to the military. But he did not feel strongly enough about it to interpose violent objection. "My one hope," he told General Taylor, "is that whatever happens there will be little or no bloodshed and we can get back to the main purpose of our being here--helping these very fine people fight the war against the VC."[57]

Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins were in constant contact with the coup leaders [redacted]. Pursuant to the policy in the 24 August cable, [redacted] were to determine when and how the coup was to be handled and had told their counterparts that: 1) the United States agreed that Nhu must go; 2) Diem's retention would be up to the coup leaders; 3) bonzes and other political prisoners must be released and the 16 June agreements carried out; 4) the United States would provide direct

56. (TS) Msg, JCS 2252 to CINCPAC, 27 Aug 63.
57. (TS) Msgs, State 256 to Saigon, 27 Aug 63; 268 and 269, 28 Aug 63; 272 and 279, 29 Aug 63. (TS) Msg, MAC 1557 to CJCS, 28 Aug 63.

support during any interim period of breakdown of the central government mechanism; 5) the United States could not be of any help during the initial action of assuming the power of state and the coup leaders were on their own and the coup entirely their action, win or lose; and 6) if the Nhus were retained and Buddhist grievances were not redressed, the United States would find it impossible to continue military and economic support.[58]

The Generals seemed reluctant to move ahead without further assurances, however. Lodge now urged:

> We are launched on a course from which there is no respectable turning back: The overthrow of the Diem Government. There is no turning back in part because U.S. prestige is already publicly committed to this end in large measure and will become more so as facts leak out. In a more fundamental sense, there is no turning back because there is no possibility, in my view, that the war can be won under a Diem administration, still less that Diem or any member of the family can govern the country in a way to gain the support of the people who count, i.e., the educated class in and out of government service, civil and military--not to mention the American people.

Therefore, he said, the United States should proceed to make an all-out effort to get the Generals to move promptly. To do so he asked authority to do the following: 1) have General Harkins repeat to the Generals personally the messages previously transmitted [redacted] and 2) if the Generals insisted, make a public statement that all US aid to South Vietnam through the Diem regime had been stopped, on the express understanding that the Generals would have started their coup at the same time.[59]

Following a White House Meeting to discuss this latest recommendation, the most specific instructions to date on US involvement in a coup were sent to Ambassador Lodge on 29 August.

58. [redacted]
59. (TS) Msg, Saigon 375 to State, 29 Aug 63.

In response to your recommendation, General Harkins is hereby authorized to repeat to such Generals as you indicate the messages previously transmitted [redacted] He should stress that the USG supports the movement to eliminate the Nhus from the government, but that before arriving at specific understandings with the Generals, General Harkins must know who are involved, resources available to them and overall plan for coup. The USG will support a coup which has good chance of succeeding but plans no direct involvement of U.S. armed forces. Harkins should state that he is prepared to establish liaison with the coup planners and to review plans, but will not engage directly in joint coup planning.

Lodge was granted authority to announce suspension of aid through the Diem government at a time and under conditions of his choice. Washington believed it would be best to hold this authority for use in close conjunction with the coup and not for present encouragement of the Generals, but that decision was up to him.[60]

The Secretary of State sent Lodge a related message on the matter of whether or not to approach Diem before going ahead with the coup. He did not give any specific direction to the Ambassador on whether he should or should not call on Diem. He merely presented Lodge with the pros and cons, and asked for his further thoughts on the matter.[61]

Ambassador Lodge, replying on 30 August, asserted that it would be futile to attempt to reason with Diem prior to going ahead with the coup. He told the Secretary of State definitely that he was contemplating no further talks with Diem at that time. "I am sure," he concluded, "that the best way to handle this matter is by a truly Vietnamese movement, even if it puts me rather in the position of pushing a piece of spaghetti."[62]

60. (TS) Msg, State 272 to Saigon, 29 Aug 63.
61. (TS) Msg, State 279 to Saigon, 29 Aug 63.
62. (TS) Msg, Saigon 383 to State, 30 Aug 63.

Secretary Rusk, noting that "when the spaghetti was pushed, it curled," called for Lodge to reopen communications with Diem. "It seems to me," he said, "that we must keep our eye fixed on the main purpose of our presence in South Vietnam and everyone on the US side needs to review the bidding on this elementary purpose: Why we are there, why are we asking our fellows to be killed and what is getting in the way of accomplishing our purpose?"

Rusk pointed out that the actions of the GVN and the Nhus had eroded this purpose, but that Diem must now be approached and made to realize his political leadership obligation. He must make a systematic effort to improve his international position and to demonstrate to the American people that "we are not asking Americans to be killed to support Madame Nhu's desire to barbecue Bonzes."[67]

Talk of a Negotiated Settlement

In the midst of the political intrigue in Saigon, French President Charles de Gaulle made a statement on Vietnam on 29 August 1963, saying:

> The grave events taking place in Vietnam are being followed with attention and emotion. The work which France has carried out in the past in Cochin China, Annam, and Tongking, the links which she has retained with the whole country, and her interest in its development enable her to understand the Vietnamese people's trials peculiarly well and to share them sincerely. From her knowledge of the worth of this people, she can appreciate the role which they could play in present-day Asia, for their own progress and to the benefit of international understanding, once they were able to live in independence of foreign countries, in peace and unity at home, and in harmony with their neighbours. Today more than ever this is what France desires for the whole of Vietnam. Naturally it is for the Vietnamese people, and for them alone, to choose their means of achieving it; but any national effort undertaken

67. (TS) [illegible]sgs, State 294 and 295 to Saigon, 1 Sep 63.

On the morning of 31 August General Harkins called on General Khiem, [redacted] General Harkins' intention was to give assurance of US backing of the planned coup, in accordance with the instructions from Washington. Before he could give this assurance, he was brought up short by General Khiem's statement that the Generals had stopped planning "at this time" and were working on other methods. Khiem stated that the Generals were not ready as they did not have enough forces under their control compared to those under Diem and those now in Saigon. The Generals, he indicated, did not want to start anything they could not successfully finish. In reporting these facts to Washington, Harkins said, ". . . we have an 'Organization de Confusion' with everyone suspicious of everyone else and none desiring to take any positive action as of right now. You can't hurry the East."[63]

[redacted]

The news was received in Washington without great consternation, since it had been apparent all along that the plans were somewhat nebulous and the Generals' military strength somewhat doubtful. Discussion by US authorities, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, turned to what actions could best be taken to make the best of the adverse developments. It was concluded that the United States should not attempt itself to operate a coup, nor should it withdraw from the RVN until the war was won. The Secretary of Defense insisted that the United States move quickly to reestablish firm communication with President Diem.[65]

Ambassador Lodge acknowledged the failure of the Generals' coup planning on 31 August but obviously had not abandoned hope that some sort of coup might be forthcoming "at some indeterminate date in the future when some other group with the necessary strength and lust for office comes forward." He was now thinking in terms of salvaging as much as could be saved by an approach to the Diem government to attempt some sort of meaningful reform.[66]

63. (TS) Msg, MAC 1583 to CJCS, 31 Aug 63.
64. [redacted]
65. (TS) SACSA Chronology, Aug 63.
66. (TS) Msg, Saigon 391 to State, 31 Aug 63.

> in Vietnam with this aim would find France ready, so far as lies in her power, to organize cordial co-operation with that country.[68]

The French Ambassador in Washington, M. Herve Alphand, clarified the statement the next day, saying that it was not directly connected with the present situation, and referred to a long-term solution. Nevertheless, partly because of its timing, the statement touched off a welter of speculation. Some commentators even saw it as evidence of an intrigue between Hanoi and certain elements in Saigon (Nhu, it was rumored) to neutralize the South and unify it with North Vietnam. The main point was that de Gaulle's statement offered an alternative policy to the war, especially since Diem seemed to be on the way out: Make peace in South Vietnam, reduce the US presence, then one could see what effect that might have on North Vietnam and on longer range prospects for the unity of the whole country within neutralization.[69]

The first US comment on de Gaulle's statement came on 18 September, when the State Department released the following statement:

> . . . it would not appear to be in the interest of South Vietnam, of ourselves, or of the other free world nations to consider negotiating away what has been accomplished by the courage and heavy expense in life and effort of the Vietnam people.[70]

An analysis of the possibilities of a North-South rapprochement by the CIA revealed that the rumors had some foundation in fact. In September 1962, the Chairman of the ICC for Vietnam had reported that Ho Chi Minh said he was prepared to extend the hand of friendship to Diem ("a patriot") and that the North and the South might possibly initiate several steps toward a modus vivendi, including an exchange of members of divided families. Again, on 15 July 1963, Ho Chi Minh released a statement suggesting that a ceasefire could be arranged if the GVN ousted its US

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68. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1963-1964, p. 20019.
69. Ibid. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) Dept of State, RFE-78, 11 Sep 63.
70. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1963-1964, p. 20020.

military advisors and established a coalition government including communists. The proposal echoed the terms laid down by the NLF in 1962, and called for "agreements . . . to abolish some of the dangerous abnormalities of the present situation and to abolish the existing trade, communications and cultural barriers between North and South." There had been an appreciable difference in the GVN response to the 1962 situation and its present behavior. The existence of contacts between North and South had always before been denied, but now Ngo Dinh Nhu acknowledged contacts with the North and was dropping occasional hints that the GVN would not necessarily refuse to consider overtures from Hanoi.

Nevertheless, the CIA did not believe that the GVN was seriously interested in any form of rapprochement of lesser dimensions than reunification, e.g., de facto or formal ceasefire, or some variant of neutralization. Reunification could not be imminent, either, since Hanoi's frequently stated conditions for unification would involve the virtual capitulation of the GVN. A variety of motives, however, could induce the GVN to explore the possibilities of rapprochement with Hanoi: a) a desire to develop their own "sanction" to counter threats of US aid cuts and provide the GVN some maneuverability in face of US pressures; b) a general interest in maximizing available options during a crisis period (e.g., one in which they might find themselves losing the military support necessary to prevent total defeat); and c) a new willingness to listen to long-standing French arguments or overtures. The CIA expected such exploratory activity to subside if US-GVN relations or the course of the war against the Viet Cong improved, or to increase if either should deteriorate further.[71]

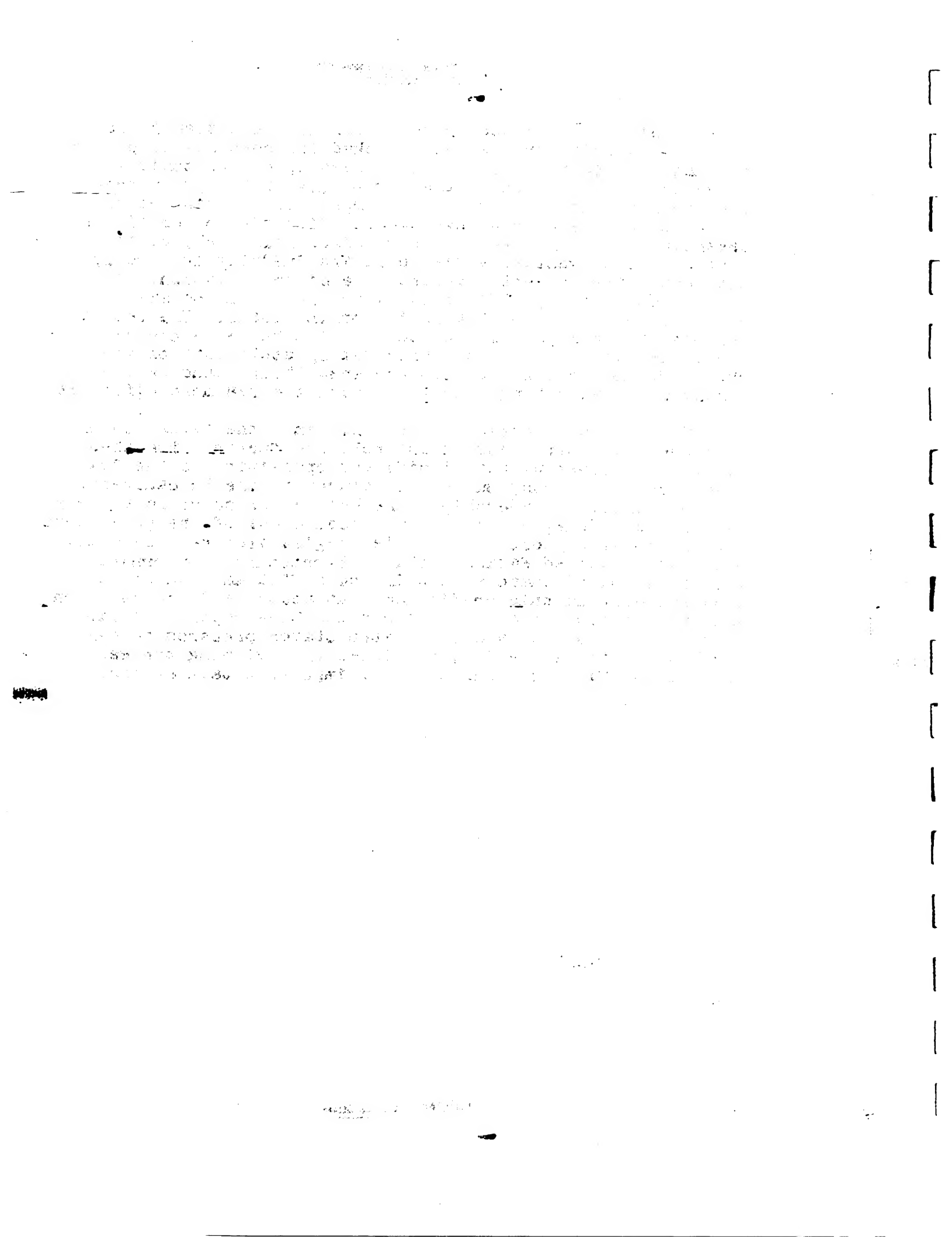
Thus at the beginning of September the United States faced another series of hard decisions about the future of the GVN and its own role in the guerrilla conflict. "In short," said a diplomat in Saigon, "all bets are off. In April we could see the end of the war in sight. But the Buddhist episode is the worst thing that could have happened . . . it is a new element which no one can handle, the government, the U.S., or even the Buddhists themselves."[72]

71. (S) Memo, for Dir, CIA, 19 Sep 63, "Possible rapprochement Between North and South Vietnam," Encl to Ltr, DepDir (Intelligence) CIA to CJCS, 26 Sep 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Aug-Oct 63). NY Times, 19 Jul 63, p. 3.

72. Newsweek, 26 Aug 63, p. 36.

Despite conciliatory moves, Diem had consistently held that the Buddhist crisis was provoked for personal or political gain and that the Buddhist leadership was communist-oriented. He thus denied the legitimacy of the grievances and underestimated the political impact of Buddhist hostility on the stability of his government. Diem saw the crisis in essentially security terms and remained relatively confident that he could eventually discredit the Buddhist leadership and reduce the protest movement to a minor agitation. In this he had been greatly influenced by the Nhus, who became principal spokesmen of GVN policy on the issue. The result had been a schizophrenic approach: Diem had made conciliatory moves but had condoned the inflammatory statements of the Nhus. The Buddhists had also hardened their stand as the months went by, making compromise with the GVN more difficult.

The sudden injection of the ARVN into the situation on 21 August had introduced an entirely new factor. The Nhus became more powerful but significant opposition to the GVN also increased--among Buddhists, students, the bureaucracy, and the military leadership. The balance of power in the GVN was altered, damaging the inner cohesiveness of the government. International support for the Diem regime also reached a low ebb, with a United Nations debate threatening, concerning the violation of human rights in South Vietnam. American embarrassment in this predicament was acute, and the decision was made to support a coup against the Diem regime. A first attempt fizzled out, and the United States prepared to make the best of the situation, convinced that winning the war against the Viet Cong was the most important task at hand.



Chapter 7

THE FALL OF THE DIEM REGIME

The last three months of the Kennedy Administration brought a great upheaval in the situation in South Vietnam. The direction that either the GVN or the United States would take remained unclear when President Kennedy was shot down on 22 November 1963. September and October were months of constant reassessment in US policy, marked by deep divisions of opinion within the US Government. Before a coherent plan of action had emerged, South Vietnamese generals staged a successful coup against President Diem and his brother Nhu on 1 November 1963. The new government set up by the Generals had hardly begun to function when the US President was assassinated. Amid the uncertainties about the future, however, the United States tried to carry through its programs in support of what was deemed the most important task in South Vietnam--the successful prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong.

Pressure on Diem

The collapse of the generals' plan to overthrow the Diem government in late August left the United States with no better alternative at the beginning of September 1963 than to put the best possible face on a poor situation. The United States had now to salvage what it could by reopening communications with Diem, hoping to influence his government into attitudes and actions more acceptable to the United States and to world opinion. While US representatives in Saigon sought to persuade Diem to take the measures necessary to reestablish stability and public confidence in the GVN, President Kennedy applied the strongest political pressure he had attempted to date.

On 2 September 1963, in a television interview, President Kennedy made an unprecedented public statement of disapproval of the Diem regime's policy vis-a-vis the Buddhists. "I don't think that the war can be won unless the people support the effort and, in my opinion, in the last 2 months, the government has gotten out of touch with the people. The repressions against the Buddhists, we felt, were very unwise." The President added that he believed the Diem government could regain its popular support only "with changes in policy and perhaps with personnel" - a clear reference to the Nhus.

President Kennedy asserted that "In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. . . . All we can do is help, and we are making it very clear, but I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake."[1]

After a White House meeting on 3 September, Ambassador Lodge was told that it had become clear that the United States faced a major problem with world opinion, with the US Congress, and with the American public. The GVN must take some kind of action to restore its image so that the United States could continue to support it. Washington officials had in mind the effective silencing and probable removal from the country of Mme. Nhu and the releasing of the bonzes and students arrested by the GVN. Even so, it was not clear "whether these measures will suffice to restore sufficient confidence in the Diem Government within Viet-Nam to permit them to win the war." The United States might have to apply sanctions rather than let the situation get steadily worse.

In order to decide whether other measures, such as the removal of Ngo Dinh Nhu, were necessary, the State Department wanted to know as much as possible about Diem's attitude. Accordingly, Ambassador Lodge was instructed to "initiate dialogue with Diem soonest." Ambassador Lodge would tell Diem how the problem looked from the US side and would find out what Diem meant to do in light of US views. "You must dispel any idea Diem may have gotten from recent press reports that everything is okay in US-GVN relations and make him understand that we are coming to a point where our sensitivity is as important as his." The Ambassador was directed to stress the difficulty that the United States would have defending the actions and policies of the GVN in the now inevitable debate before the United Nations, and the difficulties that the Administration was already having with Congress over Diem's actions.[2]

Ambassador Lodge called on President Diem on 9 September. Lodge was blunt. He informed Diem that US public opinion could not condone the idea that American lives and money were being spent for the repression of human rights. He told Diem that President Kennedy had expressed doubt that victory was possible without a change in policies. He personally believed

1. Public Papers of the Presidents, John F. Kennedy, 1963, p. 652.
2. (S) Msg, State 348 to Saigon, 7 Sep 63.

that unless the GVN did change its policies, the United States might suspend its aid. The Ambassador also advised Diem to have Ngo Dinh Nhu leave Saigon, and return only after the end of December when the US appropriations would have been voted. Diem looked aghast at this suggestion and said, "Why it would be out of the question for him to go away when he could do so much for the Strategic Hamlets." Diem also defended his brother when Lodge charged that Nhu was head of the secret police and responsible for the 21 August pagoda raids. And he gave no ground on the subjects of continued oppression of the Buddhists and the growing press censorship in the RVN.

> I did not feel he was really deeply interested. He seemed totally absorbed with his own problems here and was justifying himself and attacking his enemies. Perhaps this is all part of his medieval view of life. He is constantly preoccupied with fighting back, which is a commendable trait in many ways, but makes it hard to get a new idea across to him.[3]

The Krulak-Mendenhall Mission -- Progress in the War

As another step in reestablishing communication, to get a current idea of what the man in the countryside was thinking about Diem, President Kennedy sent General Krulak, SACSA, and Mr. Joseph Mendenhall of the State Department to RVN. Both men sought "an answer to the basic question now troubling our government. Can we win the war against the VC with the Diem-Nhu government?" Mendenhall was to make an intensive effort to obtain "at first hand information on attitudes toward GVN held by wide spectrum of populace." This public opinion poll, to be conducted independently of any official GVN agency, apparently was designed to find out how the average Vietnamese citizen viewed his government following several months of turmoil. General Krulak was to look particularly into the grass-roots reaction within the GVN military (and where feasible, of provincial officials) to recent events, particularly those related to the Buddhist issue.[4]

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3. (S) Msg, Saigon 455 to State, 9 Sep 63.
4. (S) Msg, State 349 to Saigon, 6 Sep 63. (TS) Msg, JCS 3453 to COMUSMACV, 6 Sep 63.

Before departing for RVN on 6 September, General Krulak reported to the White House that he had no evidence that the imposition of martial-law in South Vietnam had reduced the war effort to any appreciable degree. There had been a small diminution in the tempo of operations as indicated by a drop in the number of VC reported killed, the number of weapons captured, and the casualty rates of the RVNAF, but it was not alarming.[5]

General Harkins confirmed this assessment when he reported to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 9 September, that in his talks with GVN and US personnel in the field, he had found no evidence of the "Saigon turmoil." He reported that "the attitude of the people towards the military was fine. There is even an increase in the amount of information the people were reporting on the VC. There were no strained relations between advisors and their counterparts. In fact, some said the relations were even better, militarily at least."[6]

The optimistic attitude that was prevalent with key US military leaders was echoed by General Taylor on 9 September. He informed the President that final reports of military operations during August indicated a favorable trend, "despite Saigon's preoccupation with the unstable political situation," and despite a high level of VC activity designed to create as much confusion and lack of faith in the government as possible. Citing a figure of 166 large unit actions (battalion equivalents or larger) for August as compared with July's total of 168, General Taylor was sanguine about the tempo of the military campaign. Small unit actions in August had increased almost 50 percent over July. The latest GVN figures showed a total of 8,227 strategic hamlets completed of a planned 10,592. A reported 76 percent of the rural population of RVN--9.5 million people--was now living under the protection of strategic hamlets.[7]

General Krulak's report, following a whirlwind tour of South Vietnam, was similarly encouraging. He had spent four days in RVN and held "substantive conversations" with 87 members of the US advisory system, including senior officers and enlisted men of relatively low rank. He also talked with

5. (S-GP 3) Memo, SACSA to ExecSecy, NSC, "Vietnam," 6 Sep 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug-Oct 63.
6. (S) Msg, MACV 1649 to CJCS, 9 Sep 63.
7. (S) CM-882-63 to Pres, 9 Sep 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug-Oct 63.

Ambassador Lodge, General Harkins, and 22 Vietnamese officers. His general conclusions were:

> the shooting war is still going ahead at an impressive pace. It has been affected adversely by the political crisis, but the impact is not great. There is a lot of war left to fight, particularly in the Delta, where the Viet Cong remain strong. Vietnamese officers of all ranks are well aware of the Buddhist issue. Most have viewed it in detachment and have not permitted religious differences significantly to affect their internal military relationship. Vietnamese military commanders, at the various echelons, are obedient and could be expected to execute any order they view as lawful. The U.S./Vietnamese military relationship has not been damaged by the political crisis, in any significant degree. There is some dissatisfaction, among Vietnamese officers, with the national administration. It is focused far more on Ngo Dinh Nhu than on President Diem. Nhu's departure would be hailed, but few officers would extend their necks to bring it about. Excluding the very serious political and military factors external to Vietnam, the Viet Cong war will be won if the current U. S. military and sociological programs are pursued, irrespective of the grave defects in the ruling regime. Improvements in the quality of the Vietnamese government are not going to be brought about by leverage applied through the military. They do not have much and will probably not use what they have.[8]

General Krulak's rather optimistic view of the progress of the counterinsurgency in South Vietnam was in direct contrast to that presented by Mr. Mendenhall. Mr. Mendenhall charged that the RVN was suffering military reverses and was losing the war in the delta. He said that it was his view, supported by Mr. Truehart, the Deputy Chief of Mission in Saigon, that the RVN would lose the war if the Diem government stayed in power.

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8. (TS-GP 3) Rpt, SACSA, "Visit to Vietnam, 7-10 Sept 1963," pp 2-3, JCS Hist Div Files.

At a White House meeting on 10 September, the President expressed surprise that two observers could return from the same area with such divergent reactions. General Krulak suggested that Mr. Mendenhall had given the metropolitan viewpoint, whereas he had obtained a national viewpoint. Two other observers, Mr. Phillips of AID and Mr. Mecklin of USIA, gave gloomy pictures of the war, stating that the United States was indeed losing and that, contrary to what General Krulak had said, the military campaign was not going forward satisfactorily. General Krulak said that his statements regarding military progress were the views of many advisors who were doing nothing but observing the prosecution of the war, that their view was shared and expressed officially by General Harkins.9 The result of the meeting was to reveal clearly the opposing points of view on the war in South Vietnam held by US officials..

Definition of US Objectives

Ambassador Lodge entered the debate on 11 September. He believed the situation to be worsening rapidly and said the time had arrived for the United States to use whatever effective sanctions it could to overthrow the Diem regime and replace it with another. He called for intensive study by "the best brains in the government" to determine how US aid to South Vietnam could be suspended most effectively. He suggested that while aid to the GVN might be suspended, actual aid to the RVNAF might be continued secretly, bypassing the government. He also wanted the United States to begin evacuation of dependents, "both in order to avoid the dangers . . . ., but also for the startling effect which this might have." Lodge had noted the sanguine view of the fighting war shared by Generals Krulak and Harkins. He said he did not doubt the military judgment on this matter, but

> as one who has had long connection with the military, I do doubt the value of the answers which are given by young officers to direct questions by generals--or, for that matter, by Ambassadors. The urge to give an optimistic and favorable answer

9. (TS) Memo for Record, SACSA, "Meeting at the White House, 1030, 10 September; subject: Vietnam," OCJCS File, "Memoranda, Vietnam" (28 Aug-28 Oct 63).

is quite insurmountable--and understandable. I, therefore, doubt the statement often made that the military are not affected by developments in Saigon and the cities generally.[10]

The next day, again at the White House, the President's top advisors summarized their views on the situation in South Vietnam and on Lodge's recommendations. Secretary Rusk said that the United States "should not abandon Vietnam, and that we should not apply force to achieve our objectives." He believed Nhu was the center of the problem; the objective of the United States should be to persuade Diem that Nhu "is a prime impediment to the accomplishment of our joint purposes." Rusk did not believe that Ambassador Lodge had "come fully to grips with Diem" and that he must now do so. He did not believe that the United States should cut any aid that might adversely affect the war effort or affect the people directly. He cautioned against "repeating our China errors by taking steps to depose the present government without a firm basis for proceeding thereafter." In any event, he did not believe that time was "gravely pressing."

Secretary McNamara told the President that he was personally convinced that the overall military campaign was going forward well now. He agreed with Secretary Rusk that there was no urgency for precipitate action such as that proposed by Ambassador Lodge, which would make the fall of the Diem government a US objective. The Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. McCone, agreed with Secretary McNamara, saying there was good reason to observe the development of affairs for some time.

Thus the cabinet-level advisors were unanimous that the decision on an objective vis-a-vis the Diem government was not urgent. The President directed Mr. Hilsman to tell Ambassador Lodge to do what he could to quiet the US press representatives in South Vietnam, since they were "doing our programs no good." He also approved the idea of developing contingency planning for evacuation of dependents, but only at the Washington level for the time being.[11]

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10. (TS) Msg, Saigon 478 to State, 11 Sep 63.
11. (TS) Memo for Record, SACSA, "Meeting at the White House, 1800, 11 September; Subject: Vietnam," OCJCS File, "Memoranda, Vietnam" (28 Aug-28 Oct 63).

Public Reactions

The press, both in Saigon and in the United States, became increasingly critical of US policy in Vietnam and of the GVN. Prompted by the public reaction, on 12 September Senator Frank Church of Idaho and 21 of his colleagues, representing both parties, introduced a resolution in the Senate calling for the termination of all military and economic assistance to South Vietnam unless that nation abandoned its "policies of repression" and tried to gain the support of its own citizens. Asked during a press conference to comment on the Church resolution, President Kennedy declared that he, too, felt that US aid should be used in the most effective manner. "I think," he said, "that seems to be Senator Church's view." The President had not opposed presentation of the resolution; he though it might be helpful as leverage on Diem.[12]

The situation was further complicated when the South Vietnamese Embassy officially informed the United States on 13 September that Mme. Nhu would arrive in the United States on 2 October. She had been asked to speak by CBS, NBC, ABC, the Overseas Press Club, and other groups, totalling one solid week of bookings. The Secretary of State told Ambassador Lodge: "We consider that her performing here will greatly increase the risk of Congressional cut of aid to Viet-Nam." He asked Lodge how Mme. Nhu's trip could be discouraged in a manner not attributable to official US action. No effective means for preventing the visit developed, and she arrived on schedule. Her visit was officially ignored by the US Government.[13]

A Program of Action

As a result of the 11 September White House meeting, Ambassador Lodge had been instructed to continue frequent conversations with Diem, although they might be frustrating. On 13 September he told the Secretary of State that he did not see any advantage to frequent conversations with Diem if

12. Ibid. Washington Post, 13 Sep 63.
13. (TS) Msgs, State 398 and 405 to Saigon, 13 Sep 63.

he had nothing new to bring up. Mere repetition of points already made would give an appearance of weakness. Visiting Diem was time-consuming, he noted, and "it seems to me that there are many better ways in which I can use my waking hours." Ordinary methods of persuasion did not work with Diem; Ambassador Lodge thought he needed some authority to delay supplies or funds in order to get through to Diem.[14]

A program designed to obtain reforms and changes in personnel within the GVN was finally approved by the President on 17 September. "We see no good opportunity for action to remove present government in the immediate future, therefore . . . we must for the present apply such pressures as are available to secure whatever modest improvements on the scene may be possible." No really strong pressures on the GVN were authorized. Agreeing with Ambassador Lodge's view that he should have some say in the granting of aid to RVN, President Kennedy authorized him to apply any controls he thought might be helpful. "You are authorized to delay any delivery of supplies or transfer of funds by any agency until you are satisfied that delivery is in U.S. interest, bearing in mind that it is not our current policy to cut off aid entirely."

At the same time, the GVN would be pressed to take certain actions in order to reestablish US confidence and support. These had been urged for some time, and ranged from leaving the Buddhists and students alone, through holding free elections, repealing Ordinance No. 10, and rehabilitating destroyed pagodas, to an extended vacation for the Nhus. Ambassador Lodge was told that it was important for him to continue talking with Diem even though he found it wasteful.

"Meanwhile there is increasing concern here with strictly military aspects of the problem, both in terms of actual progress of operations and of need to make effective case with Congress for continued prosecution of the effort." In order to assess the needs, Ambassador Lodge was informed, President Kennedy had decided to send the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to South Vietnam on a military inspection mission.[15]

Ambassador Lodge did not greet these instructions with much enthusiasm. He replied that virtually all of the courses

14. (TS) Msg, State 391 to Saigon, 12 Sep 63. (TS) Msg, Saigon 325 to State, 13 Sep 63.

15. [redacted]

of action that the United States wanted Diem to take had already been suggested by him to Diem at one time or another. He did not believe that the United States could hope for more than lip service. On the other hand, Ambassador Lodge had detected signs that both Diem and Nhu were bothered by his silence of the past few days and, according to one source, were even "desperately anxious" to know what the United States was up to.

The Ambassador believed that whatever sanctions might be used, they should be directly tied to a promising plan for a coup d'etat and should not be applied without such a coup being in prospect.

> In this connection, I particularly think that the idea of supporting a Vietnamese Army independent of the government should be energetically studied.
>
> I have, of course, no objection to seeing Diem at any time that it would be helpful. But I would rather let him sweat for a while and not go to see him unless I have something really new to bring up. I would much prefer to wait until I find some part of the AID program to hold up in which he is interested, and then have him ask me to come and see him.[16]

The Ambassador was not happy about his impending Washington visitors. "If Secretary of Defense and General Taylor come to Vietnam, they will have to call on President Diem and I will have to accompany them. This will be taken here as a sign that we have decided to forgive and forget and will be regarded as marking the end of our period of disapproval of the oppressive measures which have been taken here since last May." Ambassador Lodge said that Secretary McNamara and General Taylor should come with their eyes open knowing that Nhu would attempt to exploit their visit to his own ends. He warned that his policy of keeping silent, thus creating apprehension in Diem and Nhu and getting them into a mood to make a few concessions, might be endangered if "we make such a dramatic demonstration as that of having the Secretary of Defense and General Taylor come out here."[17]

16. (TS) Msg, Saigon 544 to State, 19 Sep 63.
17. (TS) Msg, Saigon 536 to State, 18 Sep 63.

The President replied personally to Ambassador Lodge that "my need for this visit is very great indeed, and I believe we can work out an arrangement which takes care of your basic concern." The President told Lodge that they could easily set up the visit as one that they had decided on together. They could even make it appear that Lodge had asked for advice because of his concern over winning the war in the current situation. President Kennedy observed:

> Having grown up in an Ambassador's house, I am well trained in the importance of protecting the man-on-the-spot, and I want to handle this particular visit in a way which contributes to and does not detract from your own responsibilities. But in the tough weeks which I see ahead, I just do not see any substitute for the ammunition I will get from an on-the-spot and authoritative military appraisal.[18]

On 21 September the President told Secretary McNamara what he expected of the visit.

> I am asking you to go because of my desire to have the best possible on-the-spot appraisal of the military and paramilitary effort to defeat the Viet Cong. . . . The events in South Vietnam since May have now raised serious questions both about the present prospects for success against the Viet Cong and still more about the future effectiveness of this effort unless there can be important political improvement in the country. . .

President Kennedy told the Secretary of Defense that if McNamara's prognosis was not hopeful, the President wanted recommendations on what action must be taken by the GVN and what steps the US Government should take to lead the GVN to that action.[19]

Secretary McNamara and General Taylor proposed to make an extensive tour of the countryside during their short visit to South Vietnam. Ambassador Lodge objected. "It is inconceivable to me that direct questions asked on a whirlwind tour of the countryside can possibly elicit any new and deep insights into the situation which you do not already possess."

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18. (TS) Msg, State 431 to Saigon, 18 Sep 63.
19. (TS) Memo, Pres to SecDef, 21 Sep 63.

He also pointed out that the timing of the Taylor-McNamara visit might be interpreted as interference in the elections that were to take place on 27 September. He suggested postponement of the trip and a change in itinerary that would not take the inspecting party out of Saigon. Secretary McNamara told Ambassador Lodge that he had talked the matter over with the President and that the trip was still on as scheduled. The trip could not be postponed beyond 27 September if it was to have the desired impact on Congressional leaders. "We may well be charged with interference in the election, no matter what we do," McNamara said, "but I am inclined to believe that a clearly military-related program as presently proposed on September 25-27 would be preferable from this standpoint to remaining in Saigon." The Secretary of Defense told the Ambassador that he was particularly anxious to be in a position to report to the President on the military effort, and believed that to do so he and General Taylor would have to make extensive field trips.[20]

The Washington visitors arrived in Saigon on 24 September. After a tour of the country, Ambassador Lodge, the Secretary of Defense, General Taylor, and General Harkins met with President Diem and Secretary Thuan on 29 September.

Secretary McNamara made particularly clear the US disapproval of the GVN's internal policies and there was, according to Ambassador Lodge, no chance that Diem did not understand. The meeting also made it clear to Diem that there was no rift between the State and Defense Departments. General Taylor and Ambassador Lodge joined with Secretary McNamara in stressing the importance of Diem's government taking positive steps to improve its image.[21]

President Diem asked General Taylor to give him a confidential report on the military situation as he had observed it during his tour of RVN in the past week. On 2 October 1963 General Taylor sent Diem a personal letter criticizing the military situation and calling for some changes. Taylor told Diem that until the "recent political disturbances" he had been fully confident of a GVN victory over the Viet Cong. But now a serious doubt hung over his hopes for the future.

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20. (S) Msg, Saigon 577 to State, 22 Sep 63. (S) Msg, DEF 937502 to Saigon, 21 Sep 63.
21. (TS) Msg, Saigon 612 to State, 29 Sep 63.

"Can we win together in the face of the reaction to the measures taken by your government against the Buddhists and the students?"

Taylor judged the military situation in the I, II, and III Corps areas to be generally good although he cited the case of a division in the III Corps that had not been getting into action as much as it should. As a result, he believed the full potential of the RVNAF in this area was not being exploited. It was in the delta, however, that there was real trouble with the Viet Cong. General Taylor recommended regrouping of forces and centering RVN strength in the delta (IV Corps) area. He criticized the strategic hamlet program in the delta as being inadequate to meet the standards originally set for the program, and he called for clear-and-hold operations by GVN forces rather than the easier sweeping operations. He also criticized the diversion of men from combat units to headquarters and administrative duties. "Headquarters soldiers do not hurt the Viet Cong. Infantry with rifles in the jungle do."

General Taylor told Diem, however, that his talks with scores of GVN and US officers in RVN had convinced him that the VC insurgency in the north and center could be reduced to little more than sporadic incidents by the end of 1964, and that the campaign in the delta could be ended by the end of 1965. These judgments, he hastened to add, were predicated on the assumption that the GVN met certain conditions, energizing all agencies, military and civil, to a higher output of activity than had thus far been achieved. Ineffective commanders and province officials should be replaced as soon as identified. General Taylor made few political references, but did call for the restoration of domestic tranquility as a prerequisite for an effective campaign against the VC.[22]

The McNamara-Taylor Recommendations

Upon their return from RVN, Secretary McNamara and General Taylor presented a joint report to President Kennedy. Neither the Secretary of Defense nor the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, saw any evidence building up of a successful coup d'etat against Diem. They recommended against any US initiative to encourage a change in the government. They believed, however,

22. (TS) Msg, MACV 701 to JCS, 1 Oct 63.

that the United States should "seek urgently to identify and build contacts with an alternative leadership, if and when it appears."

On the military side, they concluded that: 1) the GVN military leadership, while concerned over unrest in the cities, was principally oriented toward winning the war against the VC and would continue to carry out their military responsibilities; 2) the military campaign was continuing without let-up and promised victory, probably by the end of 1965; 3) the progress of the war and growing GVN capabilities warranted the withdrawal of about 1,000 US military personnel by the end of 1963; 4) barring serious political upset or new tensions, the insurgency could be reduced to sporadic banditry and brought generally under control by the end of 1965; 5) the increasing unpopularity of the Diem-Nhu government was generating forces of tension that could negate or reverse the military progress that had been made over the past 18 months; and 6) pressures available to the United States to move Diem and Nhu to moderation must be exerted, acknowledging the possibility that none carried assurance that its application would be successful. There was also a caveat that pressures could not be applied for more than two to four months without adversely affecting the war effort.[23]

The President's first action on receipt of the report was to issue a statement, saying in part,

> The political situation in South Viet Nam remains deeply serious. The United States has made clear its continuing opposition to any repressive actions in South Viet Nam. While such actions have not yet significantly affected the military effort, they could do so in the future. It remains the policy of the United States in South Viet Nam, as in other parts of the world, to support the efforts of the people of that country to defeat aggression and to build a peaceful and free society.

The statement, obviously made with the US Congress and public in mind, also included the forecast that US aid would not be needed after the VC had been suppressed, which should be by the end of 1965. President Kennedy also announced that by

23. (TS) Memo, SecDef and CJCS to Pres, "Report of McNamara/Taylor Mission to South Vietnam," 2 Oct 63, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug-Oct 63.

the end of 1963 the situation would allow the withdrawal of about 1,000 US military personnel.[24]

The President approved the McNamara-Taylor recommendations for action almost without change. Instructions to this effect were sent to Ambassador Lodge on 5 October. The actions were designed to show to the Diem government the US displeasure at the GVN's political policies and activities and to create substantial uncertainty as to the future intentions of the United States. The Ambassador was told to suspend new commitments in the AID Commodities Import Program. Under this policy the second quarter allocation of $20-25 million would be withheld from the GVN, although it would not be publicly announced. Deliveries under PL 480, including a pending supplementary agreement for $2.9 million worth of condensed milk (a five-months' supply for the RVN), would be stalled. Milk delivery would not be suspended outright, but month to month agreements would be required, this slowing down deliveries and making the GVN aware of the situation. On 1 November actions on other PL 480 items (wheat, flour, and raw cotton) would become due and would be referred to Washington for decision. The pending balance of loan payments on two of Diem's favorite projects, the Saigon-Cholon Waterworks ($10 million) and the Saigon electric power project ($4 million), would be "suspended for review" and Ambassador Lodge should so inform the GVN, without comment and without public announcement.

The United States would no longer furnish support to military forces not under the effective military control of the JGS and committed to field operations. Specifically, this meant no support for Col. Tung's Special Forces, and certain other Civil Guard and "civilian airborne ranger" units, which were actually being held as private troops by Ngo Dinh Nhu.

> Your policy toward the GVN of cool correctness in order to make Diem come to you is correct. You should continue it. However, we realize it may not work and that at some later time you may have to go to Diem to ensure he understands over-all US policy. Decision of when this becomes imperative rests with you, in light of your assessment of the situation.

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24. (U) Msg, State 517 to Saigon, 2 Oct 63.

If, as was hoped, Diem grew alarmed at these signs of US disapproval and asked the US Ambassador what he could do about it, Ambassador Lodge was to tell him that he must take positive steps to turn his government from its authoritarian course back to democracy. He was to avoid making specific demands on Diem, but he was furnished a list of things he might ask Diem to do if the situation warranted. Among the political actions suggested were: 1) release of students and resumption of normal university life; 2) specific concessions to the Buddhists; 3) re-emphasis on the political aspects of the strategic hamlet program; 4) cessation of police brutality and terrorist methods; 5) restoration of civil liberties; 6) reduction of the influence of the Nhus; 7) cessation of public statements attacking and slandering the United States.

Finally, to get on with the war most effectively,

> The burden of pressure for military actions should be assumed by General Harkins in direct conversations with Diem and others under your general guidance without awaiting Diem's initiative since the continuing posture of consultative cooperation on military matters should not be broken.[25]

The military instructions sent to Admiral Felt and General Harkins on the same day were identical with General Taylor's 2 October recommendations to Diem. COMUSMACV was directed to review with the GVN those changes in military plans and programs necessary to complete the military campaign in the northern and central areas (I, II, and III Corps areas) by the end of 1964 and in the delta (IV Corps) by the end of 1965. Among the changes proposed were 1) a shift of military emphasis and strength to the delta; 2) an increase in tempo of military operations in all Corps areas, so that all combat troops were in the field an average of 20 days out of 30 and static missions were ended; 3) emphasis on "clear-and-hold" operations instead of terrain sweeps with little permanent value; 4) expansion of combat units to full authorized strength; 5) acceleration of the training and arming of the hamlet militia, especially in the delta; 6) consolidation of the strategic hamlet program, especially in the delta, and action to insure that future strategic hamlets were not built until they could be protected and until civic action programs could be introduced.

25. (TS) Msg, State 534 to Saigon, 5 Oct 63.

The US training program for the RVNAF would be accelerated as much as necessary to insure that the GVN could take over the entire operation against the VC by the end of 1965. CINCPAC was also directed to carry out the plan to withdraw 1,000 US military personnel by the end of 1963.[26]

Actual planning for the withdrawal of some US forces from South Vietnam had begun at the 7 May 1963 Honolulu meeting, when the Secretary of Defense indicated that he was considering an arbitrary withdrawal of about 1,000 men. He was convinced that the United States needed a specific withdrawal plan to give evidence both at home and abroad that conditions in RVN were improving. He directed CINCPAC to prepare a plan "based on the assumption that the progress of the counterinsurgency would warrant such a move," to provide for the withdrawal of US units, as opposed to individuals, by replacing them with selected and specially trained RVNAF units.[27]

CINCPAC submitted a plan on 21 July 1963, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent the plan to the Secretary of Defense on 20 August. They recommended that he approve it for planning purposes, but withhold a final decision until late October pending a reevaluation of the situation in South Vietnam. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that no US units should be withdrawn from the Republic of Vietnam for purely psychological purposes until the political and religious tensions now confronting the Government of Vietnam have ceased." The Secretary of Defense accepted the JCS recommendation, and the final decision to remove the men was made after the McNamara-Taylor visit to South Vietnam in October. The approved plan called for withdrawal of 1,000 men in four increments beginning on 25 November and ending on 5 December 1963.[28]

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26. (TS) Msg, JCS 2792 to CINCPAC, 5 Oct 63.
27. (S) Record, Honolulu Conferences, 7 May 63, JMF 5401 (8 May 63). (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9820 to CINCPAC, 9 May 63.
28. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 212210Z Jul 63. (S-GP 4) JCSM-629-63 to SecDef, 20 Aug 63, JMF 9155.3/3440 (26 May 63). (S) Msg, JCS 2388 to CINCPAC, 6 Sep 63.

[redacted]

Progress Reports

On 14 October President Kennedy asked Ambassador Lodge for an evaluation of the results being achieved from the instruction of 5 October.[29] The first of his questions was "Are we gaining or losing on balance and day by day in the contest with the Viet Cong?" In his answer on 16 October, Ambassador Lodge said: "We appear to be doing little more than holding our own." To him the counterinsurgency looked to be a long, smoldering struggle, with political and military aspects intertwined, each of which was stubborn in its own way. Ambassador Lodge pointed out to the President that the US presence was a stabilizing influence in RVN and in Southeast Asia; it also kept the GVN from being overthrown. But the United States could not, he said, make the people of South Vietnam like the GVN and this fact could ultimately ruin all the military efforts to put down the VC.

A second Presidential question was "Is the government responding at any point to our three-fold need for improvement in (a) campaigns against the VC, (b) internal political developments, and (c) actions affecting relations with American people and government?" Lodge answered part (a) by citing a shift in boundaries and reallocation of RVN forces, but said with regard to the other two parts of the question that it was perhaps too early to conclude that the GVN would not make some positive moves, but that it was now doing the opposite of what the United States wanted.

The President had asked also about evidence of a strengthening or weakening of the effectiveness of the GVN in relation to its own people. Lodge replied that the GVN had some of the powers of a police state, but that it was not a thoroughly strong police state, because it was not efficient and the VC served as a large and well-organized underground movement against it. The people, or at least the vast majority, were mainly interested in being left alone.

29. (TS) Msg, State 576 to Saigon, 14 Oct 63.

[redacted]

In general, Ambassador Lodge said, "So far we appear to be getting virtually no effect from our actions . . . but we would not have expected effects this early." The withholding of commercial imports had not brought any request from Diem to see Lodge.

> Frankly, I do not expect him to speak to me about it because of his suspicion that if he asks me to do something for him, I would ask him what he is prepared to do for the US. He can, of course, dip into his Foreign Exchange Reserves to meet the cost of the Army for a few months, and, in my judgment, that is what he ought to do. If the Army does not mean that much to him, then how can he expect it to mean so much to us? But I oppose continuing to withhold commercial imports to a point where an economic crisis is produced which might bring about a popular outbreak. This could be extremely dangerous and might result in important and perhaps irreversible Communist gains.[30]

General Taylor told Admiral Felt on 17 October that he wished to have reports from General Harkins paralleling those submitted by Ambassador Lodge. COMUSMACV should report frequently and in greater detail than the Ambassador on "purely military reactions." He specifically wanted to know whether General Harkins had presented the proposals to Diem as directed in the 5 October instructions and, if so, how they had been received.[31]

General Harkins reported on 19 October that while he had not had a personal audience with President Diem since the Taylor-McNamara visit, he had sent a letter to Secretary Thuan embodying the major points of Taylor's personal letter to Diem. He had also written to Diem proposing a change in Corps boundaries to shift emphasis to the delta, and this action had been approved by Diem to be effective 1 November.[32]

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30. (TS) Msg, Saigon 712 to State, 16 Oct 63.
31. (TS) Msg, JCS 4012 to CINCPAC, 17 Oct 63.
32. (TS) Msg, MACV 8250 to CJCS, 19 Oct 63.

Coup Plotting Again Emerges

Plotting against the Diem government had not ceased at the end of August. The plotters had merely gone farther underground. The conditions that brought about the plotting in the first place had not ameliorated; indeed they had grown somewhat worse as September passed. In early October the plotters again established contact [redacted]

On 2 October, [redacted] was approached by General Tran Van Don, Chief of the JGS, and told that General Duong Van Minh ("Big Minh") wished to see him privately. The US Ambassador approved the meeting, which was held on 5 October. General Minh told [redacted] of a plan to seize control of the GVN by a group of generals, headed by himself and including Generals Don, Tran Thien Khiem, and Tran Van Kim. General Minh wanted assurances that the United States would not attempt to thwart the plan. He stated that neither he nor his fellow conspirators had any political ambitions. Their only purpose in taking over the government would be to win the war against the VC. [redacted] made no commitments, but agreed to see Minh again in the near future.[33]

Ambassador Lodge immediately asked for instructions from the Secretary of State, saying that while neither he nor General Harkins had any great faith in General Big Minh, he had to make some sort of reply to his approach. Ambassador Lodge said that both he and General Harkins believed [redacted] should assure Minh that the US would not try to thwart his plans and should offer to review all but assassination plans. Minh should also be assured that US aid would be continued to South Vietnam under a government that promised to gain support of the people and to win the war against the communists.[34]

[redacted]

33. [redacted]

34. [redacted]

[redacted]

On the heels of this statement, Ambassador Lodge was given "additional general thoughts which have been discussed with the President." He was told that while the US did not wish to stimulate a coup, it did not want to leave the impression that it would thwart a change of government nor deny economic and military assistance to a new regime if it appeared capable of increasing the effectiveness of the military effort, insuring popular support to win the war, and improving working relations with the United States. He was advised to have [redacted] tell Minh that until he had more detailed information showing clearly that the Generals' plans had a high prospect of success, he could not present the case to "responsible policy officials" with any degree of seriousness.[36]

No further significant contacts occurred until 20 October when Colonel Khuong, a member of General Don's staff, approached a US officer and asked him to secure US assurances of recognition and support following a coup. He stated that four ARVN generals and six colonels were prepared to strike and named General Big Minh as one of the conspirators.[37]

This approach brought General Harkins into the matter. On 23 October, General Don contacted [redacted] He stated that the generals' coup committee had decided to take advantage of the RVN national holiday ordered for 26 October to stage a coup within the week. But on 22 October, Don said, he had been called to task by General Harkins because Colonel Khuong had approached a US officer. According to Don, General Harkins stated that this was the wrong time for a coup; the war was going well, and Colonel Khuong should stop his planning. General Don said that word of Khuong's

35. [redacted]
36. [redacted]
37. (TS) Msg, USARMA SAIGON 199 to SecDef, 21 Oct 63.

overtures to the US officer had reached Diem and that, as a result, two key ARVN divisions had been extended in their assignments outside of Saigon. These units had been counted on by the generals for their coup operations. General Don repudiated Khuong and indicated that he would be disciplined by the coup committee. [redacted] then challenged Don to produce proof that the coup committee actually existed and that there was a plan. Don promised to turn over the plans for political organization to the Ambassador on 24 October.38

In conversations with the Ambassador on the afternoon of 23 October, General Harkins, whom the Ambassador had mistakenly believed to be absent in Bangkok at the time he informed Washington of the Khuong fiasco, confirmed that he had indeed warned Don about the coup activities of his subordinate. According to Ambassador Lodge's report to Washington, General Harkins added that it was his intention to discourage GVN officers from approaching US officers on political matters, as he wished to focus their attention on their military duties. Ambassador Lodge reported that when he reminded General Harkins of the guidance contained in the 6 October Washington message, the latter stated that he had understood the messages to say that the United States was not now in favor of a coup. "I explained," Ambassador Lodge said,

> That while it was true that the USG did not desire to initiate a coup, we had instructions from the highest levels not to thwart any change of government which gives promises of increasing the effectiveness of the military effort, insuring popular support to win the war, and improving working relations with the U.S. . . . General Harkins expressed regret if he had inadvertently upset any delicate arrangements in progress and added that he would inform General Don that his remarks of 22 October did not convey official USG thinking.39

38. [redacted]
39. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1906 to State, 23 Oct 63.

General Harkins' version of what happened between him and General Don and between him and Ambassador Lodge was somewhat different from that reported by the Ambassador. General Harkins told General Taylor that he had not discussed coup planning with Don but had merely told him of Khuong's approach. "Don was surprised and told me he thought he had stopped all that. [redacted] is the first indication to me since your visit that the General Group was again in business." General Harkins said he was not trying to thwart a change in government but suggested a good hard look at the group's proposals. "There are so many coup groups making noises, unless elements of all are included, I'm afraid there will be a continuous effort to upset whoever gains control for sometime out and this to me will interfere with the war effort."[40]

On 25 October [redacted] stated that General Don had informed [redacted] that General Harkins had told Don that his comments on 22 October were actually contrary to a Presidential directive and added that his statements had been inadvertent and that he wished General Don to know this.[41]

Within a few hours, General Harkins informed the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Apparently there is a discrepancy somewhere along the line." He denied having had any discussions on the coup with General Don or having said that his statement was inadvertent. General Don had been to see him that day, but General Harkins had told him he would not discuss coups.[42]

General Taylor advised General Harkins, "View here is that your actions in disengaging from the coup discussions were correct and that you should continue to avoid any involvement."[43]

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40. (TS) Msg, MAC 1991 to CJCS, 24 Oct 63.
41. [redacted]
42. (TS) Msg, MACV 1993 to CJCS, 24 Oct 63.
43. (TS) Msg, JCS 4137 to COMUSMACV, 24 Oct 63.

[redacted]

On the night of 24 October [redacted] again met with General Don. Don now said that he could not turn over the political organization plan to the Ambassador as promised, because the coup committee had turned thumbs down on such a move for security reasons. The committee had, however, agreed to show their entire plan, military and political, to Ambassador Lodge two days before the coup. [redacted] reminded Don that the United States had made no commitment to the coup leaders and would make none until the plans had been studied in detail. Don replied that the coup was scheduled to take place not later than 2 November and that he would have the plans in Ambassador Lodge's hands two days ahead of time. Don told [redacted] that the generals had agreed that the new government would be civilian, that it would free all noncommunist political prisoners as soon as possible, that it would hold honest elections, that it would allow complete freedom of religion, and that it would be pro-Western, but not a vassal of the United States. The two men agreed to meet again on 28 October.[44]

In answer to expressions of concern from Washington, Ambassador Lodge took pains to reassure his superiors that in his best judgment, the coup committee was genuine and functioning. He excused the reluctance of the generals to provide details of their plans because of their fear of betrayal. He advised against trying to thwart a coup.[45]

Trouble between General Harkins and Ambassador Lodge

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, was concerned over certain "troublesome aspects" of the situation in Saigon. First of all, there seemed to be a definite lack of communication between General Harkins and Ambassador Lodge. In addition, the Chairman said, the instructions sent to Saigon on US support of a coup were contradictory. Ambassador Lodge had been told that the United States would not thwart a change or deny assistance to a new regime if it appeared capable of doing three things: 1) increasing the effectiveness of the war effort; 2) ensuring popular support of the war; and 3) improving relations with the United States.

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44. [redacted]
45. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1964 to State, 25 Oct 63.

General Taylor considered it inconceivable that any coup plotters could present advance proof of being able to meet these three criteria. He believed that until a new group had proved itself by some concrete actions, the United States should give it no assurance of support. General Taylor thought the guidance to Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins should be changed to instruct them to accumulate intelligence on coup movements without pursuing contacts and without attempting to delve into the strength of the plotters, which could only result in US involvement. There would be time enough to associate the United States with the plotters after they produced some tangible results.

The Chairman was also critical of the Ambassador's reporting of the war. General Taylor believed that where purely military matters were involved General Harkins was the source from which facts and professional judgment should be sought. Ambassador Lodge had stated in his latest weekly report that it was not possible to drive around the countryside freely and safely to the extent it had been two years before. General Taylor said that this contradicted reports received from such sources as the British mission, corps commanders, and US advisors. Ambassador Lodge also had told the President that there had been no mass surrenders by the VC. Without defining the term "mass," General Taylor pointed out that there had been a favorable change in the VC surrender picture with 4871 defectors in the first nine months of 1963 as compared with 1635 defectors during all of 1962, and Lodge's figure of 24,000 VC killed in the past two years was also much lower than the US military figure of 38,855.

General Taylor proposed a full review of these subjects prior to the arrival in Washington of Ambassador Lodge, who was scheduled to come shortly after 1 November for consultations on the RVN situation.[46]

After a discussion of the RVN situation at a JCS meeting with the Secretary of Defense on 28 October, General Harkins was queried on the apparent lack of effective communication between himself and Ambassador Lodge.[47]

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46. (TS) Draft Memo, CJCS to SecDef, "Current Situation in Saigon," 28 Oct 63, OCJCS File, Vietnam Cables (Oct 63).
47. (TS) Msg, JCS 4188-63 to COMUSMACV, 29 Oct 63.

General Harkins replied at length on 30 October, stating that he had not been consulted properly in the preparation of the reports by Ambassador Lodge, that the Ambassador's estimate of the military situation in RVN was at complete variance with the facts as he saw them, and that he felt any coup would be unwise. Recounting the message mix-up and the discrepancies in reporting, Harkins said

> The Ambassador and I are certainly in touch with each other but whether the communications between us are effective is something else. I will say Cabot's methods of operations are entirely different from Ambassador Nolting's as far as reporting in the military is concerned. Fritz would always clear messages concerning the military with me or my staff prior to dispatch. . . . This is not true today.

There was, General Harkins said, a basic difference between his interpretation and that of Ambassador Lodge on the guidance from Washington on coups. Ambassador Lodge believed that the two messages he had received constituted the guidance. The first stated that the United States should take no initiative to give covert encouragement to a coup, and the second contained the "additional thoughts" that the United States should not give the impression it was trying to thwart a change of government. Harkins believed that only the first message of instruction applied, that the second was merely window dressing. He told General Taylor, "no initiative should now be taken to give any active covert encouragement to a coup." He did not think there was any South Vietnamese General qualified to take over the GVN. He still believed that Diem was the best man for fighting communists, "After all," General Harkins said, "rightly or wrongly, we have backed Diem for eight long, hard years. To me it seems incongruous now to get him down, kick him around, and get rid of him. The US has been his mother superior and father confessor since he's been in office, and he's leaned on us heavily."[48] General Harkins devoted a second message, a few hours later, to refuting categorically and point by point Ambassador Lodge's pessimistic assessment on the progress of the counterinsurgency.[49]

48. (TS) Msg, MACV 2028 to CJCS, 30 Oct 63.
49. (TS) Msg, MACV 2033 to CJCS, 30 Oct 63.

Meanwhile, on the morning of 27 October, General Don had made direct contact with Ambassador Lodge, asking him if [redacted] was authorized to speak for him. Lodge replied that he was. He also told Don to keep him informed of coup progress and to let him see the coup plans.[50]

In Washington, General Krulak told General Taylor that this latest development was

> dramatically important. . . . Lodge has had a face-to-face talk with Don (although he himself decried this in Saigon 1964 as dangerous and was discouraged from doing so in Washington 78161). He now has asked specifically to see the coup plans, in face of instructions to the contrary (Washington 74228) - And [redacted] speaks for the US.[51]

[redacted] met Don again on the evening of 28 October. General Don asserted that the coup committee was also anxious to avoid any US involvement in the coup. When [redacted] told him that Ambassador Lodge was leaving Saigon on 31 October for a brief visit to the United States and should see the generals' plans before his departure, Don replied that the plans could now be made available only four hours in advance rather than the 48 hours promised earlier.[52]

By 30 October the chance of action by the generals with or without US approval appeared so imminent that officials in Washington believed contingency plans should be prepared. Washington authorities still considered that the United States could influence the coup committee to delay or call off the coup by means short of betraying the committee to Diem. Their computation of the forces that would be available to the coup leaders and those remaining loyal to Diem showed the balance to be about equal. They believed that the United States must have assurance of a balance of force clearly favorable to the coup, since prolonged fighting or defeat of coup forces would be disastrous to the war effort. Ambassador Lodge was instructed to have [redacted] inform General Don that the United States did not find that presently revealed plans gave a clear prospect of quick results. "We reiterate, burden of proof must be on coup group to show a substantial possibility

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50. [redacted]

51. (TS) Memo, SACSA to CJCS, "Vietnam," 28 Oct 63, OCJCS File, Vietnam Cables (Oct 63).

52. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2023 to State, 29 Oct 63.

of quick success; otherwise we should discourage them from proceeding since a miscalculation could result in jeopardizing US position in Southeast Asia."

The complexity of the situation and the apparent imminence of coup action also raised some question of whether Ambassador Lodge should leave on 31 October as he had planned, but this decision was left to the Ambassador. He was told to discuss the situation fully with General Harkins, "whose responsibilities toward any coup are very heavy, especially after you leave." There must be clear and definite arrangements made before his departure so that General Harkins [redacted] knew exactly what was to be done in a normal situation, in continuing coup contacts, and particularly in the event a coup took place. Deputy Chief of Mission Trueheart would serve as head of the Country Team in a normal situation, but the President wanted it clearly understood that with Lodge away, General Harkins should participate in all coup contacts. In the event a coup began, General Harkins would become head of the Country Team and the direct representative of the President. Trueheart would then serve as his political advisor.

If a coup started and measures to protect US nationals had to be taken, a Marine BLT could be flown in within 24 hours, and instructions to ready the battalion for such action were being sent to CINCPAC.[53]

The Ambassador agreed that it was important to get the best possible estimate of the chances of a successful coup, but disagreed that the United States could, or should, attempt to slow down the effort. "If our attempt to thwart this coup were successful, which we doubt, it is our firm estimate that younger officers, small groups of military, would then engage in an abortive action creating chaos ideally suited to VC objectives."

With regard to putting Harkins in control in case of a coup, Ambassador Lodge said, "It does not seem sensible to have the military in charge of a matter which is so profoundly political as a change of government. In fact, I would say to do this would probably be the end of any hope for a change of

53. (TS) [redacted]

government here." His opposition to putting General Harkins in command was impersonal, since General Harkins was a splendid general and an old friend, "to whom I would gladly entrust anything I have." Ambassador Lodge also recommended that if requests came from the coup leaders for funds to buy off potential opposition at the last moment, the United States should comply. He also believed the United States had a residual commitment from the "August episode" to evacuate the generals' dependents if the coup failed, and should try to do so if circumstances required it. "General Harkins," he concluded, "has read this and does not concur."[54]

General Harkins did not indeed concur. He revealed to General Taylor on 30 October that he had not known of the further contacts with Don or that the coup plans were so advanced. "When I said last week I was out of the coup business," Harkins said, "I did not realize I was going to be so out of touch." Ambassador Lodge had agreed to keep him informed, General Harkins claimed, but had not done so until directed by the latest message from Washington. "I was shocked," Harkins said, "because I had not seen any of the Saigon 20 series -- Saigon 2040, 2041, etc."

While he could not comment on the coup plan, to which the United States did not yet have access, he did feel that the troop list furnished by Don was misleading. It appeared to him that Don had just taken the army roster and run down it indicating troops to be used in the coup. "How the 21st, 9th, 7th, 23rd and 5th Divisions can lend any immediate support to an effort in Saigon is hard to visualize." All of these divisions were outside the Saigon area and if brought in for the coup would give the VC a wonderful opportunity in the abandoned areas. But if the coup employed only the local troops, the effort might "be a flop."

General Harkins said that he had not concurred in Ambassador Lodge's latest estimate and recommendations because he did not feel the United States should go along with the coup until more information was available. He pointed out that the prestige of the United States was involved. "I feel we should go along with only a sure thing, this, or continue to go along with Diem until we have exhausted all pressures."[55]

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54. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2063 to State, 30 Oct 63.
55. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2034 to CJCS, 30 Oct 63.

The White House advised Ambassador Lodge on 31 October that it did not accept his judgment that the United States had no power to delay or discourage a coup in RVN. If he were convinced the coup was going to fail, he should take every possible step to halt it. If he concluded that there was not "clearly a high prospect of success," he should communicate his doubts to the coup committee in a way calculated to stop them, at least until chances were better.

On the matter of who would run the show for the United States in South Vietnam if a coup took place after Ambassador Lodge had departed, the White House spokesman, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, left no doubt in Lodge's mind, telling him that in such a case the President wanted direction of the country team vested in the "most senior officer with experience of military decisions, and that officer in our view is Harkins." He then summarized

> our present standing instructions for US posture in the event of a coup: a) U.S. authorities will reject appeals for direct intervention from either side, and U.S.-controlled aircraft and other resources will not be committed between the battle lines or in support of either side, without authorization from Washington; b) In event of indecisive contest, U.S. authorities may at their discretion agree to perform any acts agreeable to both sides, such as removal of key personalities or relay of information. In such actions, however, U.S. authorities will strenuously avoid appearance of pressure on either side. It is not in the interest of USG to be or appear to be either instrument of existing government or instrument of coup; c) In the event of imminent or actual failure of coup, U.S. authorities may afford asylum in their discretion to those to whom there is any express or implied obligation of any sort. We believe, however, that in such a case it would be in our interest and probably in the interest of those seeking asylum that they seek protection of other embassies in addition to our own. This point should be made strongly if need arises; d) But once a coup under responsible leadership has begun, and within these restrictions, it is in the interest of the U.S. Government that it should succeed.[56]

56. (TS) Msg, CAS 79407 to Saigon, 31 Oct 63.

The Coup

On 1 November 1963 the generals struck without warning. Within 24 hours they were masters of Saigon and had received pledges of support from all major military commanders throughout the country. The generals put their plans into effect starting shortly after midday on 1 November. At 1345, Saigon time, General Don telephoned MACV headquarters and told General Harkins that the generals were starting their coup immediately.[57]

The military operations by which the generals seized control of key areas of Saigon and took the Presidential palace under siege were well conceived and smoothly executed. Marine and army combat units overcame strong resistance by loyal special forces troops and by the palace guard. By nightfall there was no longer any doubt of the coup's eventual success. All corps and division commanders had declared their full support of the generals' committee and coup forces controlled all major communication media in Saigon. No fighting or unrest had been reported anywhere in RVN outside the Saigon area.[58]

Several hours after the revolt erupted, Diem called Ambassador Lodge, who had decided not to leave on 31 October. Saying that some units had rebelled, Diem wanted to know the attitude of the United States. Lodge pleaded ignorance of the official US attitude. He praised Diem for his courage and great contributions to his country and offered obliquely to help him gain safe conduct. Diem hung up after telling the Ambassador that he would try to reestablish order.[59]

On the morning of 2 November Diem and Nhu surrendered to the generals' committee. Later that same day they died under mysterious circumstances. Officials of the generals' committee told Ambassador Lodge on 3 November that they had been assassinated, but not by order of the generals. No positive proof that the generals had ordered the deaths was ever uncovered.[60]

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57. (S) Msg, MACV to NSA, Critic 2, 1 Nov 63.
58. (S) Msg, MACV to NSA, Critic, 011515EST Nov 63.
59. (S) Msg, Saigon 860 to State, 1 Nov 63.
60. (S) Msg, Saigon 900 to State, 3 Nov 63.

A New Start

Fourteen general officers and 10 colonels had comprised the generals' committee that overthrew the Diem government. With their successful seizure of power, the group adopted the more formal title of Revolutionary Military Council. The Council eventually reached a membership of 40, with an Executive Committee of 12.[61]

On 4 November, General Big Minh, Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council, announced formation of a Provisional Government, headed by former Vice President Tho. Executive and legislative authority would be retained by the Council, which would delegate this authority to the Provisional Government with the exception of matters pertaining to the national budget, taxes, national defense, and security. Of the 15 members of the Cabinet of the new government, four were military men. Most of the civilian members of the government appeared to US observers to be long-time, competent, and generally apolitical civil servants. The United States granted the new government formal recognition on 5 November.[62]

The first concern of US military leaders after the change in government was, of course, continued and effective prosecution of the war against the VC. On 2 November General Harkins noted that the RVNAF had displayed remarkable cohesion in the coup and expressed the hope that such unanimity would continue. He said that the "line-up" of the provisional government "looks good for a starter." Although some of the ministerial posts had been assumed by the generals, COMUSMACV said that he would push hard to get them to relinquish these posts as they had earlier promised. "The big job, and the entire interest of my people and me, is to get the new team focused on the VC immediately. We buckle down to this at once."[63]

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61. (U) List, "Composition of Executive Committee of the Military Revolutionary Council," CCJCS File Nov 63, Vietnam Black Book for Meeting in Honolulu, 20 Nov 63, sec I.
62. (S-NOFORN) CIA/CR BB 63-49, 5 Nov 63.
63. (TS) Msg, MACV 8556 to CJCS, 2 Nov 63.

On 3 November General Harkins notified General Taylor that he intended to press the new government to make such specific improvements as: 1) establishment of a direct chain of command; 2) subordination of province chiefs to corps and division commanders in military matters; 3) emphasis on training of units, including hamlet militia; 4) operational use of general reserves; 5) operational use of special forces under the JGS and corps commanders; 6) better use of military engineers; 7) better use of boat companies in the delta; 8) lifting of restrictions on aircraft armament; 9) increased tempo of operations with emphasis on those with the best chance of success; 10) freeing ARVN elements from static security missions; and 11) reduction of isolated outposts.[64]

On 2 November Ambassador Lodge had been authorized to inform the generals that the United States was prepared to resume the full Commodities Import Program and support under PL 480 in order to prevent disruption of the war effort and economy and to avoid hardships on the population. The United States would also proceed with other projects that had been suspended under Diem, such as the Saigon water and power projects.[65]

On 6 November Ambassador Lodge submitted a report, saying that the prospects of victory over the VC were now much improved, "provided the Generals stay united." He passed on the observations of the British advisor, Mr. Thompson, who now felt that the war could be considerably shortened as compared with the period he had estimated during the Diem regime. General Harkins, Lodge added, concurred. Both Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins were optimistic that General Minh meant what he said when he promised a stepped-up campaign against the VC. Although the acceleration was not yet evident, the new government appeared to have the full and cheerful support of the people of the RVN.[66]

64. (S) Msg, MACV 2081 to CJCS, 3 Nov 63.
65. (S) Msg, State 700 to Saigon, 2 Nov 63.
66. (TS) Msg, Saigon 949 to State, 6 Nov 63.

Status of the Counterinsurgency

The fight against the VC had been overshadowed during the summer and fall of 1963 by the struggle for power within the GVN, but it had not been neglected. In terms of numbers, the RVN now had assembled a force of formidable proportions. A report presented to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 21 September 1963 credited the RVN with having 469,460 men under arms. This did not include the thousands of hamlet militia supporting the strategic hamlet program. Within the RVNAF, the Army had 198,100 men and officers, the Air Force 8,200, the Navy 6,400, and the Marines 5,600. The Civil Guard had an actual strength of 84,300 men, of which 43,300 had been trained. The Self Defense Corps totalled 102,800 members; 80,200 of these, organized into 2,186 platoons, had been trained. A total of 64,160 members of the CIDG had been trained.

The United States had a substantial investment in its own military personnel located in RVN by September 1963. The total number of US men and officers had reached 16,458, with the Army contributing 10,795, the Air Force 4,444, the Navy 668, and the Marines 551. Of these, 3,524 were with the US MAAG, 400 with MACV, 7,527 with the US Army Support Group, and 3,960 with the 2d Air Division.[67]

Before the Buddhist troubles and the coup, on 8 March 1963, the Secretary of State had described the struggle against the VC as "turning an important corner" and concluded that Saigon's forces "clearly have the initiative in most areas of the country." In a speech on 22 April, he had said that the strategic hamlet program was producing "excellent results . . . morale in the countryside has begun to rise," and the Viet Cong looked "less and less like winners."

The Buddhist rising against Diem's government in May 1963 shattered this official optimism. Nevertheless, for a time the counterinsurgency program had continued to go well. In April 1963, on the first anniversary of the official initiation of the strategic hamlet program, President Diem had announced an amnesty program for defectors

67. (S-GP 1) Rpt, "Trends in the Counterinsurgency Effort in South Vietnam," 21 Sep 63, JMF 9155.3/3360 (11 May 63) sec 2A.

from the VC. The program had long been urged on him by US authorities. Under Chieu Hoi, or "Return to Cooperate," the GVN offered to receive back into the fold all those who had cooperated or fought with the Viet Cong and to allow them full participation in all the current welfare programs. It stressed the opportunity to join the GVN fight against red colonialism rather than the previous white colonialism. Unprecedented numbers of Viet Cong reportedly surrendered under the program during the summer of 1963, despite the political troubles of the GVN.[68]

After the coup, US military authorities claimed that the struggle for political control of the GVN had not had a major effect on military activity, although they conceded that "military indicators for September, October and November showed a 'moderate lull in intensity of operations.'" By mid-November these indicators were showing that operations had regained the tempo of mid-summer.

VC activity against the RVN accelerated after the coup. It took a few days for the word to spread among the VC units, but by 11 November a flurry of VC activity had developed against the new government and its forces. This activity "trended heavily to harassment, propaganda and other relatively uncoordinated forms." The accelerated rate of VC activity dropped off sharply within several days and indicated that the enemy did not have the staying power for a sustained campaign at that level.[69]

The 20 November Honolulu Conference

A special meeting of US authorities responsible for national policy toward South Vietnam took place at CINCPAC headquarters on 20 November. The conferees included the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Director of AID, the

68. (S-GP 4) J-3 Briefing Sheet, "South Vietnam Operations-Intelligence Summary for the Secretary of Defense-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting 29 Apr 63-Project Headway," 27 Apr 63, JMF 9155.3/3/2200 (7 Jan 63).

69. (S) Rpt, "Highlights of the Military Situation," OCJCS File Nov 63, Vietnam Black Book for Meeting in Honolulu, 20 Nov 63, Tab 2.

Director of Central Intelligence, the US Ambassador to South Vietnam, CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and the Director of the Joint Staff.

The conferees met for a "full scale review of the situation in South Vietnam." In a statement issued after the conference, they reported: "In general, information received at the conference indicates an encouraging outlook for the principal objective of joint U.S.-Vietnamese policy in South Vietnam - the successful prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong communists." They also announced that the first contingent of 300 US troops would leave South Vietnam on 3 December. The rest of the 1,000 planned to be withdrawn would leave by the end of the year.

Ambassador Lodge reported at the meeting that he was optimistic about the progress of the counterinsurgency under the new GVN. He was aware of the "political fragility" of the new government, but he was very encouraged by the way in which the leaders of the military junta were turning their attention to the requirements of the people. Among their immediate interests and efforts were improvements in the strategic hamlet program, reduction of forced labor, elimination of arbitrary arrest, and enlistment of the support of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious sects, and of the Buddhists, who were by now a well-organized political force.

General Harkins was also optimistic, although statistics seemed to indicate a favorable picture for the VC. This was not necessarily so since statistics in counterinsurgency were "subject to great discount." General Harkins predicted that the new government would further shift military emphasis to the delta and would bring the overall strategy into line with US recommendations. He said, however, that the strategic hamlet program was lagging badly, primarily because province and district chiefs were either not sufficiently confident of the militia to give them weapons or "reluctant to a point of excessive conservatism."

Mr. Trueheart considered the strategic hamlet program basically sound, although it had been overextended in the delta. The program was also a victim of poor reporting, inadequate coordination, and inadequate security at the hamlet level. With the new government giving

evidence of doing away with forced labor and putting more effort into caring for the people, Mr. Trueheart was optimistic that there would be much improvement in the strategic hamlet program.

Economic problems were considered extensively at the meeting--there was a serious piaster deficit in the South Vietnamese budget that might hamper the war effort unless diminished in some way. The Secretary of Defense felt strongly that the economic situation was by far the most serious of all the counterinsurgency problems. It was too much to ask the inexperienced GVN leaders to face an economic crisis along with a military crisis. The problem was not to get more troops but to get more cash to finance the climactic year of the counterinsurgency campaign. He summarized the situation as he saw it:

> South Vietnam is under tremendous pressure from the VC. The VC are as numerous today as they were a year or two years ago. The surrounding area is weaker. The Cambodian situation is potentially very serious to the RVN. The input of arms from Cambodia before the recent developments was very worrisome in the Delta. The Generals head a very fragile government. The United States should not try to cut the corners too fine. We must be prepared to devote enough resources to this job of winning the war to be certain of accomplishing it instead of just hoping to accomplish it.

As far as the FY 1964 MAP was concerned, Secretary McNamara said "he wanted to move ahead with the war effort as fast as possible, spend whatever is necessary to win it, but at the same time to refine the program so as to avoid spending as much as the $187.5 million" indicated in the current proposal. He wanted the figure as close as possible to the suggested Department of Defense ceiling of $175.5 million.

The conferees also considered ways of retaliating against North Vietnam for the continuing infiltration of men and supplies to the South. Such action had been proposed by the JCS team that visited South Vietnam in January 1963 [redacted]

The JCS team had recommended that the United States authorize COMUSMACV "to build up a much stronger unconventional warfare capability in the Vietnamese military," and

then direct it in "a program of sabotage, destruction, propaganda and subversive missions against North Vietnam." The United States could thus put pressure on NVN without taking any overt action. Also, the retaliatory campaign would become a "powerful military endeavour" [redacted]

Various studies had been made but no action was taken until the 6 May 1963 Honolulu Conference, when CINCPAC presented a plan for overt US military operations in North Vietnam, CINCPAC OPLAN 33-62. This was a unilateral US plan that included provision for strikes against specific targets by US aircraft. The Secretary of Defense had decided against the plan but had directed that the question be studied further. On 23 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed CINCPAC to prepare detailed plans for RVN military hit-and-run operations in North Vietnam that could not be attributed to the United States but that would be conducted with US military material, training, and advisory assistance.

CINCPAC had then submitted his OPLAN 34-63 to meet this requirement. Under this plan, the United States would help the GVN engage in covert psychological operations against NVN and carry out covert military hit-and-run attacks to destroy selected targets in North Vietnam in order to increase substantially the cost to NVN of its involvement in subversion and insurgency in RVN and Laos. On 9 September the Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved the CINCPAC plan for unilateral US planning and on 12 September informed the Secretary of Defense of the concept and features of the plan. They pointed out that further planning could not be undertaken effectively until RVN accepted the US concept. They had asked the Secretary to secure the concurrence of the Secretary of State, and a similar concurrence from the GVN.

[redacted]

At the 20 November Honolulu Conference, it was directed that "an optimum 12 months program for intensified operations against North Vietnam, including abotage, propaganda

incursions, intelligence and commando hit-and-run raids be developed by COMUSMACV [redacted]" This plan would: 1) use RVN military and paramilitary resources fully supported by the United States; 2) show clearly what could be done with the means presently available and specify what additional means would be needed to carry out the optimum program; 3) consider that there would be no policy restrictions other than "non-attributability" to the United States; and 4) provide for actions of graduated intensity, ranging from low level activity of the type currently being taken to large hit-and-run commando operations. When the conferees were informed that the commando raid planning was already under way by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, they directed that this program be reviewed [redacted] for covert operations on a 12-month program basis.

With regard to Laos the conferees decided to present two matters for "high level decision in Washington." These were [redacted] establishment of a zone extending up to 50 kilometers into Laos from the border, in which operations could be conducted without Washington-level concurrence.[70]

President Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963, before the conferees could submit their conclusions and proposals to him. One of the first actions of President Johnson, in NSAM 273 on 26 November, was to authorize further planning for possible increased activity against North Vietnam.

Thus on 22 November 1963 US support of the war in Vietnam had reached another decision point. The fall of Diem and the smooth beginning of a new government had eased the frustration that most US officials felt about persuading the GVN to act on US advice. There was a newly hopeful note that all that was now needed was vigorous application of available resources. US officials continued to plan on the complete withdrawal of US support units by the end of 1965. There was also recognition, however, that some very difficult problems remained. In particular, the officials who met in Honolulu on 20 November believed that the time had come to take more direct action against North Vietnam. This was perhaps the most important policy question pending as the new US President took over.

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70. (S-GP 1) Records of Special Meeting on RVN, 20 Nov 63, JMF 9155.3/5410 (22 Nov 63) sec 1 and 2. (TS) OCJCS File, Black Book for Meeting in Honolulu.

Chapter 8

THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION

1964: A New Year Begins

On the last day of 1963 President Lyndon B. Johnson sent a letter to General Duong Van Minh, Chairman of the Military Revolutionary Council of the Republic of Vietnam, which publicly reaffirmed the US commitment:

> This new year provides a fitting opportunity for me to pledge on behalf of the American Government and people a renewed partnership with your government and people in your brave struggle for freedom. The United States will continue to furnish you and your people with the fullest measure of support in this bitter fight. We shall maintain in Viet-Nam American personnel and material as needed to assit you in achieving victory.
>
> Our aims are, I know, identical with yours: to enable your government to protect its people from the acts of terror perpetrated by Communist insurgents from the north. As the forces of your government become increasingly capable of dealing with this aggression, American military personnel in South Vietnam can be progressively withdrawn.
>
> The United States Government shares the view of your government that 'neutralization' of South Viet-Nam is unacceptable. As long as the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam persists in its aggressive policy, neutralization of South Viet-Nam would only be another name for a Communist takeover. Peace will return to your country just as soon as the authorities in Hanoi cease and desist from their terrorist aggression.[1]

1. Dept of State Bulletin, L (27 Jan 64), p. 122.

By his firm rejection of neutralization the President sounded a theme of US policy that was to be heard frequently during 1964. His own pronouncements on the matter were reinforced by Secretary of Defense McNamara, in a major speech on 26 March 1964, and by the repeated statements of Secretary of State Rusk throughout the year. The US opposition to any move toward neutralization was based, above all, on the reason President Johnson had given. Washington officials were convinced that a genuinely neutral Republic of Vietnam--or the goal they cited more frequently: a return to full observance of the terms of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 regarding Vietnam and the Geneva Accords of 1962 concerning Laos--would be possible only after defeat of the Viet Cong and cessation of the North Vietnamese support of the VC insurgency.

Two further reasons for the US attitude were not dwelt on in the public statements. The first was simply that at no time during 1964 was there a generally accepted assessment that the US and GVN programs were succeeding and that the RVN forces were clearly on their way to gaining the upper hand in the struggle. These were not the conditions under which the United States would wish to enter into any negotiations toward a general settlement.

The second and related reason was grounded in the chronic governmental instability that followed the overthrow of the Diem regime in November 1963. The seizure of power by the RVN Generals, whatever promise it held of a fresh start and a reinvigoration of the counterinsurgency effort, had swept away the existing constitutional system. Thereafter, throughout 1964 and for some months beyond, the public life of South Vietnam presented a scene of continuing turmoil and instability. A succession of governments rose to power, each arbitrarily proclaimed by a leader or faction that thereafter sought to legitimatize its rule. Among the groups vying for control of the government the military establishment disposed of the greatest strength, but jealousies and factionalism within its ranks added to the continuing political ferment. None of the successive leaders and governments inspired enthusiasm among the South Vietnamese population.

The establishment of a reasonably stable government in South Vietnam was the central concern of US officials throughout 1964. Only such a government could be expected to advance the pacification program and otherwise make effective use of the advice and assistance the United States was eager to give. As the conviction grew that cessation of North

Vietnam's support of the insurgency would require stronger actions, involving active participation by the United States, assurance that an effective and firmly based government was in place in South Vietnam became even more important. It was in this connection that the need for stability became an additional argument against serious consideration of the neutralization course, or of entering into any negotiations that might lead in that direction. American officials foresaw that if South Vietnam's leaders became aware that the United States was contemplating even exploratory negotiations with Hanoi, the knowledge would have such a demoralizing effect as to topple the shaky government in Saigon and possibly bring to power a regime that was itself committed to neutralization and US withdrawal.

At the moment when he received President Johnson's letter of New Year's greeting, General Minh had been in power scarcely two months. So far the record of the Generals who comprised the Military Revolutionary Council (MRC) under Minh's leadership had not been impressive. Their performance suffered from lack of political and administrative experience, and there were signs of disunity, distrust, and a curious inertia among some members of the government. In an early assessment Ambassador Lodge had called the Generals "able men who will do big things once they get started," but it is apparent that he was speaking hopefully rather than from firm conviction.[2]

General Krulak spoke more candidly of the weaknesses in the new government. "Operations of the governmental mechanism--far from satisfactory before the coup--have decelerated greatly," SACSA reported on 21 December 1963. The junta, although composed of competent military leaders, was now preoccupied with politics, a field in which it was far less qualified. As a result RVN military leaders slighted their primary task--fighting the war. General Krulak judged the civilian element of the GVN to be of marginal quality and unprepared to handle complex administration. Provincial officials were unsure of their authority, of their obligations and of their tenure.[3] The same was true throughout the military command.

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2. (S) Msg, Saigon 1173 to State, 7 Dec 63.
3. (TS) Memo, SACSA to CJCS, 21 Dec 63, OCJCS File, Trip Reports.

To General Harkins the period of setback and uncertainty appeared to be ending by mid-January. "The war--the control of the counterinsurgency at least--is here for the winning," he wrote General Taylor. "All that has to be done is to go after it. We have lost seven months and it will probably be another before all the dust of many changes is settled. In the meantime I still feel the GVN can meet the time schedule you and Secretary McNamara laid down in October; of course taking into account the new starting date."[4]

On 23 January Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins accompanied the top leadership of the GVN, Generals Minh, Don, Kim and Dinh, on a helicopter tour of RVN, visiting several provinces and observing the new administration in action. Lodge reported in fairly sanguine terms to Washington on GVN efforts to reach the people and to prosecute the counter-insurgency. He even ventured the opinion that the struggle against the Viet Cong was now turning in favor of the government. He was most impressed with General Minh's efforts to win over the people and to make himself a popular leader. Of Minh, Lodge concluded, "He is also pushing a sound plan, political and military, with determination and ability, and so far seems to have kept his own crowd together on a cordial basis."[5]

The Khanh Coup, 30 January 1964

Not all of Minh's crowd was "together on a cordial basis." On 28 January, Major General Nguyen Khanh, commander of the I Corps, told the senior MAAG advisor at his headquarters, Colonel Jasper Wilson, USA, that he had learned from sources in France that another coup would be attempted, possibly within three days, by a clique of pro-French Generals. Once the coup was under way there would be a call for neutralization of South Vietnam. Khanh asserted that the plotters were already in touch with General Nguyen Van Hinh, former chief of staff of the RVNAF who had been ousted in 1954.[6]

4. (S) Msg, MAC 0144 to CJCS, 16 Jan 64.
5. (S) Msg, Saigon to State 1374, 23 Jan 64.
6. (S) SACSA Briefing Sheet for JCS, "Coup d'Etat in Republic of Vietnam," 30 Jan 64, OCJCS File O.

Colonel Wilson informed General Harkins, at Khanh's urging, of the latter's charges that some of the officers then in power (he named no names) were talking out of both sides of their mouths. In public they favored all-out war against the Viet Cong but in private they were talking neutralism, which Khanh vehemently opposed. He asked for assurance that the US Government would back a counter-coup and would oppose neutralism. General Harkins instructed Colonel Wilson to tell Khanh that it was hard for him to believe the charges of neutralism among members of the MRC. The United States was on record as rejecting neutralization, but it was also opposed to any unnecessary coup or counter-coup. Colonel Wilson was to seek more specific information from Khanh, after alterting the Ambassador to what had taken place.7

Subsequently Ambassador Lodge reported to Washington that Khanh was "profoundly disturbed" by signs of a strong move toward neutralism in the MRC and felt that if it were not vigorously crushed "it might succeed because of war weariness among the Vietnamese." When pressed for more information on who was involved in the coup plotting, Khanh had identified Generals Don, Kim, and Xuan as being "rabidly pro-French" and dealing with French agents. General Dinh was involved too, as one who "would go along for the money."

Khanh wanted US assurance that his family, then living in Da Nang, would be gotten out of the country if necessary, and the Ambassador promised to have a plane ready. Khanh also asked that Colonel Wilson be his exclusive liaison man and maintain radio contact with him at all times.

Ambassador Lodge told Washington on 29 January, "My assessment is that General Khanh is considered to be the most capable general in Viet Nam, that he controls the I and II Corps, which is the most orderly part of Viet Nam; and that in addition to being a capable soldier he has the reputation of being politically perspicacious." Nevertheless, Lodge could not quite believe the charges against Don and Kim, which went against his "deepest instincts," and he had not informed the GVN leadership of Khanh's activities. General Harkins agreed with his assessment.8

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7. (S) Msg, MAC 0325 to CJCS, 30 Jan 64.
8. (S) Msg, Saigon 1431 to State, 29 Jan 64.

At about 0215 30 January, General Khanh informed Colonel Wilson that he, together with General Phat, CG 7th Division, and General Khiem, CG III Corps, would move against the GVN at 0400 that morning to "secure changes in the MRC." Wilson was to be picked up at 0315 and taken to the command post from which Khanh would direct the coup. Lodge and Harkins were both informed immediately, and the Ambassador sent word to Washington at once.9

True to his word, General Khanh, supported by Generals Khiem and Phat, at about 0400 30 January took over JGS headquarters, deployed men and armor into downtown Saigon, and detained or placed under immediate house arrest Generals Minh, Don, Kim, Dinh, and Xuan, as well as Prime Minister Tho. The coup was carried off quickly and without bloodshed. It was done so quietly that the majority of Saigon's population had no inkling of events until the afternoon newspapers appeared. Other RVN Generals who associated themselves with the coup were Generals Thieu, Mau, Co, and Tri.10

Colonel Wilson, who stayed at the command post during the entire active period of the coup, took no part other than to observe the actions of Khanh and his staff and to advise Khanh, on the Ambassador's orders, that he should make every effort to avoid bloodshed. The atmosphere in the JGS compound was described by one observer as "like an election headquarters after a victory."11

At 1100 on the morning of the coup Ambassador Lodge called on General Khanh, seeking information about his plans, his attitude toward the counterinsurgency, and the fate of the captured Generals. Khanh had offered General Minh an opportunity to join the coup and remain as head of state, but Minh had demanded the release of the other four Generals as a condition for doing so. Khanh sought no more than the removal of these men from the government, but he feared that they might provide a rallying point for students and other dissident groups if allowed to go free.

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9. (S) Msg, Saigon 1432 to State, 30 Jan 64; (S) Msg, MAC 0325 to CJCS, 30 Jan 64.
10. (S) Msg, Saigon 1445 to State, 30 Jan 64.
11. (S) SACSA Briefing Sheet for JCS, "Coup d'Etat in Republic of Vietnam," 30 Jan 64, w/Tab A "Coup Chronology," OCJCS File O.

The new government head was anxious for early US recognition and support. During his discussion with the Ambassador, Khanh promised that he would prosecute the war against the Viet Cong vigorously and without delay. He intended to take a closer look at the strategic hamlet situation, keeping the good ones and eliminating the bad ones. He told Lodge that he was trying to get a good team around him, but that he recognized his own shortcomings. He knew nothing about politics, economics, or foreign policy, and he was going to depend heavily on the Ambassador for advice. Lodge reported these conversations to Washington, saying that Khanh was "a cool, clearheaded, realistic planner who has been abl to bring about order in much of the areas which he has commanded. He hopes to do the same in the rest of the country. He looks tough, ruthless, and far sighted."[12]

Later that afternoon, Radio Saigon announced the dissolution of the Executive Committee of the MRC in a declaration signed by a majority of the Vietnamese Generals and Colonels, including all Corps Commanders. General Khanh followed this with a declaration stating that his action had been taken because the government had shown itself incapable of bringing about promised changes in the social, economic, and political life of the country, thus disappointing the hopes and sacrifices of the people and the Army. He blamed this failure on a number of individuals who, mindful only of their own interests, had allied themselves with the colonialists in advocating a neutralist solution, "thereby paving the way for the communists to enslave our people." He ended with a pledge that the Army was determined to unite the people and to bring about real security, happiness, and democratic freedom in final victory.[13]

Thus General Khanh's takeover of the government on 30 January 1964 had been accomplished with some forewarning to US officials and under their immediate observation, but without any positive exercise of US influence. Among the earliest instructions sent to Ambassador Lodge was the State Department's admonition to make it very clear through his actions that the United States had nothing to do with staging the coup.[14] On the question of recognition, the

12. (S) Msg, Saigon 1443 to State, 30 Jan 64.
13. (C) Msg, Saigon 1446 to State, 30 Jan 64.
14. (S) Msg, State 1149 to Saigon, 29 Jan 64.

United States had the option of extending formal recognition or of handling matters as a simple continuation of normal relations with a government whose head of state had changed. There was precedent for the latter course in the instances of Pakistan in 1958 and Turkey in 1960, and the State Department chose to follow it, in part to avoid possible difficulties in obtaining acts of recognition from other nations.15

Ambassador Lodge informed Khanh of this view and he accepted it. Lodge then urged upon Khanh the strongest effort to defeat the Viet Cong. He warned against any delay for "so-called 'reorganization'" and said it was vital that commanders and province chiefs be driven ahead, if necessary by a few well-placed "kicks in the rear end." The entire counterinsurgency effort--military, political, psychological, economic, and social--must roll forward.16

Instructions from Washington along this very line arrived shortly. Remembering the uncertainty and neglect of military operations that had followed on the first coup in November, US officials feared a similar setback in the counterinsurgency as a result of the Khanh coup. Accordingly the Ambassador was directed "to state to Khanh that there must be no opportunity for the Viet Cong to benefit from the events of the past few days--it is essential that he and his Government demonstrate to the people of South Viet Nam, the people of the United States and the people of the world their unity and strength." To do this, the tempo of military operations against the Viet Cong must be increased, "visibly" and at once. Lodge was told that the President wanted to be able to announce at his press conference on the next day, 1 February, that Khanh had informed him that he had instructed the Corps commanders to step up the pace of military operations immediately.17

The Ambassador was able to give this assurance. At the press conference, after referring to "the new and friendly leaders" of South Vietnam, the President read aloud a letter to General Khanh that applauded his determination to take vigorous action and pledged that the United States would continue to provide assistance "to help you to carry the war to

15. (S) Msg, State 1154 to Saigon, 30 Jan 64.
16. (S) Msg, Saigon 1451 to State, 31 Jan 64.
17. [redacted]

the enemy and to increase the confidence of the Vietnamese people in their government."[18]

Thus was launched the new government headed by General Khanh, the first of the succession that was to emerge from the political turmoil of South Vietnam during 1964. Judged against the record that later unfolded, the Khanh government was unusual in one respect: it remained in power for more than six months.

The French Attitude and Other International Aspects

General Khanh's outspoken distrust of French motives and intentions was understandable, and in some respects well-founded. The influence of the former rulers of Indochina upon thought and events within South Vietnam had not entirely disappeared with the collapse of French military power and authority in the area. French business and professional men, French institutions, and French capital still remained in RVN. French culture and customs were part of the fabric of daily Vietnamese life. Nonetheless, resentment against their former governors had generated a substantial level of anti-French sentiment within the country. On the other hand, the United States had been concerned for some time over the course of French policy, which seemed calculated to undermine US efforts to establish a stable government and situation in RVN.

The official French approach to the problems of Southeast Asia appeared to be based on the following beliefs: 1) the West could not in the long run maintain pro-Western regimes in Southeast Asia, so distant from main Western power centers and so near to Communist China; 2) the neutralization solution that France had long advocated for Laos, whatever its risks and drawbacks, offered the only hope of keeping Southeast Asian countries from falling under Chinese control altogether;

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18. (S) Msg, Saigon 1464 to State, 1 Feb 64. Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-1964 (1965), vol. I, pp. 254, 256 (hereafter cited as Public Papers, Johnson, 1963-1964).

3) the withdrawal of the dominant American presence from Southeast Asia--which would be the price the West would have to pay for neutralization--would allow greater scope for France to play a special role there as the country that would do what could be done on behalf of the West, but whose modest presence would not be considered provocative to Chinese Communist power.19

President de Gaulle had issued a declaration on 29 August 1963 whose rather lofty phrases stood as the principal public statement of French policy. After claiming for France a special knowledge and understanding of the Vietnamese people, it sketched de Gaulle's aspirations for the future of South Vietnam as a country working out its destiny in complete independence from all foreign influence, in internal peace and unity, and in concord with its neighbors. "Naturally it is for the people, and for them alone, to choose the means by which to succeed in this, but any national effort undertaken in Vietnam to this end would find France ready, to the limit of its possibilities, to organize a cordial cooperation with this country."20

Lesser French officials, when queried regarding the practical intent of the General's statement, sought to pass it off as a broad declaration of objectives that might be implemented in the long-term future. Nevertheless, it could be read as an open invitation to any South Vietnamese faction attracted to the neutralist course to look to France for understanding and support. It fired speculation that the French might already be covertly engaged in intrigue with Hanoi and disaffacted elements of the Diem regime, including Ngo Ding Nhu, to neutralize the South at once and possibly to unify it with the communist North. De Gaulle's statement offered to the Vietnamese leaders and people an alternative policy to continuing the war and the acceptance of US assistance.

At the time of the overthrow of the Diem government in November 1963, President de Gaulle informed US Ambassador Charles Bohlen that he had never supported the Diem regime

19. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) Research Memorandum, REU-16, 11 Feb 64, Dept of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "De Gaulle and Viet Nam," OCJCS File, Black Note Book, "South Vietnam Conference-March 1964-Vol II" sec 6, Tab A; hereafter cited as REU 16, Dept of State.

20. Ibid.

because it had not shown the "proper" attitude toward the French interest in South Vietnam's problems. While not regretting Diem's removal, he foresaw no ultimate victory for the successor government. De Gaulle predicted that the new military regime would intensify the war effort and press the United States for increased assistance but would eventually be rejected by a people wearied of the exertions it demanded of them.[21]

In the new year President de Gaulle took new initiatives. On 27 Janury 1964 he extended French recognition to the government of Communist China--the first such act by a major power since the beginning of the Korean War in 1950. At a press conference four days later he again advocated neutralization, declaring that "it is inconceivable to conclude a treaty of neutrality concerning the states of Southeast Asia, to which France lends special and cordial attention, without China being part of it." He spoke of a neutrality that would be accepted by the states it encompassed and guaranteed by international agreement, excluding both support by one state of armed action within another and "the many forms of outside intervention." Neutralization along these lines, de Gaulle said, "appears the only solution compatible with a peaceful life and progress for these people."[22]

President Johnson promptly rejected this rather amorphous proposal, at his press conference on 1 February. A New York Times editorial on the same day, however, found de Gaulle's suggestions "neither new, radical nor unthinkable" and called on Washington officials to "welcome rather than resent" the French leader's interest in the Vietnamese problem--a view later indorsed by Senator Mike Mansfield.[23] In urging that the proposal be pursued, these outside commentators perhaps underestimated the difficulty of getting the General to reduce one of his grand schemes to specific terms. Also, their thought probably did not extend to the aspect that was worrying Ambassador Lodge in Saigon. Later in the month he advised President Johnson that de Gaulle's pronouncements on neutralization were having an unfavorable effect on the will to win of RVN government officials and the politically conscious elements of the population. Thinking about the prospects for neutralization did not make for bravery and hard

21. (S) Msg, Paris 2223 to State, 5 Nov 63.
22. (S) REU 16, Dept of State.
23. Public Papers, Johnson, 1963-1964, vol. I, pp. 257, 259. NY Times, 1 Feb 64, 22; 20 Feb 64, I.

fighting. Moreover, Lodge reported, General Khanh was convinced that French agents were conspiring with VC terrorists and had even supplied them with explosives. The Ambassador suggested that the President make a direct approach to the French leader with the intent of inducing him to state publicly that his remarks about neutralism defined a long-term goal and "were not meant to apply to the present time."[24]

President Johnson did not send the suggested message, but he assured Lodge that Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Bohlen had sought repeatedly to impress upon French officials the danger and futility of empty talk about the neutralization of South Vietnam.[25] A query went to the Embassy in Paris, nevertheless. Replying on 26 February, Ambassador Bohlen stated his conviction that any approach to de Gaulle at that time would elicit no more than a repetition of his previous statements, with no increase in concrete details. Furthermore, such an approach would give de Gaulle the satisfaction of knowing that his attempt to reassert a certain psychological influence in Southeast Asia was succeeding and that he had forced the United States to appeal to him. "I should be very loath to make any such request of General de Gaulle as matters now stand," Bohlen concluded.[26]

Five weeks later, for a somewhat different purpose, Ambassador Bohlen did call on President de Gaulle and ask him to make a clarifying statement of his position on South Vietnam. De Gaulle refused. In advising Ambassador Lodge of this "intransigent but not unexpected de Gaulle reaction," Secretary Rusk observed that by simply standing on his broad prescription for "neutralization now," de Gaulle had placed French policy "clearly at loggerheads with US and GVN interests in Southeast Asia."[27]

A somewhat different note had recently been sounded by the Soviet Union. In a move hardly likely to do other than stiffen the US resolve, an official spokesman declared on 25 February that the USSR would render all necessary assistance and support to the "national liberation struggle" in

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24. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1606 to State, 22 Feb 64.
25. (TS) Msg, White House CAP 64058 to Saigon, 23 Feb 64.
26. (S) Msg, Paris 4061 to State, 26 Feb 64.
27. (S) Msg, State 1603 to Saigon, 4 Apr 64.

South Vietnam. The Kremlin called for the withdrawal of US forces and equipment and for an end to US "interference" in the country's internal affairs.[28]

The free world was not overawed by this declaration. When the Council of Ministers of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization met in Manila in mid-April, the conference concluded with issuance of the strongest and most specific communique in the ten-year history of the SEATO pact. The Foreign Ministers of seven nations joined in expressing "grave concern about continuing Communist aggression against the Republic of Vietnam, . . . directed, supplied and supported by the Communist regime in North Vietnam." They declared that defeat of this aggression was "essential not only to the security of the Republic of Vietnam, but to that of South-East Asia. It will also be convincing proof that Communist expansion by such tactics will not be permitted." The eighth member, France, abstained from endorsing this portion of the communique but did join in its general reaffirmation of SEATO's purpose: to resist communist aggression and subversion in the treaty area.[29]

Another voice was heard on 8 July, when UN Secretary-General U Thant called for a reconvening of the 1954 Geneva Conference powers to negotiate peace in South Vietnam. He said he had felt strongly for some time that military methods would not succeed; "the only sensible alternative is the political and diplomatic method of negotiation which, even at this late hour, may offer some chance of a solution." It was understood that Thant had in mind some form of neutralization of South Vietnam.[30]

Nations of the Communist bloc generally endorsed this initiative, and on 23 July President de Gaulle expanded upon it. The way to end the fighting, he said, was for the United States, the Soviet Union, Communist China, and France to agree to withdraw entirely from the Indochinese peninsula. A reconvened Geneva Conference could then frame the necessary guarantees against intervention and for the maintenance of neutrality.[31]

28. Jules Davids, The United States in World Affairs, 1964 (1965), p. 140.
29. Dept of State Bulletin, L (4 May 64), p. 692.
30. NY Times, 9 Jul 64, pp. 1, 2.
31. United States in World Affairs, 1964, p. 146.

President Johnson responded at his press conference the following day. The occasion was one of the first on which he used the words, "the United States seeks no wider war," after warning that provocation from the North could force a US response. The President then addressed "other friends [who] suggest that this problem must be moved to a conference table."

> If those who practice terror and ambush and murder will simply honor their existing agreements, there can easily be peace in Southeast Asia immediately. But we do not believe in a conference called to ratify terror, so our policy is unchanged.[32]

By this statement President Johnson bespoke a conviction that the course the United States had chosen was right and necessary and a resolve in seeing it through that had been evident in his actions from the moment he assumed office on 22 November 1963. No hitch or hesitation in US policy had marked the transition of authority following the death of John F. Kennedy.

Early Actions of the Johnson Administration: NSAM 273

President Johnson had taken hold immediately. On 26 November 1963 the Secretaries of State and Defense were informed that the President had reviewed the record of the discussions they had led at Honolulu on 20 November and had issued certain guidance, in NSAM 273. It opened with the following paragraph:

> 1. It remains the central object of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy. The test of all U. S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.

Calling for a unified effort by all US officials concerned and for continuation of military and economic assistance

32. Public Papers, Johnson, 1963-1964, vol. II, p. 888.

programs at levels not less than those maintained during the Diem period, the President termed it "a major interest of the United States Government" that the new Minh regime in South Vietnam be assisted in consolidating itself and in developing increased public support. In particular, US efforts should be directed at inducing GVN leaders to concentrate their attention on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. At the same time the President reaffirmed the White House statement of 2 October 1963 that had set the goal of substantial achievement of the purposes of the US advisory effort during the next two years, to be followed by a major withdrawal of US military personnel after 1965.[33]

In a paragraph that applied chiefly to the conclusions reached at Honolulu regarding a program of stepped-up GVN action against North Vietnam, with nonattributable US assistance, the presidential guidance called for prompt production of plans treating "different levels of possible increased activity" and in each instance including estimates of the resulting damage to North Vietnam, the plausibility of denial, possible NVN retaliation, and other international reactions. With regard to Laos, NSAM 273 required preparation of a plan for military operations launched from South Vietnam but penetrating no farther than 50 kilometers, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise. Secretary McNamara soon assigned concurrent responsibility for action in these several planning areas to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA).[34]

The issuance of NSAM 273 on the morrow of the day of national mourning and funeral services for John F. Kennedy summoned major officials to renew their consideration of the problems of Southeast Asia. At an interdepartmental meeting in Washington on 6 December Secretary McNamara provided what the Secretary of State described as a "disturbing analysis of the current military situation" in South Vietnam. He said that the GVN desired to respond to US military advice and to improve its operational effectivenes, but it was in a state of organizational turmoil. The Viet Cong were making an intensive effort to increase their hold on the countryside while the new government of General Minh was shaking down.

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33. (TS-GP 1) NSAM 273, 26 Nov 63, Att to JCS 2343/297, 29 Nov 63, JMF 9155.3/5410 (22 Nov 63) sec 2.

34. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to SecA et al., "National Security Action Memorandum No. 273, dated 26 Nov 63," 6 Dec 63, Encl to JCS 2343/297-1, 9 Dec 63, same file.

The Viet Cong had exhibited a powerful capability for at least a brief period of intensified operations, and their skill in counter-airborne action was improving. Mr. McNamara identified it as a prime intelligence deficiency that while there were strong indications that infiltration of materiel had increased, there was little hard evidence.

The Secretary of Defense based his conclusions on the fact that VC incidents had greatly increased since the coup in early November, going as high as 1,000 in one week, with the great preponderance of incidents taking place in the Delta area. The weapons losses by the GVN had risen sharply while the VC weapons captured had not shown a corresponding increase. The Viet Cong appeared to be maintaining their hard core strength despite heavy casualties ascribed to them by US and GVN intelligence. In addition, numerous changes in GVN division and corps boundaries and in major commanders and district chiefs had by now been made as a result of the coup. These changes contributed to the "organizational turmoil" he had described and provided an inviting opportunity for VC incursions.

The VC capability for antiaircraft action had increased alarmingly, with twenty RVN and US aircraft having been damaged in a single day, 24 November. Much of this could be attributed to improved weapons. Recent capture of AA weapons and related equipment showed them to be of "possible Russian or Chinese design." The continued appearance of recoilless rifles and ammunition, unmarked but apparently of Chinese design, and the detection of new Chinese rifles in the Delta were added indications of increased infiltration.[35]

Secretary McNamara recommended four broad measures: 1) institute a program of pressures on North Vietnam of rising intensity; 2) institute probes of Laos, including the use of US advisors and US resupply capabilities; 3) institute aerial reconnaissance of both Cambodia and Laos; 4) accelerate dispatch of US economic experts to RVN.

Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Lodge that the interdepartmental meeting had resulted in agreement to proceed with planning or action on all four points, and also to begin an analysis of waterborne traffic into South Vietnam and the development of plans to interrupt infiltration by this means.

35. (TS) Msg, State 908 to Saigon, 6 Dec 63.

A further provision of NSAM 273 had been the President's call for development of "as strong and persuasive a case as possible to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels." The conferees on 6 December had agreed to send Mr. William Jorden to Saigon with the mission of gathering evidence for the production of a new report, similar to the State Department publication, A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam, which had been released in December 1961.[36]

"The President," Secretary Rusk concluded, "has expressed his deep concern that our effort in Vietnam be stepped up to the highest pitch and that each day we ask ourselves what more we can do to further the struggle."[37]

Planning for Actions against North Vietnam

Promulgation of NSAM 273 had constituted the President's approval for proceeding with planning for increased actions by RVN forces against North Vietnam, with nonattributable US assistance. The conferees in Honolulu earlier in November had defined this as a requirement for "an optimum 12 months' program for intensified operations against North Vietnam including sabotage, propaganda incursions, intelligence and commando hit-and-run raids." The operations would use RVN military and paramilitary resources, fully supported by the United States. The plan should show clearly what could be done with the means currently available and specify what additional means would be needed to carry out the optimum program. It should list actions of graduated intensity, ranging from low-level harassment and deception to large amphibious commando raids.[38]

Immediately upon the issuance of NSAM 273 the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to undertake this planning task, [redacted] with a target date for submission [redacted] December 1963.[39] Interest in Washington in early receipt

36. Dept of State Bulletin, XLV (25 Dec 61), p. 1053.
37. (TS) Msg, State 908 to Saigon, 6 Dec 63.
38. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/295, 23 Nov 63, JMF 9155.3/5410 (22 Nov 63) sec 2.
39. (TS) Briefing Memo, "Covert Operations Against Vietnam, Dec 1963," unsigned, OCJCS File, Black Binder "South Vietnam Conference, March 1964," vol. II, sec VII.

of the plan was keen, General Taylor advised CINCPAC in a follow-up message. A few days later, on 10 December, Secretary McNamara informed Ambassador Lodge that, at the President's behest, he would stop in Saigon on his way back from the NATO Council meeting. He looked forward particularly to seeing the plan for RVN operations against North Vietnam, which, in Mr. McNamara's words, was designed "to make clear to the North Vietnamese that the US will not accept a Communist victory in South Vietnam and that we will escalate the conflict to whatever level is required to insure their defeat."[40]

During consultations with the Secretary of Defense in Saigon on 19 December 1963 General Harkins presented the plan, which was the product of the joint efforts of his headquarters [redacted] It was subsequently designated OPLAN 34A-64. Secretary McNamara decided, following the presentation, that whether or not OPLAN 34A was eventually implemented in full, the United States should take action at once to assemble in RVN all the additional materiel assets required for the total execution of the plan.[41]

The Secretary returned to Washington with information and impressions that caused him to view the future with some anxiety. "The situation is very disturbing," he told the President on 21 December. "Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2-3 months, will lead to neutralization at best and more likely to a Communist-controlled state."

The new government, which Mr. McNamara saw as indecisive and drifting, gave the greatest cause for concern. Although General Minh maintained that he, rather than the Generals' Council, was making decisions, this was in some doubt. In any event both Minh and his Council were inexperienced in political administration and, what was worse, showed little talent for it. They had no clear idea of how to reshape or conduct the strategic hamlet program. The province chiefs, most of whom were new, were receiving little or no direction. The preoccupation of military commanders with political

40. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS DIASO-3-4654-63 to CINCPAC, 2 Dec 63. (S) Msg, SecDef DIASO-3-4782-63 to COMUSMACV, 10 Dec 63.
41. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAG 4955 to CINCPAC, 20 Dec 63.

matters was reflected in ineffective direction of military operations.[42]

The encouraging accounts of the progress of the counter-insurgency that Generals Taylor and Krulak, as well as Mr. McNamara, had brought back from their September-October visits to RVN, and which had been challenged at the time by some State and USOM officials, had apparently been ill-founded. The Secretary now acknowledged that the Viet Cong were in the ascendancy and had been since about July. The Viet Cong had made great progress, and the situation had been deteriorating to a far greater extent than, as Mr. McNamara now expressed it, "we realized because of our undue dependence on distorted Vietnamese reporting." The Viet Cong now controlled very high proportions of the people in some key provinces, particularly those directly south and west of Saigon. The strategic hamlet program was seriously overextended in these provinces, and the Viet Cong had been able to destroy many hamlets, while others had been abandoned, or betrayed and pillaged by the Government's own Self Defense Corps. In these key provinces, the Viet Cong were collecting taxes at will.

The remedy to the military troubles lay in getting the GVN to double its military strength in the key provinces through redeployment, plus improvement in the US military and USOM staffs to allow a reliable, independent US appraisal of the status of operations. Also, realistic pacification plans had to be prepared.

The situation in the northern and central areas was considerably better than in the Delta, and General Harkins still hoped that they could be made reasonably secure by the latter half of 1964.

Secretary McNamara did not believe that the situation required any substantial increase in US resources and personnel. He had, however, approved the sending of 42 additional 105mm howitzers and had directed that the Self Defense Corps, which was the most exposed force and had the lowest morale, be provided with uniforms. "Of greater potential significance," the Secretary observed, "I have directed the Military Departments to review urgently the quality of the people we are sending to Vietnam. It seems we have fallen off

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42. (S) Memo, SecDef to President, "Vietnam Situation," 21 Dec 63, OCJCS File, Rpts on SVN, (Trip File Folder), Envelope #4. SecDef was also highly critical of the US Country Team in Saigon, citing its deficiencies as a second major weakness.

considerably from the high standards applied in the original selections in 1962, and the JCS fully agree with me that we must have our best men there."

With regard to prospective RVN operations against North Vietnam, Secretary McNamara [redacted] at a White House consultation shortly after [redacted] return from Saigon described the plan that had been developed [redacted] by COMUSMACV [redacted] In OPLAN 34A an array of over 2,000 actions were listed, ranging from small propaganda efforts to battalion-size commando raids and overt bombing of key targets. The President accepted the suggestion of his two advisors that an interdepartmental committee drawn from State, Defense, [redacted] be convened to select from this large target list the operations that were most feasible and promised the greatest return for the least risk. Under General Krulak's chairmanship this committee completed its report on 2 January. Secretary McNamara then prepared a shorter draft memorandum for the President and referred it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for comment.[43]

As a first phase in the implementation of OPLAN 34A the interdepartmental committee had proposed a four-month program of covert operations against North Vietnam, with a suggested beginning date of 1 February 1964. It provided for: 1) expansion of intelligence collection operations, including U-2 photographic missions and aerial communications-electronics intelligence missions; 2) expansion of psychological operations, including leaflet drops, delivery of propaganda kits, harassment and deception operations, [redacted] and 3) sabotage operations against 18 targets. Responsibility for all actions would be plausibly deniable by the United States, with the GVN being asked to adopt the program as its own. The United States would provide logistic and advisory support, but US personnel and forces would not engage in operations against North Vietnam. They would continue, however, to serve as air crews on certain air reconnaissance missions.

The proposed program had been designed to help convince the NVN leaders that it was in their own self-interest to

43. (TS-GP 1) SACSA T-2-64 to JCS, 4 Jan 64; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 Jan 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 63-Feb 64, vol II.

desist from aggressive policies. The importance attached by these leaders to the development of their economy suggested that progressive damage to NVN industrial projects and attrition of NVN resources might cause the government in the North to reduce its material support of the Viet Cong. The selection of sabotage targets had been guided by this view. Besides having an impact on the NVN economy and morale, the program could be expected to yield increased intelligence and to involve the Hanoi regime in costly countermeasures.

It was the JCS view that, taken all together and even if successful, these covert actions would not greatly influence the progress of the war. Still, the operations were within the current or early prospective capabilities of the GVN and represented a useful beginning. Intensive planning should go forward for a more vigorous program, with actions extended into the overt field if necessary. On 16 January the President approved the program recommended to him, for execution over a four month period beginning 1 February 1964. Selected from OPLAN 34A, the operations included [redacted] intelligence collection missions; 14, instead of 18, physical destruction operations, and several hundred psychological operations. The President did not approve any air strikes or other operations whose sponsorship could not be denied.[44]

Overall US political control of these operations in Saigon was charged to the Ambassador, with operational control assigned to COMUSMACV. Planning, liaison, logistics, training, and advice to the GVN would be handled by a [redacted] Task Force, reporting to COMUSMACV. Ambassador Lodge was instructed to bring the GVN into the planning process at once and in the manner considered by him and General Harkins to be most secure.[45]

Ambassador Lodge told Washington that he welcomed the exertion of increased pressure on North Vietnam. He considered the level of activity well chosen, since, he wrote, "I do not think it profitable to try and overthrown Ho Chi Minh, as his successor would undoubtedly be tougher than he is." The Ambassador said that he assumed the operations would be supported by diplomatic actions, designed to leave no doubt

44. (TS) Briefing Sheet, Agenda Item E, "OPLAN 34A-64 (North Vietnam)," OCJCS File, Trip Book, Mar 64, 29 Feb 64.

45. [redacted]

in the minds of NVN leaders, and of their Chinese mentors and Soviet associates, that these operations were merely a first phase, illustrating what North Vietnam could expect if it persisted in its support of aggression in Southeast Asia. At the same time the program should be carried out in a manner that would permit the Hanoi government to yield without serious loss of face. It might be possible to convey discreetly that some sort of reward, such as partial withdrawal of US forces and shipment of rice from the South to the North, would be forthcoming if Hanoi responded favorably.

Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins called on General Minh on 21 January to explain the US plan for expanding operations against North Vietnam. The reaction of General Minh and his associates was thoughtful and "constructive," according to Lodge, and included some canvassing of the consequences that might ensue. Assurance was given that the program the United States proposed was not one that would be pressed to a point that would make Chinese Communist intervention likely. After a further meeting between General Harkins and General Kim to discuss the military requirements in more detail, the GVN concurred in the program for February and agreed to make the forces available to carry it out.[47]

OPLAN 34A Gets Under Way

The overthrow of Minh and his associates by General Khanh occurred a few days later. Concern arose that the OPLAN 34A information passed to GVN officials might have been compromised, but investigation by General Harkins showed that the deposed Generals had not had access to the more sensitive portions of the plan and had apparently not been given any extensive written materials. Accordingly the planned operations were mounted, but they were largely unsuccessful during February and March. Equipment shortages, unfavorable weather, bad luck, and lack of motivation and enterprise on the part of the Vietnamese forces assigned contributed to this outcome.[48]

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46. (TS) Msg, Saigon CAS 3902 to CIA, 20 Jan 64.

47. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3943 to State, 21 Jan 64; [redacted]

48. (TS) Memo, SACSA to CJCS, "OPLAN 34A-64," 28 Feb 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 64. [redacted] (TS) SACSA-M-180-64 to CJCS, 19 Mar 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 64.

The failures of February were enough to cause the Secretary of Defense to question the adequacy of the operational procedures being used, and General Harkins was asked to comment In his reply, COMUSMACV held that the operational procedures were adequate and sound, but he acknowledged that morale and motivation had become serious problems. The basic loyalty of existing RVN agents and sabotage teams had been to Diem and their immediate superior, Colonel Tung, who had been removed in the November coup. They knew they were in disfavor with the Khanh government, and many of them were being called back from their missions for "interrogation." Changes in government and in key personnel had caused delays in executing programs, and some information appearing in the press suggested lapses in security. General Harkins hoped for improvement, chiefly from the intensified training program then in effect for RVN special forces.[49]

GVN National and Province Plans

While the results achieved in RVN operations against North Vietnam during February and March were disappointing, US officials could draw encouragement from the purposeful beginni General Khanh appeared to be making in carrying out an effective internal pacification plan. The RVNAF Joint General Sta had issued a new National Pacification Plan (NPP) during January. It was a revision of the earlier National Campaign Plan, and MACV advisors had participated extensively in its development. The NPP set forth the national strategy for a combined military, political, and economic offensive against the Viet C in two phases. Phase I involved a coordinated military and civilian effort under military command to clear territory of t Viet Cong, moving successively from secure and highly populate areas into the insecure and less densely populated ones. The concept became known as the "spreading oil drop." In Phase II military forces would destroy the Viet Cong in their secret bases and thus end the insurgency.

Priorities for carrying out Phase I were: 1) provinces surrounding Saigon and extending south into the Delta, to be completed by 1 July 1965; 2) remainder of the Delta in the Ca Mau peninsula and critical provinces north of Saigon; to be completed by 1 January 1966; 3) all of I and II Corps

49. (TS) SACSA-M-149-64 to CJCS, 4 Mar 64. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 031045Z Mar 64.

Tactical Zones, less the VC strongholds reserved for Phase II, to be completed by 1 January 1965 (lowest in priority but the easiest task).[50]

The new Khanh government approved the plan on 18 February 1964. The operations it called for would be conducted by military leaders with civil authorities in supporting roles, but with the relationship reversing upon the securing of a particular area.[51]

A National Pacification Committee, formally established on 9 March, was headed by Prime Minister Khanh and included key ministers of the GVN. The RVNAF high command served as executive agent for the pacification. The old Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets, established in February 1962, had been replaced by a commissariat for "Hamlets of the New Life" (Minh's new name for strategic hamlets). It was now attached to the Joint General Staff, reinforcing the principle that all aspects of pacification would proceed under military direction, with province chiefs assuming responsibility only in secured areas.

US advisors could view the NPP with satisfaction, as marking the acceptance of recommendations they had repeatedly made without result during the Diem period. The plan's implementation promised to end the difficulties that had arisen from the "two-hat" status of the province chiefs. The NPP's schedule of priorities accorded generally with the emphasis on securing the Delta area that US officials had advocated.

New Organization and Planning in Washington

On 14 February 1964, President Johnson established a high-level committee to oversee US policy and operations in South Vietnam. He named Mr. William Sullivan of the Department of State as the full-time head of this committee, under Secretary Rusk. The Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the AID Administrator were asked to to nominate individuals to serve on the committee, and

50. (S) SACSA Briefing Sheet, "GVN National and Province Plans," 28 Feb 64, OCJCS File, Red Trip Book, 29 Feb 64, Agenda Item C 2.

51. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 1266 to CINCPAC, 19 Feb 64.

Mr. Michael Forrestal was designated as the White House representative. The President directed that those appointed "give an absolute priority to their obligations as members of this committee and as agents for the execution of approved decisions. He closed by expressing the hope that "the establishment of this committee will permit an energetic, unified and skillful prosecution of the only war we face at present."[52]

To represent the Department of Defense, Secretary McNamara nominated Mr. William P. Bundy and Major General Rollen H. Anthis, USAF, who had recently succeeded General Krulak as SACSA.[53] Within a few weeks, however, Mr. Bundy left the Pentagon to become Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. His successor, both on the Sullivan committee and as Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), was Mr. John T. McNaughton.

The Sullivan committee, formally designated the Vietnam Coordinating Committee (VNCC), superseded an existing interdepartmental coordinating body whose somewhat lower organizational level had hampered its effectiveness. In launching the new arrangement President Johnson had indicated that, in the execution of approved policy, departmental appeals from Mr. Sullivan's decisions should be kept at a minimum. Mr. Sullivan was not authorized to render decisions on major questions of policy and operations, but he had considerable authority in regard to the continuing execution of approved policy. The level and terms of reference of the new committee were such as to raise some concern that Department of Defense responsibilities for military matters and JCS responsibilities for military planning and for providing the channel of command to CINCPAC might be preempted to some extent. General Anthis recognized that the two Defense representatives must be alert to insure that their Department did not become committed to policies or actions that had not received appropriate consideration by the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[54]

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52. (S-GP 1) NSAM 280, 14 Feb 64, Att to JCS 2343/321, 15 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (14 Feb 64).

53. (S-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to President, 16 Feb 64, Att to JCS 2343/321-1, 17 Feb 64, same file.

54. (S) SACSA TP-6-64 to JCS, 18 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (14 Feb 64).

During a conference with the VNCC members and other advisors on 20 February the President directed that contingency planning be speeded up for the application of pressures against North Vietnam that would have the maximum deterrent effect on the Hanoi government.[55] Accordingly the VNCC turned immediately to the preparation of a plan of action for the United States in Vietnam consisting of: 1) a detailed scenario for the imposition of measured sanctions against North Vietnam on an ascending scale; 2) back-up studies exploring in depth the major questions encountered; 3) a list of major policy decisions required before starting the proposed courses of action; and 4) a statement of intelligence requirements to support the policy decisions and operations. A subcommittee that included representation from the Joint Staff prepared this plan, submitting it on 1 March to the full committee. It was based in part on a paper dated 11 February 1964, "Draft Outline (Southeast Asia)," written by Mr. Walt W. Rostow of the Department of State.[56]

The report produced by the VNCC subcommittee was titled "Alternatives for the Imposition of Measured Pressures Against North Vietnam." It described three alternative programs of military pressures, with associated political, economic, and psychological measures, and estimated the NVN, Chinese Communist, Soviet, and Free World reactions to each. The alternatives presented for consideration were: 1) further activity along the lines of OPLAN 34A, in which RVN or third-country personnel would conduct a series of increasingly severe maritime and airborne raids against targets related to the support of the Viet Cong or critical to the economy or security of North Vietnam; 2) a program of overt US and/or Allied activity, short of combatant action against NVN territory or territorial waters but not excluding combat operations in Laos; 3) an overt US program consisting of amphibious and airborne raids, destruction of junks and NVN-owned shipping, mining of northern seaports, blockade, shore bombardment, and air attacks against North Vietnam.[57]

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55. (S) Memo for Record, Michael Forrestal, "South Vietnam," 20 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (20 Feb 64).

56. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-387-64 to CJCS, 4 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (11 Feb 64).

57. (TS-GP 1) Rpt, State Dept Policy Planning Council, "Alternatives for the Imposition of Measured Pressures Against North Vietnam," 1 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (11 Feb 64) sec 1A.

The report received no immediate approval or disapproval. Like many other papers of the period it stood as a contribution to the continuing deliberations on Southeast Asian policy that proceeded at the highest levels of the US Government throughout 1964. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also had a role in this continuing discussion and had submitted their views more than once since the beginning of the year.

The JCS Recommendations of 22 January 1964

On 22 January the Joint Chiefs of Staff had advised the Secretary of Defense that if the United States was to achieve the objectives in Southeast Asia laid down by the President in NSAM 273 of 26 November 1963, it must be prepared to put aside many self-imposed restrictions and move more boldly and at greater risk.[58]

The stakes were high. "If the US program succeeds in South Vietnam it will go far toward stabilizing the total Southeast Asia situation," the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed. "Conversely, a loss of South Vietnam to the communists will presage an early erosion of the remainder of our position in that subcontinent." Laos could not long survive with an aggressive communist power on its east flank, and Thailand would probably succumb in turn. "Cambodia," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, "apparently has estimated that our prospects in South Vietnam are not promising and, encouraged by the actions of the French, appears already to be seeking an accommodation with the communists." Beyond this, in Burma, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea the impact of an American defeat on judgments "with respect to US durability, resolution, and trustworthiness" would be severe.

As "the first real test of our determination to defeat the communist wars of national liberation formula," South Vietnam held "the pivotal position" in the world-wide confrontation between the United States and the communist nations The conflict there must be brought to a favorable end as soon as possible, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought it unrealistic to expect that a complete suppression of the insurgency could take place in one or even two years. The

58. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-46-64 to SecDef, 22 Jan 64, Encl to JCS 2339/117-2, 11 Jan 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (3 Jan 64) A.

successful counterinsurgency effort of the British in Malaya had taken ten years, they observed.

In voicing this opinion the Joint Chiefs of Staff were indfrectly challenging one provision of NSAM 273, in which the expectation had been reaffirmed that the US advisory effort could accomplish its purposes over the next two years and allow a substantial US withdrawal after 1965. Instead, the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed the way to a more extensive, and probably longer, commitment. They were convinced that the United States must make plain to the enemy its determination "to see the Vietnam campaign through to a favorable conclusion. To do this, we must prepare for whatever level of activity may be required and, being prepared, must then proceed to take actions as necessary to achieve our purposes surely and promptly."

Moreover, decisions regarding action in South Vietnam should be made within the context of an integrated US policy for all of Southeast Asia. Sufficient attention had not yet been given, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, to the integration of economic, political, and military measures in an effort that would seek compatible objectives in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia, as well as South Vietnam.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned that the RVN, with US support, was currently fighting the war on the enemy's terms; "our actions are essentially reactive."

> One reason for this is the fact that we have obliged ourselves to labor under self-imposed restrictions with respect to impeding external aid to the Viet Cong. These restrictions include keeping the war within the boundaries of South Vietnam, avoiding the direct use of US combat forces, and limiting US direction of the campaign to rendering advice to the Government of Vietnam. These restrictions, while they may make our international position more readily defensible, all tend to make the task in Vietnam more complex, time consuming, and in the end, more costly.

In addition, US observance of these restrictions might well be "conveying signals of irresolution to our enemies" and encouraging them to undertake more daring initiatives.

Then followed a sentence to whose precise wording the Joint Chiefs of Staff had given particular attention: "A reversal of attitude and the adoption of a more aggressive program would enhance greatly our ability to control the degree to which escalation will occur."[59] In this connection they discounted the likelihood of Chinese Communist intervention; "the economic and agricultural disappointments suffered by Communist China, plus the current rift with the Soviets, could cause the communists to think twice about undertaking a large-scale military adventure in Southeat Asia."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff acknowledged that "the focus of the counterinsurgency battle lies in South Vietnam itself, and that the war must certainly be fought and won primarily in the minds of the Vietnamese people." But they judged the operational direction, personnel, and material support received by the Viet Cong from outside the country to have reached significant proportions. If this outside support were stopped completely, "the character of the war in South Vietnam would be substantially and favorably altered." The Joint Chiefs of Staff were wholly in favor of mounting the four-month program of OPLAN 34A actions that the President had approved a few days earlier, but they believed "it would be idle to conclude that these efforts will have a decisive effect on the communist determination to support the insurgency." The United States must be prepared to undertake a much higher level of activity.

The memorandum of 22 January then listed the "increasingly bolder actions" the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the United States must make ready to conduct:

> a. Assign to the US military commander responsibility for the total US program in Vietnam.
>
> b. Induce the Government of Vietnam to turn over to the United States military

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59. Ibid. Additional language containing this thought had first been recommended by CSA; amendments subsequently proposed by CJCS were further refined during a JCS meeting. (C) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2339/117-2 - Strategy in Southeast Asia (U)," 15 Jan 64; (TS) Secy, JCS, "Decision On JCS 2339/117-2," 20 Jan 64; same file.

commander, temporarily, the actual tactical direction of the war.

c. Charge the United States military commander with complete responsibility for conduct of the program against North Vietnam.

d. Overfly Laos and Cambodia to whatever extent is necessary for acquisition of operational intelligence.

e. Induce the Government of Vietnam to conduct overt ground operations in Laos of sufficient scope to impede the flow of personnel and material southward.

f. Arm, equip, advise, and support the Government of Vietnam in its conduct of aerial bombing of critical targets in North Vietnam and in mining the sea approaches to that country.

g. Advise and support the Government of Vietnam in its conduct of large-scale commando raids against critical targets in North Vietnam.

h. Conduct aerial bombing of key North Vietnam targets, using US resources under Vietnamese cover, and with the Vietnamese openly assuming responsibility for the actions.

i. Commit additional US forces, as necessary, in support of the combat action within South Vietnam.

j. Commit US forces as necessary in direct actions against North Vietnam.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense of their conviction that "any or all of the foregoing actions may be required" to attain the US objectives. They would continue their close attention to developments in South Vietnam during the coming months and would recommend to him "progressively the execution of such of the above actions as are considered militarily required." For

the present the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the substance of their memorandum be discussed with the Secretary of State.

Secretary Rusk, upon receiving a copy of the JCS memorandum from Mr. McNamara, skillfully turned aside the bid for overall military control that could be read in the unqualified JCS proposal to "assign to the US military commander responsibilities for the total US program in Vietnam." Noting that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had written that the war must be won in the minds of the Vietnamese people, Secretary Rusk agreed, saying "this means that this war, like other guerrilla wars, is essentially political--an important fact to bear in mind in determining command and control arrangements in Viet-Nam."

He also subscribed to the JCS opinion that an integrated US policy must be followed in Southeast Asia but did not address directly the full implications of their thought. His reply dwelt on the need for careful consideration before decisions were made, in order to weigh the political and military risks involved and to assure due regard for the fact that action taken with respect to one country might have an impact on the situation in another. The Secretary of State declared that his Department would always be prepared to consider promptly any of the listed actions that the Joint Chiefs of Staff might subsequently recommend.[60]

JCS Planning After the Khanh Coup

Scarcely a week after submission of the JCS views on 22 January the overthrow of the Minh government by General Khanh occurred. In the new situation created by this event General Taylor, on 5 February, ordered the Joint Staff to draw up an outline plan for revitalizing the counterinsurgency program. He specified that the plan should give particular attention to means of assisting Khanh to produce the political stability that was indispensible to the success of the military program. The Chairman held that the United States could not afford to have any further changes of government before the military phase of the counterinsurgency program was concluded. "The problem," he wrote, "is to get this thought across to the

60. (TS-GP 1) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 5 Feb 64, Att to JCS 2339/117-3, 11 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (3 Jan 64) A.

senior Vietnamese military who may entertain thoughts of future coups."

In connection with proposals for stepping up the tempo of the campaign against the Viet Cong, the Chairman wanted specific suggestions for actions to restore RVN confidence and morale and to reassure the US public that the policy their government was following in Vietnam could produce results. "We should look for several relatively spectacular operations which, if successful, could have a psychological impact in South Vietnam and in the United States. To achieve this effect, we shall need accurate and sympathetic press reporting," General Taylor said.[61]

The views of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV were solicited on this latter aspect of the Chairman's guidance.[62] In reply, General Harkins discouraged the thought that operations yielding a spectacular success could readily be planned. The basic concept of the National Pacification Plan, shortly to be implemented, and the general nature of the fighting were not condusive to it. In a situation in which the enemy held the initiative, "spectacular successes, if attained, will be the result of successful reaction operations rather than specifically planned operations, simply because VC forces assemble as units only at times and places of their choosing."

CINCPAC agreed substantially, observing that "in this war, operations using large forces to corner thousands and slay them" were not to be expected. Still he thought some possibilities might be developed by turning to night guerrilla operations, ambushes using vulnerable hamlets as bait, and hot pursuit of the Viet Cong into Cambodia or Laos. Admiral Felt doubted, however, that isolated successes in such operations, even if spectacular, would cause the press to change its tune. The correspondents seemed convinced that the US cause was lost, and "short of a major shift in press attitude, US public is not likely to be reassured by increase in tempo of GVN military actions."[63]

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61. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/317, 5 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 1.
62. (TS) Msg, JCS 559-64 to CINCPAC, 062117Z Feb 64.
63. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 081046Z Feb 64.

An outline plan responsive to the Chairman's guidance was circulated for JCS consideration on 11 February.[64] In it the Joint Staff presented a broad spectrum of actions--political, military, socio-economic, psychological, and organizational--that could contribute to revitalizing and intensifying the counterinsurgency effort. Some expanded on existing or scheduled activities, but others represented a sharp departure from the current US program. Divergent views soon emerged, relating mainly to the more consequential military actions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to reserve these matters for further study, in effect merging them with the continuing consideration of the military actions listed in the JCS memorandum of 22 January. Measures on which there was ready agreement would be recommended to the Secretary of Defense immediately.[65]

On 18 February 1964 the resulting JCS memorandum was forwarded to Secretary McNamara. Although including some military measures, its recommendations were largely restricted to actions needed to insure an integrated political, socio-economic, and psychological offensive to support the National Pacification Plan, whose approaching implementation the Joint Chiefs of Staff hailed as a promising move. They recommended that the Country Team in Saigon be directed to implement the following actions at the earliest practicable time: 1) persuade General Khanh to accept US advisors at all levels considered necessary by COMUSMACV; 2) improve control of borders by setting up intelligence nets without regard to geographic boundaries, using smugglers, the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and other minority border groups and establishing certain denied areas in which a "shoot on sight" policy would be followed; 3) step up the use of herbicides for crop destruction against identified VC areas recommended by the GVN; 4) assist the GVN in readying the civil administrative effort necessary to establish orderly government in areas cleared in the military phase of the NPP; 5) support the GVN in intensified internal psychological planning and operations; 6) press for an early, effective, and realistic land reform program; 7) support the GVN in a policy of tax forgiveness for low income groups in critical insurgency areas; 8) undertake consultations aimed at gaining the support of US newsmen; and 9) arrange US-sponsored visits to South Vietnam by groups of prominent

64. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/317-1, 11 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 1.

65. (TS) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2343/317-1 - South Vietnam (U)," 12 Feb 64, same file.

journalists and editors. Further, the Country Team should make certain that all GVN military and civilian officials understood that the United States, considering it imperative that the existing government be stabilized, would oppose another coup. All US intelligence agencies and advisors should be alert for and report cases of dissension and plotting in order to prevent any further disruptive moves.[66]

The Secretary of Defense referred these JCS recommendations to the Vietnam Coordinating Committee for consideration.[67]

66. (TS) JCSM-136-64 to SecDef, 18 Feb 64, Encl to JCS 2343/317-2, 13 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 1.
67. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam," 5 Mar 64, Att to JCS 2343/317-5, 9 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 4.

Chapter 9

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDS A PROGRAM

Preparation for a Visit to South Vietnam

In a memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 21 February 1964 the Secretary of Defense reviewed the intensive consideration being given to the possibility of exerting military pressures on the government of North Vietnam to induce it to terminate its support of the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos. Noting that there were "a number of military uncertainties which must be resolved" before the ultimate decisions could be taken, he posed an extensive list of questions on which the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were desired.

Secretary McNamara asked what military actions could be undertaken by the GVN against North Vietnam, employing air and naval power but limiting ground force activity to small-scale raids, and what further actions could be attributed to the GVN even though not within the plausible range of its capabilities. Similarly, what actions could US forces take without public acknowledgement, or, alternatively, after an open declaration of the US intention to exert military pressure on North Vietnam? What targets would it be most effective to attack from the standpoint of a) specific effect on North Vietnamese capabilities for action against South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand; b) interdiction of sea communications into North Vietnam and of main communication routes from Communist China; c) inflicting damage on key installations while holding the effect on the North Vietnamese civilian population to a minimum?

In addition to answers on each point, the Secretary sought the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to the courses of action under one or more of the above headings that would be most likely to cause cessation of Hanoi's support of the insurgents but least likely to "lead to stepped-up conflict and adverse reactions in third countries."

The majority of the queries, however, had to do with the capabilities of North Vietnam and Communist China for military action, and with the US means and capabilities of deterring or opposing them. Must the US planning contemplate the possibility, for instance, that the enemy would react militarily both in Southeast Asia and in Korea or against Taiwan?

A line of thought the Secretary seemed particularly interested in pursuing was indicated by the question "what modifications must be made in existing contingency plans in order to provide for U.S. reactions which would depend primarily upon air activities rather than the intervention of substantial U. S. ground forces?" Elsewhere in the list he asked, in the event that North Vietnam and/or Communist China reacted to attacks on the North by advancing large numbers of troops into Laos, South Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, South Korea, or Taiwan, to what extent could the United States effectively counter the invasion through air and naval responses only, without adding to the ground forces currently deployed, under alternatives ranging from use of conventional ordnance only [to selective use of tactical nuclear weapons.]

In closing his memorandum of 21 February, Secretary McNamara noted that a detailed response might well require a longer time, but he wished to have the preliminary judgments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for consideration prior to his scheduled departure for South Vietnam on 4 March.[1]

Recognizing the magnitude of the Secretary's requirement, General Taylor nevertheless called for a response by 1 March, holding open the possibility that supplementary material might be submitted later. The Chairman directed that an ad hoc planning unit be established within the Joint Staff to conduct the intensive effort required. Brigadier General Lucius D. Clay, Jr., of the J-3 Directorate was immediately appointed to head the group.[2]

Among the materials on hand or shortly made available to General Clay's group were the individual views of three of the JCS members. General LeMay had submitted a major relevant paper on the same day that Secretary McNamara posed his questions. "In my military judgment," said the Chief of Staff, Air Force, "the time has come for a showdown in South Vietnam if we are to contain Communism there and in the whole of Southeast Asia."

In an 11-page outline plan for revitalizing the counterinsurgency effort General LeMay proposed issuance of a statement of policy reaffirming the US determination to assist the GVN in destroying the externally directed insurgent forces, including a warning that communist sanctuaries beyond South Vietnam's borders would no longer be immune to attack. Action should be taken to

1. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam," 21 Feb 64, Att to JCS 2343/326, 22 Feb 64; JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 1.
2. (TS) CM-1213-64 to D/JS, 22 Feb 64; (TS-GP 1) DJSM-321-64 to CJCS, 22 Feb 64; same file.

increase offensive strength and contribute to "militant prosecution" of the war within South Vietnam, including the introduction of jet aircraft for both US and VNAF use. At the same time, restrictions on both US and RVN forces should be lifted to allow hot pursuit of the Viet Cong into Cambodia and deliberate operations against enemy sanctuaries and lines of communication in Laos. He proposed intensive covert operations against North Vietnam with participation by personnel from Taiwan, Thailand, or the Philippines.[3]

Submission of views by the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant, US Marine Corps, followed shortly. Like General LeMay, they were impressed with the fact that only a token of the immense military power commanded by the United States had yet been committed to achieving the nation's vital objectives in Southeast Asia. Citing the Lebanon intervention, the Taiwan Straits confrontation of 1958, and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 as instances in which the United States had effectively used its power, gaining both a favorable outcome and heartening expressions of support from the free world, the Chief of Naval Operations thought it strange that "we are hesitant to use it again in the particular and serious crisis we now face." The specific proposals in the Navy paper paralleled those of the Air Force but went farther by recommending direct US military actions against North Vietnam.[4]

The Commandant, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., was perhaps even more forthright. He called for a prompt and clear-cut governmental decision "either to pull out of South Vietnam or to stay there and win. If the decision is to stay and win--which is the Marine Corps recommendation--this objective must be pursued with the full concerted power of U.S. resources." General Greene recommended that the United States "commence systematic destruction--in a rising crescendo--of targets in North Vietnam by air attack, amphibious raids, covert operations, and naval gunfire," initially using RVN forces but with readiness to add those of the United States. He would "place a single military officer, COMUSMACV, in complete and total control of all operations" and would introduce such wartime measures as news censorship and controlled accreditation of US and foreign

3. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/326-1, 22 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 1.
4. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/326-3, 26 Feb 64, same file.

correspondents. The ultimate outcome General Greene sketched in the following recommendation:

> While maintaining the necessary tempo of operations to convince the Communists that we mean business, make it clear that the U.S. is willing to confer and negotiate at any time with Ho Chi Minh. Listen patiently to our allies, friends, and enemies, but continue to press home the campaign in South Vietnam until a settlement on U.S. terms is reached.[5]

The JCS reply went to the Secretary of Defense on 2 March, in the form of a lengthy memorandum with several appendices. It gave detailed estimates of NVN and Chinese Communist military capabilities but presented the conclusion that while the two enemy powers might exert military pressures in several areas at once, such as in Southeast Asia, South Korea, and the Taiwan Straits, they were unable to mount and sustain a major campaign in more than one direction, owing mainly to logistic limitations. As for the US effort that would be required to contain a large-scale communist invasion of South Korea, Taiwan, or any of the countries of Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff listed the forces already designated in CINCPAC's contingency plans.

To the query regarding US ability to counter a major communist invasion through air and naval responses without deployment of further ground forces, the JCS answer was indirectly stated but unmistakable. [In applying land and sea-based air power in that situation, nuclear attacks would have "a far greater probability" of causing the enemy to desist from aggression than attacks with lesser ordnance.] Sea power would be most effectively applied in a blockade, but it would have to be imposed for a considerable time before it had a marked effect on the enemy's operations. Hence the Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized that "in initiating actions against the DRV there must be a readiness and willingness on the part of the United States to follow through with appropriate contingency plans to counter DRV/CHICOM reaction as required." That is, air and sea attacks alone could not be counted on to halt a major aggression.[6]

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5. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/326-2, 25 Feb 64, same file.

6. The quoted sentence was added as the result of a more direct statement of this view by the Joint Chiefs of Staff during discussion of a preliminary draft. (TS) Note to Control Division, "JCS 2343/326-5 - Vietnam," 29 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 2.

As for the Secretary's related question about modification of contingency plans to exclude the use of substantial US ground forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that "while CINCPAC has numerous plans which call for substantial US air effort in conjunction with the intervention of US ground forces, there are no specific plans based solely on air and naval responses which apply to all of the situations contained in this paper." They undertook to direct the preparation of such plans as required.

In assessing the means available to apply military pressures against North Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff cited particularly air strikes, amphibious raids, sabotage operations, and a naval blockade. The RVNAF, acting alone, had a very limited capability to conduct the first three types of operations. By adding nonattributable US support in the form of FARM GATE operations, the VNAF air effort could be intensified and expanded, mounting strikes against lines of communication, military installations, and industrial targets. FARM GATE capabilities would be greatly enhanced if augmented with B-57 jet aircraft. Progressing to further levels, unacknowledged introduction of other US air and naval elements would permit further selective destruction of the targets mentioned, while open announcement of the US intention to apply pressures would provide still more freedom of action. More detailed treatment appeared in an appendix and in a scenario outlining the steps in a program of increasing pressures against North Vietnam.

The central question in Secretary McNamara's list had been the request for JCS views on the course of action most likely to cause cessation of support from the North to the insurgents in South Vietnam and Laos, with the least unfavorable enemy and international reaction. In their reply on 2 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff declared that:

> (a) US intentions and resolve to extend the war as necessary should be made clear immediately by overt military actions against the DRV.
>
> (b) Military actions should be part of a coordinated diplomatic, military, and psychological program directed at deterring the enemy and preparing the world for extension of the war.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff then for the first time defined two possible modes of attack, offering a choice that was to be debated repeatedly during subsequent months:

(c) We should prepare military actions, one in the form of a sudden blow for shock effect, another in the form of ascending order of severity with increasing US participation . . . .

The more detailed portion of the JCS recommendation followed:

(d) Initial military preparations should provide for:

1. Overt demonstrations of US intentions through US low level aerial reconnaissance over Laos and North Vietnam.

ii. Expansion of RVN activities including FARM GATE aircraft, into North Vietnam by:

1. Air strikes

2. Amphibious raids

3. Sabotage

4. Harassment of shipping and fishing activities.

(e) Preparation should be initiated by the US and GVN for:

1. Increasing the intensity of efforts against the DRV by:

1. Armed reconnaissance along the principal supply routes from DRV to Laos.

2. Destruction of:

(i) Highway bridges along the principal supply routes from DRV to Laos.

(ii) Military targets in DRV and Laos which directly support the insurgency.

(iii) Airfields in DRV which are used for aerial resupply to Laos.

(iv) POL installations and major LOC facilities between China and DRV in North Vietnam.

(v) Industrial base targets in the Hanoi/ Haiphong area.

3. Mine laying in selected areas.

4. Conducting cross-border operations.

5. Undertaking a maritime blockade of DRV.

These listings indicated the general categories of targets the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought it most effective to attack, within the limiting conditions set by the Secretary of Defense. A detailed treatment of target systems appeared in an appendix.

As for enemy response to the military actions recommended, the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought it "unlikely that the CHICOMs would introduce organized ground units in significant numbers into the DRV, Laos, or Cambodia except as part of an over-all campaign against all of Southeast Asia." It was their assessment that "the Chinese communists view Laos and South Vietnam as DRV problems." The leaders of the Peiping government might offer fighter aircraft, AAA units, and volunteers to North Vietnam and at some stage might commit Chinese Communist aircraft to the defense of that country. The USSR could be expected to continue and possibly increase its economic aid shipments to Hanoi, but the Soviet leaders "would probably be highly concerned over possible expansion of the conflict." If it began to appear that the communist regimes in Hanoi and Peiping were in jeopardy, the Soviets would probably set aside their differences with Communist China and send further assistance, including higher performance aircraft. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the leaders in Moscow would make a realistic assessment of their own national interests and of US determination and intentions and would take no action that increased the likelihood of nuclear war. While condemning the US policy in international forums, the Soviets might even "seek to initiate, or have initiated by other parties, discussions aimed at terminating hostilities and stabilizing the situation throughout all of Vietnam."

In summation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed the view expressed in their memorandum of 22 January 1964 concerning the overriding importance to the security interests of the United States of preventing the loss of South Vietnam. Since North Vietnamese direction and support of the insurgency was one of the controlling factors in the continuation of the war, "intensified operations are warranted and essential at this time to convince both the DRV and CHICOM leadership of our resolution to prevail." Admittedly, adoption of the program

they had set forth would involve a change in US policy, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the specific actions they had described be approved as a basis for discussion and planning with US and GVN officials during Secretary McNamara's impending visit to South Vietnam.[7]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff met with the Secretary of Defense on 2 March and discussed the recommendations in their memorandum in detail. General Taylor drew attention to the two modes of attack they had defined--the sharp blow as against a steadily intensifying application of pressure--and said that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not yet matured their view regarding which should be chosen. The matter would be studied further, particularly in the light of any decisions resulting from the Secretary's trip to South Vietnam.

Secretary McNamara's comments showed him to be still strongly disposed toward the fullest possible use of air power, though he had apparently abandoned any thought that it could preclude the commitment of US ground forces. He now sought a minimum involvement of US ground forces, whatever the ultimate level of escalation, by substituting Chinese Nationalist or other third-country units and particularly by a "far more massive use of air." In CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64 (Defense against North Vietnamese Invasion of South Vietnam and Laos), for instance, he would like to see up to three times as many USAF squadrons committed as were currently listed. The Chairman undertook to have all the plans for Southeast Asia reviewed to assure that maximum use of air power, including naval air, was featured.

The meeting concluded with agreement that the JCS memorandum of 2 March would receive further review and that Secretary McNamara and General Taylor would discuss it with CINCPAC while en route to South Vietnam.[8]

Cross-Border Operations

As a separate action on 2 March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a strong recommendation that the United States lift restrictions that were preventing military operations into Laos and Cambodia. "While our

7. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-174-64 to SecDef, 2 Mar 64, Encl to JCS 2343/326-6, 1 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 3.
8. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Vietnam (U) (Response to SecDef Memo of 21 Feb 1964)," 2 Mar 64, same file, sec 4.

available hard intelligence does not reveal the exact dimensions of the infiltration of men and materials into South Vietnam from the North, and the true extent to which the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese supporters are utilizing sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia, there is mounting evidence that these are of such proportions as to constitute an increasingly important factor in the war."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff cited the growing firepower of the Viet Cong, which could have been achieved only through the introduction of modern infantry weapons from outside the country, and they pointed to a recent instance of the escape of a battalion-sized VC force to haven in Cambodia, following a raid into South Vietnam. Reverting to some of the language of their memorandum of 22 January 1964, the Joint Chiefs of Staff urged the lifting of self-imposed restrictions that denied the means of interdicting infiltration routes and of pursuing and destroying enemy forces. "Certain military operations across the borders of Laos and Cambodia are considered essential to successful prosecution of the war," they declared.

CINCPAC had already proposed certain specific cross-border operations, in fulfillment of NSAM 273, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary seek approval to have these carried out. Terming them "Overt Secret Operations," the Joint Chiefs of Staff supported the following actions: 1) encourage the GVN to adopt the principle of hot pursuit into the Demilitarized Zone, Cambodia, and Laos of Viet Cong committing hostile acts in or against South Vietnam; 2) authorize US advisory personnel to accompany RVNAF combat elements in hot pursuit; 3) authorize the 2nd Air Division (FARM GATE) to engage in hot pursuit under the same rules as the VNAF; 4) authorize overflights of Laos and Cambodia for reconnaissance and photography (with operations over Cambodia being limited for the time being to high altitude flights); 5) encourage GVN ground and air operations across the Laos border against VC units, installations, and activities, in cooperation with friendly forces in Laos arranged through GVN planning with General Phoumi Nosavan; 6) authorize US personnel to accompany South Vietnamese forces in international waters north of the 17th Parallel and on ground and air operations in Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also recommended encouraging South Vietnamese covert ground operations into Cambodia and air operations in support of these forays.[9]

9. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-168-64 to SecDef, 2 Mar 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/330, 25 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) (D).

Naval Blockade of North Vietnam

One of the prospective measures that had been listed more than once by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was the imposition of a naval blockade against North Vietnam. To support more detailed consideration they had asked CINCPAC to furnish his views on the feasibility of such a blockade, including the recommended concept of operations, types and numbers of ships required, and the magnitude of the effort needed to obtain effective results.10

In his reply on 28 February 1964, Admiral Felt pointed out that the predominant part of North Vietnam's trade was with Communist Bloc countries, although the majority of ocean-going ships entering the three principal ports were from free world registries. About 85 percent of NVN maritime commerce moved via shallow draft coastal shipping. Since the maritime shipping to be cut off would be owned by nations other than North Vietnam, the blockade would have to be a "total" rather than a "pacific" blockade. Accordingly, the United States would have to adopt a belligerent status. To make the blockade effective, coastal shipping would have to be stopped, requiring US forces to enter NVN territorial waters and air space.

CINCPAC pointed out that such a blockade would require considerable effort and would involve great risk, with a constant threat of Chinese Communist countermeasures. The Tonkin Gulf area in which the blockade zone would be declared was a virtual cul de sac, surrounded by existing or potential Chinese Communist air bases in South China, Hainan, and North Vietnam. While Admiral Felt believed that carrier aircraft could neutralize these threats and establish control of the air, the danger of precipitating broader hostilities with Communist China meant that "advanced readiness must be assumed to implement a family of war plans."11

A Joint Staff study, drawing heavily on CINCPAC's reply, was circulated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 March. It concluded that the United States had the capability to impose an effective naval blockade against North Vietnam, but this action was feasible "provided only that the United States is

10. (TS) Msg, JCS 5003 to CINCPAC, 241912Z Feb 64.
11. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 280311Z Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (24 Feb 64).

prepared to accept escalation of the tempo of operations into a belligerent status with the DRV and subsequently with the Chinese communists." Thus naval blockade was identified as a measure high up on the scale of escalation.[12]

The March Trip

Secretary McNamara and General Taylor, accompanied by Mr. Sullivan, Mr. William Bundy, and several other officials, reached Hawaii on 6 March. During consultations at CINCPAC Headquarters, Admiral Felt indicated his complete agreement with the program recommended in the JCS memorandum of 2 March, excepting only the provision for a naval blockade, on which his views were already recorded. A briefing on the implementation of OPLAN 34A, necessarily citing the consistent failure of the operations to date, drew a strong expression of displeasure from the Secretary of Defense. In this connection he directed CINCPAC to begin the training of South Vietnamese pilots in aerial mine-laying techniques at once.[13]

From Hawaii the Secretary of Defense and his party continued to Vietnam, arriving on 8 March. In conferences with Ambassador Lodge, in briefings by COMUSMACV and his staff, in visits to the JGS and to leading officials of the GVN, the Secretary and General Taylor received a comprehensive picture of the situation and of the status of plans and problems. Several trips were made into the countryside, including a visit to Hue with General Khanh on 11 March. On 12 March General Khanh briefed Secretary McNamara and other US officials on his latest plans for mobilizing to fight the Viet Cong. Khanh proposed enacting a National Service Act, which would bring hundreds of thousands of young men into service, either military or civil defense. The civil defense component included a civil administration corps for work in the countryside and civic action teams for the hamlets and villages.

Although the Secretary and the Ambassador expressed reservations about the numbers of men proposed by General Khanh (the Self Defense Corps and Hamlet Militia alone were

12. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/339, 6 Mar 64, same file.
13. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/341, 10 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) sec 4.

to have 422,874 men), they did agree with his idea of total mobilization. General Khanh intended to make a maximum effort in the eight critical provinces surrounding Saigon. To recruit and train administrative cadres for these eight provinces would take about a month, and Khanh believed that they would be in place by the end of April. Secretary McNamara asked Khanh whether he could tell President Johnson that the GVN was now operating on the basis of a full national mobilization of its human and material resources and whether the President could so inform the American people. General Khanh answered affirmatively, noting that since the GVN was now a "fairly compact organization," it would not take him long to get a National Service Act promulgated. [14]

The Secretary found General Khanh primarily concerned with the need to establish a firm base in South Vietnam. While he favored continuation of covert activities against North Vietnam, he did not wish to engage his forces in overt operations against the North until such time as he had established "rear area security."[15]

Secretary McNamara's Report

The Secretary of Defense returned to Washington with his report to the President already completed in draft form, dated 13 March 1964. It opened with a review of the principal US objective in South Vietnam. The United States sought an independent, noncommunist South Vietnam. The country need not serve as a Western base or as a member of a Western alliance, but South Vietnam must be free to accept outside assistance in maintaining its security, including military help. "Unless we can achieve this objective in South Vietnam, almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance," and there would be a further unfavorable impact owing to the fact that in many world capitals the conflict was being regarded as "a test case of U.S. capacity to help a nation meet a Communist 'war of liberation.'"

The current US policy Secretary McNamara described as that of "trying to help South Vietnam defeat the Viet Cong, supported from the North, by means short of the unqualified use of U. S.

14. (S-GP 1) "Memorandum of Conversation," no sig, 13 Mar 64, Att to JCS 2343/353, 3 Apr 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64) (2).
15. (S)Draft Memo, SecDef to Pres, "South Vietnam," 13 Mar 54, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).

combat forces," taking no action against North Vietnam except a very modest covert program operated by the GVN. Continued observance of the Geneva Accords with regard to Laos and respect for the neutrality of Cambodia meant that the United States and the GVN had to accept extensive use of Cambodian and Laotian territory by the Viet Cong for sanctuary and infiltration routes.

Secretary McNamara believed that "the military tools and concepts of the GVN/US effort are generally sound and adequate." Substantially more could be done toward effective employment of military forces and in the economic and civic action areas, but these improvements could be accomplished without any major equipment replacement or increases in US personnel. Indeed, the Secretary declared that the US policy of "reducing existing personnel where South Vietnamese are in a position to assume the functions is still sound." It might not lead to any major reductions in the near future, but adherence to the policy was an open avowal of the more fundamental principle that the United States regarded the war as "a conflict the South Vietnamese must win and take ultimate responsibility for." Substantial reductions in the numbers of US military training personnel should be possible before the end of 1965, he believed.

It was Mr. McNamara's assessment that the situation in South Vietnam had been growing steadily worse since at least September 1963. In 22 of the 43 provinces, the Viet Cong now controlled at least half the land area. In the eight critical provinces around Saigon, VC control ran as high as 90 percent. Large segments of the RVN population were apathetic, and the failing morale and motivation of the military and paramilitary units were evident in the rising desertion rate. Draft dodging was prevalent, while the Viet Cong continued to recruit effectively.

To illustrate the weakening of the GVN position during the past 90 days, the Secretary cited instances in which the hamlet militia had turned in their weapons or had been disarmed because of suspected disloyalty. In contrast to 1963, when few attacks had been made on strategic hamlets and those few had been repulsed, 75 hamlets in Binh Dinh had been severely damaged by the Viet Cong. In Quang Nai province the government now controlled only 275 of the 413 strategic hamlets that had existed a year earlier. Security in the Delta area had deteriorated to the point where the Viet Cong controlled nearly every aspect of peasant life, and GVN troops were reduced to defending administrative centers.

Effective political control of the provinces from the capital had largely disappeared with the November coup. Since

the fall of Diem, 35 of the 43 province chiefs had been replaced. In three months time, nine of the provinces had had three different chiefs; one province had had four. Scores of lesser officials had been replaced and almost every major military command had changed hands twice since November.

The viability of the present Khanh government, now in its second month, was open to doubt. Khanh himself was intelligent and forceful but had limited experience. He lacked wide political appeal and his control of the Army was uncertain. He lived under constant threat of assassination or another coup. "Whether or not French nationals are actively encouraging such a coup, de Gaulle's position and the continuing pessimism and anti-Americanism of the French community in South Vietnam provide constant fuel to neutralist sentiment and coup plotting," the Secretary said.

Yet there was some basis for encouragement in the performance of the Khanh government to date. Its key members appeared to be generally able; they were highly responsive to US advice and apparently aware of what needed to be done to defeat the Viet Cong. The opposition to the regime was fragmented, and Khanh was seeking to keep it so. Secretary McNamara saw evidences of energy, decision, and comprehension that added up to "a sufficiently strong chance of Khanh's really taking hold in the next few months for us to devote all possible energy and resources to his support."

In the report he had drafted for submission to the President, Secretary McNamara next considered three possible US courses of action. The first he summarily rejected: negotiation on the basis of neutralization, along the lines recently advocated by General de Gaulle. If the proposition included withdrawal of all external military assistance, and specifically total US withdrawal, as de Gaulle appeared to suggest, "this would simply mean a Communist take-over in South Vietnam."

The second possible course of action--"Initiate GVN and U.S. Military Actions Against North Vietnam"--Mr. McNamara analyzed at length before delivering his recommendation. Extensive thought had been given to all aspects of this course, he said, with a finding that the possible actions broke down into three categories: 1) border control actions; 2) retaliatory actions; and 3) graduated overt military pressure by GVN and US forces. Border control actions included low-level reconnaissance flights over Laos when required to supplement the existing U-2 flights along the border; GVN cross-border ground penetration into Laos, initially without US advisors or US resupply but with the possibility of adding this support; hot pursuit of VC forces moving

across the Cambodian border and destruction of VC bases on the Cambodian line; air and ground strikes against selected targets in Laos by South Vietnamese forces.

Retaliatory actions included overt reconnaissance of North Vietnam, at high and low levels, by US or FARM GATE aircraft to locate the sources of external aid to the Viet Cong; tit-for-tat bombing strikes and commando raids by the RVNAF against such NVN targets as communications centers, training camps, and infiltration routes ("tit-for-tat" was not further defined in the memorandum); and aerial mining of major NVN ports by the VNAF, possibly with US help.

Graduated overt military pressures, beyond retaliation, would include air attacks against military and possibly industrial targets, using the combined resources of the VNAF, the FARM GATE squadron, and three squadrons of B-57 aircraft currently in Japan. "Before this program could be implemented," the Secretary wrote, "it would be necessary to provide some additional air defense for South Vietnam and to ready U.S. forces in the Pacific for possible escalation."

Analysis had revealed "the extremely delicate nature" of all the listed military actions more severe than aerial reconnaissance. Problems to be anticipated included those of marshalling the case to justify such actions, deterring or meeting communist counteractions, and "dealing with the pressures for premature or 'stacked' negotiations." While the stronger actions would be aimed at eliminating North Vietnamese support and direction of the insurgency, their real objective would be to break down the morale and confidence of the hard-core Viet Cong cadres, while bolstering the morale of the Khanh regime.

> We could not, of course, be sure that our objective could be achieved by any means within the practical range of our options. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, unless and until the Khanh government has established its position and preferably is making significant progress in the South, an overt extension of operations into the North carries the risk of being mounted from an extremely weak base which might at any moment collapse and leave the posture of political confrontation worsened rather than improved.

The counterargument was that the Khanh government needed the reinforcement of some significant successes against the North,

without which its pacification program might not be sufficient to overcome the Viet Cong.

"On balance," Secretary McNamara wrote, "I recommend against initiation at this time of overt GVN and/or U.S. military actions against North Vietnam."

The third and recommended course was "initiate measures to improve the situation in South Vietnam." While the possibility remained of mounting military pressures against the North at some future time, it was necessary in any event, the Secretary said, to take every reasonable measure to assure success in South Vietnam. To emphasize that a new phase had begun, publicity should be given to the programs of the Khanh government as "South Vietnam's Program for National Mobilization," while real substance was given to the idea by intensive efforts of the US Country Team to assist Khanh in developing the new National Service Act and other measures that would put the whole nation on a war footing.

As part of this effort the United States should give full support to the National Pacification Plan, whose concept the Secretary thought excellent, and to development of the Civil Administrative Corps and civic action teams needed to fulfill it. The United States should encourage an enlargement of the RVN's regular military forces, through an effective system of conscription and recruiting, and should back measures to reverse the deterioration of the paramilitary forces. The Secretary thought it important to develop an offensive guerrilla force within the RVNAF. US Special Forces could train the present Ranger companies and ARVN Special Forces to fight the Viet Cong with their own methods, near the border and in other areas in advance of those in which more conventional clear-and-hold operations were in progress. He foresaw only a modest requirement for additional military equipment, costing an estimated $ 20 million. As for economic measures, the approved but unannounced program of providing fertilizers to the GVN should be stressed, enlarged, and publicized. It promised to yield great improvement in the rice crops and resulting export earnings, benefiting both the government and peasants in the secure areas.

If the Khanh government could stay in power while the United States urgently pursued the above course of action, it was Mr. McNamara's judgment that "the situation in South Vietnam can be significantly improved in the next three to four months." At the same time, however, the United States should press its preparations for further action, since it might still become desirable to apply military pressures against North

Vietnam. If hard evidence came to hand of significantly stepped-up arms supply to the Viet Cong from the North, for instance, the United States might wish to take any or all of the actions he had listed under the headings of border control, retaliation, and graduated overt military pressure. At a longer range, these actions might come to be recognized as necessary in any event, if the programs of the Khanh government, even with marked improvement in execution, were found insufficient to put down the insurgency.

In passing the Secretary noted that three proposals had been rejected, it being "the universal judgment of our senior people in Saigon" that the adverse impact on GVN morale would outweigh the possible advantages. These included the withdrawal of US dependents from South Vietnam and the dispatch of a US combat unit to secure the Saigon area. The third rejected proposal was for the United States to abandon its advisory role and assume direct control of all military operations. "It would cut across the whole basic picture of the Vietnamese winning their own war and lay us wide open to hostile propaganda both within South Vietnam and outside."

Secretary McNamara's draft report concluded with a recommendation that the President instruct the appropriate agencies of the US Government:

1. To make it clear that we are prepared to furnish assistance and support to South Vietnam for as long as it takes to bring the insurgency under control.

2. To make it clear that we fully support the Khanh Government and are opposed to any further coups.

3. To support a Program for National Mobilization (including a national service law) to put South Vietnam on a war footing.

4. To assist the Vietnamese to increase the armed forces (regular plus paramilitary) by at least 50,000 men.

5. To assist the Vietnamese to create a greatly enlarged Civil Administrative Corps for work at province, district, and hamlet levels.

6. To assist the Vietnamese to improve and reorganize the paramilitary forces and to increase their compensation.

7. To assist the Vietnamese to create an offensive guerrilla force.

8. To provide the Vietnamese Air Force 25 A-1H aircraft in exchange for the present T-28s.

9. To provide the Vietnamese Army additional M-113 armored personnel carriers (withdrawing the M-114s there), additional river boats, and approximately $5-10 million of other additional material.

10. To announce publicly the Fertilizer Program and to expand it with a view within two years to trebling the amount of fertilizer made available.

11. To authorize continued high-level US overflights of South Vietnam's borders and to authorize "hot pursuit" and South Vietnamese ground operations over the Laotian line for the purpose of border control. More ambitious operations into Laos involving units beyond battalion size should be authorized only with the approval of Souvanna Phouma. Operations across the Cambodian border should depend on the state of relations with Cambodia.

12. To prepare immediately to be in a position on 72 hours notice to initiate the full range of Laotian and Cambodian "Border control" actions (beyond those authorized in paragraph 11 above) and the "Retaliatory Actions" against North Vietnam, and to be in a position on 30 days notice to initiate the program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against North Vietnam.[16]

JCS Views on the McNamara Report

Copies of the draft report went to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the afternoon of 13 March for study and comment. The Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant, USMC, submitted views in writing, both being critical of the report in various respects. General Greene found the 12 recommendations to "offer little more than a continuation of present programs of action in Vietnam." He repeated his dictum that if the decision of the US Government was to stay in South Vietnam and win, then this objective must be pursued with the full concerted power of US resources. "Half-measures won't win in South Vietnam."[17]

16. (S) Draft Memo, SecDef to Pres, "South Vietnam," 13 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).
17. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/346-1, 17 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).

General LeMay concurred in the actions recommended to shore up and stabilize the Khanh government, but he did not agree with the Secretary's statement that "the military tools and concepts of the GVN/US effort are generally sound and adequate." Its acceptance would leave in effect the restrictions on US and GVN actions that barred operations to end the VC sanctuary in Cambodia and the unmolested movement of supplies and reinforcement from North Vietnam through Laos.[18]

Considering these views together with a draft memorandum proposed by the Chairman, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reached agreement on their reply, which was forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 14 March. They concurred in the recommendations of his draft report subject to several comments, the foremost being: "The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not believe that the recommended program in itself will be sufficient to turn the tide against the Viet Cong in South Vietnam without positive action being taken against the Hanoi Government at an early date." They had in mind the kind of program designed to bring about cessation of North Vietnamese support of the insurgency that had been outlined in the JCS submission of 2 March, prior to the Secretary's departure for Vietnam.

> To increase our readiness for such actions, the US Government should establish at once the political and military bases in the United States and South Vietnam for offensive actions against the North and across the Laotian and Cambodian borders, including measures for the control of contraband traffic on the Mekong.

Apparently believing that Prince Sihanouk was already fixed in a policy unfavorable to US interests, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended authorizing hot pursuit into Cambodia at once. Further, they believed the reaction times proposed in Recommendation 12 should be reduced. The United States should seek to be in position to implement the border control and retaliatory actions within 24 hours and the graduated overt military pressures against North Vietnam within 72 hours.[19]

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18. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM-263-64 to JCS, 14 Mar 64, same file.
19. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-222-64, 14 Mar 64, Encl to JCS 2343/346, 14 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).

Other Views on the McNamara Report

Both Ambassador Lodge and the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. McCone, also commented on the draft report, expressing views that often coincided with those of the Joint Chief of Staff. Mr. McCone believed the situation in RVN so serious as to call for more drastic and immediate actions than the Secretary of Defense proposed. Like General LeMay, he did not believe success was possible so long as the Viet Cong were permitted a sanctuary in Cambodia and an uninterrupted supply route through Laos. He suggested that General Khanh meet immediately with Prince Sihanouk to develop a joint RVN-Cambodian program to clear the border of Viet Cong. If Sihanouk would not cooperate, then the United States should assist Khanh in stopping all traffic on the Mekong River to and from Cambodia and immediately authorize hot pursuit into Cambodian territory. Khanh should also negotiate with Chiang Kai-shek for the movement of two or possibly three Chinese Nationalist divisions into the southern tip of the Delta in order to support the hard-pressed ARVN effort in that area. Mr. McCone recommended US air reconnaissance over North Vietnam, including overflights of cities for psychological and intelligence purposes.[20]

Ambassador Lodge gave his reaction in messages received in Washington on 15 March. He concurred fully in the first eleven recommendations in the McNamara report. As for Recommendation 12, he favored immediate implementation of the border control measures and of reconnaissance over North Vietnam, rather than merely preparing to institute them. "I also continue to believe in pressure and persuasion on North Vietnam to cease its aggression in South Vietnam," he wrote, "by an essentially diplomatic carrot and stick approach backed by covert military means," reserving judgment on overt US measures until covert methods had been fully tried. The Ambassador disagreed, however, with McCone's proposal for use of Chinese Nationalist troops in the Delta, judging that their presence would be resented by the area's inhabitants.[21]

Approval of the 12 Recommendations: NSAM 288

Secretary McNamara formally submitted his report on 16 March 1964, with only one change of significance from the

20. (S) Msg, Pres, CAP 64077 to Saigon, 14 Mar 64.
21. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1756 and 1757 to White House, 15 and 16 Mar 64.

original draft. He now said that pursuit of the recommended program could be expected to yield measurable improvement in the situation in South Vietnam in four to six months, rather than the three to four initially predicted. The President approved the report at a meeting of the National Security Council on 17 March. All agencies concerned were directed, by NSAM 288, to proceed energetically with carrying out the twelve recommendations. The President designated the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Mr. William P. Bundy, to coordinate their actions.[22]

A White House press release on the same day revealed the general nature of the decisions and began the highlighting of the Khanh government's programs that Secretary McNamara had recommended. "General Khanh and his government are acting vigorously and effectively" and would shortly announce a National Mobilization Plan. The release noted that an increased commitment of US economic and military assistance funds would be required to support the Khanh program.[23]

Before the day ended, also, President Johnson disptached a message to Ambassador Lodge that revealed some of his thoughts and anticipations, running beyond the decisions made at the NSC meeting that morning. With regard to Laos, the President wrote, "I will authorize low-level reconnaissance there wherever the present high-level flights indicate that such reconnaissance may be needed." He was also fully prepared to authorize hot pursuit into Cambodia if relations with Sihanouk deteriorated further. Like Lodge, the President reserved judgment for the present on overt US measures against North Vietnam, but he appeared to accept the idea that specific retaliatory actions would be necessary if the Viet Cong singled out Americans for attack. He was not ready to make a decision on high or low-level reconnaissance over North Vietnam. Such action might become desirable "after a few weeks," however, and the President had directed that the political and diplomatic groundwork be laid for this eventuality.[24]

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22. (S-GP 1) NSAM 288, 17 Mar 64, Att to JCS 2343/348, 18 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64). SecDef had also deleted a reference to the members of Khanh's government as "more able than under any previous regime," in deference to McCone's objection that US experience with them was not sufficient to permit this judgment.

23. Dept of State Bulletin, L (6 Apr 64), pp. 522-523.

24. (TS) Msg, State 1454 to Saigon, 17 Mar 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam March 64.

Following the issuance of NSAM 288, a discussion arose among the Joint Chiefs of Staff that culminated in a rare instance of their submitting split views to the Secretary of Defense on a major aspect of the course to be followed in Vietnam. Their divergence of view was less concerned with the substance of the recommendation, however, than with its timeliness.

On 18 March the Chief of Staff, Air Force, expressed his concern "that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have not taken a firm position on specific courses of action which they recommend be taken at this time." Having advised the Secretary of Defense on 14 March that they did not believe the program recommended in his report would be sufficient to overcome the Viet Cong without positive action being taken against North Vietnam at an early date, the Joint Chiefs of Staff should set forth the course of action they did recommend and urge its immediate implementation. General LeMay noted that the Commandant, US Marine Corps, had expressed similar views.[25]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that a study be prepared from which a determination of the optimum course of action could be made. When it was completed at the end of the month, however, the Chief of Naval Operations pointed out that the course it recommended differed from the one approved by the President in NSAM 288 only in timing. The study proposed implementation of certain military actions immediately, whereas NSAM 288 provided for preparation to implement these same actions within specified time periods after they were directed. Both Admiral McDonald and General Wheeler objected that the study presented no new facts or arguments that would justify proposing modification of a policy decision so recently made at the highest level.[26]

On 14 April 1964 the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense of the study they had undertaken and forwarded a copy. As a result of this study, the Secretary was told, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant, US Marine Corps, were "convinced that operations in Vietnam should

25. (TS) JCS 2343/350, 18 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64) (1). CMC views were on record in (S-GP 3) JCS 2343/345,14 Mar 64, same file, and (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/346-1, 17 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).

26. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/345-2, 30 Mar 64; (TS) CNOM-121-64 to JCS, 31 Mar 64; (TS) CSAM-203-64 to JCS, 31 Mar 64; JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64) (1).

be extended and expanded immediately," by implementing substantially the same list of actions against North Vietnam and across the Laotian and Cambodian borders that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended on 2 March. The Chairman, the Chief of Staff, Army, and the Chief of Naval Operations each attached dissenting views. General Taylor did not consider that it would be "appropriate or indeed possible" to cut across the government-wide preparations to fulfill the program of NSAM 288, then in progress, by turning to immediate implementation of an expanded military program. Observation of the military and political efforts already under way had convinced him that "some lapse of time will be required to attain a condition of readiness for the implementation of an effective course of action against North Vietnam." Both he and his Army and Navy colleagues believed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff could more appropriately and effectively formulate recommendations for military action when these preparations were further advanced.[27]

Noting that the dissenting view was, in fact, that of the majority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary McNamara did not pursue the matter further.[28]

Implementation of NSAM 288: RVN Forces

As approved by the President on 17 March 1964, NSAM 288 included three major actions to be taken with respect to the South Vietnamese armed forces, regular and paramilitary. Approved Recommendation 4 called for assistance to the GVN in increasing these forces by at least 50,000 men. Recommendation 6 looked toward the improvement, reorganization, and increased compensation of the paramilitary forces, and Recommendation 7 set the goal of creating an offensive guerrilla force within the RVNAF. In assigning responsibilities within the Department of Defense, Secretary McNamara charged Recommendations 4 and 6 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) in collaboration, while making Recommendation 7 solely

27. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-298-64 to SecDef, 14 Apr 64, Encl to JCS 2343/345-3, 14 Apr 64, same file.
28. (C-GP 4) Memo, Admin Secy, OSD to Secy, JCS, "JCSM-298-64 Alternative Courses of Action,Vietnam," 5 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/345-4, 7 May 64, same file.

a JCS responsibility. All three bore a relation to Recommendation 3, "support a Program for National Mobilization . . . to put South Vietnam on a war footing," which was assigned exclusively to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA).[29]

Difficulty in achieving these purposes stemmed, first, from the fact that they depended heavily on planning, decision, and effective administration by GVN officials, and second, from the advanced state of the deterioration of the armed forces when the effort began. The strength of the RVN regular and paramilitary forces had declined in each month since October 1963, as the rising desertion rate, added to combat losses, outstripped the government's feeble efforts at recruiting and conscription. As Secretary McNamara had noted in his report, an estimated 20,000 of the prospective 50,000-man increase would be required simply to bring the ARVN, Civil Guard, and Self Defense Corps up to authorized strength.

On 4 April General Khanh signed a National Public Service Decree. It placed on all able-bodied male citizens from ages 20 to 45 an obligation for national service in either the military forces or civil defense.[30]

On 23 March Ambassador Lodge had been instructed to act quickly through the Country Team and in concert with GVN officials, to develop the concept for putting Recommendations 4, 6, and 7 into effect. Before the 50,000-man increase could be applied, for instance, General Khanh would have to refine more precisely his plans for using the added forces.[31] Consultations between MACV officers and the GVN high command on these matters carried well into April. The requirements to bring RVN forces up to authorized strengths were soon determined to be:

29. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to SecA et al., "Implementation of South Vietnam Programs," 23 Mar 65, Encl to JCS 2343/348-1, 24 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).
30. (C) Msg, Saigon 1992 to State, 15 Apr 64.
31 (S) Msg, State 1505 to Saigon, 23 Mar 64.

Force	Current (Mar 64)	Auth (Jul 64)	Shortage
Regular	211,000	227,000	16,000
Civil Guard	86,000	90,000	4,000
Self Defense Corps	92,000	93,000	1,000

The proposals initially advanced by the GVN for higher force authorizations were:

Force	By 31 Dec 64	By 31 Dec 65
Regular	237,320	251,683
Civil Guard	101,060	119,636
Self Defense Corps	110,000	122,874[32]

General Harkins agreed that a 10,000-man increase in the regular forces by December 1964 was warranted, but he doubted that further increase to 251,683 by the end of 1965 was justified. He had greater reservations about the CG and SDC strengths and had advised General Khanh that a joint group should study the security situation province by province before establishing the requirements.

On improving and reorganizing the paramilitary forces, it had been Secretary McNamara's idea that "what remains of the present hamlet militia" should be consolidated with the Self Defense Corps and the pay and allowances of the SDC and the Civil Guard should be substantially improved at once. General Khanh had a different concept, however. In March he proposed to grant formal status to the armed youth of the hamlet militia. He wanted to pay them at SDC rates and retain them as a force separate from the SDC with a chain of command through youth commissioners at district, village, and hamlet level. The GVN estimates of total numbers of hamlet militia, derived from a formula of one or two squads per hamlet, amounted to 144,000 for CY 64 and 216,000 for CY 65.

Describing this scheme after his April trip to Vietnam, General Wheeler observed that "the nationally supported paramilitary array becomes more complicated, rather than simplified. The thrust of the Secretary of Defense recommendation

32. (TS-GP 3) "Report of General Earle G. Wheeler, Chief of Staff, United States Army, on visit to The Republic of South Vietnam . . . 15-20 April 1964," 22 Apr 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (22 Apr 64) sec 1A. (hereafter cited as The Wheeler Report, Apr 64.)

was opposite." In discussions with the RVN high command, General Harkins was continuing a strong effort to discourage the idea of a separate hamlet militia force, paid by the central government. He urged that the Self Defense Corps be relied on as a single paramilitary force entrusted with local security of the village seat and its several hamlets.

On 27 April General Wheeler briefed the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the implementation of Recommendations 4, 6, and 7. Secretary McNamara expressed great disappointment at the lack of progress. Six weeks had gone by since the issuance of NSAM 288 without positive action to bring the regular and paramilitary forces up to strength, to reorganize them, or to create an offensive guerrilla force. He was concerned over MACV's difficulty in bringing the GVN to agree on realistic strength projections and effective paramilitary organization but said improvements in the conscription and recruiting systems must be pressed without awaiting joint agreement on the strength figures, and the whole effort must be accelerated. Instructions to this effect went to CINCPAC from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to Ambassador Lodge from the State Department on 29 April.[33]

The following day the Ambassador, accompanied by Deputy COMUSMACV, Lieutenant General William C. Westmoreland, made strong representations to General Khanh and his associates. Ambassador Lodge said that US advisors throughout the RVN were reporting that the GVN was nowhere making an adequate effort to furnish the money to corps and division levels to permit active recruiting, to increase the pay of ARVN and paramilitary units, and to meet family allowance and disability compensation commitments. He noted that no claim had been made that the government lacked funds or that the support pledged by the United States was lagging. The failure, which Lodge was sure contributed to the desertion rate and the low intake of draftees and volunteers, was owing to "want of administrative initiative."

General Westmoreland cited further details. The RVN regular and paramilitary forces were currently short about 35,000 men from authorized strengths. Only 55 percent of the conscription goals had been met in March, and the training facilities were operating at far below capacity. It was urgent, he said, that quotas for recruiting and conscription

33. (S) Msg, JCS 6073 to CINCPAC, 29 Apr 64.

be set at new levels to counteract the manpower shortage and that the GVN leaders reach a decision on the form and pay status of the paramilitary forces. General Khanh promised a renewed effort and predicted that an influx of draftees would soon fill the National Training Center to capacity.[34]

Reporting a week later, General Harkins said "Khanh has turned on the pressure since his meeting on 30 April with the Ambassador and DEPCOMUSMACV." Definite recruiting goals and new draft quotas had been set and orders were out to tighten up the induction system. Meanwhile it had been agreed to accept the GVN figure of 237,000 as the strength goal for regular forces by the end of 1964. This would raise the authorization by 10,000 but would involve an actual increase of 30,600 men, since the downward trend in overall RVNAF strength had continued during April.

In the joint consultations, MACV had agreed to raise the MAP-supported strength of the Civil Guard by 7,600 during 1964, to a new level of 97,615. This was less than the initial GVN proposal of 101,060 but would require an actual increase of 11,615 men. MACV was continuing to press for combination of the Self Defense Corps and the hamlet militia (which the GVN now called the "combat youth") into a single paramilitary organization for local security, paid by the national government and responsive to a single chain of command. If these proposals were agreed to, the United States would accept the GVN figure of 110,000 as the CY 64 ceiling for the force.

Turning to Recommendation 7, the development of a guerrilla warfare capability, General Harkins reported that the GVN was seeking a better distribution of ranger battalions for employment in border areas of the northern provinces; developing plans for more effective border control, using RVN Special Forces, rangers, and air surveillance supported by an integrated intelligence system; and training junior officers and NCOs, and some Montagnards, in guerrilla warfare techniques at a RVN-US Special Forces Center recently established near Nha Trang.[35]

Secretary McNamara gave particular attention to the status of the plans for augmentation of the RVN forces, reorganization of the paramilitary forces, and implementation

34. (S) Msg, Saigon 2091 to State, 30 Apr 64; (S) Msg, MACV 3421 to JCS, 30 Apr 64.
35. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to JCS, 070725Z May 64.

of the national mobilization plan during his May visit to South Vietnam. The Secretary was informed that General Khanh had signed a further mobilization decree on 6 May. It authorized drafting of men for the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps on the same basis as for the regular forces. With the object of involving all the people in the war effort, it committed men not in military service, plus women volunteers, to part-time, unpaid duty in various kinds of security, medical relief, and social welfare work.

At a meeting with Country Team officials in Saigon the Secretary of Defense tacitly accepted the force increases that General Harkins reported had been agreed between his staff and the GVN high command. These involved a total build-up of at least 75,000 men between April and the end of 1964: 31,000 in the regular forces; 12,000 in the Civil Guard; a minimum of 18,000 and possibly twice that many in the combined SDC-combat youth; 10,600 in the National Police, and 3,400 in the hamlet action cadre.

With reference to Recommendation 7, both Secretary McNamara and General Taylor stressed that a capability to operate by guerrilla methods in VC-dominated areas must be developed within the RVNAF. The Secretary charged General Harkins specifically with this task. If MACV's studies disclosed a valid requirement for more US Special Forces personnel, Mr. McNamara was prepared to approve an augmentation.[36]

Implementation of NSAM 288: Cross-border Operations

Recommendation 11 in the list approved by NSAM 288 on 17 March 1964 contained the only new military operations authorized by the President's action. Besides continuing the existing high-level US overflights of South Vietnam's borders, the appropriate US agencies were to "authorize 'hot pursuit' and South Vietnames ground operations over the Laotian line for the purpose of border control." No operations by units larger than battalion size should be undertaken without the approval of the Laotian Premier, Souvanna Phouma. Operations across the Cambodian border should depend on the

36. (S) Msg, MAC JO1 3846 to CINCPAC, 14 May 64; (TS) Msg, MAC JO1 3849 to CINCPAC, 14 May 64. (TS) Memo, no sig [CJCS?] to CSA et al, "Visit of the Secretary of Defense and Chairman, JCS to RVN, 11-13 May," undtd, OCJCS Envelope Files.

state of relations with Cambodia. The Department of State had the primary responsibility for carrying out Recommendation 11.[37]

The undertaking began on what seemed to be a promising note. On 17 March Ambassador Lodge reported the results of a meeting between General Khanh and Laotian General Phoumi, held with the consent of Souvanna Phouma. The two leaders had reached agreements allowing for very extensive cooperation, granting free passage and use of bases in Southern Laos to RVN forces and providing for commando raids and other operations by combined Lao-RVN units.[38]

In an immediate reply the State Department noted that no information had yet been received regarding Souvanna's reaction to these agreements. The Department itself had strong reservations about some of the actions contemplated. In particular, its officials feared that any extensive operations against communist-held areas of Laos might breach the underlying understanding on which the tripartite government of Laos was based, namely, that the status quo be maintained with respect to the territories held by each of the Laotian parties. Besides inviting retaliatory action from North Vietnam, such operations, with evident US approval, might convince Souvanna that the United States was no longer supporting the Geneva Accords respecting Laos; he might then resign.[39]

A few days later the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that they favored approval of the Ambassador's recommendation that the United States assure Khanh of financial and materiel support for his prospective Laotian operations and specifically provide Khanh with aerial photographs of areas in Laos he would designate. They endorsed the actions Khanh and Phoumi had agreed on as "appropriate military steps" but pointed out to Secretary McNamara that "large-scale air and ground (battalion or larger size) operations will require the United States to be prepared to counter possible communist reaction."[40]

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37. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to SecA et al., "Implementation of South Vietnam Programs," 23 Mar 64, Encl to JCS 2343/348-1, 24 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).

38. (S) Msg, Saigon 1767 to State, 17 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64) (B).

39. (TS) Msg, State 1448 to Saigon, 16 Mar 64, same file.

40. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-245-64 to SecDef, 20 Mar 64, App to JCS 2343/347-1, 20 Mar 64, same file.

On 7 April the Department of State put out "tentative guidelines" for implementation of Recommendation 11, seeking comments from the Ambassadors in South Vietnam and Laos. Under these guidelines Ambassador Lodge would be able to inform Khanh that the United States approved certain of the actions and would provide financial and materiel support to carry them out. Acceptable actions included hot pursuit by RVN forces into Laos, but not deep penetrations by large units; intelligence collection operations and sabotage raids by RVN forces into the region south of Tchepone, under certain restrictions and when cleared by the US Embassies in both Saigon and Vientiane. Any operations requiring aerial resupply would have to be considered and approved "by Washington on a case-by-case basis." Resupply, if approved, would be conducted by unmarked VNAF planes operated by VNAF personnel. No US personnel would accompany RVN forces on any cross-border operations, except advisors attached to ARVN units engaged in hot pursuit. Beyond this there were unapproved activities that "Khanh should be warned should not be undertaken," including RVNAF use of Lao bases. "Vietnamese aerial bombing of targets in Laos by either marked or unmarked planes should be specifically prohibited under current circumstances."[41]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were convinced that the State Department's cautious approach to cross-border operations did not fulfill the spirit and letter of NSAM 288. They expressed this view to the Secretary of Defense at a meeting on 20 April and three days later provided him a draft memorandum to the Secretary of State recommending that it be used in discussion with Secretary Rusk. They wished Mr. McNamara to say that he was concerned over the general lack of progress in implementing Recommendation 11, noting that no firm planning guidelines had been provided to the field, that joint planning with the GVN had not been undertaken, and that no actual operations had been conducted. The draft memorandum also expressed concern over the restrictions imposed by the tentative guidelines, finding that "they do not define a program of the scope authorized by the President in NSAM 288." COMUSMACV had pursued his planning task as far as was possible without entering into joint consultations with the GVN; he should be authorized to take that next step at once. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also asked that the Secretary of State be urged to remove the restrictions concerning aerial

41. (TS) Msg, State 1630 to Saigon, 7 April 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64) (B).

bombing (at least in support of ground operations), resupply, US advisory assistance, and extensive coordination in advance of operations.[42]

Earlier in April the Secretary of Defense had received from DIA a statement that there was a requirement for cross-border air and ground intelligence collection missions into Laos. Ambassador Lodge had recently raised the possibility that the communists were readying a capability there "to support future direct military unit cooperation in VC operations in South Vietnam," but DIA judged its current intelligence sources insufficient to provide verification. "Ground reconnaissance patrols into Laos would appear to be the best way to get detailed information on the extent of Communist activity there."[43]

This intelligence requirement came to the fore even more prominently on 30 April, when the conferees at a NSC meeting were presented with strong evidence derived from high-level photography that increased military logistic activity was taking place along the infiltration routes in Laos. State Department officials began considering the desirability of stronger intelligence reconnaissance patrols than had been contemplated in the tentative guidance, as well as the possibility of mounting low-level reconnaissance flights over certain parts of Laos.[44] At the same time, General Taylor sent a concept for the establishment of covert reconnaissance patrols to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, seeking their comments. Both officers replied that the concept of operations was feasible and that the reconnaissance missions could be initiated within two to four weeks following agreement by the Khanh government to undertake them. But, as Admiral Felt pointed out, nothing could be done at all until the "long-overdue joint planning with the Vietnamese" was authorized.[45]

On 5 May, following interdepartmental agreement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to initiate joint planning with the GVN for the conduct of covert reconnaissance patrols

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42. (TS-GP 1) CM-1332-64 to SecDef, 23 Apr 64, Encl to JCS 2343/348-3, 27 Apr 64, same file.
43. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/358, 13 Apr 64; (TS) Msg, Saigon 1913 to State, 6 Apr 64; JMF 9155.3/3100 (6 Apr 64).
44. (TS) Msg, State 925 to Vientiane, 30 Apr 64.
45. (TS) Msg, JCS 6098 to CINCPAC, 30 Apr 64; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 022223Z May 64.

of the type General Taylor had described, specifically along Route 9 and east of Tchepone. Meanwhile the State Department was actively considering low-level reconnaissance flights over some areas.[46]

General Harkins secured the agreement of General Khanh to the cross-border patrol operations on 11 May. RVN Special Forces would furnish the operational personnel, to be trained and advised by US Special Forces. Operations in Laos would be conducted by six-man teams, not in uniform, infiltrated and withdrawn by air; they would gather intelligence, fighting only in self-defense. In subsequent joint consultations an operations target date of 15 June for the first four teams was set.[47]

Visiting South Vietnam during this period, Secretary McNamara received a briefing from General Harkins on 14 May. The Secretary said he wanted the cross-border operations to develop the maximum possible information on NVN assistance to the Viet Cong. General Harkins should strive for a rapid expansion of the capabilities for patrol operations in Laos and should assume that authority to seek out additional intelligence targets would be forthcoming. Secretary McNamara set a goal of doubling the number of operational teams every 30 days. Eight teams should be ready by 15 July.[48]

YANKEE TEAM

Low-level air reconnaissance over Laos was instituted later in May, but more directly as the result of internal developments in Laos than in implementation of Recommendation 11. The Laotian stability that the State Department had been concerned with preserving had been destroyed by forces beyond US control. On 19 April a group of right-wing military officers carried out a briefly successful coup against Premier Souvanna Phouma. With US support, Souvanna was shortly restored as head of the government, but less than a month later the communist Pathet Lao launched an

46. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6163 to CINCPAC, 5 May 64; (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg ASD (ISA) to CJCS, "Implementation of Recommendation 11, NSAM 288 (U)," 13 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/348-5, 15 May 64; (TS) Msg, State 951 to Vietiane, 5 May 64; JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64) (B).

47. (TS) Msg, MAC 2310 to JCS, 12 May 64; (TS)Msg, MAC 2419 to JCS, 18 May 64; same file.

48. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV J1 3849 to CINCPAC, 140330Z May 64.

offensive in the Plaine des Jarres that drove Souvanna's forces westward into the hills in confusion.[49]

As part of the US response to these developments the Secretary of State on 17 May asked the Ambassador in Vientiane to induce Souvanna Phouma to request low-level US reconnaissance over certain roads and key areas of the Plaine des Jarres. The objective would be to obtain target information and other intelligence of communist activity, to lift the morale of the pro-government forces, and to demonstrate US determination to the Pathet Lao. On the following day the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINPAC to launch the first low-level reconnaissance flights over Laos. They were conducted on 19 May by US aircraft of the 2nd Air Division in South Vietnam, augmented in later operations by carrier aircraft. The Laos reconnaissance flights received the nickname YANKEE TEAM, and COMUSMACV was designated as the coordinating authority.[50] On 21 May the State Department publicly acknowledged that the flights were occurring. A fuller statement on 6 June noted that they had been instituted in response to an appeal by Souvanna Phouma and would continue, by agreement with the Royal Laotian Government.[51]

Implementation of NSAM 288: Future Operations

In NSAM 288, as approved by the President on 17 March 1964, Recommendation 12 contained the provisions looking to the future. Referring to actions discussed elsewhere in Secretary McNamara's report, it called on all appropriate agencies:

> 12. To prepare immediately to be in a position on 72 hours notice to initiate the full range of Laotian and Cambodian "Border Control" actions . . . and the "Retaliatory Actions" against North Vietnam, and to be in a position on 30 days notice to initiate the program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against North Vietnam.

Within the Department of Defense, Secretary McNamara assigned responsibility for Recommendation 12 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[52]

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49. The United States in World Affairs, 1964, pp. 163-164. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 260.

50. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2344/79, 18 May 64, JMF 9155.2 (18 May 64). (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, pp. 269-270.

51. Dept of State Bulletin, L (29 Jun 64), p. 994.

52. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to SecA et al., "Implementation of Vietnam Programs," 23 Mar 64, Encl to JCS 2343/348-1, 24 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64).

On 18 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to prepare an operation plan to meet the requirements of Recommendation 12, treating the three categories: border control actions, retaliatory actions, and graduated overt military pressures. Elements of several of these actions already appeared in various CINCPAC OPLANs, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted them drawn together in one cohesive plan "to permit sequential implementation as may be desired by higher authority."[53]

In a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense on 23 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff referred to the comments they had submitted when NSAM 288 was moving toward approval. Besides suggesting that the 72-hour and 30-day reaction times set in Recommendation 12 should be "materially compressed," they had stated at that time that "the US Government should establish at once the political and military bases in the United States and South Vietnam for offensive actions against the North and across the Laotian and Cambodian borders." To accomplish this a wide range of governmental actions was necessary, with coordination to assure that effort toward the political objective of preparing international opinion for a campaign against the sources of the Viet Cong insurgency did not lag behind the achievement of military readiness. "The immediate interdepartmental problem," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, was to identify the needed preparations, incorporate them into a program with an agreed time sequence, and assign tasks to appropriate agencies. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff are unaware of any move to develop such a program in the spirit of urgency suggested by Recommendation 12." They recommended that the Secretary of Defense "take the lead in energizing the actions which must be taken throughout the Government."[54]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were informed two days later that Secretary McNamara accepted the role they had suggested for him. Through Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton he had generated action within the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, where Mr. Sullivan and White House aide Michael Forrestal were now at work on a comprehensive paper.[55]

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53. (TS) Msg, JCS 5390 to CINCPAC, 18 Mar 64.

54. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-256-64 to SecDef, 23 Mar 64, Encl to JCS 2343/346-2, 23 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64) (A).

55. (S-GP 3) Memo, Actg ASD (ISA) to CJCS, "Implementation of Recommendation 12 . . . ," 25 Mar 64, Encl to JCS 2343/346-3, 26 Mar 64, same file.

Before the first results of the VCC effort appeared, however, Admiral Felt submitted CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64, "Military Actions to Stabilize the Situation in RVN," dated 30 March. As directed, the plan set forth in detail how US forces would support or participate with RVN forces in the conduct of graduated operations to eliminate or greatly reduce the North Vietnamese support of VC insurgency in South Vietnam, in three categories: 1) actions to control or curtail VC activity on or across the RVN borders with Laos and Cambodia, on 72 hours notice; 2) selective retaliatory actions by RVN forces against North Vietnam on 72 hours notice; 3) expanded military pressures by both US and RVN forces against North Vietnam, on 30 days notice. Concurrently with the Category 2 or 3 operations, CINCPAC would establish a strategic posture and readiness in Southeast Asia and elsewhere to deter or respond to NVN-Chinese Communist retaliation or major aggression.

The border control operations of Category 1 would be conducted by RVN forces, with US aerial reconnaissance, airlift, and advisor support. The Category 2 retaliatory operations would include overt high and low-level reconnaissance by US or FARM GATE aircraft, bombing strikes and commando raids by RVN and FARM GATE forces against such NVN military targets as communications centers, training camps, and infiltration routes, and aerial mining of northern ports by VNAF aircraft, possibly with US assistance. The graduated overt pressures of Category 3 were chiefly "air attacks against NVN military, and possibly industrial, targets . . . utilizing the combined resources of GVN Air Force and FARM GATE, reinforced by two B-57 squadrons." Target lists for the aerial bombing in Categories 2 and 3 were attached.[56]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64 on 21 April, subject to several comments and a number of lesser changes.[57]

Meanwhile the Sullivan-Forrestal effort to develop a comprehensive program for implementation of Recommendation 12 had been productive but not successful. The first scenario produced, early in April, had dealt mainly with political

56. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64, "Military Actions to Stabilize the Situation in RVN (U)," 30 Mar 64, JMF 3146 (30 Mar 64) sec 1

57. (TS-GP 3) SM-560-64 to CINCPAC, 21 Apr 64 (derived from JCS 2054/627-5), same file, sec 2.

actions and for various reasons had been withdrawn almost immediately. A second scenario, which combined a revised political draft with a military draft produced within the Department of Defense, was referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for comment by Secretary McNamara late in April.[58] They found it unsuitable and so advised the Secretary on 16 May. With respect to military actions, the scenario considered only the third category, graduated overt military pressures against North Vietnam. On the other hand, it explored some contingencies not included in Recommendation 12, which they thought might better be treated separately. Believing that the unsatisfactory product had resulted from the separate departmental approaches used and from lack of an orderly input of military information, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that an interagency working group be established to draft a new scenario. They forwarded an 11-page listing of military actions in support of Recommendation 12 as a contribution to the effort.[59]

A week later the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense with information on timing factors affecting the readiness to implement Recommendation 12, keyed to the provisions of CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64. Necessary steps that would consume time were, in order: 1) development of an agreed political-military scenario for the coordinated US-GVN implementation of the plan; 2) consultation and coordination with the GVN; 3) training of existing GVN and US forces in the types of operations contemplated; 4) activation of additional programmed forces; 5) deployment into position of participating and deterrent forces.

In more detailed comments the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that no consultation with GVN officials had yet been undertaken or scheduled. "The Department of State should take the lead on this but as yet has not," they informed the Secretary. Once the GVN had agreed to the program, training and preparation could follow. Time must be allowed for sanitizing, translating, and disseminating certain TOP SECRET-NOFORN information to the

58. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Status Report on the Political/Military Scenario, SVN," 10 Apr 64; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Draft Scenarios for Recommendation 12 (NSAM 288)," 23 Apr 64, Att to JCS 2343/348-2, 24 Apr 64; JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64)(A).

59. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-422-64 to SecDef, 16 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/348-4, 8 May 64, same file.

RVNAF. The aerial mine-laying training of VNAF units had been interrupted but was scheduled to resume on 20 May. Meanwhile the substitution of higher-performance aircraft was proceeding on schedule. A second VNAF squadron would receive A-1H aircraft by the end of May and a third squadron by August. Thirty FARM GATE A-1E aircraft would be in South Vietnam with combat-ready crews by August, with an additional 20 planes by December.

All border control operations called for under OPLAN 37-64 could be mounted within 72 hours after notification, except certain larger actions that would require 5-10 days notice. The retaliatory actions of Category 2 likewise could be undertaken within the 72-hour limit, except for the amphibious and airborne raids, requiring 10-30 days notice. The limited deployment of US deterrent forces that accompanied Category 2 operations could be accomplished within 72 hours.

The overt military pressures of Category 3 could be implemented within 12 days of notification, assuming prior alerting of forces. The only US units to be added for participation in these operations would be the B-57 squadrons. They could reach South Vietnam from Clark Field in the Philippines, ready to go in 24 hours, but time must be allowed for the much more extensive movement of US forces committed to the deterrent role. The bulk of these forces would need 12-15 days to deploy into position, while the final increment would require 45 days. CINCPAC had said, however, that so long as forces were actually in motion, the operations against North Vietnam could be started in 12 days. This represented the only substantial compression of the readiness periods originally stated in Recommendation 12. The Category 3 operations could be begun on even shorter notice, however, if the circumstances made it acceptable to forego the planned deployment of US ground forces to deterrent positions on the mainland of Southeast Asia, such as to Thailand.

Answering a question he had posed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that the climate in Vietnam was one of the lesser considerations in undertaking military operations.

> The best period for conduct of all types of military operations in North Vietnam is mid-October to mid-December. However, weather for offensive air operations into NVN is suitable during the summer months and provides the worst conditions for ground operations. While coastal weather during the late winter months can be expected to hamper certain types of air operations into NVN, over-all weather

conditions for military operations are satisfactory. In fact low ceilings may serve to provide added protection to certain operations.[60]

The Target List

A further product of the detailed planning of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, related to their responsibility for the implementation of Recommendation 12, was the identification of targets in North Vietnam suitable for air attack. They submitted a list of 91 targets to the Secretary of Defense on 30 May, describing it as the basis for an air campaign to cause the North Vietnamese government to desist from supporting the Pathet Lao and Viet Cong insurgencies and to reduce the capability of that government to renew such support in the future.

The list was divided into three categories. In Category A were targets the destruction of which would reduce North Vietnam's support of the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao. The targets, selected for their connection with support and infiltration activities, included airfields, supply and ammunition depots, petroleum storage, and military headquarters and barracks, plus targets discovered during armed reconnaissance along NVN highways leading to Laos. Category B targets were those whose destruction would reduce the capability of NVN forces to take action against Laos or South Vietnam. They included the remaining airfields, railroad and highway bridges, supply depots in northern NVN, petroleum storage in Hanoi and Haiphong, and aerial mining. Category C, significant industrial targets, consisted of eight plants or facilities whose devastation would effectively destroy the NVN industrial base.

The JCS estimates of the time required for available strike forces to achieve the desired 85 percent probable destruction of the targets showed it to be hardly practical to rely solely on VNAF capabilities. Theoretically the South Vietnamese air force could deal with the targets of Category A in something over seven months, disregarding the probability that the VNAF would not be able to sustain continuous combat operations for such a period. A combination of VNAF and FARM GATE B-57 operations could achieve the desired destruction of

60. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-445-64 to SecDef, 23 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/382, 23 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64)(A).

the Category A targets in a little over two months. At the fullest application of power, adding all the USAF and carrier aircraft designated as available in CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64, the Category A targets could be disposed of in 12 days and all three categories dealt with in 46 days. To maintain the 85 percent level of destruction, restrikes would have to be conducted for an indeterminate period against the more readily repairable facilities.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that most of the 91 targets duplicated those listed in CINCPAC's OPLANs and that Admiral Felt was charged with maintaining the detailed plans and target folders and with adding or deleting targets as current intelligence dictated. Should decision be made to launch attacks under any of the categories, full low-level reconnaissance coverage of the target system should be undertaken beforehand to update the target folders and provide data for combat mission planning. If feasible and not prejudicial to the security of friendly forces, leaflets should be dropped immediately prior to the bombings to warn civilians away from danger areas.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised Secretary McNamara that air operations could be conducted against any targets drawn from the list. "The intensity of execution can range from selective strikes in an ascending order of gradually increasing military pressure to a concentration of effort designed to attain the effect of a sudden blow."

> From a military viewpoint, it is considered that the most effective application of military force will result from a sudden sharp blow in order to bring home the penalties for violating international agreements and the intent of the United States to bring a cessation of DRV support of the insurgency in Laos and RVN.[61]

The target list of 30 May illustrated in detail something the Joint Chiefs of Staff had pointed out earlier in the month: whether the United States turned to military operations against North Vietnam out of concern over the situation in South Vietnam or in Laos, the target systems attacked would be the same and their destruction would benefit the

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61. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-460-64 to SecDef, 30 May 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/383, 26 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (21 May 64).

anticommunist cause in both countries. This observation was forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 16 May 1964, just as aggressive communist moves were setting off hostilities in Laos and raising concern that the Pathet Lao might be beginning a campaign to overrun the entire country. The increased attention that Washington officials were now forced to give to Laos brought the importance of North Vietnamese support of the insurgencies into still sharper focus. For their part, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw military action against North Vietnam as "offering the possibility of a favorable long-term solution to the insurgency problem in Southeast Asia."[62]

62. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-442-64 to SecDef, 16 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/348-4, 8 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (13 Mar 64)(A).

Chapter 10

THE CONSULTATIONS OF MAY AND JUNE, 1964

General Khanh Takes a New Tack

The policy set by the President's approval of NSAM 288 on 17 March 1964 was that the United States should for the present withhold direct military action against North Vietnam while employing every possible means to improve the stability of General Khanh's government in South Vietnam, the strength of its armed forces, and the effectiveness of its National Pacification Plan. Among the reasons that Secretary McNamara had advanced for recommending this line of action was the fact that it accorded with the views of General Khanh. During consultations with the Secretary in March, Khanh had said he wanted to give priority to securing and consolidating his base in the South before undertaking any move northward. Accordingly it was distinctly unsettling to Washington officials to receive word in early May that Khanh appeared to be changing his mind.

Having summoned Ambassador Lodge unexpectedly on the morning of 4 May, General Khanh talked at length about his country's situation. He felt that it was wasteful and illogical to go on taking losses in the fight with the Viet Cong "just in order to make the agony endure" and asked if it was not time for him to declare a state of emergency in South Vietnam and move to more drastic action. Khanh said that the state of emergency would involve a suspension of certain civil rights, a reorganization of his government that would get rid of the "politicians," a clamp-down on "French subversive activities," imposition of a curfew in Saigon, and possibly the evacuation of a large portion of its inhabitants, including American dependents. Concurrently he would announce to the Hanoi government that any further interference in the affairs of South Vietnam would be met with reprisals. Khanh specifically asked the Ambassador if the United States would be ready to undertake tit-for-tat bombing of North Vietnam in each instance of such interference.

Lacking instructions, Ambassador Lodge avoided any commitment and pointed out that the reprisals the enemy might take must be considered as well. In reply to this

Khanh asked directly whether the United States would "follow through" if Communist China intervened with ground forces. Lodge said that this was a question that could be answered only at the highest level of the US Government but that he personally could not visualize the United States sending a large land army to the mainland of Asia.1

The Ambassador's report of this conversation brought a prompt and concerned response from Washington. The Secretary of State said that Khanh had raised grave issues, which must be carefully weighed. Mr. Rusk detected "a trace of despair" or perhaps "an accumulation of frustrations" in the reported remarks, and he contrasted them with Khanh's attitude during the consultations in March, and more recently during the Secretary's own April visit. "Experience in Greece, Malaya and Korea demonstrates the need for a sound structure of support before active advances can be made," Secretary Rusk said, "and this would seem to mean genuine progress in South Vietnam itself before action against the North."2

At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked CINCPAC and COMUSMACV for their assessments. Admiral Felt thought Khanh's remarks indicated a temporary breakdown under pressure. He hoped it was a passing mood. CINCPAC was sure General Khanh knew that real victory could come only when the people of South Vietnam were convinced that the government could protect them and could give them social improvement and justice. "Confidence of a population is not gained quickly in one glorious battle or assault" but must be earned by steady performance.3

General Harkins replied in a similar vein. Among other things, he observed that it was a little late in the day to be threatening tit-for-tat retaliation for North Vietnamese "interference." "The whole philosophy of tit-for-tat is defective and reactive," he said. "If we are to threaten Hanoi, I believe we should do it on our own initiative and be prepared to exert credible, steadily increasing, damaging pressure on them."

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1. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2108 to State, 4 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam - Trip, 9-14 May 64.
2. (TS) Msg, State 1838 to Saigon, 5 May 64, same file.
3. (TS) Msg, JCS 2025 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 6 May 64. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 070745Z May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam - Trip, 9-14 May 64.

General Harkins agreed with Khanh that the situation could not be allowed to stand without change. But the key to improvement still lay in "effective execution of the National Pacification Plan." Though a long and expensive process, effective implementation of the National Pacification Plan would bring progress, without recourse to panicky evacuations or unrealistic schemes for governing without "politicians." He hoped to consult with Khanh soon and "go over some of the hard, basic facts of life, to include the primary one that the sooner the GVN develops comparable initiative, determination, skills and aggressiveness to that which the VC display, . . . the shorter the agony that must be endured."[4]

The May Visit of the Secretary of Defense

A few days later, during the period 11-13 May, Secretary McNamara and General Taylor visited Vietnam for a fresh survey of the situation. In consultation with COMUSMACV and his Deputy, General Taylor explored the progress of the covert and sabotage operations against North Vietnam under OPLAN 34A, which still had shown no striking success. The Chairman asked for an opinion on the time that would be required to establish sufficient control in South Vietnam to warrant consideration of operations against the North beyond the scope of OPLAN 34A. General Harkins replied that by 1 January 1965 such control would have been established everywhere except in the Delta, which would not be substantially pacified until the end of 1965. General Westmoreland was less sanguine, stating that it would be at least May 1965 before acceptable control would exist north of Saigon and two or three years more before the Delta could be cleared up. Both officers wished to see some expansion of OPLAN 34A operations, but they did not favor progressing to the stronger measures against the North contained in CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64 until implementation of the National Pacification Plan was showing more success. General Harkins observed that it would be dangerously easy to divert the GVN from the main job of internal pacification by the attractiveness of a venture against North Vietnam.[5]

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4. (TS) Msg, MAC 2247 to CJCS, 7 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam - Trip, 9-14 May 64.

5. (TS-GP 3) Memo, no sig. to CSA et al., "Visit of the Secretary of Defense and Chairman, JCS to RVN, 11-13 May," n.d., OCJCS File, Brown Envelope #4.

As for the National Pacification Plan, Secretary McNamara received briefings that indicated there were eleven clear-and-hold operations supposedly under way in early May in furtherance of the "oil-spot" concept. Progress was good in only five of them, however; the RVN forces committed to the others were either virtually inactive or, in two instances, giving way to the enemy. A Country Team staff report advised the Secretary that, in fourteen provinces designated as critical, there were "poor" chances of surviving VC attacks in ten and "fair" chances in the other four. Such phrases as "population appears to remain uncommitted," "morale and effectiveness of militia and SDC are poor," and "absence of firm national and province policy and capable leadership at all levels" abounded in this report.[6]

Secretary McNamara expressed concern that the total resource requirements for implementing the National Pacification Plan during 1964 had not yet been defined. He asked, also, why there were only eleven scheduled clear-and-hold operations, questioning the assumption that expansion of one "oil spot" per province was an acceptable norm. While acknowledging that the deficiencies lay principally with the GVN and its forces, he was convinced that the talents of the GVN and the US mission as a whole had not yet been fully applied to marshalling and committing integrated civil and military resources to the pacification program.[7]

Secretary McNamara had occasion to make this latter point again, during an extended consultation with General Khanh on 13 May, also attended by the Ambassador, General Taylor, and General Harkins. Khanh began the meeting by reviewing the recent course of the war. He asserted that over the past three months the GVN had reestablished control over some 2,000,000 citizens (to his US superiors, General Harkins had already sharply questioned the validity of this claim).[8]

General Khanh was satisfied with the rate of progress, considering the circumstances under which his government was working. He found particularly hampering the fact that his

6. (S) Briefing Sheets, "Questions from Para 5 of SecDef Message," Tabs 5b and 5c, SecDef Agenda Book (Gen Taylor), 10-14 May 64, OCJCS File.
7. (S) Msg, MAC JOI 3846 to CINCPAC, 140220Z May 64.
8. (TS) Msg, MAC 2247 to CJCS, 7 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam - Trip, 9-14 May 64.

time was so greatly occupied with political problems, each of which had some connection with the serious religious division in his country. Besides the hostility between Catholics and Buddhists, there were conflicting factions within the Buddhist movement, all generating passions that must be brought under control before they affected the unity of the armed forces. Buddhist leader Tri Quang was cited as the prime troublemaker. Ambassador Lodge said that he and other Embassy officials would continue their efforts to influence Tri Quang to adopt a more conciliatory attitude toward the Catholics and to give greater regard to the interests of the country as a whole.

General Khanh also discussed his problems with the press. Criticism of the government by Vietnamese newspapers often expressed the views of certain "parlor politicians" in Saigon, who had no contact with the realities of the war. Other papers gave no support to the government because of their identification with specific financial or commercial interests, Khanh charged.

While keeping constant guard against a coup or assassination plot, Khanh had also to contend with "the problem of the French." US officials had consistently advised him against breaking relations with the Paris government, and he recalled that Secretary Rusk had stressed this point during the April visit. When Khanh had said that he knew certain Frenchmen were involved in subversive activities, the Secretary had advised him to expel them selectively and for cause, but not to break off diplomatic relations. This policy was now being followed. Khanh said he had ordered three Frenchmen deported the previous day, and he vowed to expel any others who spread neutralist doctrine or otherwise threatened the security of the government or the war effort.

In view of all these circumstances, General Khanh was not displeased with what had been accomplished in recent months. He thought it just to say that South Vietnam had had no effective government during most of the time since May 1963; the mobilization and training of forces and the mounting of operations had unquestionably suffered as a result of the two successive coups. But the GVN was now reasserting its authority, and he had good reason to believe that it would do so at a more rapid rate hereafter.

Under the questioning of Secretary McNamara and General Taylor, Khanh then turned to a fuller exposition of his

attitude on operations against the North. When he had spoken to Ambassador Lodge about the futility of operations that merely let the agony endure, he had not meant to give the impression that he would lose patience in the long, grinding struggle that undoubtedly lay ahead. But he believed that victory could be speeded by an open declaration that South Vietnam was being attacked from the North and was accordingly on a war footing. A further declaration should be made that if these attacks did not stop within a specified period, such as two weeks or a month, South Vietnam would strike back, with blows comparable in degree and importance though not necessarily identical in form. "Whereas the North attacks us with guerrillas that squirm through the jungle, we would attack them with 'guerrillas' of our own, only ours would fly in at tree-top level and blow up key installations or mine the port of Haiphong."

General Khanh was fully aware that the consequences of such action must be considered. If North Vietnam, and perhaps Communist China, counterattacked in strength, the matter would rapidly become a problem for the United States to deal with. Accordingly, Khanh deferred entirely to US opinion on timing, or on whether attacks against the North were to be undertaken at all. Nevertheless he pointed out that the Viet Cong and the National Liberation Front were but the arms of the enemy monster; its head was in Hanoi. To destroy it quickly and effectively, a blow at the head was needed.

General Khanh was confident that RVNAF capabilities were already sufficient for the type of sea and airborne attacks he had in mind. What he sought was assurance that his country could rely on US support if a strong counterattack developed.

General Taylor at this point recalled the March conversations, in which Khanh had emphasized the need for a solid base in South Vietnam as a prerequisite for action against the North. Khanh conceded that this requirement remained, but he did not expect stability to be achieved before the end of the year. He now saw the fact that the southern base was not solid as a reason to strike against the North at once. The political and psychological impact of such action might provide the cure for weakness. Attack against the North might galvanize opinion in the South and engage his people fully in the war, he said.

Secretary McNamara then stressed the importance of raising the strength of the armed forces to the agreed

levels as rapidly as possible. Citing figures for April that showed the effort to be considerably behind schedule, he offered them not as a criticism but as introduction to his main point: the United States was prepared to help in any way it could to speed the accomplishment of this objective. If more money or materiel were needed, it would be provided whenever the requirement could be demonstrated. In this connection he agreed that the VNAF needed more fighter aircraft and said they could be delivered within three to four months.

The Secretary also emphasized the importance of prompt action on the GVN budget, for he had noted that delays in granting budgetary approval appeared to be holding up the progress of the pacification effort. Again he stressed that Khanh could count on the United States to supply any funds that were clearly needed and to cover any shortage that had been occasioned by worthwhile activity.

In closing his account of the meeting on 13 May, Ambassador Lodge noted that the exchanges had been frank and friendly throughout. General Khanh had concluded by expressing, with obvious sincerity, his appreciation for the pledges of US material support that had been made.[9]

Additional Aid Funds Requested

The assurances Secretary McNamara had given reflected faithfully the attitude of the President. A few weeks earlier Mr. Johnson had instructed his senior advisors that "in our effort to help the Vietnamese to help themselves, we must not let any arbitrary limits on budget, or manpower, or procedures stand in our way."

> We can do extraordinary things within the limit of our current appropriations and we can, if necessary, seek emergency appropriations if they are needed for success in Vietnam. We all recognize that a prompt and clear success in Vietnam would be worth a very large amount to us; and we should not shrink from using the necessary funds to obtain the result.[10]

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9. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Saigon 2203 to State, 14 May 64; (TS) Memo for Record, CJCS, "Visit to General Khanh, 4-5:00 p.m., May 13, 1964," 13 May 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam - Trip, 9-14 May 64.

10. (S) Msg, State 1791 to Saigon, 28 Apr 64.

On 18 May 1964, shortly after the return of the Secretary of Defense to Washington, President Johnson addressed a request to the Congress for addition of $125 million to the $3.4 billion already proposed for foreign assistance programs in the budget then under consideration. He designated $70 million of these added funds as needed for economic aid and $55 million for military uses in South Vietnam. The President said that since the budget was prepared, two major changes had occurred in Vietnam. "First, the Viet Cong guerrillas, under orders from their Communist masters in the north, have intensified terrorist actions against the peaceful people of South Vietnam." Second, the new government of General Khanh had come to power, "bringing new energy and leadership and new hope for effective action." The Khanh government had already committed itself to programs that would require an increase of about 40 percent in GVN expenditures over the 1963 level.

> The vigorous decisions taken by the new Government of Vietnam to mobilize the full resources of the country merit our strongest support. Increased Communist terror requires it.[11]

Ultimately the President's request was substantially fulfilled. When the Congress approved foreign assistance authorizations and appropriations for FY 1965, in October, the amounts were only slightly reduced from the total Administration request for all programs, world-wide.[12]

Post-Visit Consultations

Upon his return from Saigon, General Taylor reviewed for his JCS colleagues the discussions that had taken place, including Secretary McNamara's action authorizing 25 additional aircraft for the VNAF, raising its prospective total force to 150. The Chairman was concerned over the paucity of administrative talent in the GVN, noting that it resulted in a very

11. Dept of State Bulletin, L (8 Jun 64), pp. 891-893.
12. Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 88th Congress, 2nd Session, 1964 (1965), XX, pp. 297, 300-312.

heavy workload falling on General Khanh personally. In his opinion the situation in South Vietnam was still deteriorating, but at a rate that was slowing down.[13]

The Secretary of Defense had apparently received an even less favorable impression from his visit. He concluded that the Viet Cong had "shifted into high gear" in their attempt to undermine the people's sense of security and confidence in Khanh's government and were making progress toward that end. Among the indicators that had convinced Mr. McNamara were the decreasing number of hamlets under GVN control, the rising number of VC attacks and incidents, and increasing RVNAF fatality, desertion, and weapons loss rates.[14]

The officials who had returned from Vietnam had to ponder not only the findings of their visit but the critical turn in the Southeast Asian situation arising from the communist Pathet Lao offensive in the Plaine des Jarres. Further, there was the unfinished work on a political-military scenario for the implementation of Recommendation 12 of NSAM 288. These elements merged in a renewed effort directed by Secretary McNamara, who ordered the development of a new scenario for strikes against North Vietnam. Personnel of his own office prepared the document, with technical assistance from the Joint Staff. A version dated 23 May 1964, in the form of a draft memorandum to the President, was scheduled for discussion by a group headed by the Secretaries of State and Defense at a Sunday morning meeting on 24 May.[15]

The draft memorandum explained that because of recent communist moves to extend control over Laos and to intensify Viet Cong pressures, and the belief that additional US efforts within South Vietnam would not prevent further deterioration there, the President's advisors had given detailed consideration to strikes against North Vietnam. The scenario presented

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13. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Visit of the Secretary of Defense and Chairman, JCS, to South Vietnam," 15 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam - Trip, 9-14 May 64.

14. (S) Memo for Record, LTC Sidney B. Berry, Jr., "Sec/Def Conclusions, Saigon, 13 May 1964," 13 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64.

15. (TS-GP 3) J-3 T-102-64 for CJCS, 23 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (21 May 64) (A).

a step-by-step plan for political and military pressures against North Vietnam. The military attacks would probably be conducted by the VNAF initially, with the possibility of adding US aircraft, and would continue until there was clear evidence that the Hanoi government had stopped its support of insurgency in the South. "The military actions would start only after favorable action on a U.S. Congressional Joint Resolution supporting continued U.S. opposition to the North Vietnamese attempt to destroy the independece of South Vietnam." Other preparatory moves would include prepositioning of US forces in a deterrent and readiness posture, substantially as provided for in CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64.[16]

At the Sunday morning meeting, which General Taylor attended, there was general agreement that the trend in Southeast Asia, and in South Vietnam particularly, was unfavorable. The discussion ranged widely and resulted in a number of changes of timing and emphasis in the Scenario. One of the most notable had to do with the Congressional support to be obtained. Within the White House this matter had already progressed to the point of drafting a Joint Resolution to be proposed. Its operative part was a declaration that the United States regarded the preservation and integrity of South Vietnam and Laos as vital to its national interest and to world peace. To this end, if the President deemed it necessary and if requested by the Government of South Vietnam or of Laos, the United States was prepared to use all measures including the commitment of armed forces to assist that government in defeating aggression or subversion supported, controlled, or directed from any communist country.[17]

The prospect of obtaining formal passage of a Joint Resolution seemed poor, less because of anticipated opposition than for reasons of timing. The Congress was facing both a heavy legislative calendar and the need to recess during the presidential nominating conventions. For the immediate future there appeared little chance of obtaining unanimous consent to lay aside the Civil Rights bill that was then being debated. Accordingly, the revised draft memorandum to the President

16. (TS) Draft Memo to Pres, "Scenario for Strikes on North Vietnam," 23 May 64, same file.

17. (TS-GP 1) J-5 T-74-64 for CJCS, 24 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64.

that resulted from the morning discussions omitted specific reference to a Joint Resolution and spoke instead of an "appropriate expression (probably in general terms) by Congress of its support."[18]

The revised paper also set forth in more detail the preparatory dispositions CINCPAC was to take, writing in certain points that General Taylor had gone to the meeting prepared to make. It noted specifically that movements prior to D-Day would include deployment of the B-57 squadrons from the Philippines to South Vietnam to augment FARM GATE and might involve "the initiation of low-level reconnaissance of North Vietnam if not previously begun."

General Taylor had presented the JCS view that a sharp, strong blow, employing US aircraft from the outset, would be more effective militarily than the progressive unfolding of an intensifying air campaign. Other conferees thought it important that attacks be launched on a limited scale, initially by the VNAF only, in order not to confront the North Vietnamese with a major loss of prestige in the eyes of the world. There was no dissent, however, regarding an advance to US participation if the Hanoi government did not show signs of yielding. Accordingly, the program of air strikes in the revised scenario was a progressive and expanding one, with respect both to starting with VNAF aircraft alone and to targets, stated as follows:

> Initially, mine their ports and strike North Vietnam's transport and related ability (bridges, trains) to move south; then against targets which have maximum psychological effect on the North's willingness to stop insurgency. These latter targets would comprise those related to North Vietnam's military power (e.g., POL storage, selected airfields, barracks/training areas, bridges, railroad yards, port facilities, communications) and those comprising their industrial assets.

The scenario scheduled various actions with relation to an unspecified D-Day. They extended backward as far as D-19, the date on which General Khanh's agreement to undertake

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18. (TS) Memo to Pres, "Scenario for Strikes on North Vietnam," 24 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (21 May 64) (A).

overt South Vietnamese air attacks against targets in the North should be obtained, after giving him a guarantee of US protection in the event of enemy retaliation. The question that continued to be debated and that bore heavily on the choice of a D-Day was whether or not to accept the hazard that the Khanh government might collapse just as the United States was becoming fully committed to an extension of the hostilities, by official statements, troop deployments, and hard-won Congressional action. Or could it be presumed that striking North would halt deterioration in the South?[19]

One contribution to the continuing discussion was a memorandum by Mr. William Sullivan, Chairman of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee. He believed that "the dilemma we face in addressing the problem of Southeast Asia is not whether we should move either to stiffen the position in South Vietnam or to strike against North Vietnam. The fact is that eventually we will have to do both. The question, therefore, is which of these two measures we should do first."

Mr. Sullivan pointed out that if the United States took the militant line of insisting on communist withdrawal from newly conquered territory in Laos, it could expect to find itself facing a decision to bomb North Vietnam within a month. If on the other hand the United States tried for a political settlement regarding Laos, it could expect long delays and ultimate arrival at some imprecise political agreement that did not change the communist military position. He believed this latter course would crumple the morale of those Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese, and Filipino allies who now fully expected the United State to use the communist activity in Laos as justification for direct attacks on North Vietnam. Sullivan argued for setting aside "the logical Viscount Montgomery approach" of taking all measures to tidy the base in South Vietnam before moving to strike the North. The United States could further intensify its efforts to strengthen the Khanh government but should accept the condition that attacks against North Vietnam would be mounted "in the face of certain uncovered risks in the South."[20]

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19. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, LTG A. J. Goodpaster, "Four Meetings on Extension of Operations Against North Vietnam, 24-25 May," 25 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64.

20. (TS) Memo by Sullivan, "Substitutes and Supplements in Southeast Asia," 24 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64. No indication has been found of the timing of this memo in relation to the other events on 24 May, but it was probably used at the morning meeting. It bore no addressee.

Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, General Taylor, Mr. McCone, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy met with the President on the evening of 24 May. All present were agreed that extension of the conflict northward was inevitable unless the Hanoi government desisted from its support of the insurgencies in Laos and South Vietnam. President Johnson apparently accepted the supposition that air attacks against North Vietnam might become necessary before the summer of 1964 had passed, and he was prepared to begin briefing the Congressional leadership, touching on three points: 1) the probable necessity of carrying the war to the North; 2) the desirability of inducing the United Nations, or at least the Southeast Asia Treaty nations, to take some action that would provide a context of international support; 3) the need for Congressional approval of the $125 million increase in aid funds that he had recently proposed.

The second of the above points was foremost in the President's mind. Before taking any drastic action, he wanted to give international bodies a full chance to find a solution, preferably through a UN-sponsored peace-keeping mission. McGeorge Bundy's reading of the President's thought, as subsequently reported, was that Mr. Johnson was ready to take action on the whole matter of "North Vietnamese behavior" with respect to Laos and South Vietnam. "If he cannot get the U.N. to do so, he will follow a course of pressure, one of the later elements of which will be military action."[21]

After further consultation among the principal advisors on 25 May, Mr. Bundy produced a new version of the memorandum, designed to fulfill the purposes the President had indicated. This draft incorporated the following advice to the White House:

I. Basic Recommendation

1. It is recommended that you make a Presidential decision that the U. S. will use selected and carefully graduated military force against North Vietnam, under the following conditions: (1) after appropriate diplomatic and political

21. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, LTG A. J. Goodpaster, "Four Meetings on Extension of Operations Against North Vietnam, 24-25 May," 25 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64.

warning and preparation, (2) and unless such warning and preparation--in combination with other efforts--should produce a sufficient improvement of non-Communist prospects in South Vietnam and in Laos to make military action against North Vietnam unnecessary.

2. This basic Presidential decision is recommended on these premises:

(1) that the U. S. cannot tolerate the loss of Southeast Asia to Communism;

(2) that without a decision to resort to military action if necessary, the present prospect is not hopeful, in South Vietnam or in Laos;

(3) that a decision to use force if necessary, backed by resolute and extensive deployment, and conveyed by every possible means to our adversaries, gives the best present chance of avoiding the actual use of such force.

It was the best estimate of the advisors that the decision could be carried out without drawing a major military response from Communist China or from the Soviet Union. Also, if carefully handled, military action against North Vietnam should not trigger an increase in Viet Cong terrorism and military action so great as to engulf the Khanh regime.

Nevertheless, it is recognized that in making this decision we must accept two risks: (1) the risk of escalation toward major land war or the use of nuclear weapons; (2) the risk of a reply in South Vietnam itself which would lose that country to neutralism and so eventually to Communism.

In outlining the proposed sequence of actions following the basic Presidential decision the advisors would call first for establishment of communication with Hanoi (through the new member the Canadian Government was sending to the Vietnam component of the International Control Commission) and with "other adversaries of major importance (USSR, France, Red China)." The message to be conveyed was the firmness of US determination and the limited nature of the US objectives. The United States intended that communist terror and subversion in Southeast Asia should end; it did not seek the destruction

of the Hanoi regime. This step should be followed almost immediately by a conference in Honolulu, at which Washington officials would reach full understanding with Ambassador Lodge, COMUSMACV, and other US Ambassadors regarding the strategy and the degree to which it should be revealed to the governments of South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

Next would come action at the United Nations. After a broad presentation of the problem of communist aggression in Southeast Asia, "together with much hitherto secret evidence proving Hanoi's responsibility," the United States would seek a resolution calling for a halt to Pathet Lao aggression in Laos (since the United States was not certain of having the seven votes needed for affirmative action in the Security Council if the resolution also included South Vietnam).

> The basic object of this exercise would be a double one:
>
> (a) to give worldwide publicity to the basic problem through the voice of Stevenson, and
>
> (b) to make it perfectly plain if we move to further action that we had done our best at the UN.

Whether the resolution was passed or vetoed, it could serve as the point of departure at a chosen time, when the United States or an ally would formally pronounce that the requirements that had been presented to the United Nations were not being met. Meanwhile consultation with the SEATO Allies would be in progress. While no support was expected from France or Pakistan, the others might join in agreement on further action, including some commitment of forces. Thereafter, the first deployments of US and allied forces toward Southeast Asia would occur. "It is our recommendation that these deployments be on a very large scale, from the beginning, so as to maximize their deterrent impact and their menace."

The requirement for a formal Congressional Resolution had been reinstated, but counsel regarding its timing was divided:

> (8) A Congressional Resolution.
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> We agree that no such resolution should be sought until Civil Rights is off the Senate

calendar, and we believe that the preceding stages can be conducted in such a way as to leave a free choice on the timing of such a resolution. Some of us recommend that we aim at presenting and passing the resolution between the passage of Civil Rights and the convening of the Republican Convention. Others believe that delay may be to our advantage and that we could as well handle the matter later in the summer, in spite of domestic politics.

Once favorable action on the Congressional Resolution was obtained, a further military deployment to Southeast Asia would occur. These forces would not be advanced as a bluff, but they might nevertheless so enlarge the picture of menacing preparations as finally to convince the leaders in Hanoi that the less painful course would be to cease supporting the insurgencies.

Lack of such a response, however, would bring the initial strike against the North.

This would be very carefully designed to have more deterrent than destructive impact, as far as possible. This action would be accompanied by the simultaneous withdrawal of U.S. dependents from South Vietnam and by active diplomatic offensives in the Security Council, or in a Geneva Conference, or both, aimed at restoring the peace throughout the area. This peacekeeping theme will have been at the center of the whole enterprise from the beginning.

President Johnson apparently desired the fullest possible counsel and reflection before making the basic decision. He drew the Honolulu conference from the proposed sequence and placed it first. On the evening of 26 May he sent a message to Ambassador Lodge advising that Secretaries Rusk and

22. (TS) Draft Memo, McGeorge Bundy to Pres, "Basic Recommendation and Projected Course of Action on Southeast Asia," 25 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64. The available records do not show conclusively whether or not this draft memo was ever formally submitted to the President.

McNamara, General Taylor, and Mr. McCone had been instructed to join Admiral Felt "for a meeting with you and a very small group of your most senior associates in Southeast Asia to review for my final approval a series of plans for effective action." The President hoped that this meeting could occur as early as the following Monday, 1 June.[23]

On the same day, 26 May, the President began consultation with certain Congressional leaders of both parties. Under Secretary of State George W. Ball advised Secretary Rusk, then in India for the funeral of Prime Minister Nehru, that the President "will wish the Congress associated with him on any steps which carry with them substantial acts and risks of escalation."[24]

JCS Contributions to the Honolulu Conference Preparations

In the short time remaining for preparation for the Honolulu conference the Joint Chiefs of Staff made several contributions. On 30 May they responded to a requirement that had arisen during the White House consultations for fuller examination and development of the concept of "telegraphing actions," designed to assure that the contemplated deployment of US and other forces to Southeast Asia had the fullest possible psychological impact in Hanoi. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that the movement of military units and other preparations could certainly contribute to the objective of applying pressures against North Vietnam and implying sterner measures to come. Indeed, even if desired, the United States could not stage a "quiet" deployment of major forces to Southeast Asia, some of them from locations almost halfway around the world. Not only would the communist nations detect the moves; "news media would pick them up; statements would be requested." The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in fact, cautioned against "over-exploitation," which could generate "irresistible demands for a premature international conference before we have accomplished our goal of causing the DRV to modify its behavior."

A draft of telegraphing actions which might be taken in connection with the alerting and

23. (TS) Msg, State 2087 to Saigon, 26 May 64, same file.
24. (TS) Msg, State TOSEC 3 to New Delhi, 27 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64.

movement of forces is attached. However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff desire to emphasize their view that these telegraphing actions will not, by themselves, have significant impact on causing the DRV/Chinese communists to cease their aggression in Southeast Asia. Positive offensive actions must be taken to demonstrate that DRV support of the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao will no longer be tolerated.[25]

Also on 30 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted three different memoranda to the Secretary of Defense on aspects of the US advisory effort in South Vietnam, whose improvement and possible expansion were being considered at various levels. Within the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, for instance, study was being given to the possible infusion of a substantial number of US civilian and military personnel as advisors at all echelons of the Government of South Vietnam itself.[26] The three JCS submissions had to do solely with military advisors and were forward to Secretary McNamara as a basis for discussion with Ambassador Lodge and COMUSMACV at Honolulu.

The first JCS memorandum concerned extension of the advisory effort to the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps. The Joint Chiefs of Staff found that approximately 1,000 US advisory team personnel could be effectively used in a selective, phased program at the district level to provide training and operational advice to improve the effectiveness of the paramilitary units. About 500 more personnel would be needed to back up the advisory detachments at the province level with administrative and logistic support. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that COMUSMACV should be allowed to tailor and deploy the advisory teams to meet the particular requirements of any area.[27]

The second and related JCS memorandum defined the requirements of a pilot program for placing advisors with the paramilitary forces in seven critical provinces, involving about

25. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-469-64 to SecDef, 30 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/384, 26 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (21 May 64) (A).
26. (TS-GP 1) SACSA-T-19-64 for CJCS, 23 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64.
27. (S-GP 1) JCSM-465-64 to SecDef, 30 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/388, 28 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (28 May 64) (1).

300 US personnel. With respect both to this plan and the larger effort sketched in the first memorandum, the Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized that the shortage of Vietnamese language interpreters would be a limiting factor, which could not be overcome without great effort.[28]

The third JCS memorandum on 30 May addressed the question whether greater effectiveness could be achieved by assigning US military advisors to company-sized units of the ARVN. Currently there were 1,336 US advisors serving with regular Vietnamese military units. These were fairly equally divided among corps, division or special zone, brigade or regiment, and battalion levels. There were 43 advisors with separate companies, but these were exceptions to the normal practice. The RVNAF had 525 company or company-sized units--infantry, marines, rangers, airborne, artillery, and armored. To place US advisors at this level on a permanent basis would require 1,621 additional personnel of all ranks. It would also be contrary to the advice of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV. Both officers thought that an extension of the US advisory effort to the company level was neither desirable nor required.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defens of these views and noted that there were "a number of limiting factors which militate against the establishment of a program of advisors at company level." They cited "the question of acceptability of such a program to the Vietnamese, the problem of overcoming the language barrier, and the inevitability of greatly increased US casualties which would result." The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary of Defense not consider assigning US advisors below battalion level in the RVNAF.[29]

Of greater moment was the memorandum the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted giving their views on the central purpose of the Honolulu conference. An initial version of the memorandum went to the Secretary of Defense on 31 May, before his departure. Further JCS consideration on 1 June resulted in certain amendments, and the revised text of the memorandum, dated 2 June 1964, was presented to Secretary McNamara by

28. (S-GP 1) JCSM-464-64 to SecDef, 30 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/387, 28 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (28 May 64).
29. (S-GP 1) JCSM-466-64 to SecDef, 30 May 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/389, 28 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (28 May 64) (2). A fuller treatment of the US advisory effort during 1964 appears in Ch. 16.

General Taylor, in Honolulu. General Taylor designated it "an agreed JCS paper less the views of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, which I will submit later."[30]

To the Secretary of Defense the Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed concern over what they considered to be "a lack of definition, even a confusion" in the US approach to the broad subject, "Objectives and Courses of Action--Southeast Asia."

> 2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that it is their first obligation to define a militarily valid objective for Southeast Asia and then advocate a desirable military course of action to achieve that objective. Based on military considerations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the United States should seek through military actions to accomplish destruction of the North Vietnamese will and capabilities as necessary to compel the Democratic Government of Vietnam (DRV) to cease providing support to the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos. Only a course of action geared to this objective can assure that the North Vietnamese support of the subversive efforts in Laos and South Vietnam will terminate.
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> 3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are concerned that the military validity of the objective stated above may not be recognized. They note that some current thinking appears to dismiss this objective in favor of a lesser objective, one visualizing limited military action which, hopefully, would cause the North Vietnamese to decide to terminate their subversive support of activity in Laos and South Vietnam. This lesser objective is thus not geared to destruction of capability but rather to an enforced changing of policy and its implementation, which, if achieved,

30. (TS-GP 1) CM-1450-64 to SecDef, 2 Jun 64, and (TS-GP 1) JCSM-471-64 (Revised) to SecDef, 2 Jun 64, Encls A and B to JCS 2343/394-1, 2 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3 (28 May 64). The original version was (TS-GP 1) JCSM-471-64 to SecDef, 30 May 64 (derived from JCS 2343/394), same file.

may well be temporary in nature. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that this lesser objective just described is militarily an inadequate objective for the present situation, but would agree as an initial measure to pursue a course of action to achieve this lesser objective.

Should the national authorities choose the lesser objective, the implementing action should clearly be of a new order. If it gave the appearance of being merely an evolutionary development of previous US activity, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, "the impact on the North Vietnamese could be delayed and even diffused and uncertain."

Reluctance now to take positive action will almost inevitably increase the price and gravity of such action when it is finally taken. This situation exists because, in spite of more than two years of effort to convince a determined enemy of our determination that he will not prevail, he has clearly increased his effort and achieved improvement in his relative situation. Thus, even within the lesser second objective, the time for continuing a monologue of "messages" that repeat the substance or maintain the intensity of our past effort seems to us to be well past. If we mean to send a "message" to convey the determination which must be part of our national purpose if we really intend to prevail in this situation, we must recognize the requirement to convey directly, sharply, even abruptly, that the situation has indeed changed insofar as the United States is concerned. It appears that the way to convey that "message" now is along the following lines:

a. Select carefully a limited number of target complexes--perhaps two--in North Vietnam.

b. In selecting these target complexes, screen carefully to assure that those chosen are in fact directly and significantly

associated with support of the effort in Laos and North Vietnam; that they represent completely valid military objectives; that they are susceptible to reasonably quick and precise destruction by air attack; that their destruction can be achieved with minimum impact on civilian populations.

The two targets that the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended as meeting these criteria were Vinh, a major resupply depot supporting the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao, and Dien Bien Phu, from which the North Vietnamese transported materiel and troops into Laos on Route 11. Once the targets were chosen, planning for readiness to launch the bombing strikes should begin. It would include, "as a matter of military prudence," readiness to accomplish the fuller objective of destroying the North Vietnamese will and capabilities, should escalation occur.

In summary, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said there was "no basis to be hopeful about the situation in Southeast Asia until and unless North Vietnam is forced to stop supporting the insurgent activities in Laos and South Vietnam." They repeated their view that "the best way to achieve this objective is through destruction of the North Vietnamese will and capabilities as necessary to compel the DRV to cease providing such support." Even if a lesser objective was chosen, new and positive military action should be employed to convey the US message to the enemy. The same action would meet the important need to impress allied nations with the will and determination of the United States. In this connection the Joint Chiefs of Staff cited a message from Ambassador Graham A. Martin in Bangkok, in which he had warned, barely a week earlier, that Thailand's leaders were moving toward a reexamination of the value of their commitment to the West. "At this moment they still believe we would honor our undertakings but rapid pace recent events and minimum U.S. responses is almost visibly eroding confidence manifested last October, when I first arrived," the Ambassador had written.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged the Secretary of Defense, at the Honolulu conference, to seek precise delineations of both the greater and the lesser objectives and their supporting courses of action, with awareness that on military grounds the Joint Chiefs of Staff advocated adoption of the greater objective. Should the lesser one be chosen, the

military implementation should nevertheless be designed to signal clearly "a sharp change in US outlook and determination."

In preparation for the conference, numerous messages had also passed from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, and from the State Department to the Embassies in Laos, Thailand, and South Vietnam. A message from Acting Secretary of State Ball to Ambassador Lodge on 27 May had made clear that besides deliberating on courses of action for the future, the conferees at Honolulu should be prepared to review the current status and means of improving the programs already under way to stabilize the political and military situations within South Vietnam.31

The Honolulu Conference, 1-2 June 1964

The gathering of US officials in Hawaii on 1-2 June included senior representatives of all agencies concerned with directing the political, military, economic, intelligence, and information aspects of the counterinsurgency effort in Southeast Asia. Headed by Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, the list of participants included General Taylor, Mr. McCone, USIA Director Carl P. Rowan, the Deputy Administrator of AID, Ambassador Lodge, Ambassador Martin, and two Assistant Secretaries of State and two of Defense. Representation from the Embassy in Laos, [redacted] Admiral Felt and his component commanders, and other high-level assistants brought the total to more than 40. In his initial communication to Ambassador Lodge, the President had noted that General Harkins was already scheduled to return to the United States on 24 June, prior to relinquishing his post and retiring. The President had instructed Lodge to bring the Deputy COMUSMACV, General Westmoreland, with him to Honolulu and "leave General Harkins in charge of the war."32

A four-hour plenary session opened the conference on the morning of 1 June. Thereafter, while other officials attended the meetings of five working groups on specific problems, a

31. (TS) Msg, State 2095 to Saigon, 27 May 64; (TS) Msg, JCS 2625 to CINCPAC, 28 May 64.

32 . (TS) Msg, State 2087 to Saigon, 26 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 64.

policy group of 16 principals met in virtually continuous session through the afternoon of 2 June.[33]

Survey of the Existing Situation

In opening the general survey of the existing situation that occupied the plenary session, Ambassador Lodge characterized conditions in South Vietnam as "still generally unsatisfactory." Although the GVN under General Khanh had stepped up its military activities, the Viet Cong had matched the new level, offsetting any gains by the government. Viet Cong activity in Saigon itself had measurably increased.

The Ambassador reviewed the many lines of internal division--religious, ethnic, and political--that troubled the public life of South Vietnam. He deplored the general lack of patriotism and public spirit and the prevalent attitude of every man for himself. The Catholics constituted the strongest anticommunist group in RVN and would be the core of any effective anticommunist force, he said. Other influential groups included the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai religious sects, numbering between two and three million people. They were supporting Khanh at present, but their loyalties had proven fragile in the past. The Buddhists were harder to categorize. While they had never publicly denounced the Viet Cong, they had prevented the Viet Cong from infiltrating their ranks to any serious degree. Both the Buddhists and Catholics were cautious about public denunciation of the Viet Cong for fear that their bonzes or priests in the villages would be attacked by the terrorists.

While these internal divisions were of serious concern, Lodge saw no evidence of widespread support of communist aims and policies among the people. Although many in RVN considered Ho Chi Minh a great leader, Viet Cong support in the countryside was generated by fear of the terrorists--not loyalty to Hanoi. Lodge believed that as soon as the GVN made its counter terrorism measures effective, popular support of the Viet Cong would dwindle. He thought the public reaction would be unfavorable to any indiscriminate saturation bombing

33. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, "Special Meeting on Southeast Asia, Plenary Session, 1 June 1964," n.d., JMF 9150 (1 Jun 64) sec 1A. The following account of the plenary session is taken from this source without further citation.

of North Vietnam. But a selective bombing campaign against military targets in the North would bolster morale and "give the population in the South a feeling of unity and a sense of accomplishing something in the war."

General Khanh had managed to halt the deterioration of political stability that had begun with the Buddhist disorders in May 1963. He saw clearly the need to rally the people and the armed forces behind him and was making a determined effort to do this, by travelling widely and allowing the people to see and hear their leader. According to Lodge, General Khanh had injected new vigor into the Army and was working to give strength and spirit to the paramilitary forces.

One of Khanh's problems, that of the four generals who had been deposed when he overthrew the Minh government, appeared to be temporarily under control. General Minh himself, after some hesitation, had joined Khanh's government in a figurehead post, but Generals Dinh, Dom, Kim, and Xuan were held under house arrest. After long consideration of placing them on trial--a course that, whatever the verdict, would have refired both the country's religious hostilities and dissension within the armed forces--Khanh had released the four generals from detention and had set them up as a special staff to work together at Dalat. They were under surveillance but were not locked up. The "Dalat Generals" remained a potential source of leadership for a new coup, but in the Ambassador's judgment, Khanh had sufficient following within the RVNAF to keep him in power.

The general administrative ineffectiveness of the GVN continued. Ambassador Lodge blamed it less on poorly trained personnel than on defective, antiquated procedures inherited from the French civil service system. The lack of trained personnel willing to work at the district, village, and hamlet levels was serious, however, and was not likely to be alleviated soon.

As an over-all assessment, Ambassador Lodge thought that the situation in South Vietnam could not be expected to improve in the near future "without our introducing something new and significant into the equation."

General Westmoreland then analyzed the military and security situation in more detail, relying particularly on statistical indicators. His figures showed that GVN control of the rural population had declined slightly during the first quarter of 1964, dropping from 79 percent at the

beginning of the year to 75 percent by the end of March. The rate of decline had slowed in April and was now reversed, indicating that while the situation was grim, the prospects were not.

The New Life Rural Hamlet Program had made some gains in those areas that were subject to the impact of US money and materiel. However, in the more significant aspects of control, such as mutual trust between the GVN authorities and the hamlet dwellers, the objectives had not been reached and an actual decline had taken place. This was best illustrated, General Westmoreland pointed out, by the drop in the percentage of MAP-supported hamlet militia scheduled to be armed who had actually received weapons. The percentage of completed hamlets having the authorized number of hamlet militia squads had also fallen.

The real need was still for sustained pacification operations to establish a positive separation of the population from the Viet Cong and to restore the confidence of the people in the ability and the desire of the GVN to protect them. The personnel management of the armed forces had been in a sorry state since the 1 November 1963 coup, with demoralizing effect upon troops and officers alike. Some slight indications of improvement, including a decrease in the April desertion rate and a rise of volunteer enlistments, had been noted, however. The understrength of combat units remained the number one problem of the RVNAF.

The GVN was improving the management of its resources, General Westmoreland said. Forces were being allocated judiciously within the critical provinces and in support of the major pacification efforts. General reserve forces had been released in greater numbers to the corps, and the corps commanders were using them well. Two A-1H fighter squadrons would be operational soon, and a third was scheduled to be flying before the end of 1964. Paramilitary forces were being reorganized, as US officials had urged, under the Ministry of Defense and with a single chain of command down to the subsector level. Khanh had signed decrees on 7 and 12 May redesignating the Civil Guard as the Regional Force and the combined Self Defense Corps and hamlet militia as the Popular Force.

General Westmoreland also stated that the intensive efforts of US advisors to bring about greater RVNAF military activity had succeeded in spite of the political turmoil. The

number of small unit operations had tripled in the first three months of 1964, while battalion-sized operations had doubled. Battalion operations in which contact with the Viet Cong had been made rose to 58 percent. On the other hand only two percent of the small unit operations had made contact with the enemy.

As for further needed improvements, the Deputy COMUSMACV said US advisors were convinced that future operations must be aimed more definitely at retention and extension of control. This meant more clear-and-hold operations instead of "safaris" in which large formations started from a secure area, swept a contested area, and returned to base. In short, the philosophy and concepts of the National Pacification Plan needed translating into operational techniques. To accomplish this, and to increase the emphasis on gaining permanent control of territory and people, would be the prime objective of the US advisory program in coming months, with highest priority being given to the areas immediately surrounding Saigon.

In General Westmoreland's opinion, the military situation in South Vietnam was tenuous, but far from hopeless.

The Secretary of Defense had listened to this account of the security situation with a certain skepticism. When General Westmoreland finished, Mr. McNamara told the group that he considered the military situation somewhat worse than "tenuous." In his eyes it was approaching the "hopeless" category. As evidence he pointed to the desertion rates in the RVNAF and paramilitary forces and the failure of the GVN to meet any of the agreed force goals. Armed forces morale was very poor generally and not getting any better. The GVN had yet to deploy adequate forces into the key provinces to meet the critical Viet Cong situation there. To Secretary McNamara three facts were highly pertinent: 1) the GVN needed 17,000 recruits per month but was getting about 1,000; 2) there was no evidence of any increase in GVN control of either population or area; 3) the administration of the pacification effort was very ineffective. The GVN had only ten or twelve clear-and-hold operations going and the gist of reports on all of these was that they were making little if any progress.

General Westmoreland conceded that, despite MACV's strong recommendations to Khanh, the GVN recruiting campaign had fallen some 50 to 80 percent behind the goals sought during the month of May. The GVN found itself in competition with the Viet Cong for recruits, and even for conscripts. In at

least two instances a group of draftees had elected to join the Viet Cong rather than fight for the government.

Secretary Rusk noted that morale was a function of leadership and asked if Khanh was doing anything to improve the low morale of his forces. General Westmoreland cited Khanh's more liberal promotion policies, better pay, and prompt recognition of valor by awarding medals to deserving soldiers. One of the factors most affecting morale was lack of dependent housing for the RVNAF. Studies were in progress, and COMUSMACV hoped to be able to submit recommendations on this problem within two weeks.

The conferees also heard presentations by the chief AID and USIA officials in South Vietnam. The latter, Mr. Barry Zorthian, commented on press relations, among other subjects. He said that the American press in Saigon was as skeptical and cynical a group of newsmen as he had ever encountered. Their attitude could be traced to a feeling that they had been misled in the past both by the GVN and by US spokesmen. Under the current regulations, reporters had complete access to the battlefield and to US and GVN personnel at all levels. American newsmen were therefore in a position to obtain evidence to prove almost any point they wanted to make, as in the current stories disparaging the effectiveness and will to fight of the RVN forces.

Mr. Zorthian thought that a more effective organization and policy for handling the press, backed up by adequate facilities and resources, would be necessary before there was any possibility of obtaining more favorable reporting in US newspapers. "Today the handling of the press is so diffuse and current rules under which our military people are operating are often so unrealistic that we are not getting as good world coverage as we might."

After an extended discussion of the situation in Laos and Thailand, the conferees heard further reports on military aspects from Admiral Felt's staff. The CINCPAC J-2 presented a briefing on the North Vietnamese armed forces, which were estimated to include some 225,000 fighting troops. The NVN army divisions were not motorized in the US sense and moved mainly by foot, with about 150 trucks per division to transport supplies. The air force consisted of 76 planes, none of them fighter or jet aircraft. Chinese Communist aircraft could readily be deployed there, however, since there were five fields in North Vietnam capable of receiving jet aircraft.

General Taylor inquired regarding the status of NVN air defense and was told it would be relatively ineffective against high-flying jet aircraft but would be effective against propeller-driven planes and helicopters. General J. E. Smart, CINCPACAF, said that US aircraft could probably hit targets in North Vietnam without any losses in an initial attack, and Secretary McNamara elaborated on this point. No surface-to-air missiles were known to be located there, he said, and the North Vietnamese simply did not have the resources to provide air defense for all their key targets. It should certainly be possible to plan an air attack that would avoid running into well-defended areas.

The Policy Group Discussions

In the sessions held thereafter by the 16-man policy group General Westmoreland gave his judgment that with continuation of existing programs the situation in South Vietnam would improve slowly to the end of 1964. Ambassador Lodge reiterated his view that it would show no improvement unless some new element was introduced, such as air strikes against the North. But neither the Deputy COMUSMACV nor the Ambassador, General Taylor observed later, believed that the United States was racing against the clock or had to take action against North Vietnam before it was completely ready. Both officials opposed the idea of an extensive US civilian encadrement of the GVN administrative structure which had been considered by the Vietnam Coordinating Committee.

General Westmoreland presented his concept for a program of concentrated effort to make the pacification operations in eight critical provinces more effective. It involved setting up supervisory teams of US and GVN experts in the provinces, using about 45 US personnel (40 military and 5 USOM) in each. Intensified effort along this line, he believed, could turn the situation in all provinces in favor of the government within nine months to a year.

With reference to possible attacks on North Vietnam, Secretary Rusk emphasized the need to prepare public opinion before taking any action. He believed that such attacks would have to be limited to South Vietnamese aircraft until a Congressional Resolution was obtained but feared a prolonged debate if one were sought. In the realm of material preparation, too, it seemed to the Secretary of State that the United States was not fully ready to undertake a military action in Southeast Asia that might lead to escalation of the hostilities. He called for more

study of the logistical factors involved and a fuller assessment of the further steps that might have to be taken. His position gained support from the opinion offered by both Admiral Felt and General Westmoreland that 1 November 1964 was the optimum date for US readiness to launch attacks against North Vietnam.[34]

After the Honolulu Conference

The deliberations of US officials at Honolulu on 1-2 June produced no recommendations for pronounced change in national policy. The principal effect was a rededication to intensified effort in the furtherance of existing programs and existing planning, under the precepts of the still-controlling NSAM 288. At no point had the conferees come to grips with the question of future operations in the terms the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended to Secretary McNamara: a precise delineation of objectives and their supporting courses of action. Probably the conference was too large, and the time necessarily spent by the principals in hearing reports from the five working groups too great, for this to have been accomplished in any event.

General Taylor placed a number of requirements on the Joint Staff as a result of the conference, particularly along the line of more searching investigation of logistical requirements and readiness to support OPLAN 37-64 and other CINCPAC plans. Staff action was needed, also, to carry out instructions of the Secretary of Defense regarding the equipment for a ROAD infantry brigade prepositioned at Korat, Thailand. All items that were not transportable by air were to be supplied within 30 days, so that the brigade could be ready for combat within six days after being ordered to move. Additionally, the Secretary had directed that equipment for a ROAD brigade prepositioned on Okinawa be reconfigured within 60 days to support the unit in any of the anticipated areas of operations in the Asian-West Pacific area. CINCPAC was charged with reviewing and commenting on the various alternative concepts for air action against North Vietnam that had been developed,

34. (TS) Memo for Record, CJCS, "Highlights of Honolulu Conference," 2 Jun 64, OCJCS File M/R envelope.

including objectives, target systems, timing, weight of effort, and other factors.35

The primary action resulting from the conference, however, was toward implementation of the concept General Westmoreland had presented for a concerted US effort to intensify the GVN's pacification activities in eight critical provinces. On 5 June, in a joint State-Defense-AID message, Washington official asked Ambassador Lodge to supply specific proposals and scheduling for the following actions that they regarded as having been agreed upon at Honolulu: 1) move additional RVN troops into the eight "super-critical" provinces; 2) develop and carry out hamlet-by-hamlet oil spot and clear-and-hold operation plans for each of the approximately 40 districts within the provinces; 3) introduce a system of population control, by curfews, identification papers, and other measures; 4) build up the provincial police forces; 5) expand the information program by distributing 40,000 radio receivers and by other measures; 6) develop an economic aid program tailored to the needs of each province (medicines, school construction materials, etc.); 7) assign 434 US personnel, initially from in-country, consisting of 320 provincial and district military advisors, 40 USOM advisors, and 74 battalion advisors (two eac for 37 battalions); 8) transfer military personnel to fill USO shortages where necessary; 9) establish joint US-GVN teams to monitor the pacification program at both the national and provincial levels.36

Ambassador Lodge replied that the plans were not so firm as was apparently believed in Washington. At Honolulu, General Westmoreland had been speaking from a draft working paper that was then awaiting Country Team study and was only now receiving it. In particular the Ambassador did not consider that the number of US personnel to be employed had been settled at Honolulu.37

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35. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2339/124, 5 Jan 64, JMF 9150/3100 (4 Jun 64).

36. (S) Msg, State 2184 to Saigon, 5 Jun 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 64. SecDef, who had approved this message, informed JCS that it constituted a decision to which their three memoranda of 30 May on aspects of the US advisory effort had contributed; (S-GP 4) 1st N/H of JCS 2343/387, 10 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (28 May 64).

37. (S) Msg, Saigon 2435 to State, 8 Jun 64; (S) Msgs, Saigon 2442 and 2444 to State, 10 Jun 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 64.

The other policy elements that had been under consideration in Washington prior to the Honolulu meeting--such as selection of NVN target systems, reconnaissance over Laos, action at the United Nations, contact with Hanoi through a Canadian emissary, and a possible Congressional Resolution--continued to be discussed and developed during June. Earlier, on 22 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the low-level reconnaissance flights over Laos, instituted on 19 May as YANKEE TEAM, be continued "on an orderly basis," at a rate of about two a week. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said that complete low-level coverage of North Vietnam, as a one-time effort, should be accomplished as soon as possible in order to provide targeting intelligence for CINCPAC's strike plans. They requested authorization for Admiral Felt to conduct this aerial reconnaissance on or about 27 May. The request was not granted, but, as has already been recounted, low-level reconnaissance over Laos did become a continuing program, by agreement with the Royal Laotian Government.[38]

On 5 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a new and more detailed recommendation that low-level reconnaissance of North Vietnam be undertaken, this time for a different purpose. They designated five supply and infiltration routes leading into Northern Laos and the Laotian corridor to South Vietnam that they considered should be kept under "meaningful surveillance." The Secretary of Defense was advised that after CINCPAC had accomplished a complete initial coverage, further flights over certain portions of the routes would be required; their frequency would depend on "information obtained from the initial coverage, the risk factor, and the value of these operations from a political point of view." On 15 June Secretary McNamara noted the JCS recommendation and directed that plans to carry out such reconnaissance be kept in readiness for implementation on short notice.[39]

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38. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-444-64 to SecDef, 22 May 64, Encl to JCS 2344/80, 22 May 64, JMF 9155 (22 May 64). For the continuation of YANKEE TEAM operations, see Ch. 9.

39. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-489-64 to SecDef, 5 Jun 64, Encl to JCS 2343/412-1, 5 Jun 64; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Initial Low-Level Reconnaissance Operation into North Vietnam (S)," 15 Jun 64, Att to JCS 2343/412-2, 17 Jun 64; JMF 9155.3 (4 Jun 64) (1).

Meanwhile the continuing air reconnaissance over Laos had generated one instance of the type of positive military action to demonstrate US determination that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been recommending. One US reconnaissance aircraft was shot down by ground fire over Laos on 6 June 1964. The flights the following day were the first accompanied by armed escort, but one of the fighter escorts was knocked down, with the pilot subsequently recovered. On orders from Washington, CINCPAC launched eight F-100 aircraft on a strike mission against a communist antiaircraft installation at Xieng Khouang, Laos, on 9 June. It was designed as a single sharp act of retaliation to make the point that US forces would continue the reconnaissance operations and would fire when fired upon.[40] By that date the noncommunist forces in Laos, with US materiel assistance, were holding their own against the Pathet Lao, and there appeared to be some prospect of a negotiated settlement.

Action at the United Nations

In the pre-Honolulu consultations the President had indicated strong interest in arranging for a UN peace-keeping mission in Southeast Asia. No full-scale effort was mounted to obtain such a UN commitment, but some of the objectives of this course were achieved, and its feasibility was tested, and perhaps discounted, by other action carried forward by Ambassador Adlai Stevenson in New York.

On 13 May the Government of Cambodia had called for an early meeting of the UN Security Council to consider Cambodia's charges of "repeated acts of aggression" against its territory by US and South Vietnamese forces. The Government of South Vietnam had already acknowledged, with appropriate regrets, that in the heat of battle its forces had crossed the ill-marked frontier in pursuit of Viet Cong raiders on 7 and 8 May and on earlier occasions. The United States had offered apology for the fact that a US military advisor had accompanied an RVN force on a similar intrusion in March.[41]

40. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 55-64, 9 Jun 64. (TS-GP 3) DJSM-1011-64 to CJCS, 17 Jun 64, OCJCS Loose Files, Jun 64.

41. The United States in World Affairs, 1964, pp. 170-171.

In speeches before the Security Council on 21 and 26 May and on 4 June, Ambassador Stevenson expanded the US answer to the charges into a forceful denunciation of the aggressive actions of North Vietnam in Southeast Asia.

> The recent difficulties along the frontier . . . are only superficially and accidentally related to the Republic of Viet-Nam. They are deeply and directly related to the fact that the leaders and armed forces of North Viet-Nam, supported by Communist China, have abused the right of Cambodia to live in peace by using Cambodian territory as a passageway, a source of supply, and a sanctuary from counterattack by the forces of South Viet-Nam . . . .
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> It is the outrageous, the persistent military action of the Hanoi regime which constitutes the longstanding threat to the peace of Southeast Asia and to the territorial integrity of the other nations of that region. That, and that only, is the cause of the war in Southeast Asia.

He urged that the United Nations place its peace-keeping experience at the disposal of Cambodia and South Vietnam and said that the United States would welcome some form of UN-sponsored border patrol force.[42]

The resolution passed on 4 June was less impressive, however. The strongest action the Security Council was willing to endorse was the dispatch of an investigative mission to the RVN-Cambodian border area, composed of representatives from Brazil, the Ivory Coast, and Morocco, with instructions to "consider such measures as may prevent any recurrence of such incidents" and report to the Security Council within 45 days.[43]

The further history of the mission was not unfavorable to US interests, however. The radio voice of the National Liberation Front had already reviled the United Nations for

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42. Dept of State Bulletin, L (8 Jun 64), pp. 907-913; L (15 Jun 64), pp. 937-941; L (29 Jun 64), pp. 1002-1004.
43. Dept of State Bulletin, L (29 Jun 64), p. 1004.

listening to "slanders" against the patriotic Viet Cong forces from the lips of the US imperialists and their lackeys. It continued to do so, adding a vow to oppose with force any entry of UN representatives into South Vietnamese territory. When the mission reported on 28 July 1964, it advised the Security Council that unarmed UN civilian observers could monitor the border from the Cambodian side but could not expec to function within South Vietnam because of Viet Cong hostility.[44]

Elsewhere in the realm of diplomacy, the new Canadian member of the Vietnam component of the International Control Commission had arrived in Southeast Asia and on 18 June had held an extended conversation with the North Vietnamese Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong. High officials in Washington were aware that the Canadian diplomat had conveyed the message of US determination to oppose North Vietnamese aggression and support of insurgency, with its corollary that the United Stat did not have destruction of the Hanoi regime as a further goal and sought no wider war. He had also made known his availability as a channel for transmission of any proposal the Hano leaders might wish to send to Washington.[45]

Further Thought on a Congressional Resolution

Among the Washington officials concerned with US policy i Southeast Asia the desirability of seeking a Congressional Resolution as prior sanction for the stronger measures that might become necessary was generally accepted, though the question of optimum timing was still unsettled. This was the central point addressed by Assistant Secretary of State William P. Bundy in a memorandum that was scheduled for discussion on 15 June by the same group of advisors, headed by Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, whose thought had given impetus to the Honolulu conference.[46]

Mr. Bundy's first paragraph briefly set the scene:

> Now that we have worked through the immediate problem of the shooting down of our aircraft over

44. Douglas Pike, Viet Cong (1966), pp. 473-474. NY Times 29 Jul 64, 2.

45. (TS) Memo, W. H. Sullivan to SecDef, "Canadian Consultations in Hanoi," 22 Jun 64, OCJCS Loose Files, Jun 64.

46. (TS) Memo, McGeorge Bundy to SecState and SecDef, 15 Jun 64, same file.

Laos and have Souvanna Phouma's clear understanding that reconnaissance flights may continue over the Plaine des Jarres and 'South Laos' and with escort as necessary, we should now draw back and examine the total picture as it may develop in the next three to four months and what our central plan should be.

"We do not expect at the present time to move in the near future to military action against North Viet-Nam," he wrote, but some important change in conditions, largely beyond US control, might compel reconsideration. For instance, a marked deterioration might occur in South Vietnam that would dictate a forecast "more gloomy than the one that was reached at Honolulu," or the Pathet Lao might break loose in another strong offensive.

"We have entered a negotiating track on Laos." At best, it might lead ultimately to a trailing off of hostilities and a restoration of something like the status quo ante among the several Laotian factions, a strengthening of Souvanna's position, and perhaps even an improvement in the effectiveness of the International Control Commission. The negotiations might be inconclusive or, at worst, might take a turn that the United States could not avoid opposing so forcefully as to regenerate the crisis.

The United States could not weaken in these negotiations without demoralizing the Khanh government, but if they were protracted, this, too, might arouse concern in Saigon "that we are moving toward negotiated solutions for both Laos and South Viet-Nam." Hence, Secretary Bundy believed, the United States must find continuing means of demonstrating its firmness to Souvanna, to Khanh, "and, above all, to Hanoi." And always there was the possibility that the situation in South Vietnam, on its own, could deteriorate to the point where action against the North appeared the only solution.

For all of these reasons there is a very strong argument for a continuing demonstration of US firmness and for complete flexibility in the hands of the Executive in the coming political months. The action that most commends itself for this purpose is an immediate Congressional Resolution, subject to the following conditions:

a. A formula must be devised, in consultation with the Congressional leadership, that would ensure rapid passage without extended and divisive debate. The draft resolution must support any action required but must at the same time place maximum stress on our peaceful objectives and our willingness to accept eventual negotiated solutions, so that we might hope to have the full support of the school of thought headed by Senator Mansfield and Senator Aiken and leave ourselves with die-hard opposition only from Senator Morse and his very few cohorts.

b. Timing must be considered. Because of proximity on either side to the Republican convention, July appears very difficult. Early August is likewise difficult because the Congress will probably be rushing to complete other measures and adjourn before the Democratic convention. We thus conclude that the only feasible time for presentation would be shortly following the conclusion of the Civil Rights debate, i.e. during the week of June 22. . . .

It may be argued that a Congressional Resolution under present circumstances faces the serious difficulty that there is no drastic change in the situation to point to. The opposing argument is that we might well not have such a drastic change even later in the summer and yet conclude--either because of the Polish consultations [on Laos] or because of the South Viet-Nam situation--that we had to act.

Accordingly, the Assistant Secretary of State recommended that the President be advised to begin consultations with the

Congressional leadership on an urgent basis regarding the draft Joint Resolution that was attached.[47]

The evidence available does not indicate the outcome of the discussion among the principal advisors on 15 June, but it is probable that they remained divided on the desirability of seeking Congressional action in the near future. The proposal was not formally introduced in the Congress at that time. That the question remained an active one may be surmised, however, from the fact that the President asked the Department of State on 22 June for an analysis of the Chief Executive's legal authority to send US forces to South Vietnam.[48]

General Taylor's Recommendations on Patterns of Attack

When the Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted their memorandum on the central purpose of the Honolulu conference to the Secretary of Defense on 2 June, General Taylor had termed it "an agreed JCS paper less the views of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, which I will submit later."[49] His own memorandum went to Secretary McNamara on 5 June. General Taylor reviewed the main points of the JCS submission, which had defined two courses of action--one a primary and recommended course and the other a lesser course. "As I understand the distinction between the two alternatives," the Chairman wrote, "the first calls for a concurrent attack upon North Vietnamese will and capabilities in order to induce the North Vietnamese to cease their attack upon their neighbors and in addition, by destroying in large part their military capabilities, to assure that they cannot resume these attacks." The second alternative placed less emphasis on destruction of capabilities, being designed chiefly to induce the enemy to change his policy.

47. (S) "Second Draft," Asst SecState(FE), "Memorandum on the Southeast Asia Situation: Probable Developments and the Case for a Congressional Resolution," 12 Jun 64, in folder attached to (TS) Memo, McGeorge Bundy to SecState and SecDef, 15 Jun 64, OCJCS Loose Files, Jun 64.

48. (S) Memo, Deputy Legal Adviser to SecState, "President's Request re Legal Basis for Sending United States Troops to Viet-Nam," 26 Jun 64, same file.

49. (TS-GP 1) CM-1450-64 to SecDef, 2 Jun 64, and (TS-GP 1) JCSM-471-64 (Revised) to SecDef, 2 Jun 64, Encls A and B to JCS 2343/394-1, 2 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3 (28 May 64).

General Taylor believed this was not "an accurate or com plete expression of our choices" and that there were three patterns on which the attack against North Vietnam might be initiated. In descending order of weight they were: 1) a massive air attack to destroy all significant military target and render the enemy incapable of further support of the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao; 2) a lesser attack on some significant part of the military target system in North Vietnam to convin the enemy that it was in his interest to stop aiding the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao and, if possible, to obtain his cooperati "in calling off the insurgents"; 3) "demonstrative strikes" against limited military targets to show US readiness and intent to pass to the more drastic alternative attack pattern

General Taylor opposed launching the maximum attack at t outset. He held that it would be unnecessarily destructive merely to change the enemy's will and would lessen the chance of gaining cooperation from Hanoi in calling off the insurgen The maximum pattern would pose such a challenge to the Communist Bloc as to raise considerably the risks of escalation. The Chairman favored the second pattern, but he sensed that political considerations would dispose the responsible US civilian leaders to prefer the third one. He noted that the third pattern of attack could be accomplished by VNAF aircrai alone, "perhaps stiffened by FARM GATE."[50]

General Taylor recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop a plan for the demonstrative strikes defined in his third alternative. On 10 June Secretary McNamara informed the Chairman that he concurred in this recommendation.[51]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff assigned the major planning activity in response to this directive to CINCPAC.[52] Subsequently it became merged with a broader effort toward refine ment of the target lists for attack against North Vietnam,

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50. (TS-GP 1) CM-1451-64 to SecDef, 5 Jun 64, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2343/394-1, 8 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3 (28 May 64).
51. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 Jun 64, Att to JCS 2343/394-2 15 Jun 64, same file.
52. (TS) Msg, JCS 6888 to CINCPAC, 16 Jun 64.

carried on both at CINCPAC Headquarters and in Washington. As will be recounted, the result, in August, was transformation of the 91-target list the Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 30 May into a new document identifying 94 targets.

CINCPAC OPLAN 38-64

Meanwhile another product of CINCPAC's planning had been received. On 1 June Admiral Felt submitted CINCPAC OPLAN 38-64, "Military Operations to Terminate Aggression in Southeast Asia." As a plan for US military action, primarily with air and naval forces, against sudden large-scale Chinese Communist and North Vietnamese aggression, it responded to the interest shown by the Secretary of Defense in this subject in February.

The plan provided for early, massive employment of US air and naval power to defend the general line of the Mekong River and to inflict "punitive and crippling blows" against mainland China. The initial ground defense of Southeast Asia would be limited to delaying actions by local national forces, subsequently reinforced by US and allied ground units. At the outbreak of hostilities US air forces would at once attack enemy strength in Southeast Asia and South China, achieve local air superiority in areas of ground action, and give close air support to friendly ground forces. At the same time, naval forces would bombard coastal areas and gain control of sea lanes. Deployments of US and allied ground forces to Thailand and South Vietnam would begin "in the minimum strength required to conduct a definitive ground defense" of critical points along the Mekong line. Following the initial stage, ground and amphibious operations would strike against the invaders and ultimately eject communist forces from Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam.

As sufficient forces were generated, PACOM air and naval forces, supported by SAC, would "effect deliberate intensification of the conflict by punitive and crippling offensive operations against selected targets in other areas of Communist China to the degree necessary to terminate the confict." While every effort would be made to implement the plan with conventional weapons, US forces would have the capability to employ [nuclear and] controlled fragmentation munitions weapons on a highly selective basis if necessary to accomplish the mission.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved CINCPAC OPLAN 38-64, subject to minor modifications, on 29 July.[53]

Status of Recommendations 11 and 12, NSAM 288

On 24 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff again addressed the Secretary of Defense regarding the status of Recommendations 11 and 12 of NSAM 288. They noted that the required US military planning had been accomplished, specifically in COMUSMACV OPLANs 98 and 98A, for covert and overt cross-border operation into Laos, to implement Recommendation 11, and in CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64, treating both cross-border operations and the strikes against North Vietnam called for by Recommendation 12. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned over the general lack of progress beyond that point. While Recommendation 11 authorized hot pursuit and ground operations into Laos under varying circumstances, the Department of State so far had sanctioned only limited covert intelligence-collection patrols. While the planned operations depended primarily on RVN forces, there had been no discussion as yet with the South Vietnamese government and no move toward combined US-GVN planning and training. The same lack of consultation with the GVN affected the readiness to implement Recommendation 12.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that Secretary McNamara seek the concurrence of Secretary Rusk that "non-committing negotiations" be begun with the GVN, so that readiness could be advanced by instituting combined planning and training. As a collateral benefit, awareness that such activity was going on could add to the pressures felt by the communist leaders in Hanoi.[54]

Resignation of Ambassador Lodge

The further working out of this proposal, and of other pending matters, occurred after an extensive shifting of the assignments of key military and diplomatic personnel. At his

53. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC OPLAN 38-64, 1 Jun 64, JMF 3146 (1 Jun 64) sec 1. (TS-GP 3) SM-1215-64 to CINCPAC, 29 Jul 64, Encl to JCS 2054/635-6, 17 Jul 64, same file, sec 2.

54. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-541-64 to SecDef, 24 Jun 64, Encl. to JCS 2343/415, 21 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3 (21 Jun 64).

press conference on 23 June the President had read the letter by which Henry Cabot Lodge tendered his resignation as Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam. "I do so entirely for personal reasons," the Ambassador had written on 19 June, and he reaffirmed his support of existing US policy. The President announced that he intended to nominate General Maxwell D. Taylor to succeed Lodge as Ambassador. He would also name the current Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, to serve in the new post of Deputy Ambassador. To fill the position of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, vacated by General Taylor, the President designated General Earle G. Wheeler.[55] Subsequently, General Wheeler assumed the duties of Chairman on 3 July 1964, with General Harold K. Johnson becoming Chief of Staff, Army.

These changes happened to coincide with others of importance. On 30 June Admiral Felt had been relieved as Commander in Chief, Pacific, by Admiral Ulysses S. Grant Sharp, Jr., who had been serving as CINCPACFLT. About a week earlier General Harkins had returned to Washington, and Lieutenant General William C. Westmoreland had assumed the duties of COMUSMACV. General Harkins was established as a consultant in the office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the period until his retirement on 1 August.[56] At the request of Ambassador Taylor, Mr. Sullivan was transferred to Saigon in July to serve on the Embassy staff. The President named Mr. Michael Forrestal to succeed him as Chairman of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee in Washington.

At the press conference on 23 June the President restated and reaffirmed the US policy.

> I have said before that there is danger in Southeast Asia. It is a danger brought on by the terrorism and aggression so clearly, if secretively, directed from Hanoi. The United States intends no rashness and seeks no wider war. But the United States is determined to use its strength to help those who are defending themselves against terror and aggression. We are a people of peace--but not of weakness or timidity.

55. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (13 Jul 64), pp. 46-47.
56. (U) CM-1437-64 to SecState et al., 18 Jun 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 64.

The South Vietnamese were a proud people, Mr. Johnson said. "The task of building their peace and progress is their own; but they can count on our help for as long as they need it and want it."57

57. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (13 Jul 64), p. 47.

Chapter 11

AMBASSADOR TAYLOR'S FIRST MONTH

Ambassador Taylor Takes Charge

Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor arrived in Saigon on 7 July 1964. He assumed his new post with greater powers than had been granted to any of his predecessors. The President's letter of instruction, besides assigning full responsibility to the Ambassador for all the US programs in South Vietnam, contained the following statement: "I wish it clearly understood that this overall responsibility includes the whole military effort in South Vietnam and authorizes the degree of command and control that you consider appropriate." President Johnson left the means of exercising control over COMUSMACV's activities to Ambassador Taylor's discretion, telling him to work out arrangements that made his authority effective but did not unduly burden him in the exercise of his other functions.[1] Moreover, the US establishment that Taylor came to head had been greatly strengthened by creation of the post of Deputy Ambassador, occupied by a top-notch career diplomat, U. Alexis Johnson, and by the addition of other talent, such as that of Mr. Sullivan.

Against these advantages were to be ranged a formidable set of circumstances, for it was General Taylor's fate to assume the Ambassadorship on the eve of one of the most difficult periods in the entire history of the US endeavor in South Vietnam. General Khanh, under an accumulation of burdens, pressures, and uncertainties, was shortly to turn fractious and unpredictable. The course he took during the remainder of 1964 frequently contravened US policy and precipitated a continuing domestic crisis in South Vietnam. To a remarkable degree, Khanh's actions fulfilled the program he had sketched to Ambassador Lodge on 4 May but had later seemed to set aside in deference to US counsel. It included declaration that his country was being invaded by the North Vietnamese, attempts to rally his people by calling for a "March North," and a scheme for reorganizing the government. The last of these was the most hurtful. It sent the government of South Vietnam

1. (S) Msg, State 20 to Saigon, 2 Jul 64.

reeling through a series of changes in form and personnel, each attended by public discontent, Buddhist and student demonstrations, and faltering governmental control. The result was frustration of the US desire to see a strong and stable government in South Vietnam that would implement an effective pacification plan and prove a reliable partner in any stronger actions against the North that became necessary.

These untoward events still lay in the future when Ambassador Taylor made his first official call on General Khanh, on 8 July. Khanh greeted him cordially, expressed satisfaction at his appointment, and pledged the "frank cooperation of a soldier." The Ambassador, in turn, promised to deal frankly with Khanh in every way. The two men agreed that all efforts of their respective governments should be fully coordinated. Upon learning of the new US Mission Council into which Ambassador Taylor had organized his key subordinates, Khanh undertook to form an analogous council to work with the US group. He said the Americans should be more than advisors; they should participate actively in the making and implementing of plans, not only in the field but in the GVN ministries in Saigon as well. Cooperation should be limited only by the need to avoid situations that would lend credence to the familiar communist charge that the GVN was only a puppet of the Americans.[2]

At that time, in early July, the US Embassy's assessment was that Khanh still had not succeeded in mobilizing his country's resources behind him in a determined effort against the Viet Cong. Although fairly secure in his position of leadership, he had not noticeably increased his popular support and did not even command the loyalty of all his ministers. Nevertheless, a certain stability had been attained, with the country's grave political problems temporarily under control. In the military field, US advisors were growing cautiously optimistic as the improved organization of the RVNAF and paramilitary forces began to take effect. During June there had been a slight increase in the number of men under arms, a significant drop in desertions, better coordination among the services of the RVNAF, and increased aggressiveness and tenacity in ARVN operations.[3]

2. (S-GP 3) Msg, Saigon 56 to State, 8 Jul 64. The changes in Embassy organization and procedures introduced by Amb Taylor are described more fully in Ch. 16.

3. (S-GP 3) Msg, Saigon 87 to State, 13 Jul 64.

As for assessment of the enemy situation, General Westmoreland in mid-July submitted a revised estimate of the organization and strength of Viet Cong forces. It confirmed the existence of the following VC elements: 5 regimental headquarters, 46 battalions, 132 separate companies, and 29 separate platoons. The strength of these confirmed VC units was computed at about 31,000--a higher figure than previously estimated. It was believed to result from a marked improvement in the quantity and quality of intelligence information being obtained rather than from an actual increase in enemy strength.[4]

Secretary Rusk expressed concern over reports of growing VC strength and aggressiveness in the northern provinces, evidenced by battalion-size attacks on two Special Forces camps and a hamlet within a short period of time. A supply convoy had recently been ambushed. Meanwhile most of the intelligence teams that had been sent into Laos had not been heard from and their apparent fate indicated that the enemy strength in southern Laos must be sizable. The Secretary of State asked Ambassador Taylor to consider the feasibility of additional air and ground reconnaissance to obtain hard intelligence on the VC situation in the northern provinces and adjacent areas in southern Laos.[5]

The Ambassador replied that the increased estimate of enemy strength and the recent upward trend of VC activity in the northern provinces should not "occasion overconcern." "We have been coping with this strength for some time without being accurately aware of its dimensions," Taylor wrote. As for the heightened tempo of operations, the Ambassador thought there was "considerable reason to believe that the VC command thinks we are about to shift larger forces to the Saigon area than the modest transfer actually planned and that these are holding attacks to pin forces in the north." Nevertheless, there was need to expedite the combined US-GVN effort, and the US Mission Council was studying the military personnel requirements that General Westmoreland had developed for execution of the pacification plan in the critical provinces around Saigon and for subsequent operations up to about July 1965. Ambassador Taylor thought that US military strength in South Vietnam should probably be increased to around 21,000 men during the next six months to meet projected needs.[6]

4. (S) Msg, Saigon 107 to State, 15 Jul 64.
5. (TS) Msg, State 130 to Saigon, 14 Jul 64.
6. (S) Msg, Saigon 108 to State, 15 Jul 64.

Major Increase in US Military Personnel

General Westmoreland had developed his requirements for additional manpower in two steps. As an immediate result of the discussions at Honolulu on 1-2 June, he had obtained the agreement of the Khanh government to accept US military advisors at the battalion level throughout the RVNAF and to extend the advisory effort in the eight critical provinces to the district level. On 25 June General Westmoreland submitted the manpower requirement for this undertaking to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Within a total of over 900 men, the following spaces would be above current allotments and would require authorization:

	Army	USMC	Total
Officer	141	1	142
Enlisted	548	10	558
Total	689	11	700 [7]

After study, and receipt of CINCPAC's concurrence in the request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the augmentation be approved. They noted, however, that this and other personnel assignments to USMACV were forcing the Services to make critical adjustments in their manpower posture. The Army contribution of 689 men, for instance, was the approximate equivalent of a ROAD infantry battalion. The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary to give priority consideration to raising the Service manpower ceilings to accommodate these unprogrammed requirements.[8]

On 16 July General Westmoreland submitted a broader request, for additional personnel, units, and equipment to support the pacification program in South Vietnam over the next year. When combined with several other increments already requested and currently under review in Washington, COMUSMACV's submission set the command's total requirement for new personnel at about 4,200 officers and men, drawn from all Services. The largest of the pending requests was the one for 700 battalion and

7. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J32 5380 to JCS, 25 Jun 64, JMF 1040.1 (1 May 64) sec 2.
8. (S-GP 4) JCSM-632-64 to SecDef, 24 Jul 64 (derived from JCS 2428/360-5), same file, sec 3.

district-level advisors. There were other personnel increments, however, either pending or already approved but not yet supplied, that had not at first been taken into account. When recomputed several days later, COMUSMACV's total requirement for new personnel stood at 4,772. These were to be added to an existing strength of slightly over 16,000.

While the prime purpose of COMUSMACV's program was to place more advisors in the field, their increase would generate a substantial further requirement for administrative and logistical personnel and for helicopters and airlift support. Under the program the number of lower-echelon field advisors would be almost doubled, as would the number of locations involved, and each of the latter would be at the end of communications and supply lines. General Westmoreland called for augmentation of his cargo airlift capability by one squadron of USAF C-123s for what he called his "wholesale" delivery system, and an additional company of 16 Army Caribou aircraft for "retail" delivery. Three C-123 squadrons were currently located in South Vietnam. Demands for their services exceeded their normal capabilities, and these squadrons had consistently overflown their programmed 60 hours a month since the beginning of 1964. General Westmoreland pointed out that here, as elsewhere throughout the support base, introduction of advisors in the numbers contemplated would impose demands that could not be met by further overutilization of existing facilities and services.

COMUSMACV also asked for two Army airmobile companies, each with 25 UH-1B helicopters, and two airlift platoons, each with 10 helicopters of the same type. When added to his existing forces, this increase would come close to fulfilling the need General Westmoreland recognized for one airmobile company to fly in support of each of the ARVN's nine divisions, plus one company as a corps-level quick reaction reserve in both the III and IV Corps, and another for general reserve in the Saigon and Delta area. Some of these aircraft he planned to use in "an armed helicopter configuration," mainly as escort for other helicopters engaged in troop and cargo lift. He also sought one medical helicopter ambulance detachment, with five UH-1Bs. This would double COMUSMACV's medical evacuation support capability, rectifying the existing shortfall and meeting needs that would arise from the increase and wider dispersion of US advisory personnel.

General Westmoreland observed that helicopters had proved exceedingly valuable to ARVN corps, division, and sector commanders and to US advisors for command, control, liaison, and

conduct of early reconnaissance in advance of convoys and reaction forces. The most damaging blows struck by the Viet Cong were ambushes of tactical formations and attacks on hamlets and outposts. To provide timely reinforcement of positions under attack, COMUSMACV was planning in conjunction with the RVNAF to establish "quick reaction heliborne forces, in each division area, capable of reinforcing beleaguered friendly elements with company size forces in one hour."

Among the unit increases requested by COMUSMACV was an increment that would allow the constitution of a Special Forces Group on a PCS basis, as opposed to the TDY status on which the Special Forces teams already in South Vietnam were serving. The battalion-size attacks that the Viet Cong had been mounting against Special Forces camps in the mountain border areas had demonstrated the need for reinforcements to fill out the half-strength detachments currently assigned to these camps. An increase of 592 US Army Special Forces personnel would bring their total to 1,299; organization as a Special Forces Group would provide effective command and control over their enlarged capabilities.[9]

Ambassador Taylor immediately supported COMUSMACV's request, noting that the personnel, unit, and equipment requirements had been developed "in the light of plans to intensify pacification in certain priority areas and to improve operations throughout the country." Since the aggressiveness and capabilities of the Viet Cong seemed to be rising, he saw a need for substantial improvement in ARVN reaction at the battalion level, for quicker responses in "counterambush" operations. The Ambassador also endorsed the introduction of a Special Forces Group on a PCS basis. This step should make it possible "to carry on an effective offensive counter-guerrilla program--something we have done only to a limited degree in the past," he wrote on 17 July. Barring unforeseen contingencies, the increases now sought "should meet the US military personnel requirement for pacification operations for approximately the next twelve months."[10]

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9. The basic submission was (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J31 6180 to CINCPAC, 16 Jul 64. The above discussion also draws on the subsequent detailed justifications contained in (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 6227 to CINCPAC, 17 Jul 64, and (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J1 7044 to JCS, 28 Jul 64.

10. (S) Msg, Saigon 125 to State, 17 Jul 64.

On 20 July CINCPAC informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he also generally supported COMUSMACV's proposals.[11] On the same day the Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed a similar view during a meeting with the Secretary of Defense, but they reserved their final recommendations until more detailed justification had been received from the field. Among the further materials received was General Westmoreland's proposed schedule for introduction of the units, personnel, and equipment into South Vietnam. The phase-in dates fell generally in October, though some extended over a period ending in December, and the introduction of the Special Forces Group would not be completed until 1 February 1965. Secretary McNamara asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess the ability of the Services to meet COMUSMACV's proposed schedule and to examine the possibility of accelerating it to the point of completing the movement of all units by 30 September 1964.[12]

The JCS reply to the Secretary of Defense, in a memorandum dated 4 August, presented the advice of the Services that in some instances COMUSMACV's proposed schedule could not be met on an orderly basis. The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a revised schedule for the phase-in, citing in this connection General Westmoreland's statement that the dates he had proposed should not be considered overriding if meeting them would involve sacrifice of quality or adequate preparation. The JCS schedule would set back most of the unit arrival dates to November or December. COMUSMACV's schedule for the arrival of personnel not associated with unit movements was generally acceptable, however, and could be met with minor exceptions.

The implications involved in accelerating the program so that all movements were completed by 30 September were examined in detail. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that "almost without exception, the Services can meet the desired acceleration if the costs of the serious interference with Service training, testing, and combat readiness are accepted."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that the contemplated expansion of US forces in South Vietnam would require construction of additional living accommodations and airfield facilities,

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11. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 200036Z Jul 64.
12. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J1 7044 to JCS, 28 Jul 64. (S-GP 4) JCS 2343/431, 2 Aug 64, JMF 9155.3 (2 Aug 64).

at an estimated cost of $6,500,000, with the construction taking five months from the receipt of funds. COMUSMACV had stated that existing airfield facilities, including maintenance hangars and parking areas, were already being utilized to capacity. The Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the requirement of five months for construction "could be a critical factor, limiting accelerated introduction of the increased US effort into South Vietnam by 30 September 1964." They implied that COMUSMACV should be asked to determine the effect of this limitation before a decision for accelerated introduction was made.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that MAP funds be authorized to meet the construction requirements generated by the deployments. They also renewed their previous recommendation that Service manpower ceilings be raised to accommodate COMUSMACV's unprogrammed personnel requirements.

Differences among the Joint Chiefs of Staff required that the central recommendation of their memorandum of 4 August be stated as a split view. The Chairman, the Chief of Staff, Army, and the Chief of Naval Operations recommended to the Secretary of Defense that authority be granted to deploy all the units listed by COMUSMACV, on the revised movement schedule proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps affirmed their support of the dispatch of "any additional US forces whose potential contribution to the war justifies their introduction," and they endorsed the recommendation that General Westmoreland's request be fulfilled, subject to two exceptions.

It was the view of General LeMay and General Greene that "COMUSMACV's justification for introducing 77 additional helicopters and an additional CV-2B Caribou Company requires further clarification." With respect to the helicopter augmentation, "there needs to be clearer understanding as to intended utilization in a transport role as opposed to the armed configuration." They noted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already agreed that the manner in which armed helicopters were being employed in South Vietnam required investigation. To the Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant the fundamental question that should be answered was "whether the necessary close air support can be provided by VNAF/USAF fixed wing aircraft, either presently in South Vietnam or which may be programmed therefor." Without this information there was an inadequate basis for action on COMUSMACV's helicopter request. As for the proposed Caribou

augmentation, they wished to defer action until General Westmoreland had more fully defined the nature and magnitude of his airlift needs.[13]

The Secretary of Defense announced his decisions in a memorandum dated 7 August. Although recognizing that an accelerated deployment schedule would cause problems for the Services in certain areas, he directed that it be adopted. In view of the urgent need for additional US support for the Republic of Vietnam, "the resulting temporary reductions in U.S. capabilities, training programs and exercises are considered acceptable." Secretary McNamara ordered that all the units, personnel, and equipment requested by COMUSMACV be prepared for deployment to reach South Vietnam by 30 September 1964, with a few exceptions that he listed for deferred arrival. The views of General LeMay and General Greene on the introduction of additional helicopters and Caribou aircraft had been considered, he wrote; "I have concluded that these items should be supplied to COMUSMACV." General Westmoreland should be queried, however, regarding his ability to absorb the increases on the indicated schedule; where necessary, he should designate more acceptable arrival dates. The Secretary of Defense authorized use of MAP funds to meet construction requirements. The JCS recommendation that Service manpower ceilings be raised to accommodate COMUSMACV's unprogrammed requirements would be considered as a separate matter, he wrote. (During the remainder of 1964 the Joint Chiefs of Staff received no direct written reply to this recommendation.)[14]

When queried by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Westmoreland recommended strongly against compressing the shipment of men, units, and equipment into the time remaining before 30 September. He said that such a rapid build-up would overload existing facilities and create administrative problems beyond his capacity to handle in an orderly manner. Ambassador Taylor and CINCPAC supported him in this objection. Accordingly

13. (S-GP 4) JCSM-665-64 to SecDef, 4 Aug 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/431, 2 Aug 64, JMF 9155.3 (2 Aug 64). The question of the use being made of armed helicopters was part of a larger question that had been raised in Congress and in the press regarding the degree to which US personnel were engaging in combat operations; for fuller discussion, see Ch. 16.

14. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Additional Support for Republic of Vietnam on an Accelerated Basis," 7 Aug 64, Att to JCS 2343/431-1, 10 Aug 64, JMF 9155.3 (2 Aug 64).

the Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted a new phase-in schedule submitted by COMUSMACV. The Chairman informed the Secretary of Defense by memorandum on 14 August that it would yield a buildup of US personnel on the following progression:

1,955 by 1 October 1964
3,595 by 1 November 1964
4,566 by 1 December 1964
4,680 by 1 January 1965
4,747 by 1 February 1965 [15]

Well before this, on 21 July, the Secretary of State had informed Ambassador Taylor that "highest authority has approved in principle, subject to further review of details, the requested increase in authorized military strength to about 22,000." In a further message two days later he said that Washington officials thought announcement of the forthcoming major increase in US assistance should be made initially in Saigon, perhaps through a brief joint statement by the Ambassador and General Khanh. "Believe this would tend to focus attention on US-GVN partnership and might go some way towards satisfying General Khanh's continuing need for evidence of our support," Secretary Rusk wrote.[16]

Ambassador Taylor agreed fully that Khanh should be a party to the announcement. In fact, he suggested to the Secretary of State on 25 July that Khanh make the formal announcement in the name of the GVN while he, Taylor, stood by to follow with a "backgrounder" statement. "This will enable Khanh to present the Vietnamese people with a solid achievement of increased US material support and hopefully serve in some small degree to undercut the pressures on him reported in separate telegrams."[17]

General Khanh announced the increase in US support in broad terms on 27 July. News accounts added the rounded figures and other details released in Washington. The United States would send 5,000 men to South Vietnam over the next few months, raising the existing military mission from 16,000

15. (S-GP 4) CM-80-64 to SecDef, 14 Aug 64, Att to 1st N/H to JCS 2343/431-1, 18 Aug 64, same file.
16. (S) Msg, State 205 to Saigon, 21 Jul 64; (TS) Msg, State 224 to Saigon, 23 Jul 64.
17. (TS) Msg, Saigon 215 to State, 25 Jul 64.

to 21,000, an increase of more than 30 percent. The New York Times saw this as "further evidence of the deep concern in Washington about the trend of the war" but said it did not signal a US decision "to carry the war into North Vietnam or to throw American units into combat." News accounts noted that the decision marked a definite abandonment of the goal of substantial US withdrawal from South Vietnam by the end of 1965, which the White House had announced in October 1963. (In actuality, a message from the Office of the Secretary of Defense had instructed CINCPAC to cease planning on this basis on 8 April 1964.)[18]

When certain other pending increases were approved, the total authorized US military personnel for South Vietnam stood at 22,226 on 14 August 1964.[19]

Disturbing Moves by General Khanh

The references to General Khanh's situation in the messages exchanged by Ambassador Taylor and Secretary Rusk bespoke their disquiet over the recent actions of the South Vietnamese leader and other members of his government. The first instance of assertive and unpredictable behavior had occurred at a news conference on 14 July. There GVN military officials, without prior coordination with COMUSMACV, had charged that infiltration from the North was increasing at a rapid rate. Apparently trying to create the impression of a major invasion, they told the press that organized regular North Vietnamese military units were being sent into South Vietnam.[20]

Ambassador Taylor immediately set up a press briefing at which COMUSMACV's Chief of Staff denied that there was any evidence of infiltration by organized units and attempted to dampen the excitement caused by the GVN statements. Ambassador Taylor told his Washington superiors that he was at a loss to understand General Khanh's motives in sponsoring public

18. NY Times, 28 Jul 64, 1. (S-GP 4) Msg, DEF 963028 to CINCPAC, 8 Apr 64, JMF 9155.3/3360 (25 Jan 63) sec 5. The changed basis for planning projections of US strength in South Vietnam is treated more fully in Ch. 16.

19. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Extension of US Advisory Assistance (U)," 14 Aug 64, Att to JCS 2428/360-7, 18 Aug 64, JMF 1040.1 (1 May 64) sec 3.

20. (S) Msg, Saigon 109 to State, 15 Jul 64.

statements of purported invasion, "which are not borne out by intelligence which presumably is the same as that available to us."

Before the Ambassador had an opportunity to confer with Khanh, the GVN leader took a more drastic step. On 19 July at a rally marking the tenth anniversary of the Geneva Accords, which the GVN labeled the "Day of Shame," General Khanh addressed a Saigon crowd estimated at more than 70,000 people. Khanh told his audience that the Geneva Accords, "born of Communist-Colonialist collusion," had divided the Vietnamese nation. Having failed to take over the South by force of arms, Peking and Hanoi were now trying to gain the same end through a newly convened Geneva Conference (communist spokesmen had recently endorsed proposals by the UN Secretary-General for a negotiated settlement). Vowing that South Vietnam would not allow its freedom to be bartered away in the negotiations of others, Khanh then launched into the "March Northward" theme, claiming that all his people supported a strategy of attack.

In an anniversary proclamation on the following day, Khanh declared that if VC aggression continued, the South Vietnamese government would "intensify the war to achieve total victory in order to liberate all the national territory." At the same time, Khanh's Secretary of State called for a "March North," and on 21 July the Deputy Prime Minister referred to the northward march again in an address concluding the observance of "Shame Week," as the GVN had now officially designated the period.[21]

Immediately following Khanh's first address, Secretary Rusk had reminded Ambassador Taylor of the importance of "keeping General Khanh as far as possible on the same track as ourselves regarding possible action against North." If the United States should find it necessary to strike against North Vietnam in response to significant escalation by Hanoi, it would want to be in the position of responding to new aggression rather than appearing to be carrying out previously planned and publicized offensives.[22]

The excitement aroused by the observance of Shame Week was not to run its course without further incidents, however.

21. (S) Msg, Saigon 245 to State, 29 Jul 64.
22. (S) Msg, State 192 to Saigon, 20 Jul 64.

It had refired anti-French sentiment, particularly among student groups. Students paraded in the streets of Saigon, burned effigies of General de Gaulle shaking hands with Ho Chi Minh, and defaced a French war memorial in the center of the city. In the early hours of 21 July, half a hundred students attacked the French Embassy compound, setting fire to a vehicle, breaking windows, and tearing up the ground floor offices of the Chancery. Police looked on without interfering.[23]

Ambassador Taylor reported to the State Department on 21 July that the GVN was continuing to feed distorted stories to correspondents and that Saigon newspapers were now accusing the United States of hiding the facts about North Vietnamese infiltration.[24]

At a press conference on 22 July the commander of the VNAF, Nguyen Cao Ky, made still stronger statements in an apparent attempt to prove that the "Go North" slogan was no hollow threat. He revealed that his planes had been dropping combat teams into North Vietnam on sabotage missions, thus publicly acknowledging the operations under OPLAN 34A. Further, General Ky declared that the VNAF was prepared to bomb North Vietnamese cities at any time; it had been training for this mission for three years.[25]

Reports reaching US officials through other channels added to their concern. In private, it was said, Khanh had declared that his country was tired of war, that pacification would take too long, and that the issue must be resolved promptly, either by attack on the North or by negotiation. He was said to be determined to "incite" the United States to action. General Ky, in turn, reportedly believed that the GVN must make its own decisions, since considerations arising from the presidential election campaign were paralyzing the US will.[26]

Ambassador Taylor and his Deputy, Alexis Johnson, confronted General Khanh and his principal aides on the morning of 23 July, expressly to straighten out the difficulties

23. (S) Msg, Saigon 245 to State, 29 Jul 64.
24. (C) Msg, Saigon 158 to State, 21 Jul 64.
25. (C) Msg, Saigon 172, 22 Jul 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 435.
26. (S) Msg, Saigon 186 to State, 23 Jul 64.

arising from Khanh's "March North" theme and General Ky's unfortunate remarks. The Ambassador emphasized that Ky's statements to the press could cause great damage. They were an admission against interest, giving aid to the enemy's propaganda by acknowledging GVN responsibility for the activities under OPLAN 34A. By alerting North Vietnam, they could make future operations more difficult. Ky's revelations and aggressive tone would certainly alienate some of the third countries from whom the GVN was seeking support.

General Khanh conceded that a propaganda advantage had been given to the enemy, but he argued that Hanoi's leaders would gain nothing of operational importance since they already knew perfectly well what was going on. After discussion, Khanh agreed that the damage might be lessened by having the GVN issue a formal "clarification." The Ambassador furnished a draft statement that he suggested be used.[27]

Later in the day the South Vietnamese Ministry of Defense issued a communique to the effect that Ky's statement had expressed the personal views of a single military leader and did not reflect official opinion. It was not the text the Ambassador had supplied, and US attempts to modify the wording before issuance were rejected, with a clear intimation that the GVN did not like being made to appear a puppet that reversed statements of its leading officials whenever they did not please the United States.[28]

At the morning meeting Ambassador Taylor had turned next to the more serious matter of Khanh's speeches calling for an attack on North Vietnam. He told Khanh that the combination of recent events gave the appearance of a GVN campaign to push the US Government into a course of action it was not ready to adopt. He pointed out the ill effects of such an impression. Khanh replied that he had no thought of bringing pressure on the United States; he had promised to be a loyal ally and expected to behave as one. But he held forth eloquently on the weariness of his people after twenty years of a war that had no end in sight. The war must be won soon because South Vietnamese patience had its limits. Khanh cited the recent capture of North Vietnamese personnel who said they were draftees assigned to regular army units. He insisted that the United States must recognize that, with this turn, the war had

27. (S) Msg, Saigon 180 to State, 23 Jul 64.
28. (S) Msg, Saigon 193 to State, 24 Jul 64.

entered a new phase to which "we should respond with new measures." In reporting this conversation to the Secretary of State, the Ambassador wrote that Khanh did not specify what new measures he had in mind, but "I am sure he was thinking of reprisal bombings."[29]

State Department officials speculated that Khanh's actions might merely be an expression of frustration over recent military difficulties, in which case the steadying influence of Ambassador Taylor should be sufficient to restore his resolution in pursuing the pacification program. They saw a more disturbing possibility, however. Khanh's advocacy of action against the North might be a reaction to pressures from neutralist opinion, and might indicate that such opinion was on the rise. The Ambassador was asked to be particularly alert for evidence of growing neutralist sentiment in Saigon and for any hint of North Vietnamese contact with dissidents among the deposed generals, former GVN officials, or exile groups. Also, despite the recent difficulties, Ambassador Taylor was to make every effort to remove any doubt in Vietnamese circles that the United States continued to support Khanh.[30]

Ambassador Taylor Proposes Combined Planning

In an extended assessment on 25 July, Ambassador Taylor said that Khanh appeared to have launched a deliberate campaign to associate the United States with increased military pressures on North Vietnam, disregarding the embarrassment it would cause his ally. Recalling Khanh's discussions with Ambassador Lodge in May, Taylor surmised that Khanh had been thinking for a long time about some dramatic move to raise his people's morale and to bring the war effort to a more decisive phase. It was possible that Khanh had given his "March North" speech merely to whip up public enthusiasm and aid recruiting. More likely, in Taylor's opinion, Khanh was trying to commit the United States to a program of reprisal bombing as a first step to further escalation of hostilities against North Vietnam. It was even possible that by "March North," Khanh meant literally to begin a military offensive to reunify Vietnam as soon as he felt the United States was inextricably involved.

29. (S) Msg, Saigon 185 to State, 23 Jul 64.
30. (S) Msg, State 235 to Saigon, 24 Jul 64.

In sum, Khanh, after nearly six months in office, seems to have reached the conclusion that the frustrating and ineffective instruments of government at his command are not adequate to master the Viet Cong by counter-insurgency means alone. He and his colleagues seem to have decided that they can bring cessation of Viet Cong harassment only by bringing direct pressure to bear on the North. If they are unsuccessful in getting us more directly involved, it is difficult to judge at this stage how strong pressures would become within the GVN to seek a negotiated solution.[31]

The dangers of this situation were evident. The more strongly the United States sought to dissuade Khanh from his current line of thought, the more unpredictable his actions might become. And it could not yet be judged how deeply the "March North" fever had taken hold. "One maverick pilot taking off for Hanoi with a load of bombs," Ambassador Taylor wrote, "could touch off an extension of hostilities at a time and in a form most disadvantageous to US interests."

To the Secretary of State, the Ambassador proposed a means of containing the frustrations of the GVN leaders and channeling their fervor into a more useful effort. He suggested that the United States offer to engage in combined contingency planning with the GVN for various forms of military action against North Vietnam. Such planning activity would not only force GVN officials to confront the realities that lay behind Khanh's slogan; it also could provide a basis for any military action the United States might subsequently choose to take against the North. Further, it would give US officials an opportunity to probe the thought of Khanh and his associates more deeply. In proposing combined planning to the GVN, Ambassador Taylor said, the United States must make absolutely clear that it was assuming no commitment to carry out the plans.[32]

Qualified approval of this concept reached Ambassador Taylor on 26 July in a joint State-Defense message that authorized him to make the proposal at his discretion. But he was to tell Khanh that the planning must be closely held, with only a "small and select joint group" involved. There must be absolutely no security leak. Further, the Washington authorities

31. (S) Msg, Saigon 213 to State, 25 Jul 64, JMF 9155.3 (26 Jul 64).
32. (TS) Msg, Saigon 214 to State, 25 Jul 64, same file.

believed Taylor should not put this offer in writing but should make his points orally, underscoring that the United States assumed no commitment to carry out the plans, when made.[33]

Ambassador Taylor replied that while security leaks would of course be undesirable, limiting the planning to a small and exclusive group would not realize the full benefit of such planning. Breadth of participation was desirable in order to let Khanh's military critics know that he was getting cooperation from the United States in a field in which he had taken the initiative. Some of these same generals and officials needed to be made aware of the requirements for preparation that the planning would identify. And as a practical matter, if the planning was to be effective, ample staff assistance would be required.[34]

Armed both with discretionary power to propose combined planning and with authority to suggest that Khanh make the initial announcement of the forthcoming increase in US advisory support, Ambassador Taylor went to confer with the GVN leader on 27 July. Khanh turned the discussion again to the need for pressure against North Vietnam. "Once more," the Ambassador reported to Washington, "it came out clearly that he is thinking about reprisal tit-for-tat bombing rather than a movement north with land forces or massive bombing to effect total destruction of Hanoi and all its works." Khanh wanted to strike the North in order to encourage his people and to hasten Ho Chi Minh toward the conclusion that his support of the Viet Cong should end. Khanh recognized that at some point he would need the cooperation of Ho Chi Minh to end VC activities in the South.

This line of talk gave the Ambassador his opportunity to bring up the proposal for combined contingency planning. Khanh appeared pleased but surprised to receive it, and he asked for several days to think it over. Khanh also said that he intended to declare a "state of emergency" within a short time but agreed to consult Ambassador Taylor before doing so.[35]

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33. (S) Msg, State-Defense 253 to Saigon, 25 Jul 64, same file.
34. (S) Msg, Saigon 225 to State, 27 Jul 64.
35. Ibid.

JCS Recommendations for Additional Action

The Ambassador's messages had of course received intensive consideration in Washington. At a NSC meeting on 25 July, General Wheeler had been instructed to have the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepare, as a matter of urgency, a list of those military actions that would: 1) "reduce the frustration and defeatism of the RVN leaders by undertaking punitive measures against the enemy outside the borders of the RVN"; 2) contribute militarily to the success of the counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam; 3) entail minimum risk of escalatory measures by the enemy; and 4) require minimum US participation in a combat role.[36]

Of the several actions examined by the Joint Staff in the swift course of this study, only three met all criteria. They were: 1) air strikes against Laotian infiltration routes into South Vietnam; 2) cross-border ground operations against the infiltration system; 3) selected air strikes against prime military targets in North Vietnam, using non-US, unmarked aircraft. By a memorandum on 27 July the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Secretary McNamara of their findings, analyzing each of the three courses of action and furnishing detailed supporting data.

Air strikes, including armed reconnaissance missions, against communist installations and traffic in the Laos Panhandle would reduce but not stop the flow of support to the Viet Cong. Such actions would, however, "signal sharply to Hanoi and Peking that they must pay a higher price to continue the subversion effort." While the VNAF could conduct these strikes alone, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that FARM GATE resources should be added to heighten the level of effort. Use of FARM GATE aircraft would also "ensure effective US direction of this sensitive operation in both planning and execution."

As for the second course, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that reconnaissance and punitive cross-border ground operations into Laos could locate, harass, and perhaps destroy communist installations and troop formations. Even moderate success would increase the already sizable problems of the enemy in supplying men and materiel to the Viet Cong and would reinforce the signal to Hanoi. Intelligence

36. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/426, 26 Jul 64, JMF 9155.3 (26 Jul 64).

probes and raids by RVN Special Forces and Rangers and overt attacks by units of the VNAF Airborne Brigade up to battalion size were suggested. For these efforts to achieve worthwhile results, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that US advisors must accompany the RVN units.

The third course of action was, in fact, an extension of the operations that had been going on since February 1964 under OPLAN 34A. As conducted so far, this had been "a modest, covert, psychological and punitive campaign" against North Vietnam, in which no air strikes had yet been mounted. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said that air missions by unmarked aircraft with non-US crews "to mine selected harbors and rivers and to strike prime military targets" could punish the enemy and, again, "signal sharply" to Hanoi and Peking.

Since these actions had been chosen as unlikely to trigger a communist response escalating the conflict in Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not recommend moving US combat units into South Vietnam or nearby at the present time. They observed that "the introduction of US combat forces which would sit idle could well have a psychological impact on both friends and enemies the reverse of that desired."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that the three courses of action they had described could prove militarily and psychologically beneficial to the war effort in South Vietnam, provided they did not siphon off needed resources or otherwise distract the attention of GVN leaders from their main mission, winning the counterinsurgency battle. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, nevertheless, that "these actions would not significantly affect communist support of Viet Cong operations in South Vietnam," and they noted that some of the actions might have counterproductive results in Laos from a political point of view. They recommended that Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland be asked to comment.[37]

Subsequently, copies of the JCS submission were provided to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV, but further consideration was to occur in circumstances changed by enemy action.[38]

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37. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-639-64 to SecDef, 27 Jul 64, Encl to JCS 2343/426, 26 Jul 64, JMF 9155.3 (26 Jul 64).

38. (TS-GP 3) 1st N/H to JCS 2343/426, 3 Aug 64, same file.

Action in the Gulf of Tonkin

Since late 1962, destroyers under CINCPAC's command had conducted patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin from time to time, chiefly for intelligence collection purposes, under the code word designation DESOTO. The patrolling ships were frequently subjected to communist air or surface surveillance. The most recent DESOTO patrol had been in early March 1964 when CINCPAC recommended in July that another one be scheduled to investigate North Vietnamese coastal activity. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved, directing that the patrol begin not later than 31 July.[39]

In fulfillment of this mission the US destroyer MADDOX was operating in international waters off the North Vietnamese coast on 2 August 1964. Toward midafternoon, local time (020750Z), the ship's radar detected three torpedo boats approaching at high speed. When the boats closed to 9,000 yards with apparent hostile intent, the MADDOX fired three warning shots and then opened fire with its 5-inch battery when these were disregarded. The North Vietnamese boats pressed their attack, launching two torpedoes and firing machine guns. The MADDOX evaded the torpedoes but was hit by one bullet, whose recovery provided physical evidence of the attack. Meanwhile the destroyer's battery had scored a direct hit on one enemy boat. At 020828Z, four aircraft from the carrier TICONDEROGA joined the action and attacked the PT boats, two of which were fleeing toward the shore while the third lay dead in the water and burning. The MADDOX retired southward to rendezvous with the destroyer C. TURNER JOY.[40]

On 3 August the United States Government announced that it took an extremely serious view of this unprovoked attack on a US naval vessel operating on the high seas.

> The United States Government expects that the authorities of the regime in North Viet-Nam will be under no misapprehension as to the grave consequences

39. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, pp. 367-368.

40. Ibid., pp. 368-369. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 100-64, 3 Aug 64.

which would inevitably result from any further unprovoked offensive military action against United States forces.[41]

On the same day the President issued the following statement:

> I have instructed the Navy:
>
> 1. to continue the patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of North Viet-Nam,
> 2. to double the force by adding an additional destroyer to the one already on patrol,
> 3. to provide a combat air patrol over the destroyers, and
> 4. to issue orders to the commanders of the combat aircraft and the two destroyers,
>
> (a) to attack any force which attacks them in international waters, and
> (b) to attack with the objective not only of driving off the force but of destroying it.

These instructions had already been passed to CINCPAC by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the further provision that surface pursuit of the enemy would not approach closer than 11 nautical miles to the mainland and US aircraft were not to penetrate North Vietnamese airspace.[42]

The MADDOX and C. TURNER JOY maintained the patrol on 3 August without incident. On the evening of 4 August, however, while the destroyers were near the center of the Gulf, about 65 miles from land, an undetermined number of PT boats closed for an attack. In the darkness the two destroyers evaded torpedoes and the C. TURNER JOY engaged targets seen on radar only, although return fire and enemy searchlight beams were observed. Target identification by aircraft arriving from the TICONDEROGA was hampered by low ceilings. When the enemy broke off the engagement after two hours, the C. TURNER JOY

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41. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (24 Aug 64), p. 258.
42. Ibid., p. 259. (S) Msgs, JCS 7680 and 7681 to CINCPAC, 2 Aug 64.

claimed one boat sunk by its guns and another damaged. Neither destroyer was hit and there were no US casualties.[43]

In the highest councils in Washington there appears never to have been any doubt that US retaliation must follow any second North Vietnamese attack on US warships in international waters. On 4 August, upon receipt of the first alert that attack on the DESOTO patrol might be imminent, an ad hoc group consisting of the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary, the Director, Joint Staff, the Director J-3, and several J-3 officers met at 1000 to consider possible action. Using the existing North Vietnamese target list, the group developed options for retaliatory attacks, with particular attention to installations directly related to the hostile action, namely, North Vietnamese PT and gunboat bases and their supporting POL facilities.

News that the destroyers were actually engaging the enemy reached the group at about 1100. The discussion shifted to a meeting of the Secretary of Defense with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also attended by the Secretary of State and Mr. McGeorge Bundy. When Secretaries Rusk and McNamara departed about 1145 for a scheduled NSC meeting, they were prepared to recommend to the President that retaliatory action take the form of air strikes against North Vietnamese PT/PGM bases and associated POL storage. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to send detailed recommendations to the White House as quickly as possible. In their further deliberations the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to recommend that the United States carry out severe retaliation on 5 August against several listed bases and the POL tanks in the Vinh area.

The Secretary of Defense met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff again at 1500, bringing word that the President had approved their recommendations, with some modification. He had added two base areas to the target list but had decided that, except for striking the storage tanks, the US attacks would be mounted against the boats only, not against the bases or port facilities.[44]

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43. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 102-64, 5 Aug 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, pp. 369-370.

44. The above account is drawn from (TS) J-3 Working Paper, "Command and Control of the Tonkin Gulf Incident, 4-5 August 1964," 26 Feb 65, J-3 Records.

At 042115Z August (1715 EDT) the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to conduct a one-time maximum effort attack at first light on 5 August against the POL facilities at Vinh and against "SWATOWs and PT boats located at bases Port Wallut, Hon Gay, Phuc Loi and Quang Khe and at Loc Chao estuary." Further, he was to conduct armed reconnaissance against boats found beyond the 3-mile limit. Carrier aircraft only were to be used, with all planes avoiding Hainan Island and keeping at least 50 miles from the border of Communist China. The JCS message also directed continuation of the DESOTO patrol but deferred any OPLAN 34A activities for 24 hours.[45] The retaliatory operation received the nickname PIERCE ARROW.

Less than four hours later the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC and other commanders to undertake a comprehensive series of air, sea, and ground force deployments and movement alerts, drawn from the list in CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64 and designed to advance forces toward or into Southeast Asia in order to discourage enemy reaction to PIERCE ARROW and to improve US readiness for immediate operations against North Vietnam if necessary. Perhaps the most significant of the moves was the deployment of two B-57 squadrons from the Philippines to Bien Hoa in South Vietnam, where they remained after the immediate emergency had passed.[46]

Late on the evening of 4 August in Washington the President addressed the American people by radio and television. He reported the occurrence of the second deliberate North Vietnamese attack and declared that such acts of violence against the armed forces of the United States "must be met not only with alert defense but with positive reply."

> That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight. Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Viet-Nam which have been used in these hostile operations.

President Johnson was sure that this latest act of communist aggression would cause all Americans to redouble their determination to fulfill the US commitment to the people and

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45. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7720 to CINCPAC, 042115Z Aug 64, JMF 9155.3/3230 (64).

46. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7729 to CINCPAC, CINCSTRIKE, and CINCSAC, 050043Z Aug 64, JMF 9155 (26 Jun 64) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 102-64, 5 Aug 64.

government of South Vietnam. "Yet our response, for the present, will be limited and fitting. . . . We still seek no wider war."[47]

The President actually spoke at a time between the launching of strike aircraft from the TICONDEROGA (050243Z) and from the CONSTELLATION (050500Z) and before any of them had reached the target areas.[48] A total of 64 sorties were flown in the PIERCE ARROW operation, with those scheduled against Port Wallut diverted to Hon Gay because of unfavorable weather. It was estimated that the POL facility at Vinh/Ben Thuy was 90 percent destroyed; of 30 SWATOWs and PT boats sighted, 8 were destroyed, 6 severely damaged, 10 moderately damaged, and 4 lightly damaged. Two US aircraft were lost through enemy action.[49]

The Joint Congressional Resolution

Among the consequences flowing from the aggressive actions of the North Vietnamese in the Gulf of Tonkin, the one of greatest permanent importance was the passage by the Congress of the Southeast Asia Resolution. The President, who had already consulted legislative leaders of both parties on 4 August, sent a message to the Congress the following day. He reviewed the 10-year history of the commitments undertaken by the United States in Southeast Asia, including its SEATO obligations, and the military responses to communist attacks on US forces that had been found necessary.

> As the President of the United States I have concluded that I should now ask the Congress, on its part, to join in affirming the national determination that all such attacks will be met, and that the United States

47. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (24 Aug 64), p. 259.

48. The official explanation given later was that the speech had been timed to advise the enemy that the incoming strike aircraft had a limited and specific mission and were not the first wave of an all-out attack that might include Communist China; at the same time the forewarning was judged insufficient to permit the PT bases to be cleared. The United States in World Affairs, 1964, pp. 148-149.

49. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 102-64 and 103-64, 5 and 6 Aug 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 372.

will continue in its basic policy of assisting the free nations of the area to defend their freedom.

As I have repeatedly made clear, the United States intends no rashness, and seeks no wider war. We must make it clear to all that the United States is united in its determination to bring about the end of Communist subversion and aggression in the area. We seek the full and effective restoration of the international agreements signed in Geneva in 1954, with respect to South Vietnam, and again in Geneva in 1962, with respect to Laos.

I recommend a resolution expressing the support of the Congress for all necessary action to protect our Armed Forces and to assist nations covered by the SEATO Treaty. At the same time, I assure the Congress that we shall continue readily to explore any avenues of political solution that will effectively guarantee the removal of Communist subversion and preservation of the independence of the nations of the area.

The President cited an additional reason for passing the resolution, "at a time when we are entering on 3 months of political campaigning. Hostile nations must understand that in such a period the United States will continue to protect its national interests, and that in these matters there is no division among us."[50]

A joint resolution was immediately introduced. Apart from the preamble, which referred to the recent events, it was virtually identical to the text that had been discussed in earlier months among the President's advisors. Its operative sections, as introduced and as ultimately approved, were the following:

> Resolved . . . That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.
>
> SEC. 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance

50. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (24 Aug 64), pp. 261-263.

of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

SEC. 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.[51]

Secretaries Rusk and McNamara testified together in support of the resolution before a joint meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees on the morning of 6 August. Secretary Rusk cited precedents and stressed the similarity of the proposed resolution to those passed in earlier years, copies of which were supplied for comparative purposes.

As I have said before, we cannot now be sure what actions may be required. The Formosa resolution of 1955 was followed by the use of United States warships to escort supply convoys to the offshore islands in 1958; the Middle East resolution was followed by President Eisenhower's sending of troops to Lebanon in 1958; the Cuba resolution was followed by the well-known events of October 1962. I do not suggest that any of these actions may serve as a parallel for what may be required in Southeast Asia.[52]

Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, assumed the major responsibility for explaining and supporting the resolution on the floor of the Senate. He recommended "prompt and overwhelming endorsement," believing that passage was necessary to make clear to the

51. Ibid., p. 268. PL 88-408 (H.J. Res. 1145), 78 Stat. 384, approved 10 Aug 64.
52. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (24 Aug 64), pp. 267-268.

communist powers "that their aggressive and expansionist ambitions, wherever advanced, will meet precisely the degree of American opposition which is necessary to frustrate them." Specifically, "the intent is to prevent the continuing aggression that now exists against South Vietnam."

The questions of other Senators returned more than once to the matter of whether or not the resolution constituted an advance authorization and approval for the deployment of US combat forces, perhaps in large numbers, to South Vietnam. Senator Fulbright found nothing in the wording that contemplated or encouraged such a course. "I personally feel it would be very unwise under any circumstances to put a large land army on the Asian Continent," he said, but "the language of the resolution would not prevent it." Admittedly, the resolution authorized whatever action the President as Commander in Chief found necessary. Senator Fulbright said it was his hope, fully shared by the President, that the combined effect of the resolution and the incisive military action that had been taken would be to deter North Vietnam from further aggression.

On 7 August the House of Representatives approved the Southeast Asia Resolution by a vote of 416 to 0. The Senate vote was 88 to 2 for the resolution, with all 10 of the absent Senators announced as favoring it. While some misgivings had been expressed by others, only Senators Morse and Gruening opposed the resolution outright. They thought it embodied a dangerous and unnecessary enlargement of the President's authority. Senator Morse called the resolution "a predated declaration of war"; Senator Gruening said it authorized "escalation unlimited."[53]

The United Nations and Communist Countercharges

Meanwhile, before the UN Security Council Ambassador Stevenson had charged North Vietnam with deliberate aggression against US naval forces and had defended the PIERCE ARROW retaliatory attacks as an act of self-defense fully consonant with international law and the United Nations Charter. In his speech on 5 August Ambassador Stevenson sought no specific Security Council action but dwelt instead on the ultimate goal

53. Congressional Record, vol. 110, pt 14, 5-7 Aug 64, pp. 18133, 18399-18407, 18462, 18469-18470.

of the United States in Southeast Asia: peace. "We want nothing more, and nothing less, than the assured and guaranteed independence of the peoples of the area." This end could readily be achieved whenever the Hanoi regime ceased its aggressive support of insurgency and agreed to abide by the Geneva Accords and Agreements. "Any time that decision can be put in enforceable terms," Stevenson said, "my Government will be only too happy to put down the burden that we have been sharing with those determined to preserve their independence."[54]

The Hanoi regime had already acknowledged attacking the MADDOX on 2 August, claiming that the ship had invited assault by intruding beyond the claimed 12-mile territorial limit and by providing protective cover for an RVN naval raid on two North Vietnamese islands on the night of 30-31 July (an OPLAN 34A mission). United States officials had denied that the DESOTO patrol bore any relationship to "whatever may have been going on in connection with these islands." As for the second attack in the Tonkin Gulf on 4 August, Hanoi denied its occurrence, charging that the United States had fabricated the incident to justify the "illegal" strikes against the North Vietnamese PT bases.[55]

Threats of grave consequences were heard from both Peking and Hanoi. Observable communist action appeared to be directed toward improving North Vietnam's air defenses, however. On 7 August it was determined that 36 MIG 15 and 17 aircraft had appeared at the Phuc Yen air field, probably with Chinese Communist pilots.[56]

The View from Saigon

General Khanh had been informed of the US intention to mount the PIERCE ARROW operation, in part through a message from President Johnson, delivered by the Ambassador, that read, "The measures I have ordered are intended to make unmistakably clear to the Communist leaders in Hanoi that the United States defends its rights and that our commitment to assist

54. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (24 Aug 64), pp. 272-274.
55. The United States in World Affairs, 1964, pp. 149-150. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (7 Sep 64), p. 335.
56. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 373.

your country in preserving her freedom and independence cannot be shaken . . . ."[57] General Khanh was greatly heartened by the US action. Ambassador Taylor also outlined for him the force movements and alerts, including the deployment of two B-57 squadrons to South Vietnam, that the United States was undertaking to strengthen its position in Southeast Asia. Khanh responded that the United States need not seek permission to send its forces into his country, particularly if time was pressing.[58]

The Embassy assessed the reaction of the Vietnamese people to the US attacks on North Vietnam as highly favorable. To many the action indicated a stronger US commitment to Southeast Asia than they had formerly believed existed, and Buddhist, Catholic, and Dai Viet spokesmen hailed the event. But as the week passed with no further direct US action, Embassy observers sensed a let-down. The Vietnamese public did not readily grasp the US intention that the attacks be viewed by Hanoi as a measured and specific response establishing that US forces could not be molested with impunity, rather than as the opening round in continuing hostilities between the United States and North Vietnam.[59]

General Khanh had seized the occasion for further moves in his campaign to convince his people that they were engaged in direct hostilities with the North Vietnamese. In decrees issued on 7 August he declared a state of emergency, warned of imminent attack from the North, and instituted drastic measures for control of the population. The decrees suspended many of the normal rights of citizens and gave the governing Military Revolutionary Council unusual powers. Private homes could be searched at any hour without warrant; strikes and certain demonstrations and meetings were banned. Citizens could be detained without trial, and any violation of public order or "national security" was placed within the jurisdiction of military courts. The Embassy reported that "terrorists, people who indulge in sabotage, speculators harmful to the national economy, caught red-handed, will be sentenced to death" without

57. (S) Msg, State 342 to Saigon, 4 Aug 64.
58. (S) Msg, Saigon 310 to State, 5 Aug 64.
59. (C) Msg, Saigon 329 to State, 7 Aug 64; (C) Msg, Saigon 342 to State, 15 Aug 64.

right of appeal. Three days later GVN officials announced the beginning of an air raid shelter program in Saigon.[60]

The date of the decrees, 7 August, marked the end of Ambassador Taylor's first month of service, during which he had gained a ready appreciation of the pressures and uncertainties under which General Khanh was working. The Ambassador's initial courtesy calls on the three civilian Vice Premiers of the GVN had confirmed that none of them was deeply loyal to Khanh. Vice Premier Hoan, who was a leading member of the Dai Viet political party, complained that the ministers and vice premiers were not kept informed of what Khanh was doing and could not gain his approval for important projects. Vice Premier Do Mau spent the interview in portraying himself, in Taylor's words, as a "useful alternative" to Khanh, while Vice Premier Oanh "condescendingly pointed out" Khanh's inadequacies.[61] It was probable that these three men had been prominent in Khanh's thought in May when he had spoken of "getting rid of the politicians."

The loyalty of Khanh's military associates was not assured, either. To the Ambassador, Khanh complained particularly about General Minh, who had been induced to remain in the government as Chief of State after Khanh's coup in January. This had been done, Khanh said, in the interests of national unity and to capitalize on Minh's reputed popularity with the public, but at the cost of some dissension elsewhere in the military ranks. Khanh charged that General Minh was uncooperative, however, absenting himself from cabinet meetings and making no attempt to discharge his responsibilities. Minh's lack of enthusiasm for the "March North" had deepened Khanh's suspicions that Minh was supporting the partisans of the "French neutralism solution." Meanwhile a powerful bloc of generals headed by Defense Minister Khiem and Chief of Staff Thieu were pressing Khanh to get rid of Minh. Members of this bloc, Khanh asserted, were closely allied with the Dai Viet political party. The Dai Viet, according to Khanh, had no particular policy with regard to the war, merely a party objective of acquiring the sources of power and hence a desire to penetrate the armed forces.[62]

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60. (U) Msg, Saigon 344 to State, 7 Aug 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 437.

61. (S) Msg, Saigon 65 to State, 9 Jul 64; Msg, Saigon 96 to State, 14 Jul 64.

62. (S) Msgs, Saigon 126 to State, 17 Jul 64; 152, 21 Jul 64; 203, 24 Jul 64.

General Khanh had suggested that the Ambassador could help him by doing two things: getting the word about that the United States opposed any further coups, and talking with General Khiem and some of his supporters about the undesirability of partisan politics within the armed forces. Ambassador Taylor had promised to do what he could on both counts. As he observed to Washington, Khanh "was and is our boy for the cold-blooded reason that we see no substitute leader capable of carrying forward the pacification campaign."[63]

By early August there was some progress to point to, also. Khanh had followed through on his intention of designating GVN officials with responsibilities paralleling those of particular members of the US Mission Council, with whom they would consult directly and continuously. On 5 August a tentative beginning had been made, under Defense Minister Khiem and General Westmoreland, on combined planning for military pressures against North Vietnam.[64] Combined planning at another level, which Ambassador Lodge had instituted as one of his last services, had been in progress since early July. The task was to devise plans for pacifying the critical provinces around Saigon by expansion of the "oil spot" outward. On the GVN side, members of the planning staff came from the 7th Division, the Capital Military District, and the III Corps; MACV and USOM furnished the other members, with the senior US advisor to the III Corps heading the US contingent.[65]

By 10 August this plan was well advanced, designated HOP TAC by the Vietnamese and PICA I (Pacification Intensification in Critical Areas) by the Americans. Ambassador Taylor pointed out that the urban area centered around Saigon and Cholon was of paramount strategic importance. It contained about 40 percent of South Vietnam's population, almost all of its limited industrial capacity, and its centers of social and political power. The US Mission hoped that the planning and implementation of HOP TAC would exercise Khanh's government in a way that improved its functioning, that effective social, economic, and administrative services would be developed in the affected areas, and that "some pragmatic military successes" would be achieved that would raise morale and drive the Viet Cong from the nation's heartland.[66]

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63. (S) Msg, Saigon 203 to State, 24 Jul 64.
64. (S) Msgs, Saigon 245 to State, 29 Jul 64; 310, 5 Aug 64.
65. (S) Msg, Saigon 96 to State, 14 Jul 64.
66. (S) Msg, Saigon 377 to State, 10 Aug 64.

In a general survey for his Washington superiors on 10 August, Ambassador Taylor noted that US advisors in the field held a more favorable view of the military situation than US officials in Saigon. The personnel strength of the RVNAF and paramilitary forces had begun to rise slowly and the trend was continuing. By January 1965, the Ambassador predicted, their total number would come close to the year-end target strength of 446,000. The US advisors judged more than 90 percent of ARVN battalions to be at least "marginally effective." The VNAF was being equipped with A-1H aircraft on schedule; three squadrons would be combat-ready by 30 September and a fourth by December.

But the Viet Cong had also shown improvement, the Ambassador wrote.

> In terms of equipment and training, the VC are better armed and led today than ever in the past. Infiltration continues both from Laos and Cambodia and there is no indication that the VC are having difficulty in replacing their losses in men and equipment. However, there is no reason to believe that in the coming months, they will wish to risk their past gains in an overt military confrontation with GVN forces . . . .

The Viet Cong would continue their tactics of terrorism and harassment with the aim of creating such demoralization in South Vietnam as to force acceptance of a political settlement favorable to them. Rather than seeking to conquer by conventional military means, the enemy looked to neutralization and a coalition government as the road to communist domination.

The most variable and uncertain element under assessment was the government of South Vietnam. Ambassador Taylor observed that the Khanh government "has lasted six months and has about a 50/50 chance of lasting out the year, although probably not without some changed faces in the cabinet."

> Khanh's state of mind will be an important factor in the future conduct of the war and in his relations with the representatives of US policy. He and many of his colleagues are finding it very difficult to face up to the long years of slow hard slugging which is all they see ahead under the present rules of operational conduct.
>
> In the coming months, we may expect to face mounting pressures from the GVN to win the war by direct attack on Hanoi, which, if resisted, will create frictions and

irritations which could lead local politicians to serious consideration of a negotiated solution or local soldiers to a military adventure without US consent.

Ambassador Taylor concluded his report of 10 August by recommending that US efforts during the coming months be directed as follows: 1) do everything possible to bolster the Khanh government; 2) improve the pacification program by concentrating on critical areas such as the provinces around Saigon; 3) undertake "show-window" social and economic projects in secure rural and urban areas; 4) keep the American public informed of what the US Government was doing and why; 5) prepare to implement contingency plans against North Vietnam with optimum readiness by 1 January 1965.[67]

The last of these points repeated a recommendation the Ambassador had made the previous day, in a message devoted more specifically to military measures. In the 9 August message he noted that all OPLAN 34A activities would remain under suspension until further notice from Washington. The appearance of MIG 15 and 17 aircraft in North Vietnam must be taken into account, but since they were presumed not to have all-weather or night interception capabilities, Ambassador Taylor believed the United States should accept the risk of nighttime operations and daylight activities in international waters. He recommended maintaining the DESOTO patrols and continuing airsweeps over international waters with authority to engage enemy boats and aircraft under relaxed rules of engagement, which he thought justified by the recent attacks on US vessels.

Ambassador Taylor recommended that the United States begin armed reconnaissance missions over the Laos Panhandle, progressively attacking the most clearly identified infiltration facilities. Pilots should have authority to strike specified fixed targets, to attack road traffic in delimited areas, and to conduct fire-suppression attacks against AA defenses. His final recommendation was that the United States prepare to undertake some of the air strikes against North Vietnam provided for in CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64, after completing the following actions: 1) set forth publicly and effectively the evidence of continued infiltration and control of the insurgency from North Vietnam; 2) accomplish combined planning with the GVN; and 3) establish evidence of sufficient progress

67. (S) Msg, Saigon 377 to State, 10 Aug 64.

in the pacification of provinces around Saigon to warrant undertaking a new military commitment. Ambassador Taylor thought fulfillment of this program would set the target date for beginning bombing operations against North Vietnam at about 1 January 1965. In effect, his message called for implementation of some of the actions that had been listed under Recommendations 11 and 12 of NSAM 288.[68]

Study of Courses of Action in Washington

Ambassador Taylor's recommendations were a contribution to the intensive consultations going on in Washington. At a White House meeting of senior advisors with the President on 10 August there was general agreement that the US Government must decide in the very near future the best course of action to be taken in Southeast Asia and the means of implementing it. General Wheeler informed his JCS colleagues that the following key questions had been raised:

a. What, if any, actions should be undertaken in the Laos Panhandle?

b. Should the tempo of Operations Plan 34A operations be increased?

c. Should we initiate a tit for tat program of retaliation, or should we do something more, against North Vietnam? If so, what and when?[69]

The secretaries of State and Defense had undertaken to pursue these questions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff likewise began preparing their views on 10 August, but before completion of this major exercise they submitted a preliminary expression when commenting on a draft policy paper circulated by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, William P. Bundy.

Secretary Bundy's paper, "Next Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," dated 13 August, identified the next ten days or so as "a short holding phase" during which the United States

68. (TS) Msg, Saigon 364 to State, 9 Aug 64, JMF 9150 (18 Aug 64) sec 1.

69. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Chairman's Debrief of 10 August White House Meeting," 10 Aug 64, same file.

must avoid any actions that could be considered provocative or that would obscure the responsibility for escalation of the hostilities, should the North Vietnamese turn to stronger action. DESOTO patrols and new OPLAN 34A activities, for instance, would be withheld. Thereafter, toward the end of August, the United States must take up more active measures.

Among the elements of the situation now confronting the United States, the prime one was the conclusion Secretary Bundy had drawn from Ambassador Taylor's reports: "South Vietnam is not going well." There was a major problem of maintaining the morale of General Khanh and other GVN leaders. The US retaliation for the attacks in the Tonkin Gulf had lifted that morale temporarily but had also raised expectations; "morale could easily sag back again if the VC have successes and we do nothing further." A second element was the progress along the "negotiating track" on Laos, which in some respects was running ahead of US desires. Should the move toward a conference on Laotian problems gain greater momentum, the United States might have to refuse to participate, in order to avoid a seriously unfavorable impact on GVN morale.

The attitude of the communist leaders in Hanoi and Peking was the third element. The recent US response had undoubtedly convinced them that similar retaliation would follow any further attacks on US forces. The communists "are certainly not persuaded that they must abandon their efforts in South Vietnam and Laos," however, and might still doubt that the United States would take stronger actions in response to infiltration or increased VC activity.

> Basically, a solution in both South Vietnam and Laos will require a combination of military pressure and some form of communication under which Hanoi (and Peiping) eventually accept the idea of getting out. Negotiation without continued military action will not achieve our objectives in the foreseeable future. But military pressure could be accompanied by attempts to communicate . . . provided always that we make it clear both to the Communists and to South Vietnam that military pressure will continue until we have achieved our objectives. After, but only after, we have established a clear pattern of pressure hurting the DRV and leaving no doubts in South Vietnam of our resolve, we could even

accept a conference broadened to include the Vietnam issue.

Secretary Bundy then listed certain limited pressures that could be applied against North Vietnam from late August through December. OPLAN 34A activities could be continued and might be openly acknowledged and justified by the GVN. Combined planning with the GVN could be pressed, with word of its existence deliberately leaked for Hanoi's benefit. Training of VNAF pilots in jet aircraft could be speeded and publicised. DESTOTO patrols could be resumed, carefully dissociated from the 34A operations, and specific tit-for-tat bombing or mining actions could be mounted in response to any special VC or NVN activity, such as terrorist attacks on US dependents. Lastly, cross-border operations into the Laos Panhandle could be conducted on a limited scale. The VNAF might strike at selected targets in the infiltration areas, existing US aerial reconnaissance would continue, and suppressive missions might be added. Secretary Bundy ruled out ground operations, however. To be successful they would require greater forces than the GVN could spare from the pacification effort, and he did not believe use of US of Thai forces should be considered at present.

Admittedly, Secretary Bundy wrote, these limited actions did not add up to "a truly coherent program of strong enough pressure either to bring Hanoi around or to sustain a pressure posture into some kind of discussion." All fell short of systematic military action against North Vietnam. The United States might decide to move on to such action some time during the period through December, in response to some incident or because of deteriorating conditions in South Vietnam, perhaps brought on by greatly increased infiltration. If not, planning should continue for beginning on the date suggested by Ambassador Taylor, 1 January 1965. In this connection. "our present thinking is that systematic action against the DRV might start by progressive attacks keyed to the rationale of infiltration routes and facilities, followed by other selected military-related targets."[70]

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70. (TS-GP 3) Third Draft, W.P. Bundy, "Next Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," 13 Aug 64, Att to JCS 2343/441-1, 13 Aug 64, JMF 9150 (11 Aug 64).

The Joint Chiefs of Staff delivered their comments in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 14 August. They expressed general agreement with the policy and courses of action contained in the Bundy paper, provided that the more serious pressures of systematic military action were applied, "as necessary," along with the limited pressures. Here they repeated the language of the JCS submission of 2 July, to which General Taylor, as Chairman, had not been a party. Inclusion in the program of attacks on targets in North Vietnam would have the objective of "destroying the DRV will and capabilities" to continue support of insurgent forces in Laos and South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the recent strikes in response to the Tonkin Gulf attacks had "conveyed to both friend and enemy the measure of US resolution in Southeast Asia. The sudden advantage gained by this military action must be retained." The actions proposed, if promptly pursued, should sustain the US advantage and maintain the higher morale that had been generated among South Vietnam's leaders. Referring to the study begun on 10 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary that they were preparing fuller recommendations on military courses of action as a matter of urgency.[71]

Meanwhile, Washington officials had passed the Bundy paper to Ambassador Taylor with a request for his judgment on whether or not the program it outlined would maintain the morale of the GVN leadership. By this date, also, it was established that the Ambassador would return to Washington to take part in important consultations near the end of August.[72] Ambassador Taylor drafted his reply to the immediate message just as a sharp break in the relatively stable political situation in Saigon was under way. All further consideration was to proceed with increasing attention to a distrubing new factor--the progressive deterioration that followed from General Khanh's mid-August attempt to restructure the government of South Vietnam.

71. (S-GP 3) JCSM-701-64 to SecDef, 14 Aug 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/441-2, 13 Aug 64, same file.

72. (TS) Msg, St te 439 to Saigon, 14 Aug 64. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Further Actions in Southeast Asia," 12 Aug 64, JMF 9050 (18 Aug 64) sec 1.

Chapter 12

US ACTION AWAITS GOVERNMENTAL STABILITY

The GVN Degenerates

General Khanh informed a US Embassy official on 8 August 1964 that he was considering the promulgation of a provisional constitution, which would reorganize the government of South Vietnam for more effective operation. He viewed this as a "logical follow-up" to his assumption of extraordinary powers under the emergency decree issued on 7 August, in the wake of the US retaliation against North Vietnam for the Tonkin Gulf attacks. Information received by the Embassy in following days indicated that Khanh regarded General Minh, the incumbent Chief of State, as the main hindrance to effective government. Khanh intended to get rid of Minh by abolishing his current position and offering him the post of Ambassador to the United Kingdom. The governmental reorganization would provide an opportunity to ease out other unwanted personalities and would create a legislative body without undergoing the hazards of a general election.[1]

Khanh soon revealed his ideas to Ambassador Taylor in greater detail and on 14 August provided the text of the proposed constitution for review and comment. The Military Revolutionary Council (MRC) would be replaced by a legislative assembly. Of its 150 members, 60 would be appointed military officers, 60 elected by provincial councils, and 30 appointed by Saigon politicians. The constitution would establish a President as the single executive, eliminating the existing Chief of State and Vice Premier positions.

Ambassador Taylor reported to Washington that while the language of the document was rather brief and authoritarian and likely to arouse criticism in the US press, "Khanh and his military colleagues have decided that this sort of change is indispensable." Taylor told the State Department that he would not make any substantive suggestions to Khanh but would try to get the wording improved to make it "more palatable

1. (C) Msgs, Saigon 355 to State, 8 Aug 64; 388, 11 Aug 64.

both in Vietnam and abroad." He acknowledged that the document was likely to be viewed as an "unduly permanent formalization of military takeover." "Whether we like it or not," the Ambassador wrote, "this is the constitutional form which the MRC fully intends to impose and we see no alternative but to make the best of it." The Department of State approved the course he intended to follow.[2]

On 16 August, the MRC proclaimed the new constitution and elected Khanh President of the Vietnamese Republic. Existing ministries were to continue in a caretaker capacity until the new government began to function. While declaring that the new constitution was a move toward the fuller practice of democracy, Khanh reserved virtually absolute powers to the presidency for the duration of the emergency he had already proclaimed as Premier.

Strong public reaction set in on 19 and 20 August when, on the first anniversary of the Diem regime's Pagoda Raids, Buddhist crowds demonstrated against "the new dictatorship." In Hue and in Saigon, students also marched in protest against both the arbitrary elevation of Khanh to the presidency and the terms of the new governing charter. In an attempt to meet their objections, Khanh promised that a majority of his cabinet ministers would be civilians and that some provisions of the emergency decrees would be relaxed. These assurances calmed neither the students nor the Buddhists, and their demonstrations turned more violent, flaring at times into direct clashes between Buddhists and Catholics. Khanh's government made no attempt to suppress the rioting and restore order.[3]

On the morning of 24 August, Buddhist leaders Tri Quang, Thich Minh, and Tam Chau presented Khanh with a list of demands whose acceptance would have largely nullified the new constitution. Among the Buddhist objections was the claim that former Diemists had undue position and influence in the government. They therefore demanded that all "Can Lao elements" be dismissed, "even if wearing Dai Viet labels." A national program of passive resistance was threatened if the demands were not met, and further Buddhist demonstrations were already scheduled.

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2. (S) Msgs, Saigon 415 and 419 to State, 15 Aug 64; (S) Msg, State 446 to Saigon, 15 Aug 64.

3. The United States in World Affairs, 1964, pp. 154-155. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 438.

Khanh put off replying to the Buddhist demands and discussed them with Ambassador Taylor before entering consultations with the MRC. While saying the decision rested with Khanh, the Ambassador suggested that it would be a mistake to give in to a minority group on issues of such importance; to do so would only invite further demands. Taylor reported to Washington that Khanh was particularly concerned about possible widening of the conflict between Buddhists and Catholics, which might extend to the armed forces.[4]

Washington officials attempted to back Ambassador Taylor's efforts by issuing statements on 24 August; the New York Times summed them up as indicating that the US Government "would take an extremely serious and negative view of any move to oust the regime of President Nguyen Khanh."[5] By that hour, however, 25 August was already well advanced in Saigon--the day on which the MRC formally withdrew the proclaimed constitution. The caretaker government continued, but General Khanh had agreed to vacate the premiership pending the choice of a new head of government by the MRC. Divisions had appeared within the Military Revolutionary Council. Some members felt Khanh had already gone too far in offering concessions to the Buddhists; others were reluctant to see the MRC abolished, as both the proposed constitution and the more recent concessions provided. Still others, it was suspected, entertained personal ambitions that could best be furthered if Khanh were discredited.[6]

As the MRC members sought to decide on a new form of government and a new leader, Ambassador Taylor called on General Minh at the latter's request. "What Minh really wanted to know," Taylor reported to Washington, "was the answer to the 64 dollar question--if someone other than Khanh is elected, what will be the attitude of the US Government?" In reply the Ambassador stressed two points: 1) The US Government was opposed to any substantial change of government since such change was bound to disrupt the military effort; 2) the United States firmly supported Khanh and had no number-two candidate. If Khanh should lose, this would be most disappointing to the United States and would occasion a searching review of US policy toward South Vietnam.[7]

4. (S) Msg, Saigon 542 to State, 24 Aug 64.
5. NY Times, 25 Aug 64, 10.
6. (S) Msg, Saigon 561 to State, 26 Aug 64.
7. (S) Msg, Saigon 572 to State, 26 Aug 64.

The outcome was a compromise that deferred to a considerable extent to the US attitude. On 27 August, the MRC named a triumvirate to head the government; it was composed of Generals Khanh, Minh, and Khiem, with Khanh still holding the title of Premier. But the riots and demonstrations continued, with clashes between Buddhists and Catholics reaching new intensity. On 29 August, it was announced that Khanh had suffered a "breakdown" and was relinquishing his post temporarily. Dr. Nguyen Xuan Oanh was appointed acting Premier. The government finally moved in troops to restrain the civil disorders.

In their contacts with the press, Embassy spokesmen made clear that they expected Khanh to resume his place at the head of the government, and they avoided denying that the US Government might have to reconsider its role in South Vietnam if he did not.[8] Meanwhile, Ambassador Taylor was in frequent touch with Khanh, who was resting at Dalat. The failure of his attempt to change and improve his government had left Khanh depressed and unsure of himself, aware that his "strongman" reputation had been tarnished. In support of the Ambassador's efforts to revive Khanh's spirit and get him to return to his duties, President Johnson sent a personal message on 2 September. The President promised Khanh the continued full support of the United States and added, "It seems to me urgently necessary to have you present in Saigon just as soon as you can possibly get there."[9]

General Khanh did return to the capital to resume the premiership on 3 September. He very soon reached an agreement with the Buddhists, however, that amounted to a substantial capitulation. Accepting a Buddhist formula, Khanh pledged that the government would be reorganized during a two-month transition period. By the end of October the country's military leaders would be prepared to withdraw and devote themselves to direction of the war effort, leaving an entirely civilian government in control.[10]

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8. NY Times, 30 Aug 64, 2.
9. (TS) Msg, Saigon 684 to State, 30 Aug 64. (S) Msg, Saigon 698 to State, 1 Sep 64. (TS) Msg, State 714 to Saigon, 2 Sep 64.
10. The United States in World Affairs, 1964, pp. 155-156.

Ambassador Taylor's Recommendations of 18 August

The train of events just described had barely begun on 18 August, when Ambassador Taylor dispatched his comments to Washington on the policy paper drafted by Assistant Secretary of State Bundy. At that time it was possible to expect that the new constitution, just proclaimed, would lead to a stronger government in South Vietnam. The Bundy paper of 13 August had outlined a series of "lesser pressures" that could be applied against North Vietnam during the period from late August through December, while preparing for stronger actions with a target date of 1 January 1965.[11]

Ambassador Taylor's message on 18 August started from the assumption--also implicit in the Bundy paper--that the existing programs of the counterinsurgency effort were not sufficient to maintain GVN morale or to offer reasonable hope of eventual success against the Viet Cong. "Something must be added in the coming months," the Ambassador wrote, and he discussed two possible courses of action. The less severe actions of his Course A were broadly similar to Secretary Bundy's program of lesser pressures and would have the following objectives: 1) gain time for Khanh to develop a stable and effective government; 2) maintain morale in South Vietnam, particularly among GVN officials; 3) hold North Vietnam in check and restrain the buildup of VC strength by infiltration from the North; 4) develop a posture of maximum readiness for deliberate escalation of the pressures against North Vietnam by 1 January 1965.

In view of the "considerable measure of risk" that he saw in the situation, Ambassador Taylor said that US officials must be wary of becoming deeply involved in a course of action "until we have a better feel of the quality of our ally." If possible, the United States should avoid hostilities with North Vietnam "if our base in South Vietnam is insecure and Khanh's army is tied down everywhere by the VC."

> It is to our interest to gain sufficient time not only to allow Khanh to prove that he can govern, but also to free Saigon from the VC threat which presently rings it and assure that sufficient GVN ground forces will be available to provide a

11. The Bundy paper and the comments made on it by the JCS are treated in Ch. 11.

Under Course of Action B the implementation of the US program would not await evidence of improved performance by Khanh's government. The operations to be mounted would be the same as under Course A, but execution would be accelerated, awaiting only US readiness and employing US forces and means almost exclusively. Accordingly, there would be an increased likelihood of US involvement in ground action.

Ambassador Taylor recommended commitment of the US Government to Course of Action A. "However, we should always bear in mind the fragility of the Khanh Government and be prepared to shift quickly to Course of Action B if the situation requires."[12]

The JCS Recommendations of 26 August

Since the NSC meeting on 10 August the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been engaged in developing their recommendations for military action in Southeast Asia. With the receipt of Ambassador Taylor's message of 18 August, they returned the draft JCS memorandum to the Joint Staff for revision to take the Ambassador's views into account. The further stages of JCS consideration were influenced by the reports of the public disturbances and governmental changes in South Vietnam and by a CIA evaluation that these events marked the beginning of a new and dangerous period.[13]

To Washington officials the news of withdrawal of the RVN constitution left the status of Khanh's leadership in considerable doubt. Seeking clarification of the confused political picture, the Joint Chiefs of Staff convened a telecon with General Westmoreland on 25 August. His first-hand report offered little encouragement that governmental stability would soon be restored.

> Events of the last few days, during which Khanh has been unwilling to exercise powers legally his to curb excesses, has caused sharp cleavages and deep suspicions within ranks of MRC. Conversely the

12. (TS) Msg, Saigon 465 to State, 18 Aug 64, OCJCS File, Black Book, "Vietnam Conference Sep 64, Vol I/II."
13. (TS) J-3 Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "JCS 2343/444-1 - Recommended Courses of Action - Southeast Asia (U)," 29 Aug 64, JMF 9150 (18 Aug 64) sec 2.

> Buddhist leadership has been remarkably successful in political action tactics to divide and conquer.

General Westmoreland expected that, "despite some disenchantment with Khanh," the MRC would soon reelect him head of the government (as part of the triumvirate arrangement, as it turned out), but that the Buddhists would continue to press their demands, probably with success.

> How long Khanh will last is largely up to the military leadership. It may not be very long. In any case, the lessening roles of capable Catholic civil and military executives and the withdrawal of the Dai Viets from the government will further thin out an already inadequate structure.

General Westmoreland predicted that unsettled conditions would continue for several months, allowing little progress in the pacification effort. "Indeed, there is a distinct possibility of progressive deterioration."[14]

COMUSMACV's assessment weighed heavily upon the thought of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the two successive sessions on 26 August at which they reached final agreement on their recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. The report had deepened General LeMay's conviction that the United States must take forceful action against North Vietnam. "I do not believe that we can afford to risk the possible collapse of our position in Asia. There is too much at stake," the Chief of Staff, Air Force, told his colleagues. "I am convinced that direct US offensive operations are necessary, that they entail far less risk to the US than continuing on our present course, and that they have every prospect of success."[15]

In the memorandum that the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent to Secretary McNamara on 26 August they endorsed Ambassador Taylor's proposed Course of Action B. They held that, in the light of the recent political deterioration in South Vietnam, this course was "more in accord with the current situation" and that the accelerated program of actions it listed was

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14. (S) "Resume of Questions and Answers, Telecon with General Westmoreland, 25 August 1964," OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul-Aug 64.

15. (TS-GP 3) CSAFM-732-64 to JCS, 26 Aug 64, JMF 9150 (18 Aug 64) sec 1.

"essential to prevent a complete collapse of the US position in Southeast Asia."

> Additionally, they do not agree that we should be slow to get deeply involved until we have a better feel for the quality of our ally. The United States is already deeply involved. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that only significantly stronger military pressures on the DRV are likely to provide the relief and psychological boost necessary for attainment of the requisite governmental stability and viability. . . . Failure to resume and maintain a program of pressure through military actions could be misinterpreted to mean we have had second thoughts about Pierce Arrow and the events leading thereto, and could signal a lack of resolve.

Accordingly, the United States should continue in the posture of increased readiness attained by the deployments during the Tonkin Gulf episode and should pursue the following objectives: 1) improvements in South Vietnam, including emphasis on implementing the HOP TAC Plan; 2) interdiction of North Vietnam's lines of communication to the Viet-Cong through Laos by operations in the panhandle and through Cambodia by strict control of the waterways leading therefrom; 3) denial of VC sanctuaries in the Cambodian border area through hot pursuit operations into Cambodia; 4) increased pressure on North Vietnam through military actions, including resumption of DESOTO patrols and OPLAN 34A missions.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, however, that more direct and forceful actions than these would, in all probability, be required. They favored readiness to mount air strikes and other operations against military targets in North Vietnam as "prompt and calculated responses" to any notable actions by the Viet Cong, or by the Pathet Lao in Laos--substantially the tit-for-tat retaliation that Ambassador Taylor had recommended be held in reserve.

All of the military actions mentioned so far should be implemented at once, even though the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that such a program would not necessarily provide decisive end results. They reiterated the view contained in the JCS submission of 2 June:

> The military course of action which offers the best chance of success remains the destruction of the

DRV will and capabilities as necessary to compel the DRV to cease providing support to the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff closed their memorandum of 26 August by recommending, in summary, that:

a. The following military actions receive priority (not necessarily in the order listed):

(1) Continuation of the Pacification Program in RVN with emphasis on the Hop Tac program to establish the security of Saigon and its surroundings;

(2) Continuation of the present forward deployment of US combat units;

(3) Resumption and intensification of OPLAN 34A operations with emphasis on maritime operations and with initiation of air operations against selected targets when practicable. OPLAN 34A operations should remain covert for the time being.

(4) Resumption of Desoto patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin;

(5) Operations against the VC LOC, including staging base areas and infiltration routes in the Laos Panhandle by:

(a) The RLAF;

(b) GVN [redacted]orces in cross-border operations with US support as required;

(c) US Armed aerial reconnaissance, attacking infiltration installations.

(6) Retaliatory actions by GVN/US forces against appropriate targets in the DRV in response to stepped up Viet Cong/Pathet Lao actions should such occur.

(7) Institution of "hot pursuit" operations into Cambodia.

b. The following related actions be taken:

(1) Institution of strict controls on the Mekong and Bassac rivers;

(2) Direct action against the Viet Cong leadership in RVN.

c. Since the above actions will probably not in themselves accomplish our objectives of compelling the DRV to respond favorably, we should be prepared to:

(1) Commence deployment of remaining Category III OPLAN 37-64 forces;

(2) Commence a US air strike program against targets in North Vietnam in accordance with current planning.

In light of recent developments in South Vietnam and the evaluations furnished by COMUSMACV, the Joint Chiefs of Staff conclude that accelerated and forceful action with respect to North Vietnam is essential to prevent a complete collapse of the US position in Southeast Asia. They consider that a decision as to specific actions and the timing of these actions is urgent and recommend that conversations with Ambassador Taylor focus on this issue with a view to its early resolution.[16]

Two days later the Joint Chiefs of Staff were informed that a copy of their memorandum had been furnished to the Department of State. Together with the earlier JCS comments on the Bundy draft policy paper, it would be carefully considered in the current interdepartmental discussions and in the conferences to be held after Ambassador Taylor's return to Washington.[17]

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16. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-746-64 to SecDef, 26 Aug 64 (derived from JCS 2343/444-1), JMF 9150 (18 Aug 64) sec 2.

17. (TS-GP 3) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Recommended Courses of Action - Southeast Asia (U)," 28 Aug 64, Encl to JCS 2343/444-2, 31 Aug 64, same file. The earlier JCS comments, treated in Ch. 11, were contained in (S-GP 3) JCSM-701-64 to SecDef, 14 Aug 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/441-2, 13 Aug 64, JMF 9150 (11 Aug 64).

The 94 Target List

Supporting the readiness of the United States to launch some of the stronger actions recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was a revised list of targets in North Vietnam suitable for air attack. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had furnished it to the Secretary of Defense on 24 August. Commonly referred to as the 94 Target List, it was to figure prominently in the consultations of the Washington policy-makers over the following months.

The new list resulted from refinement and development of the one the Joint Chiefs of Staff had provided the Secretary on 30 May 1964. The 94 targets were those identified as most critical to North Vietnam's support of insurgency operations and to the country's military capabilities and industrial output. They were grouped in five categories: Category A - Airfields; Category B - Lines of Communications (bridges, railroad yards, and shops); Category C - Military Installations (barracks and headquarters, ammunition depots, POL storage, supply depots, communications facilities, and port facilities); Category D - Industrial Installations; Category E - Route Armed Reconnaissance. The supporting studies and data included a detailed analysis of each target, examples of possible weapons and sortie requirements to achieve the desired damage objective, and a list of available forces.

The 94 Target List had been approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a target data base for use in current military planning, and CINCPAC had been directed to develop and submit strike plans for four patterns of attack against North Vietnam. In ascending order of severity, they were as follows:

a. Demonstrative strikes against a few military targets to show US readiness and intent to pass to alternatives b, c, or d, below.

b. An attack on some significant part of the military target system in the DRV for the dual purpose of convincing the enemy that it is to his interest to desist from aiding the VC and PL and, if possible, of obtaining his cooperation in calling off the insurgents in the RVN and Laos.

c. An air campaign against significant military targets in the DRV with the objective of destroying them and, with them, the DRV capabilities to continue military support to the VC and PL.

d. A full-scale air campaign against significant military and industrial targets in the DRV with the objective of destroying them and, with them, the DRV will and capabilities to continue assistance to the VC and the PL.

Forces to be applied to each pattern, as appropriate, ranged from VNAF aircraft only to the full resources that might be deployed in implementation of CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that air operations could be conducted against any of the targets on the list. "The intensity can range from selective strikes in ascending order of gradually increasing military pressure to a full-scale air campaign against significant military and industrial targets." The Joint Chiefs of Staff then repeated the professional opinion they had first expressed three months earlier:

> From a military viewpoint, it is considered that the most effective application of military force will result from a sudden sharp blow in order to bring home the penalties for violating international agreements and the intent of the United States to bring a cessation of DRV support of the insurgency in Laos and the RVN.[18]

Further Elaboration of the JCS Views

During a JCS discussion with the Secretary of Defense on 31 August, he asked to be provided with a program of military action with respect to South Vietnam, with an estimate of its outcome. In effect, this was a request for a more detailed exposition of the recommended course of action the Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted on 26 August. In JCS discussions of the draft reply first produced by the Joint Staff, begun on 4 September, differing opinions were expressed on some aspects of the recommended course.[19]

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18. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-729-64 to SecDef, 24 Aug 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/383-2, 18 Aug 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (21 May 64) sec 2. The earlier JCS submission of 30 May 64 has been described in Ch. 9. The planning tasks assigned to CINCPAC fulfilled the requirements imposed by SecDef approval of the recommendations submitted by GEN Taylor on 5 Jun 64, discussed in Ch. 10.

19. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/452, 3 Sep 64; (C) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2343/452," 4 Sep 64; JMF 9155.3 (3 Sep 64).

The Chief of Staff, Army, noted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had gone on record a number of times asserting that "the military course of action which offers the best chance of success remains the destruction of the DRV will and capability as necessary to compel the DRV to cease providing support to the insurgencies in the RVN and Laos." Yet he saw a growing body of evidence supporting the view that "the VC insurgency in the RVN could continue for a long time at its present or an increased intensity even if North Vietnam were completely destroyed."

> Therefore, although I believe that actions against North Vietnam, against appropriate targets and in appropriate phasing, could have a deleterious effect upon the VC in the RVN, I also believe that the war against the insurgency will be won in South Vietnam and along its frontiers.

General Johnson recommended deletion from the draft reply of a sentence that again repeated the previous JCS opinion. Rather than saying that attacks against North Vietnam would offer the best chance of success, he would substitute language that called them one of the "essential elements of the program." General Johnson wished to place at least equal emphasis on cross-border operations into the Laos panhandle, conducted on a scale sufficient to realize the objective of "destroying all VC/PL depo staging areas, and way-stations on the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex, and of stopping the flow of men and materiel into Southern Laos and the RVN."

The Chief of Staff, Army, also believed that the full program of attacks against targets in North Vietnam outlined in the draft reply "should not be applied except in the event of DRV and/or CHICOM armed intervention against RVN or in Laos." General Johnson thought this proposition followed inescapably from a further statement of the draft reply, to the effect that if it were found necessary to implement the program in full, reaction by the North Vietnamese or Chinese Communists in the form of large-scale aggression would be "more than likely." He said that if moderate pressures did not cause North Vietnam to stop supporting the Viet Cong,"it is illogical to conclude that . . . more severe pressures would have any other effect but to increase and intensify the support of the VC insurgency."[20]

Comments submitted by the Chief of Staff, Air Force, on the same day treated many of the same points but took a different view. General LeMay not only supported repeating the JCS opinion

20. (TS-GP 1) CSAM-472-64 to JCS, 4 Sep 64, same file.

that the best chance of success lay in the destruction of North Vietnamese will and capability; he would add a positive recommendation that "the specific course of action designed to achieve this objective, the destruction of 94 targets in North Vietnam, be implemented immediately." As for the expected enemy reaction, General LeMay believed that "large-scale CHICOM aggression as a result of actions taken to destroy the DRV will and capability to continue support of the insurgents in SVN and Laos is unlikely provided the action of the US reflects determination, strength, and resoluteness." He thought such an enemy reaction likely only if "the US actions reflect an intention to introduce and employ substantial ground forces in a defensive type action." If the United States gave evidence of willingness to meet the Chinese Communists on the ground in Southeast Asia, this would tend to encourage them to attack.[21]

During their meetings on 4 September, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that the immediate product required of the Joint Staff was a Talking Paper for their use in discussions with the Secretary of Defense and Ambassador Taylor on 8 September. It would be based on the draft paper under discussion and on comments to be submitted by the Services. The Talking Paper, of course, would not have the status of an approved JCS position. The Joint Chiefs of Staff would come to agreement on their formal reply to Secretary McNamara's request for a program of military action later, in the light of the discussion on 8 September.[22]

The Talking Paper, when produced on 7 September, did not depart significantly from the JCS position already on record. Its main contribution lay in the several appendices, which gave detailed programs for military pressures against North Vietnam, cross-border operations, and intensified action within South Vietnam and also discussed possible enemy responses and the counteractions available.[23]

Other Preparations for the Taylor Visit

Early in September, just before Ambassador Taylor's departure for the consultations in Washington, General

21. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM-759-64 to JCS, 4 Sep 64, same file.
22. (C) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2343/452," 4 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (3 Sep 64).
23. (TS-GP 1) J-3 TP 159-64 for JCS, 7 Sep 64, same file.

Westmoreland gave him an appraisal of the military situation, sending a copy also to General Wheeler. The key military issue of the moment, COMUSMACV said, was preservation of the structure, effectiveness, and unity of purpose of the RVN armed forces in the face of the current political disturbances in South Vietnam. "The officers' corps must be assured that its members will not be punished or expelled from the armed forces if they faithfully execute the orders of constituted authority in connection with the maintenance of law and order." Officers of the RVNAF must feel secure against purges based solely on their political or religious affiliation. General Westmoreland said that if the government did not reject the demands of pressure groups for military resignations, it was possible that the armed forces would collapse in disunity, or, finding their situation intolerable, "make a desperate move to regain power. Neither course of action is compatible with the objectives we seek."

Apart from this central concern, General Westmoreland was encouraged by the progress and prospects in purely military matters. In the last few months there had been measurable improvement in RVNAF strength and means and in operational methods. More improvement was in sight. Barring a substantial increase in North Vietnam support to the Viet Cong, the RVNAF should clearly outstrip the enemy in overall effectiveness. General Westmoreland cited increases in manpower and morale, resulting from such reforms begun earlier in the year as better pay, a better-organized promotion system, new awards and publicity for heroic actions, and the greatly expanded dependent housing construction program. The recent strengthening of the US advisory effort was also having its effect.

There were numerous military problems to which COMUSMACV was giving special attention, ranging from leadership deficiencies at the company, platoon, and squad levels to the development of a viable paramilitary concept and force structure. He told the Ambassador that all these problems were "susceptible to solution assuming that political stability can be achieved."[24]

The review of the situation that Ambassador Taylor sent to Washington on the eve of his departure indicated that this was an assumption far from certain of being fulfilled. He informed the Secretary of State that his review and recommended course of action was intended as a "basic document" for use in the Washington discussions.

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24. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 4830 to CJCS, 6 Sep 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep-Oct 64.

Ambassador Taylor observed that US officials must necessarily be disappointed by the political turmoil in RVN but they need not be surprised. The social, political, religious, and ethnic crosscurrents in the country made turbulence unavoidable. The recent events had been instructive regarding the limits of the perfectibility of institutions in a country such as South Vietnam, and the United States had gained that feel for the quality of its ally and of Khanh's leadership that the Ambassador had spoken of earlier. "Only the emergence of an exceptional leader could improve the situation," Taylor wrote, "and no George Washington is in sight."

The United States could anticipate, at worst, a coalition government that tried to accommodate all shades of opinion and, in consequence, satisfied none. Such a government might reach some accommodation with the communist National Liberation Front, draining away the political energy supporting the pacification program. At best, a GVN might emerge that was capable of holding against the Viet Cong. With good luck and strong US backing this government might manage to achieve some limited success in implementing HOP TAC. But very likely, in Taylor's opinion, it would be unable to direct the total pacification program successfully and would seek more and more to have the United States take over the major responsibility for fighting the Viet Cong and North Vietnam. "The politicians in Saigon and Hue feel today that the political hassle is their appropriate arena: the conflict with the VC belongs to the Americans," he noted.

The Ambassador saw two alternatives. The United States could acquiesce in the development of a popular front government, which might "in due course" require a US withdrawal from South Vietnam, or the United States could assume an increased active responsibility for the outcome. To Ambassador Taylor, Vietnam's significance in relation to the total world responsibilities of the United States clearly ruled out accepting the passive course. "If we leave Vietnam with our tail between our legs," he wrote, "the consequences of this defeat in the rest of Asia, Africa, and Latin America would be disastrous."

The political deterioration in South Vietnam had brought Ambassador Taylor's views closer to those of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who favored the Course of Action B of his message of 18 August. The Ambassador now held that the United States could not afford to await the unlikely achievement of a strong, stable GVN as a prerequisite to starting direct military pressures against North Vietnam. It must be satisfied merely to have a viable government, evidencing some promise of permanence.

In reviewing the timing factors Ambassador Taylor said it would be two or three months at the earliest before a government could be set up in South Vietnam that could enforce order in the cities and resume the pacification program at something like its past level. The "March North" fever had dwindled during the political disorders, and the United States no longer need hasten its plans in order to satisfy the impatience of GVN officials to close with the enemy. The problem of maintaining GVN morale continued, however, and might be met by the same measures that were necessary to keep North Vietnam on notice that the United States was not lessening its resolve. He recommended resuming DESOTO patrols and OPLAN 34A activities and undertaking modest cross-border operations.

Ambassador Taylor believed the United States should concentrate its efforts until about 1 December 1964 toward setting up a viable government, at the same time shoring up morale and keeping the enemy in check. During this period the United States should develop the capability to carry out attacks, on short notice, in the Laotian corridor and against North Vietnam under CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64. It should be ready also to exploit any opportunities presented by the communists, similar to the Gulf of Tonkin attacks, to initiate military pressures against North Vietnam under favorable conditions of world opinion.

Under the Taylor program, provided the objective of a reasonably stable government had been attained, the United States would be ready about 1 December to escalate the pressures against North Vietnam, with the aim both of holding the GVN together and raising its morale and of creating conditions for negotiated termination of hostilities on favorable terms. Before beginning these pressures, US and allied military forces should be deployed to meet possible Chinese Communist or North Vietnamese reaction. The attacks on Laotian infiltration routes and appropriate targets in North Vietnam would then commence, mounted largely by US aircraft, with the VNAF employed against targets out of range of the enemy MIGs. "The attacks should be orchestrated in such a way as to produce a mounting pressure on the will of the Hanoi High Command, designed to convince the latter to desist from further aid to the VC and Vietminh and to agree to cooperate in calling off the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos."

During these operations the United States could expect little help from the GVN, other than ground defense of its own territory. Even if Hanoi's leaders ultimately withheld

their support of the insurgents, there would still remain many serious problems in South Vietnam, and US assistance would be required there for a long time. "We see no quick and sure way to discharge our obligations honorably in this part of the world," Ambassador Taylor concluded. "This forecast is fairly grim but the alternatives are more repugnant. We feel that we should take the offensive generally along the lines recommended herein and play for the international breaks."[25]

Discussions Leading to the Presidential Decision: NSAM 314

Upon his arrival in Washington, Ambassador Taylor entered into discussions with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara and General Wheeler. On 8 August Assistant Secretary of State Bundy recorded the consensus reached by this group in a memorandum for review and decision by the President. The views presented were very similar to those in the Ambassador's recent message.

It was agreed that General Khanh would probably continue to head the South Vietnamese government and that he might make some headway during the next two to three months in restoring its effectiveness. "The best we can expect is that he and the GVN will be able to maintain order, keep the pacification program ticking over (but not progressing markedly), and give the appearance of a valid government." During that period the GVN would be too weak for the United States to risk any deliberate escalation that would involve a major role for, or threat to, South Vietnam. A level of action must be maintained, nevertheless, that demonstrated to the communist enemy the continued resolve of the United States and the GVN.

The group of advisors recommended that DESOTO patrols be resumed immediately and OPLAN 34A operations shortly afterward. "Limited GVN air and ground operations into the corridor areas of Laos should be undertaken in the near future, together with Lao air strikes as soon as we can get Souvanna's permission." The United States should be prepared to respond with tit-for-tat retaliation against North Vietnam in the event of any attack on US units or "any special DRV/VC action against SVN." Retaliation of the first type should follow the model of the PIERCE ARROW strikes, being directed against specific targets related to the means the enemy had used in his attack; the

25. (TS) Msg, Saigon 768 to State, 6 Sep 64.

response to special enemy action against South Vietnam should be "aimed at specific and comparable targets."[26]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the Bundy memorandum at their meeting on 8 September, establishing their position for use by the Chairman at a White House meeting scheduled the following morning. General Wheeler then recorded the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a memorandum addressed to the Secretary of Defense.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that DESOTO patrols should be resumed shortly after Ambassador Taylor's return to Saigon, under rules of engagement that allowed pressing the effort to destroy any attacker. The US vessels should complete the first patrol and clear the Gulf of Tonkin before the GVN resumed marine operations (MAROPS) along the North Vietnamese coast under OPLAN 34A. The Chairman differed from the other JCS members regarding the handling of MAROPS thereafter. The four Service members believed these 34A operations should remain covert until they had become "so intertwined" with the DESOTO patrols that the two were properly associated, "or until the US is prepared openly to support MAROPS militarily." General Wheeler favored the concept that had been developed during the consultations with Ambassador Taylor: The GVN would resume MAROPS and, upon Hanoi's first public condemnation of their occurrence, would openly acknowledge the operations and justify them by publishing the facts on VC infiltration and supply by sea. The Chairman believed that ending the covert status of the 34A operations would remove limitations on the scope and effectiveness of MAROPS and on the routing of DESOTO patrols and would lift a condition that could inhibit the nature and extent of the response to any attack on US forces in the Gulf.

With respect to actions directed toward Laos, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended something more extensive than the "limited GVN air and ground operations" listed in the Bundy memorandum. Such operations should be launched soon "against the VC LOC in the Laotian corridor to include attacks against staging bases and infiltration routes," and should be supplemented by US armed reconnaissance flights. Also, an attempt should be made to arrange for Thai participation in ground action in the corridor area.

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26. (S-GP 1) Memo, ASecState(FE), "Courses of Action for South Vietnam," 8 Sep 64, Encl to JCS 2343/457, 9 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (9 Sep 64).

The JCS position for use at the White House meeting included a comment on the term "tit for tat," which "could be interpreted to limit too narrowly our response to an attack on US units or any specific DRV/VC action against SVN." The Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested avoiding the term and saying "we should be prepared to respond as appropriate against the DRV . . . ."

The memorandum containing the JCS views closed with the following:

> 6. The Joint Chiefs of Staff agree that the present in-country pacification plan, including the foregoing actions, is not enough in itself to maintain national morale or to offer reasonable hope of eventual success. Military action by GVN and US forces against the DRV will be required.
>
> 7. The Chief of Staff Air Force and Commandant of the Marine Corps believe that time is against us and military action against the DRV should be taken now. They concur that the American public should support any action taken by the United States Government against the DRV. They consider that, linked to the next significant incident, we should commence a retaliatory GVN and US air strike program against the DRV in accordance with the 94 target plan. In this regard, they consider that a battalion-size VC attack on South Vietnam should be construed as "significant."

The view of the Chairman, the Chief of Staff, Army, and the Chief of Naval Operations, given in paragraph 8, was that "we must respond appropriately against the DRV in the event of an attack on US units," but they did not recommend making this the occasion for starting a program of attacks against the full 94 Target List.[27]

General Wheeler used the memorandum when presenting the JCS views at the White House meeting on 9 September. To President Johnson, Ambassador Taylor, and the other advisors he stressed the thought in paragraph 6, and he read paragraphs 7 and 8 in full.[28] The decisions reached by the President

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27. (TS-GP 1) CM-124-64 to SecDef, 9 Sep 64, Att to JCS 2343/457-1, 9 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (9 Sep 64).

28. (S) Note to Control Div, "The 9 September White House Meeting on Southeast Asia," 9 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (10 Sep 64).

were issued the following day as NSAM 314. He had approved substantially the program of action recommended by the group of senior advisors. The modifications that might be traced to the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were inclusion of the possibility of US armed reconnaissance flights over the Laotian corridor area and avoidance of the term "tit for tat."

In NSAM 314, 10 September 1964, the following actions were directed:

1. U.S. naval patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin will be resumed promptly after Ambassador Taylor's return. They will operate initially well beyond the 12-mile limit and be clearly dissociated from 34A maritime operations. The patrols will comprise two to three destroyers and would have air cover from carriers; the destroyers will have their own ASW capability.

2. 34A operations by the GVN will be resumed after completion of a first DeSoto patrol. The maritime operations are by far the most important. North Vietnam has already publicized them, and is likely to publicize them even more, and at this point we should have the GVN ready to admit that they are taking place and to justify and legitimize them on the basis of the facts of VC infiltration by sea. 34A air drop and leaflet operations should also be resumed but are secondary in importance. We should not consider air strikes under 34A for the present.

3. We should promptly discuss with the Government of Laos plans for limited GVN air and ground operations into the corridor areas of Laos, together with Lao air strikes and possible use of U. S. armed aerial reconnissance. On the basis of these discussions a decision on action will be taken, but it should be recognized that these operations will in any case have only limited effect.

4. We should be prepared to respond as appropriate against the DRV in the event of any attack on US units or any special DRV/VC action against SVN.

Further, the President reemphasized the importance of economic and political actions having immediate impact in South Vietnam, such as pay raises for civilian personnel and demonstration projects in the cities and selected rural areas. He stressed again that "no activity of this kind should be delayed

in any way by any feeling that our resources for these purposes are restricted. We can find the money which is needed for all worthwile projects in this field."

The final paragraph of NSAM 314 indicated the underlying thought of the Washington policymakers:

> These decisions are governed by a prevailing judgment that the first order of business at present is to take actions which will help to strengthen the fabric of the Government of South Vietnam; to the extent that the situation permits, such action should precede larger decisions. If such larger decisions are required at any time by a change in the situation, they will be taken.[29]

Thus the directive left the time for "larger decisions" indeterminate, with no mention of the 1 December date Ambassador Taylor had proposed. The course indicated was essentially a holding operation, chosen in the belief that it would be unwise to move voluntarily to more direct military action against the North without the assurance that a reasonably stable government was functioning in South Vietnam. It was apparent that the delay to allow time for Khanh to strengthen his government had not been considered unacceptable; on the other hand, the option of striking against North Vietnam was not foreclosed.

A DESOTO Patrol with Equivocal Results

Pursuant to NSAM 314, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 September authorized CINCPAC to conduct a three-day DESOTO patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin, beginning on 15 September, Saigon time. The approved rules of engagement were precisely those the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended in the memorandum used by the Chairman at the White House meeting, in the following terms:

> In the event of hostile attack, the patrol ships and aircraft are directed to fire upon the hostile attacker with the objective of insuring destruction. Ships are authorized to pursue the enemy to the recognized three mile territorial limit. Aircraft are authorized hot pursuit inside territorial waters (three miles) against surface vessels and into hostile airspace

29. (TS-GP 1) NSAM 314, 10 Sep 64, Encl to JCS 2343/458, 10 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (10 Sep 64).

(includes DRV, Hainan Island and Mainland China) against attacking aircraft when necessary to achieve destruction of identified attack forces. Ships and aircraft will confine their actions to the attacking ships and/or aircraft.[30]

After delays owing to weather conditions, the patrol conducted by the destroyers MORTON and EDWARDS got under way and proceeded uneventfully until the night of 18 September. The two destroyers were steaming in column in the darkness when radar sightings indicated fast-closing contacts on both bows. On this basis, and without visual sighting of any enemy craft, the MORTON and EDWARDS opened fire to repel the apparent attack. Carrier aircraft joined them shortly but were unable to locate any targets. The destroyers' batteries fired more than 100 rounds at radar-detected targets before the images broke up or disappeared.[31]

When the first reports of this action reached Washington, retaliatory attacks immediately came under consideration. Less than three hours after the initial radar sightings, General Wheeler informed CINCPAC that "if we can establish that an intentional attack has in fact been made on DeSoto Patrol, our response must be substantial." He listed the types of air attacks against North Vietnam that might be ordered and requested Admiral Sharp to alert appropriate forces. Within the hour a JCS message to CINCPAC sought answers, "required ASAP at highest levels," to such questions as "Was it intentional attack? Was target firing? What was the target?"[32]

Five hours later a message from the Joint Chiefs of Staff superseded the Chairman's initial message and directed Admiral Sharp to be prepared to conduct air operations during daylight hours on 19 September against five specific targets in North Vietnam selected from the 94 Target List. To mount the estimated 80 strike sorties required, he was authorized to employ any available US air resources except FARM GATE.[33]

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30. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8518 to CINCPAC, 10 Sep 64, same file.
31. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 376.
32. (TS) Msg, JCS 8789 to CINCPAC, 181508Z Sep 64; (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8790 to CINCPAC, 181550Z Sep 64; OCJCS File, "RVN Incidents, Tonkin Gulf, 18 Sep 64."
33. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8806 to CINCPAC, 182035Z Sep 64, same file.

Thirteen hours after the incident there was still no conclusive evidence that an attack had taken place on the DESOTO patrol. No debris or other physical evidence was found during an exhaustive search of the area in daylight. The Joint Chiefs of Staff first deferred the prospective retaliatory strikes until first light on 20 September, then informed CINCPAC they would not be conducted.[34]

Meanwhile, the three-day DESOTO patrol had been concluded without further alarms. On 19 September the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Admiral Sharp to await further instructions before scheduling another.[35]

On the following day, General Wheeler requested CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to furnish him their views on the worth of DESOTO patrols. Both commanders came strongly to the defense of the operations, citing their value as a source of technical and other forms of intelligence on NVN techniques and capabilities. Admiral Sharp added that the patrols asserted "our right to go any place we desire on the high seas . . . a right we must never give up." General Westmoreland hoped the resumption of the DESOTO patrols was not to be delayed by an extended reassessment of their value, for he saw the result as an "exhuming of US paper tiger image privately if not publicly in the eyes of interested parties in this part of the world." COMUSMACV reported continued improvement in the military aspects of the US endeavor in South Vietnam. "The disturbing feature is the political situation which is becoming increasingly unglued."[36]

The Rise of Doubts Regarding General Khanh

The intention underlying the Presidential decisions recorded on 10 September in NSAM 314 had been to allow time for the development of governmental stability in South Vietnam before the United States undertook more positive action against the North. The course of events within the country during the remainder of the month was to raise considerable doubts that the US purpose could be achieved. Even before Ambassador Taylor

34. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT et al., 190152Z Sep 64. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8839 to CINCPAC, 18 Sep 64. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8863 to CINCPAC, 19 Sep 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 377.

35. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8869 to CINCPAC, 19 Sep 64.

36. (TS) Msg, JCS 4593 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 20 Sep 64; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 210025Z Sep 64; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MACV 5147 to CJCS, 21 Sep 64.

could return to his post, dissident officers staged another coup. The commanders of the IV Corps and the 7th Division moved about ten battalions into Saigon in the early morning hours of 13 September and seized control of the capital. General Khanh was in Dalat and thus out of reach of the rebels.

Throughout the day the coup leaders, Generals Duc and Phat, broadcast over radio Saigon, revealing in the process their own lack of unity. General Phat called for Khanh's arrest, charging treasonable failure to carry on the fight against the Viet Cong successfully. General Duc apparently wanted to enforce reforms on the Khanh government without overthrowing it, calling for a purge of traitors, reestablishment of national unity, and vigorous prosecution of the war. Khanh, using a transmitter in Dalat, broadcast counterappeals for loyalty and suppression of the revolt. While some commanders held back, apparently awaiting a clearer indication of the outcome, others rallied to Khanh's side. General Nguyen Cao Ky, the VNAF commander, opposed the coup from the beginning and sent aircraft to make low-level passes over locations where the coup forces were emplaced.[37]

Early in the affair the Secretary of State had sent a message to Deputy Ambassador Johnson, in Taylor's absence, calling on him to make the strongest possible representations to all key leaders. It was imperative that the situation not reach the point of open conflict between elements of the RVNAF. "The picture of petty bickering among Vietnamese leaders has created an appalling impression abroad and causes friends of South Vietnamese freedom all over the world to wonder how serious South Vietnamese are about their freedom and security and what there is for others to support," Rusk said. Ambassador Johnson was to impress on the coup leaders the consequences of their action and seek the return of the tactical units to their assigned areas. Generals Duc and Phat should be told bluntly that the United States had no faith in them as prospective heads of a government for South Vietnam, and that it firmly supported Khanh.[38]

Ambassador Johnson had already been speaking in this vein to General Phat. Meanwhile, Khanh remained at Dalat. US

37. (S) Msg, Saigon 931 to State, 22 Sep 64.
38. (S) Msg, State 654 to Saigon, 13 Sep 64.

officials were in touch with him, but he appeared to have no plan of action. Khanh requested that US Marines be landed at Nha Trang and Vung Tau, but he was unable to suggest what mission they should perform.[39]

The outstanding figure was General Ky, who by his firm stand kept the coup from succeeding. A hot-headed man, Ky had to be dissuaded by American officers from bombing the Saigon radio station. The coup's leaders were in frequent communication with Ky in an effort to win him over, but without success. Having been given authority by Khanh to negotiate on his behalf, Ky received General Duc at his headquarters on the morning of 14 September. After their meeting there was a press conference presided over by Ky at which he announced, "There has been no coup." He told reporters that the events of 13 September had been "the result of the aroused patriotism of members of the armed forces." The two generals had been misguided, but now they "understood." General Khanh flew back to Saigon and in a broadcase statement assured the people that his forces were in control.[40]

In commenting on 15 September on the collapse of the coup, Admiral Sharp noted that "General Ky's star has become brighter. He was a major moderating force and principal spokesman for the government. It wouldn't be too surprising to see him play parts of greater importance in the future."[41]

Less than a week after resolution of the coup episode, the Khanh government encountered new internal troubles. On the night of 19-20 September the Montagnard Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) rebelled at four camps in Darlac Province in the highlands of South Vietnam. The CIDG was composed of tribesmen under Vietnamese officers, with US Special Forces teams and advisors attached. Resentful of a long history of being treated as inferiors by the Vietnamese, the Montagnards apparently planned to murder their officers and attack the provincial capital. About 40 Vietnamese personnel were killed at the outset of the revolt. ARVN forces responded by blocking roads in the area and taking up defensive positions, preparatory to the government's next move.

The US Special Forces personnel stationed in the CIDG camps, US advisors with the ARVN units, and Ambassador Taylor and

39. (S) Msgs, Saigon 833 and 836 to State, 13 Sep 64.
40. (U) Msg, Saigon 843 to State, 14 Sep 64; (C) Msg, Saigon 848 to State, 14 Sep 64; (S) Msg, Saigon 931 to State, 22 Sep 64.
41. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 150318Z Sep 64.

General Westmoreland all took major parts in attempting to end the rebellion without further bloodshed and preventing a permanent breach between the Montagnards and the government. When this was substantially achieved on 28 September, General Khanh expressed gratitude to the Ambassador for the assistance provided. During the earlier and more critical stages, however, Ambassador Taylor had had to contend with a strong suspicion on Khanh's part that US Special Forces advisors had instigated or assisted the revolt and with charges that US activities in the highland area were designed to make the Montagnards consider themselves "American soldiers" rather than elements of the GVN forces.[42]

Meanwhile, there had also been a 48-hour general strike in Saigon and a noncommunist insurrection against the government in Qui Nhon Province, where Khanh was able to reassert control by the end of September. During the month General Khanh assumed for himself the additional position of Minister of Defense and began work on the promised transition to a civilian government. The triumvirate announced that a High National Council would be formed to draft a provisional constitution and select a provisional national assembly by the end of October. General Minh was in charge of the task of choosing the 17 members of the Council.

In an assessment communicated to Washington while the Montagnard revolt was going on, Ambassador Taylor said that recent developments had "demonstrated a faster rate of deterioration of governmental processes than I would have predicted." General Khanh in his combined role as Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Commander-in-Chief still made all the decisions, and no one else in the government had emerged as a strong figure. Khanh was particularly vulnerable to pressure groups, however, because of the pattern he had established by giving in to the Buddhists and the students and because of his "lame duck" staus owing to the pledge of military withdrawal from the government by 1 November.[43]

The Buddhist leader, Tri Quang, apparently exerted increasing influence on Khanh. In his own dealings with Tri Quang, Ambassador Taylor had found him a powerful personality. The Buddhist leader had emerged during the distrubances in August as "one of the major power factors in South Vietnam," apparently committed to "creating a government wholly responsive to his

42. (S) Msgs, Saigon 921 to State, 22 Sep 64; 952, 25 Sep 64; 985, 29 Sep 64. (TS-GP 1) Command History USMACV, 1964, pp. 122-124.
43. (S) Msg, Saigon 938 to State, 24 Sep 64.

will." The Buddhists often spoke of "a Vietnamese solution" to the country's problems, and there was reason to suspect that Tri Quang's advice to Khanh had a neutralist, and certainly an anti-American, tone.[44]

Another influence on Khanh, however, was that of the "Young Turks," a term that encompassed most of the younger generals of the RVNAF, all of whom had attained their rank since the ouster of Diem in November 1963. Their futures depended on a successful prosecution of the war and on having a government that made this endeavor its first business. The influence of the Young Turks had risen with the abortive coup of 13 September, for by remaining loyal to Khanh they had saved him from downfall and placed him under obligation to heed their advice.[45]

The attempted coup had also heightened the religious tensions in the country, owing particularly to inflammatory accounts in the Vietnamese press that described it as the attempt of a Catholic-Diemist-Can Lao-Dai Viet coalition to seize the government.[46]

From the Ambassador's reports, CINCPAC concluded that the United States might soon be faced with a further deterioration of the GVN. In a message to General Wheeler on 26 September, he suggested that Khanh was ineffective as a leader and that his continuation in office would further erode the morale of both the government and the armed forces. "Perhaps now is the time to tell Khanh point blank that if he cannot reverse the present downward trend, then we will have to withdraw our support for him," Admiral Sharp wrote. He suggested General Minh as a successor to Khanh, should the latter resign or be deposed. CINCPAC did not want the United States to "go down with a losing horse" simply because "we cannot think of an alternative."[47]

The recommendations that Ambassador Taylor sent to Washington two days later were compatible with CINCPAC's views. The Ambassador pointed out that the problem facing the United States was how to assure adequate political leadership until

44. (S) Msgs, Saigon 700 to State, 2 Sep 64; 872, 16 Sep 64.
45. (S) Msg, Saigon 923 to State, 24 Sep 64.
46. (S) Msg, Saigon 988 to State, 29 Sep 64.
47. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 260406Z Sep 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep-Oct 64.

1 November when, presumably, the High National Council would have formed a provisional government, while at the same time keeping up an effective defense against the Viet Cong. "Fundamental to this consideration," the Ambassador said, "is how we are to view Khanh who, up to now, has enjoyed our confidence and has received our unqualified public and private support." He noted that the United States had bailed Khanh out of serious trouble at least twice in recent times; "the question now is whether he is worth saving again either for the long or short term."

General Khanh was still working hard, but he was discouraged and lacked his old zest and confidence. In gaining the support of the Buddhists and the Young Turks he had alienated other factions within the armed forces and had incurred the hostility of the Dai Viet, the Can Lao, and portions of the Catholic population. A majority of the officer corps apparently still supported him, because of Khanh's continued US backing and the absence of a strong rival.

> We must hang on, keep up the war and play for political breaks. If we can get a reasonably good provisional government before the end of the year we are back in business. I suspect Khanh will not survive as head of government but if he can be retained as Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief he may be able to give effective military leadership to the pacification effort.

Ambassador Taylor recommended that the United States: 1) continue to press for a satisfactory governmental solution through the work of the High National Council; 2) be prepared to drop Khanh if he got into irreparable trouble; 3) view General Minh as a short-term substitute for Khanh; 4) press on with the pacification program; and 5) continue to prepare for offensive actions against North Vietnam as planned.[48]

Apparent progress could be reported on the Ambassador's fourth point. General Khanh had taken personal charge of implementation of the HOP TAC Plan for pacification of the provinces surrounding Saigon. He had agreed with Ambassador Taylor that after further preparations during the remainder of the month, HOP TAC would be formally initiated on 1 October.[49]

48. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Saigon 972 to State, 28 Sep 64.
49. (S) Msg, Saigon 903 to State, 18 Sep 64.

Cross-Border Operations

In NSAM 314, 10 September 1964, the President had directed that discussions begin promptly with the Government of Laos concerning limited South Vietnamese air and ground operations into the corridor areas, together with Lao air strikes and possible US armed reconnaissance flights. While Ambassador Unger carried forward his part of this task in Vientiane, the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed recommendations concerning the prospective military operations, which they forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 30 September. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary seek approval for immediate implementation of the air strike plan that they submitted in a detailed appendix. It would employ Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF) T-28 aircraft and US YANKEE TEAM flights, without any South Vietnamese participation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that VNAF and FARM GATE resources were already fully committed to the pacification program in South Vietnam and should not be levied upon except for missions supporting the cross-border ground operations. The 22 confirmed targets in Laos should be allocated on the basis of 17 to the RLAF and five bridges to YANKEE TEAM, with US aircraft also flying flak suppression missions for the RLAF and providing high cover against the possibility that enemy air forces might attempt to interfere.

A further target--the most significant, militarily, of any yet detected--was Mu Gia Pass, but it lay in North Vietnam, just beyond the Laotian border. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized that political considerations prevented sending either the RLAF or YANKEE TEAM against it at present, but they recommended that the decision be reconsidered whenever the political situation allowed.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also recommended that authority be granted to implement the plan they submitted for ground operations into the Laos corridor. South Vietnamese forces would perform the operations, initially only in the central of three designated areas, but with provision for expansion into the other two as capabilities increased. The plan provided that penetrations would not exceed 20 kilometers and that the GVN forces employed would not exceed two company equivalents in any one operational area. The Joint Chiefs of Staff attached one condition. They believed that successful execution of the program was possible only if US advisors were authorized

to accompany the GVN units; otherwise, "no further consideration should be given to the conduct of such ground operations." The VNAF could be relied on for air support, with provision for use of FARM GATE or other US air resources in an emergency exceeding VNAF capabilities.[50]

On 6 October Ambassador Unger reported from Vientiane that in his discussions with RLAF officials they had proposed certain modifications in the target list. The Lao also had requested cover by US jet aircraft for RLAF strikes on four targets close to the North Vietnamese border and had suggested YANKEE TEAM attacks on four heavily defended targets. The following day a joint State-Defense message authorized Ambassador Unger to urge the Lao to begin the program of air strikes in the Laos Panhandle, limiting themselves to targets suitable for their T-28 aircraft without US air cover or fire support. He was also to inform them that US strikes against certain difficult targets were to be anticipated but had not yet been authorized.[51]

In the light of these developments, and of a recommendation received from Ambassador Taylor that US participation in the cross-border air operations be authorized, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again addressed the Secretary of Defense on 13 October. They found all the Lao requests and target modifications acceptable, and they recommended that US aircraft provide both high cover and flak suppression for the RLAF strikes and that US forces be used against targets that were beyond the RLAF capability.

In supporting their views, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the United States was responsible for initiating the air strike proposal. Failure to provide US assistance as requested could result in losses to the RLAF in both manpower and aircraft that would be unacceptable to the Laotian Government. The governments of both Laos and Thailand could view US reluctance to support the RLAF operations as a demonstration of US weakness and lack of resolve. Hence the Joint Chiefs of Staff held that "US participation in the air operations in Laos is essential to the success of the operation, politically and militarily."[52]

50. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-835-64 to SecDef, 30 Sep 64 (derived from JCS 2343/467), JMF 9155.3 (25 Sep 64).
51. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2344/98, 11 Oct 64, JMF 9155.2 (11 Oct 64).
52. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-870-64 to SecDef, 13 Oct 64, App A to JCS 2344/98, 11 Oct 64, same file.

Replying on 21 October to the two JCS submissions regarding cross-border operations, Secretary McNamara wrote that ground operations had not yet been authorized, but planning should proceed along the lines the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended. As for the air strike program, the extent to which US participation had been authorized to date was set forth in the joint State-Defense message dispatched to Ambassador Unger on 13 October.[53] The message endorsed the eight-day program of RLAF strikes in the Panhandle, to begin 14 October, that the Ambassador's efforts had produced, and it authorized support by US combat air patrols (CAP) where necessary. "CAP would not be used to suppress or retaliate to ground AAA." In the message Washington officials acknowledged that YANKEE TEAM suppressive strikes against certain difficult targets "are part of the overall concept" but said that consideration was being deferred until the results of the first RLAF strikes could be evaluated.[54]

On 16 October Ambassador Unger reported that the RLAF would probably complete strikes against the first thirteen targets in the corridor by 23 October. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 20 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the targets remaining beyond these thirteen were militarily the most significant, and they renewed their recommendation that US air forces participate in the attacks, as the Lao had requested. The Secretary of Defense replied on 29 October that the three successive JCS memoranda on cross-border operations had been provided to the Department of State and would be kept under constant review.[55]

The JCS Recommendations of 27 October 1964

Following the consultations in Washington that had culminated in the issuance of NSAM 314 on 10 September, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had turned to further development of their position on courses of action in Southeast Asia.

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53. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Cross Border Operations," 21 Oct 64, Att to JCS 2344/98-1, 22 Oct 64, same file.

54. (S) Jt State-Def msg, State 330 to Vientiane, 13 Oct 64, JMF 9155.2 (11 Oct 64).

55. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-889-64 to SecDef, 20 Oct 64 (derived from JCS 2344/101); (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Support, Laos Operations," 29 Oct 64, Encl to JCS 2344/101-1, 30 Oct 64; JMF 9155.2 (17 Oct 64).

Specifically, at their meeting on 14 September, they directed the Joint Staff to examine possible actions, both within South Vietnam's borders and beyond, that might be added to the list recommended to the Secretary of Defense in the JCS memorandum of 26 August. As this study progressed, views expressed by individual members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were added to the Joint Staff's field of consideration.[56]

On 25 September, for example, the Chief of Staff, Army, recommended to his colleagues that they broaden the JCS advice being rendered to higher authority by giving more attention to political courses of action in South Vietnam. This seemed necessary to General Johnson because "the communist 'war of liberation' being fought against the people of South Vietnam is in very large measure a political struggle -- a struggle for the loyalty and support of the population." While he would press the implementation of all military measures already approved, particularly the cross-border operations into Laos, General Johnson wished the Joint Chiefs of Staff to address the problems of lack of governmental stability, low leadership morale, and inadequately trained civil service in South Vietnam, acknowledging that "solutions to these problems are critical to the eventual termination of the insurgency." One of his suggestions was that the United States propose concluding a Mutual Defense Treaty with the GVN. "Such a treaty, on the order of the treaty with Korea, would provide the needed legal base to commit the Government of South Vietnam to a closer identification with United States objectives, and also provide the necessary foundation for subsequent agreements on combined operations beyond the frontiers of South Vietnam."[57]

General Johnson's paper, together with the written comments of the Chief of Staff, Air Force, was referred to the Joint Staff for consideration in connection with its work on "Additional Courses of Action in Southeast Asia."[58] While sharing General Johnson's concern over governmental deterioration in South Vietnam, General LeMay did not believe that "the problem is one to be resolved by political actions or by the combination of political/economic/psychological/military actions proposed by the Army." He thought the Army viewpoint represented

56. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/149, 22 Oct 64, JMF 9155 (22 Oct 64).
57. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/470, 30 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (25 Sep 64) (1).
58. (C-GP 1) 1st N/H of JCS 2343/470, 9 Oct 64, same file.

"a considerable dilution of the firm stand the Joint Chiefs of Staff have taken" in all their recommendations since 2 June, which had consistently pointed to the need for military action against North Vietnam. Convinced that "time is not on our side," General LeMay believed that the problem of governmental instability had to be approached in this way, also. "It appears to me that waiting for the more secure political base is a lost cause and ignores the necessity for positive military action now to insure establishment of a secure political base."[59]

General LeMay also took exception specifically to General Johnson's statement that the military policies and actions currently being pursued within South Vietnam were "probably the optimum that can be provided." He cited various restrictions, particularly the fact that the United States was not employing the B-57 and F-100 jet aircraft it had in the country in support of the counterinsurgency effort. At that time the Chief of Staff, Air Force, already had before his colleagues a memorandum suggesting that they recommend to the Secretary of Defense the use of at least the B-57s against the Viet Cong within South Vietnam, in carefully defined circumstances.[60]

The question of use of the jet aircraft that had been deployed in South Vietnam as part of the US posture of readiness assumed during the Tonkin Gulf incidents already had a history of consideration. COMUSMACV had recommended employing the B-57s and F-100s in a sustained campaign against the Viet Cong on 29 August. CINCPAC had reserved judgment on the proposal pending further study. "We must remember," Admiral Sharp advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 31 August, "that it would be immediately obvious that U.S. jet aircraft were in use against the VC. This would be a step in escalation. With a government in Saigon that changes almost daily, I question if we are ready to commit U.S. forces any further than we already have." Ambassador Taylor endorsed this view a few days later.[61]

One of the decisions made by the highest authority on 9 September (not included in NSAM 314) had been that the US jet aircraft would not be utilized for the present. Answering

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59. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM J-19-64 to JCS, 9 Oct 64, same file.
60. (S-GP 4) JCS 2343/476, 7 Oct 64, JMF 9155.3 (6 Oct 64).
61. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MACV-J3 8887 to CINCPAC, 29 Aug 64. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 310100Z Aug 64. (S-GP 3) J-3 Briefing Sheet for CJCS on JCS 2343/476, 13 Oct 64, JMF 9155.3 (6 Oct 64).

In SNIE 10-3-64, dated 9 October, the intelligence community analyzed "Probable Communist Reactions to Certain Possible US/GVN Courses of Actions." Communist leaders in Hanoi and Peking were presumed to have noted the same trends favorable to them in South Vietnam that the earlier SNIE had sketched. Accordingly, it was in the enemy's interest to avoid any action that might change the favorable cast of the situation, and this, the US experts held, was compatible with an underlying Chinese Communist aversion to becoming involved in hostilities with the United States. The two communist countries were thought, nevertheless, to be willing to continue supporting the Viet Cong, even at the risk of causing a limited US retaliation against North Vietnam, "probably on the calculation that victory is near in the South and that they could through political counteraction prevent prolonged or expanded US attacks in the North."

It was the intelligence view that North Vietnam would not attack the DESOTO patrols again unless they were conducted in a highly provocative manner. The communist response to US or GVN air action against infiltration targets in the Laos Panhandle would probably amount only to political and propaganda moves, some improvement of defenses, and VC sabotage raids against US and GVN air bases. If the US or the GVN mounted cross-border ground operations, the communists might move more forces into the area.

The highest level of action considered in the SNIE was a systematic program of gradually intensifying US and VNAF attacks against targets in North Vietnam. The intelligence authorities believed that in the opening stages the enemy would try to dissuade the United States from further attacks by a combination of "apparent concessions," efforts to heighten international pressures for negotiation, and actions designed to underscore communist determination. Communist propagandists would attack US "war madness" and play on fears of a wider war. While making an all-out propaganda and diplomatic drive for an international conference, Hanoi's leaders would hint privately of willingness to reach some accommodation. Both North Vietnam and Communist China would deploy troops in a threatening manner, but the experts doubted that they would invade South Vietnam. Peking would probably meet Hanoi's requests for such defensive assistance as radar equipment, antiaircraft artillery, combat aircraft, patrol craft, and technicians. While probably not asking for Chinese ground forces, Hanoi would exploit any offers of Chinese Communist "volunteers" and would publicize the arrival of equipment and advisors. The Soviets

a JCS query a week later, CINCPAC said that from a purely military point of view there was no question that use of the B-57s and F-100s was desirable. There was a shortage of fixed-wing aircraft in South Vietnam, and requests by ground commanders for close air support often went unfilled. "Armed helos have partially filled gap by their use in suppressive fire." But utilization of the jet aircraft "must be considered in conjunction with the political decision to increase US participation," Admiral Sharp noted. He recommended a limited use of the B-57s, possibly as part of FARM GATE. These older aircraft would normally have been retired and had been retained in the Pacific Command only because of their suitability for the type of operations occurring in Southeast Asia. "Introduction of the still first line F-100 on the other hand could imply a marked increase in U.S. involvement." General LeMay's recommendations on 6 October followed on CINCPAC's views; after JCS discussion, they too were referred to the Joint Staff.[62]

During the first ten days of October the US intelligence community delivered two evaluations that had a marked impact on the deliberations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The first, SNIE 53-2-64, dated 1 October, surveyed the situation in South Vietnam and concluded that there had been further deterioration since early September. The intelligence experts considered conditions unfavorable for the development of a viable government in Saigon. They thought likely a "further decay of GVN will and effectiveness," leading toward defeatism and paralysis of leadership and attended by increasing friction between GVN and US officials. They doubted that the rearrangement of the political structure, scheduled for late October, would improve this picture; moreover, a coup involving "disgruntled South Vietnam military figures" could occur at any time. As governmental effectiveness declined, the war effort would dwindle on all fronts, and the GVN might seek a political accommodation with the enemy. With this prospect, the assessment read, the Viet Cong were unlikely to exert themselves in large military actions to win major victories. The enemy's current terrorist and guerrilla tactics were well designed to exploit the trend toward anarchy, leading ultimately to a neutralist coalition government that the communists could dominate.[63]

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62. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 250150Z Sep 64, JMF 9155 (22 Oct 64). (U) 1st N/H of JCS 2343/476, 22 Oct 64, JMF 9155.3 (6 Oct 64).

63. (S-GP 1) SNIE 53-2-64, 1 Oct 64.

The Chief of Staff, Air Force, noted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already submitted positive proposals on 2 June and 26 August, but the programs recommended had not yet been implemented. The judgment reached had been that more aggressive efforts should not be mounted until a more stable political base was achieved in South Vietnam. "SNIE 53-2-64 proves again that time is not on our side. It suggests strongly that additional delay can have disastrous results." General LeMay called on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review urgently their previous recommendations and provide current advice to the President and Secretary of Defense, within 72 hours if possible.[65]

Four days later the Chief of Staff, Air Force, submitted his own version of the memorandum the Joint Chiefs of Staff should forward to the Secretary of Defense.[66] Some of its strongly worded phrases calling for accelerated and forceful action were ultimately to be included in the submission the Joint Chiefs of Staff made on 27 October, for a still graver view of the situation had been presented in the meantime by Ambassador Taylor.

In the first of three successive messages from Saigon, the Ambassador noted a "definite step-up" in infiltration from North Vietnam, particularly in the northern provinces. If continued at the current rate, infiltration during 1964 might reach a total of 10,000 men. "I feel sure," Taylor wrote on 14 October, "that we must soon adopt new and drastic methods to reduce and eventually end such infiltration if we are to succeed in South Vietnam."[67]

Two days later, in a message addressed to President Johnson and the Secretary of State, he again cited the rising rate of infiltration and said that increasing numbers of northern-born conscripts were being identified. Khanh's government claimed to have proof that they had come in organized NVN units. "By any objective standard their presence in SVN constitutes an invasion by hostile forces into the territory of an ally of the US," Ambassador Taylor declared. He said that with the advent of the dry season the infiltration problem would assume a magnitude and urgency that would require immediate countermeasures.[68]

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65. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM J-24-64 to JCS, 12 Oct 64, JMF 9155 (22 Oct 64).
66. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM J-34-64 to JCS, 16 Oct 64, same file.
67. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1129 to State, 14 Oct 64.
68. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/149, 22 Oct 64, JMF 9155 (22 Oct 64).

would limit their involvement to political and propaganda efforts and, perhaps, agreement to meet Hanoi's calls for some military equipment.

Should these efforts fail to deter the US attacks, North Vietnam would have to decide whether to stop its support of the Viet Cong or suffer major destruction of its military and industrial facilities. The communist leaders might suspend such support, probably with the intention of renewing it later. The possibility of an all-out communist attack on South Vietnam in these circumstances could not be denied, however. The leaders in Hanoi might judge that the United States was unwilling to undertake a major ground war in Southeast Asia, or that if it proved willing, the United States could be defeated ultimately by the same methods that were successful against the French. "In a situation involving so many levels of possible escalation we cannot make a confident judgment as to which course the DRV leaders would choose," the intelligence experts said.

If North Vietnam responded aggressively, it would have some forms of assistance from Communist China, but the men in Peking would remain reluctant to become directly involved in the fighting unless destruction of the communist regime in Hanoi appeared likely. Nevertheless, there was always a chance that Communist China might intervene for reasons that seemed irrational to the United States or because it misjudged the US objectives. "Communist China's capability for conducting a ground war in adjacent areas of Southeast Asia is formidable," the analysts pointed out. They believed that Soviet reaction to escalation of the war would take the form of augmented pressures to bring the United States to the conference table.[64]

General LeMay brought the findings in the first of the two intelligence reports to the attention of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a forthright memorandum on 12 October. Reviewing the prediction of continuing deterioration in South Vietnam, he called it "as clear a forecast of impending disaster as we can expect to receive from the intelligence community. . . . Unless we can, without delay, define and initiate some positive course of action to counter the present trend, we must accept what looms before us as an inevitable consequence."

64. (TS-GP 1) SNIE 10-3-64, 9 Oct 64.

trained civil service in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) militate against early success and that the solutions, primarily political, to these problems are also critical to the eventual termination of the insurgency.

The struggle in South Vietnam is a combination of political and military actions and there is an interaction between the two that permits a political success to be exploited militarily and vice versa. Accordingly, a program of military and supporting political actions with respect to the RVN has been developed on the basis that US withdrawal from the RVN or Southeast Asia is not an acceptable course of action. This program envisages the requirement now for accelerated and forceful actions both inside and outside of the RVN to support a strategy of:

a. Depriving the Viet Cong (VC) of out of country assistance by applying continuously increasing military pressures on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to the extent necessary to cause the DRV to cease support and direction of the insurgency.

b. Depriving the VC of assistance within the RVN by expanding the counter-insurgency effort - military, economic and political - within the RVN.

c. Continuing to seek a viable effective government in the RVN based on the broadest possible consensus.

d. Maintaining a military readiness posture in Southeast Asia that:

(1) Demonstrates the US will and capability to escalate the action if required.

(2) Deters a major communist aggression in the area.

The recommended courses of action to support this strategy were listed in an ascending order of severity in two appendices, one for actions within South Vietnam, the other for actions

The third message, on 17 October, reviewed the advances the Viet Cong had made. They had taken full advantage of the unsettled political conditions in South Vietnam to increase the area under their control. Over the past year the Viet Cong had moved gradually from their mountain bases, gained control of the piedmont, and were now encroaching into the coastal plain. In addition to gaining access to the plentiful supplies of food and manpower in this area they had assumed positions from which they could extend control to the coast in some regions. There the enemy might establish beachheads to support still more extensive infiltration.69

Although not directly related to the Ambassador's messages, certain comments that the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided to Secretary McNamara on 21 October were pertinent. In forwarding to him an Army study analyzing actions taken in Southeast Asia to date, they observed that "the very nature of guerrilla warfare, with its hit and run tactics, provides the insurgent with the initiative as long as he is not separated from his source of direction, personnel, and supplies." They noted that operations to cause North Vietnam to cease its support of the insurgency had been recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff but not yet implemented. They then referred to SNIE 53-2-64, saying that it "clearly indicates that we are fast running out of time in Southeast Asia." The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that they would shortly submit recommendations on additional courses of action in Southeast Asia.70

During intensive consultations on 23 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff reached final agreement on the text of their memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, which had been under development since 14 September. It was forwarded on 27 October. The Joint Chiefs of Staff cited Ambassador Taylor's message to the President on 16 October, as well as SNIE 53-2-64, as basis for their statement that "in view of the recent estimate of the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam, the Joint Chief of Staff believe that strong military actions are required now in order to prevent the collapse of the US position in Southeast Asia."

> The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognize that the lack of stability in the central government, the low state of morale of the leadership, and the poorly

69. (S) Msg, Saigon 1167 to State, 17 Oct 64.
70. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-893-64 to SecDef, 21 Oct 64, Encl B to JCS 2343/469, 29 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (24 Sep 64)(1).

beyond its borders. In introducing the appendices the Joint Chiefs of Staff repeated their established opinion that "the military course of action which would contribute most to defeating insurgencies in Southeast Asia remains the destruction of the DRV will and capabilities as necessary to compel the DRV to cease providing support to those insurgencies." Implementation of the entire program might be required to achieve this objective, but "the lists are arranged so that any of the actions may be selected, implemented, and controlled, as required, to produce the desired effect while analyzing and estimating the communist reaction."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff referred to SNIE 10-3-64, the estimate of probable communist reaction. From it they derived the conclusion that "there is not a high risk of introduction of Chinese communist ground force combat units unless major US/RVN ground units had moved to occupy areas of the DRV or communist held territory of Northern Laos, or possibly, the Chinese communists had committed their air and had subsequently suffered attacks on their bases."

> Further, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that because of the present favorable balance of power it is within the capability of US forces to deal with large-scale aggression.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested authority to implement immediately the first six courses of action of Appendix A (within RVN) and the first eight of Appendix B (outside RVN). The six to be pursued within South Vietnam were: 1) influence the GVN to apply increasing pressure on the Viet Cong and to continue the pacification program with emphasis on HOP TAC; 2) begin a vigorous civil affairs effort in South Vietnam; 3) apply much more stringent measures of population control, including curfews in selected areas, checkpoints, and identification, search, seizure, and detention procedures; 4) encourage recruitment from the Popular Force volunteers to serve as uniformed district and village policemen; 5) support operations to cut off VC supply through the Mekong-Bassac Rivers and associated waterways; and 6) employ US fixed-wing aircraft in day and night air strikes within South Vietnam (presumably the B-57s and F-100s).

The eight recommended actions outside South Vietnam were: 1) resume DESOTO patrols; 2) intensify OPLAN 34A operations with emphasis on MAROPS and addition of VNAF air operations against selected targets; 3) maintain the current forward deployments

of US combat units in Southeast Asia; 4) permit RVN forces to pursue and destroy VC units crossing into Cambodia; 5) launch appropriate retaliatory actions to NVN/VC incidents, as prescribed in NSAM 314; 6) conduct low-level US reconnaissance probes of North Vietnam; 7) resume and expand cross-border operations, both air and ground, against infiltration through the Laos Panhandle; and 8) with US, FARM GATE, and VNAF resources, attack lines of communication in North Vietnam in conjunction with air strike operations against nearby targets in RVN and Laos, destroying such border targets as Mu Gia Pass.

The next two courses of action of Appendix B were 9) deploy further US forces within the concept of OPLAN 37-64 (1 Army brigade and 2 F-100 squadrons to Thailand; 1 MEB to Da Nang), and 10) commence "air strikes against infiltration associated targets in the DRV." The Chief of Staff, Army, and the Chief of Naval Operations, supported by the Chairman, requested "authority to implement; as an extension of increasing pressures on the DRV, courses of action 9 and 10 of Appendix B, after appropriate implementation of the first eight courses of action."

The Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps urged more immediate action. They believed that "the judgment reflected in SNIE 53-2-64 forces the conclusion that, if indeed, time has not run out, it is fast doing so."

[redacted]

> Unless we move now to alter the present evolution of events, there is great likelihood of a VC victory. They see no useful alternative to initiating action against the DRV now through a planned and selective program of air strikes. Accordingly, they recommend that courses of action 9 and 10 (as revised) in Appendix B be implemented now, and that course of action 10 be revised to read:
>
> > Selective air strikes against DRV to include air strikes on infiltration routes.
>
> They believe that the initial effort should be focused on targets of military significance and should be mounted in response to the next significant VC action in South Vietnam. In this regard, they consider that a battalion size VC attack in SVN or an act of VC terrorism against US personnel should be construed as significant.

Also to be considered significant would be confirmation of the reported appearance of organized NVN units in South Vietnam.

Beyond courses of action 9 and 10 were six more in Appendix B of increasing severity, as follows: 11) aerial mining of North Vietnamese ports (Haiphong approaches, Cam Pha, and Hon Gay), with suitable notice to other countries through diplomatic channels; 12) "Naval quarantine/blockade of the DRV (also applies to Cambodia)"; 13) attacks of increasing severity on targets in North Vietnam; 14) "All-out air attack on the DRV" (the entire 94 Target List); 15) amphibious and airborne operations to seize one or more lodgements on the North Vietnamese coast; and 16) "Commit US and Allied ground forces into Southeast Asia as required." In Appendix A there was one more action within South Vietnam beyond the six recommended for immediate implementation: 7) "Deploy forces to implement appropriate CINCPAC OPLANS; to assist actively in fighting the insurgency in RVN or to defeat communist aggression as necessary." These further courses of action in the two appendices exceeded what had been recommended in the JCS memorandum of 26 August.

Besides calling for immediate implementation of certain actions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended "that courses of action 7 in Appendix A and 11 through 16 in Appendix B be implemented as required to achieve US objectives in Southeast Asia." By so recommending, the Joint Chiefs of Staff showed themselves willing to contemplate a level of action beyond what they had suggested two months earlier, including the possibility of ultimate deployment of US ground combat forces to the mainland of Southeast Asia. The Joint Chiefs of Staff closed their memorandum of 27 October by requesting that their views be provided to the President at the earliest feasible time.[71]

The Secretary of Defense replied as follows on 29 October:

> I have noted the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed in JCSM 902-64. They have been provided to the Department of State.
>
> Ambassador Taylor has expressed concern about initiating a program of pressure on North Vietnam before we have a responsible set of authorities to work with in South Vietnam. I am convinced that we should obtain his views with respect to the specific JCS

71. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-902-64 to SecDef, 27 Oct 64 (derived from JCS 2339/149), JMF 9155 (22 Oct 64).

recommendations and their timing. I therefore propose to provide him a copy of the referenced memorandum and its appendices and to request his comments as soon as possible so that a proposal accompanied by your views can be presented to the President very soon.[72]

72. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Courses of Action, Southeast Asia," 29 Oct 64, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2339/149, 30 Oct 64, same file.

Chapter 13

JCS RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING THE BIEN HOA ATTACK

First Days of the Huong Government

In South Vietnam the High National Council (HNC), composed of 17 prominent figures representing various party and religious interests, had been formed by 26 September 1964. It set about drafting a provisional charter for the new government that was scheduled for installation by the end of October. In a message to Ambassador Taylor, Secretary of State Rusk said that "the US must exercise privately all the influence it can bring to bear to obtain as stable a form of government as possible and one whose personnel will be acceptable not only to the HNC but also to the military," and, of course, to the United States as well.[1]

For his part General Khanh seemed not only ready but anxious to shed his responsibilities as Prime Minister and become a soldier again. On 11 October he addressed the HNC on the temporary nature of his stewardship under the triumvirate arrangement and made clear that he did not aspire to the premiership in the new government. "I will return to my post as a general in order to fight day and night, together with my comrades-in-arms, to preserve this last piece of earth of the Free Vietnamese," he declared.[2]

Since Khanh wielded such power as was being exercised at the moment, however, it was evident that the form of the new government would have to meet his approval. Upon seeing the first draft of the proposed charter on 15 October, Khanh charged that the HNC had assigned unprecedented authority to the post of Chief of State, an authority greater than the Prime Minister's. He said that the document was "unacceptable to the armed forces" and demanded its revision. According to some reports, he threatened a coup if the HNC failed to comply.[3]

1. (TS) Msg, State 795 to Saigon, 9 Oct 64.
2. (U) Msg, Saigon 1092 to State, 11 Oct 64.
3. (S) Msg, Saigon 1150 to State, 16 Oct 64.

Embassy officials surmised that Khanh's objections stemmed in part from the fact that General Minh appeared to be the leading candidate at the moment for appointment as Chief of State. To avoid a confrontation between the two generals and their supporters, Ambassador Taylor persuaded the HNC to reduce the Chief of State to a figurehead position, reposing the main governmental power in the civilian Prime Minister, yet unnamed. The Ambassador informed Washington that General Minh "seems agreed" as Chief of State and that General Khanh would probably be named Commander-in-Chief. "We may be emerging from the woods, but I still have my fingers very much crossed," he wrote.[4]

On 21 October, assuming that Minh would be the Chief of State who would in turn appoint the Prime Minister, Ambassador Taylor discussed with him the selection to be made. He told Minh that the United States had no candidate for the post but that he wanted to be sure the United States was "not surprised" and would find the appointment suitable.[5]

A surprise was in store, nevertheless. On 24 October the HNC unanimously elected Dr. Phan Khac Suu as provisional Chief of State. Ambassador Taylor called on Suu the next day and told him "with some deliberate anger" that the United States could not countenance the HNC action of making important decisions without consulting the US Embassy in advance. Suu offered to resign at once if the United States wished him to. Taylor brushed this offer aside but told the new Chief of State that he could not expect US support unless he and the HNC informed US officials in advance of their nominations for Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and other key posts. These nominees must be satisfactory to the United States.[6]

In reporting these developments to the President, Ambassador Taylor characterized the new charter as "reasonably satisfactory" but said "we are not too happy" over the choice of Dr. Suu. Admittedly he was a respected man of high principles, an agricultural expert and opponent of the former Diem regime, but Suu was judged to be a weak leader and clearly lacking in physical stamina. After making the initial appointment of the Prime Minister, however, he would probably have only a nominal role in the government.[7]

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4. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1148 to State, 16 Oct 64; 1199, 20 Oct 64.
5. (S) Msg, Saigon 1210 to State, 21 Oct 64.
6. (S) Msg, Saigon 1259 to State, 25 Oct 64.
7. (S) Msg, Saigon 1292 to State, 27 Oct 64.

General Khanh submitted his resignation as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense to the newly designated Chief of State on 26 October. Three days later Dr. Suu called on the Prefect of Saigon, Tran Van Huong, to serve as Prime Minister and assemble a cabinet.

Huong began his attempt to govern in difficult circumstances, without benefit of the initial surge of popular favor and tolerance that might have been expected. The new regime seemed to have only critics and opponents, with no important faction rallying to its support. The Vietnamese press was almost unanimous in dispraising it. The task of forming a cabinet was complicated by the reluctance of several candidates to join a government they considered temporary, and particularly by the eleventh-hour withdrawal of two key appointees, apparently owing to Buddhist pressure.[8]

Huong succeeded in completing his cabinet slate by 4 November, however, and Ambassadors Taylor and Johnson reviewed it with him. They also discussed the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief. Huong preferred General Minh but concluded it would be wiser to appoint Khanh. To ease the transition, Huong suggested that Minh leave the country for a time. Within a day, US officials were working on arrangements for Minh's quiet departure for Hawaii. The third member of the triumvirate, General Khiem, had already been dispatched to Washington as the GVN's Ambassador.[9]

With public announcement of the cabinet selections, the Buddhists declared their opposition, claiming that too many of the appointees had been associated with the former Diem regime. Student leaders organized a rally on 6 November and denounced the Huong government because it "has not answered the people's desire for freedom and democracy." The cabinet list gave the press new targets for criticism.[10] Prime Minister Huong declared that any antigovernment demonstrations would be suppressed and indicated that General Khanh had assured him of the Army's support. In public, Khanh confined himself to remarking that the Army would not try to resume power "unless the situation demands it."[11]

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8. (S) Msg, Saigon 1385 to State, 4 Nov 64, JCS IN 12786.
9. (S) Msgs, Saigon 1382 to State, 4 Nov 64, JCS IN 12447; 1397, 5 Nov 64, JCS IN 13765.
10. (C) Msg, Saigon 1426 to State, 8 Nov 64, JCS IN 16990.
11. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, vol. XIV, 1963-1964, p. 20462B.

In an assessment dispatched to Washington at the end of the new government's first week, Ambassador Taylor said that the remarkable thing was that the decision of two months earlier to return political control to civilian hands had been carried out. Much was still uncertain, including the form the Buddhist opposition would take, the true political strength of Huong, the ability of the cabinet as a whole, and the durability of the resolve of Khanh and other officers to stay out of politics.[12]

The charter of government provided for an elected National Assembly, but until it came into existence the High National Council was to continue and to exercise the legislature's functions, including the power to remove the Prime Minister by passing a lack-of-confidence motion. Ambassador Taylor anticipated that the next critical turn in the political situation would come when the Huong government proposed the legal provisions under which the Assembly would be elected.[13]

On 10 November Huong expressed his disappointment to the Ambassador that the United States was limiting its action to South Vietnam, citing the lift to morale that the US retaliation to the Tonkin Gulf incidents had given. Taylor replied that "reciprocal responsibilities were involved"; the GVN must demonstrate strength to meet its current responsibilities and to withstand any VC counteraction that might be generated by increased pressures on North Vietnam. "Huong indicated his complete understanding of the situation," the Ambassador reported.[14]

OPLAN 34A Approval Procedures

In Washington at that time the Joint Chiefs of Staff were citing "stimulus to the new government leadership of Vietnam" as one of the benefits to be hoped for from the expansion of OPLAN 34A operations they were recommending to Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance.[15] The JCS recommendations on 14 November were made under the procedures of a new system for the approval

12. (S) Msg, Saigon 1414 to State, 7 Nov 64, JCS IN 15807.
13. (C) Msg, Saigon 1563 to State, 20 Nov 64, JCS IN 29904.
14. (S) Msg, Saigon 1452 to State, 10 Nov 64, JCS IN 19014.
15. (TS-GP 1) CM-258-64 to DepSecDef, 14 Nov 64, JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 64).

of OPLAN 34A activities that had been established by higher authority some weeks earlier.

On 30 September Secretary Vance had advised General Wheeler and Assistant Secretary McNaughton that thenceforward, at the beginning of each month, a proposed schedule of 34A MAROPS would be reviewed in coordination by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. McGeorge Bundy of the White House, and Mr. Llewellyn Thompson of the State Department. The document would become the approved schedule for planning purposes for the coming month, but the mounting of each listed operation would require approval in advance by the same three reviewing officials. A further step of approval was required. After SACSA had drafted the executing message, it would not be dispatched until initialed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), Mr. Bundy, and Mr. Thompson. Under these procedures the schedule for October had received its first round of approval on the first day of that month.[16]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted the basic November OPLAN 34A schedule to Secretary Vance late in October but followed it on 14 November with detailed recommendations for adding VNAF air strikes to the program. Approval of the latter proposal was withheld pending the outcome of White House consultations at the end of November on larger aspects of the Southeast Asian problem, yet to be recounted.[17] The system for the approval of OPLAN 34A operations remained in effect in the following months, however.

The Progress of JCS and CINCPAC Planning

The plans for both retaliatory strikes and a more extended air campaign against North Vietnam had undergone further development during September and October, the most notable feature being the higher levels of desired damage written into the objectives. On 22 September the Chief of Staff, Air Force,

16. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to ASD(ISA), 30 Sep 64; (S) Memo for Record, DepSecDef, "October Schedule for OPLAN 34A Operations," 1 Oct 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep-Oct 64.

17. (TS-GP 1) CM-221-64 to DepSecDef, 29 Oct 64, JMF 9155.3 (26 Oct 64). (TS-GP 1) CM-258-64 to DepSecDef, 14 Nov 64; (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "Operation Plan 34A - Additional Actions (U)," 4 Jan 65, Att to JCS 2343/489-1, 7 Jan 65; JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 64).

pointed out that in the wake of the Tonkin Gulf incident four days earlier the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed that punitive strikes against North Vietnam in response to attacks on DESOTO patrols should seek maximum feasible damage to the targets. While the strike missions would be selected from the 94 Target List, the JCS agreement divorced them from the List's damage criteria. General LeMay noted that the sortie requirements in CINCPAC's retaliation plan needed to be increased to achieve the new level.[18]

After exchanges with Admiral Sharp and further consideration, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 7 October informed CINCPAC that when responding to North Vietnamese attack on US forces, the reprisal action "should be of such a magnitude as to inflict the maximum feasible levels of damage on the specific targets selected commensurate with the capability of available US forces, rather than the damage levels in the 94 target study." When a DESOTO patrol was in progress, PACOM forces should maintain a tactical readiness posture to conduct air strikes with the least practicable delay when ordered from Washington.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided two target options under each of two levels of response. The first, reprisal for attacks resulting in little or no damage to the DESOTO patrol, had an Option I A of five targets, including the enemy MIGs and their supporting facilities, wherever located. Option I B, though listing six targets, was a less severe response, which higher authority might prefer under the circumstances at the time of decision. For reprisal following attacks resulting in significant damage or loss of life in a DESOTO patrol unit, Options II A and II B both required a two-day attack, striking all Option I A targets plus five others. The additional targets of the two options differed in emphasizing port facilities as against railroad and highway bridges.

CINCPAC was authorized to employ available US resources except FARM GATE, to use optimum ordnance to include napalm and CBU2A weapons, and to provide CAP, suppressive fire, photo reconnaissance, and search and rescue. Whenever directed to execute any of the options, Admiral Sharp's command should be prepared to conduct air strikes on the remainder of the 94 targets.[19] Pursuant to this JCS directive, CINCPAC on 28

18. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/462, 22 Sep 64, JMF 9155.3 (22 Sep 64).
19. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9584 to CINCPAC, 7 Oct 64 (derived from JCS 2343/462-2), JMF 9155.3 (22 Sep 64).

October rescinded his Frag Order # 2 of 18 September and issued Frag Order # 3.[20]

The damage criteria of the 94 Target List itself came under consideration at virtually the same time. On 2 October PACOM officers had delivered a briefing before the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the air strike plan, which had been incorporated in CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64 as Annex R. General LeMay again took the initiative, advising his colleagues that while the plan was fully responsive to the JCS guidance provided in July, "I do not consider this, nor do I suppose that CINCPAC considers it, an optimum application of available force to the 94 target task -- to destroy the DRV will and capability to support the insurgency in SVN and Laos." He noted that conditions had changed in the meantime. The situation in Southeast Asia had deteriorated, CINCPAC's air resources had been increased, and there was reason to expect that the political restrictions of midyear "may well be invalid by December 1964." The Chief of Staff, Air Force, considered that CINCPAC's planning should be redirected to achieve maximum feasible levels of damage. It was agreed that the Chairman would present this view to the Secretary of Defense during a second appearance of the PACOM briefing officers on 5 October.[21]

During the JCS session with the Secretary of Defense, Mr. McNamara said that on the occasion of the next DESOTO patrol, two aircraft carriers should be so stationed as to be able to conduct immediate retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam, if directed. Apparently the Secretary did not object to the higher damage criteria the Joint Chiefs of Staff were considering. In a message on 13 October they reviewed for CINCPAC the changes in the situation that led them now to instruct him to revise Annex R under the following additional guidance:

> a. Use available forces in PACOM as deemed necessary by you, to include at least two CVAs, and identify any essential or desired augmentation.

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20. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACAF et al., 280210Z Oct 64.

21. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM J-4-64 to JCS, 2 Oct 64; (TS) Note to Control Div, "Briefing on the Air Strike Annex to CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64," 2 Oct 64; JMF 9155.3 (8 Oct 64).

22. (TS) Note to Control Div, "CINCPAC Air Strike Plan," 5 Oct 64, same file. This record contains no indication of SecDef views on damage levels.

b. Include in your plan provision for fighter CAP as required to meet current air threat.

c. Give first priority to airfields, aircraft, and POL storage facilities in all attack options which employ overt US air.

d. Strikes should be of such magnitude as to inflict the maximum feasible levels of damage on the specific targets commensurate with the capability of available forces.[23]

The problems confronting the United States in Southeast Asia had generated a continually expanding requirement for CINCPAC OPLANs treating various contingencies. As early as May 1964 the desirability of consolidating some of these plans had come under consideration, and CINCPAC had submitted a scheme for its accomplishment.[24] After Admiral Sharp assumed command in late June, further study led him to recommend a somewhat different consolidation of planning on 2 August. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the undertaking five days later.[25]

Admiral Sharp's intention was to make CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64 the single master plan for all types of action designed to counter or cause cessation of North Vietnam's support of the insurgencies in Laos and South Vietnam. It should be so written as to allow implementation in stages, with flexibility to accommodate any future variants that might be developed. OPLAN 37-64 stemmed originally from the Presidential decisions in March, issued in NSAM 288, and the plan's original title was "Actions to Stabilize the Situation in RVN."[26]

On 19 November 1964, Admiral Sharp issued the revised version, CINCPAC OPLAN 37-65, now titled "Military Actions to Stabilize the Situation in RVN and/or Laos." It incorporated the previously effective OPLANs 33-62, 34-64, 37-64, and 99-64 --

23. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9769 to CINCPAC, 13 Oct 64 (derived from JCS 2343/477), JMF 9155.3 (8 Oct 64).
24. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6338 to CINCPAC, 16 May 64; (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 230306Z May 64.
25. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 022330Z Aug 64; (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7801 to CINCPAC, 7 Aug 64.
26. NSAM 288 and the development of CINCPAC OPLAN 37-64, which the JCS approved on 21 Apr 64, have been treated in Ch. 9.

all directed against North Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved OPLAN 37-65, subject to certain modifications, on 10 March 1965.[27]

The existence of two other CINCPAC plans should be recalled. OPLAN 38-64 provided for US military action, primarily with air and naval forces, against sudden large-scale Chinese Communist and North Vietnamese aggression in Southeast Asia. CINCPAC's basic plan for defense of the Southeast Asian mainland, in circumstances short of general war, was OPLAN 32-64.[28]

One further plan was promulgated in the autumn of 1964, in response to a JCS directive in late June. On 5 September Admiral Sharp submitted CINCPAC OPLAN 39-65, for operations to forestall or cause cessation of aggression by Communist China and its allies, in Southeast Asia, South Korea, or elsewhere. As directed, the plan placed primary reliance on US air and naval operations, holding US ground force involvement on the Asian continent to a minimum. "Its key is the cessation of aggression by striking the Asian Communist heartland."[29]

Implementation of CINCPAC OPLAN 39-65 was to come under frequent consideration in the circumstances that developed during the remainder of 1964. The plan's flexibility and range of actions offered US policymakers a number of options. Its Phase I consisted of deployments for deterrent effect. Its Phase II provided for pre-emptive action on the basis of strategic warning of impending Chinese Communist aggression, as well as for full-scale action against an aggression already launched.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved CINCPAC OPLAN 39-65 on 21 September, noting that its further development was in progress. Among the modifications required was a slight alteration in the title, which became, simply, "Contingency Plan for CHICOM Aggression (U)." The Joint Chiefs of Staff also made the change indicated below in the plan's statement of mission:

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27. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC OPLAN 37-65, 19 Nov 64, JMF 3146 (19 Nov 64) sec 1A. (TS-GP 3) SM-220-65 to CINCPAC, 10 [illegible] (derived from JCS 2054/649-7), same file, sec 1.

28. Development and JCS approval of OPLAN 38-64 are discussed in Ch. 10. CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64 had received JCS approval on 6 Nov 63; (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1963, pp. 38-40.

29. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7128 to CINCPAC, 27 Jun 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC OPLAN 39-65, 5 Sep 64, JMF 3146 (5 Sep 64) sec 1.

Deploy forces and/or conduct air and naval offensive operations to damage destroy to the degree necessary, the military, logistic, and economic structure of Communist China, and as required, that of North Vietnam and North Korea, in order to deter, prevent or cause cessation of large-scale aggression or attacks, by Communist China.[30]

The Bien Hoa Attack; JCS Recommendations of 1 and 4 November

Just after midnight, in the first minutes of 1 November, a Viet Cong force slipped by the RVNAF security troops at Bien Hoa Air Base, twelve miles northwest of Saigon. The enemy set up mortars and fired approximately 60 rounds in a 39-minute attack against the crowded flight line, runway, control tower, and bivouac area. Four US servicemen were killed and 72 were wounded or injured. Besides other US and VNAF aircraft damaged, five B-57s were destroyed and thirteen damaged, out of the total force of 36 US B-57 aircraft in South Vietnam. In an early message Admiral Sharp called the enemy action "a well executed attack and psychologically well timed." Staged on a South Vietnamese national holiday, it appeared to be a deliberate affront to the new Huong government and perhaps related to the US national election of 3 November as well.[31]

Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV all viewed the incident from the first as precisely the type of enemy action against US forces that had been marked for retaliation in recent US deliberations at the highest level. The Ambassador's first substantive message on 1 November called the Viet Cong attack "a deliberate act of escalation and a change of the ground rules under which they have operated up to now."

It should be met promptly by an appropriate act of reprisal against a DRV target, preferably an airfield. Since both US and GVN have been victims of this attack and since ultimate objective should be to convince Hanoi to cease aid to VC (and not merely to lay off US), the retaliatory action should be made by a combined US/VNAF effort. Immediate objective would be to reduce probability

30. (TS-GP 3) SM-1534-64 to CINCPAC, 21 Sep 64, Encl to JCS 2054/644-6, 17 Sep 64, JMF 3146 (5 Sep 64) sec 2.
31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010501Z Nov 64, JCS IN 1006; (TS) "Resume of Bien Hoa Attack," 3 Nov 64; OCJCS File, "Bien Hoa Incident."

of similar attacks on other crowded US facilities such as Da Nang and Tan Son Nhut and to offset the depressive effect of this action on the new government.

Ambassador Taylor thought the retaliation should be launched within 48 hours at the latest, and preferably within 24. He was preparing recommendations regarding the targets, and he requested authority to begin consultations with Premier Huong and General Khanh toward agreement in principle on combined reprisal action.[32]

In an immediate reply the State Department told him to forgo approaching the GVN leaders pending the outcome of a high-level meeting scheduled in Washington at noon, 1 November.[33]

Within a few hours a message from Ambassador Taylor gave the US Mission's views. He repeated the point that the retaliation should be a combined US-GVN action on a tit-for-tat basis, following the provocation as closely as possible in time. The target in North Vietnam comparable to Bien Hoa was clearly the Phuc Yen airfield outside Hanoi, current location of the enemy MIG force. The presence of those aircraft and the field's strong AA defenses appeared to rule out VNAF participation in the attack, but Taylor believed Phuc Yen should be struck first, or else the MIGs would be dispersed to other bases, complicating the task of locating and destroying them. The next most suitable targets, he said, were the barracks at Vit Thu and Chap Le and the Xom Bang ammunition depot -- all close together in lower North Vietnam and within VNAF capabilities. Attack on all four targets would be "the combination of maximum effect."

Ambassador Taylor told Washington officials that if favorable decision on striking Phuc Yen was reached at their noon meeting, the attack could be launched at first light on 3 November by US 2d Air Division forces already in South Vietnam. "I strongly urge that any strikes approved be viewed as the inauguration of a new policy of tit-for-tat reprisals [illegible]taliation for major Viet Cong depredations," the Ambas[illegible] said. He recommended that, immediately following the strikes, the United States and the GVN announce jointly that retaliation would thenceforth be the rule against any major

32. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1357 to State, 010243Z Nov 64.
33. (TS) Msg, State 976 to Saigon, 010400Z Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Bien Hoa Incident."

acts of sabotage, terrorism, destruction of industrial facilities, or interruption of rail and highway communications.[34]

Even before these exchanges the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed CINCPAC to sail the embarked Marine special landing force (SLF) toward Da Nang and there to hold it offshore and out of sight of land. Admiral Sharp should also prepare to move Army and Marine units by air from Okinawa to improve the security of the Saigon area and the two adjacent air bases, Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut. His recommendations for reprisal action were requested.[35]

In reply Admiral Sharp named three targets, all barracks or military camps, at Dong Hoi, Chanh Hoa, and Vit Thu (the last one also designated in Taylor's message, not yet seen by CINCPAC). Attacking them would be an appropriate reprisal for the American casualties suffered in the bivouac area at Bien Hoa. If a heavier retaliation was desired, attacks could be launched against Phuc Yen airfield and any of the options listed in CINCPAC's Frag Order # 3 of 28 October.

Admiral Sharp closed by observing that "failure to establish the fact now that attacks such as that on Bien Hoa will result in prompt and heavy retaliatory action can only result in a serious blow to our prestige and serve to invite further attacks at places and times of their choosing. As a minimum, I recommend attack on the three barracks areas."[36]

A message from General Westmoreland was received at about the same time, containing his strong endorsement of the Ambassador's initial recommendation that "retaliatory air strikes be undertaken, jointly with the GVN, against DRV targets." COMUSMACV also wrote that "Ambassador Taylor and I consider it highly undesirable that any action suggestive of dependent evacuation be taken at this time."[37]

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34. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1360 to State, 010740Z Nov 64, JCS IN 1009, same file.
35. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1449 to CINCPAC, 312112Z Oct 64, same file.
36. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010501Z Nov 64, JCS IN 1006, same file.
37. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV MACJ00 12862 to JCS, 010359Z Nov 64, same file.

From Washington later on 1 November General Wheeler advised Ambassador Taylor, Admiral Sharp, and General Westmoreland that a White House meeting to discuss courses of action was scheduled for early the following afternoon. At the noon meeting of senior officials on 1 November, now concluded, "concern was expressed that proposed US retaliatory/punitive actions could trigger North Vietnamese/CHICOM air and ground retaliatory acts."

> Highest authority desires to consider in conjunction with US military actions, increased security measures and precautionary moves of US air and ground units to protect US dependents, units and installations against North Vietnamese/CHICOM retaliation.

Requesting comments from the three addressees, General Wheeler said that the following actions were being considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff: 1) withdraw US dependents prior to or upon initiation of air strikes against the North; 2) move the Marine SLF to Da Nang air base and two Army or Marine battalions to the Saigon area to provide local security; 3) move a Marine HAWK battalion from California to South Vietnam; 4) augment land-based and carrier air resources for higher effectiveness in attacking the Option I A targets of CINCPAC Frag Order # 3; and 5) effect "forward movement from CONUS or within PACOM of ground, sea, and air units to WESTPAC and alert of additional units in CONUS as might be required to implement appropriate portions of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64 and/or CINCPAC OPLAN 39-65." Also, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were considering the desirability of using US aircraft against the Viet Cong within South Vietnam, in support of the VNAF and FARM GATE.[38]

The above actions under JCS consideration were only those responsive to the concern expressed by the officials at the noon meeting on 1 November. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had met earlier on that Sunday morning to formulate their recommendations for military action in consequence of the Bien Hoa attack. Their views had subsequently been presented orally to the Secretary of Defense by General Wheeler.[39] The course of action they urged was considerably stronger than any recommended by Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC, or COMUSMACV during the 48 hours following the mortar attack at Bien Hoa.

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38. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1451 to CINCPAC, 012119Z Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Bien Hoa Incident."

39. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/153, 3 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (3 Nov 64).

The Joint Chiefs of Staff viewed the enemy's strike on US forces as more than an incident requiring reprisal in kind. Giving a full measure of meaning to Ambassador Taylor's characterization of the enemy move as "a deliberate act of escalation," they considered that it marked the time when the United States must undertake a systematic program of military action to cause North Vietnam to desist from its support of the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao insurgencies. Besides launching immediate retaliation, the United States should institute a program of progressive attacks against the targets of the 94 Target List.

Specifically the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that within 24 to 36 hours, PACOM forces should conduct air strikes against five targets in Laos: Tchepone barracks, Tchepone military area, Ban Thay military area, Nape highway bridge, and the Ban Ken bridge on Route 7. At the same time, Admiral Sharp should conduct low-level reconnaissance of infiltration routes and of targets in North Vietnam south of Latitude 19° N. (roughly the lower third of North Vietnam). These operations would provide an immediate response, employ the capabilities of forces already in place, and divert the enemy's attention from the preparations and force deployments necessary for the stronger actions to follow. The preparations would include dispatching the Marine SLF to Da Nang and airlifting Army or Marine units from Okinawa to the Saigon area. The airlift aircraft could then be used to assist in evacuation of US dependents -- a move that the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed should begin concurrently with the air strikes against North Vietnam.

Other preparations, meanwhile, would develop readiness for the following operations:

a. Within 60 to 72 hours, 30 SAC B-52 aircraft from Guam conduct a night strike on Phuc Yen airfield.

b. At first light thereafter, PACOM carrier and land-based aircraft conduct a follow-up strike against Phuc Yen and strikes against POL storage at Hanoi and Haiphong and against the Gia Lam and Cat Bi airfields at those two cities.

c. Also at first light, VNAF aircraft strike the Vit Thu barracks.

While the above operations would have the appearance of reprisal, in the JCS view they should be merely the first steps

in a sustained program of attacks. The following steps should be: 1) armed reconnaissance of infiltration routes in Laos; 2) air strikes against infiltration routes and targets in North Vietnam; and 3) progressive strikes by SAC and PACOM forces against the targets of the 94 Target List. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that authority be obtained to use bases in Thailand as necessary in carrying out the program.[40]

In the early hours of 2 November, Washington time, the comments General Wheeler had requested from Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV were received. The Ambassador and General Westmoreland deferred to CINCPAC's judgment regarding the desirability of the forward deployment and alert of forces for possible implementation of OPLAN 32-64 or 39-65, as well as the augmentation of PACOM forces for more effective strikes under Frag Order # 3. Admiral Sharp favored these measures and made certain detailed suggestions. He, in turn, deferred to the opinion of the two Saigon respondents regarding withdrawal of US dependents. Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland did not consiser this move either necessary or desirable and said it would have "an adverse psychological impact on the newly formed government."

As for introducing Marines at Da Nang and two Army or Marine battalions to the Saigon area to provide security for US personnel and installations, COMUSMACV thought it undesirable "at this time. We hesitate at this juncture to admit by such action that the host government cannot defend bases used by us and to take the big step in committing organized U. S. ground units in combat with the V. C." The troops should remain in readiness for movement on short notice, however. Ambassador Taylor, holding the same opinion, commented more extensively. Placing US battalions at the airfields "is likely to convey message that US intends to continue to limit its actions to SVN and to defensive measures -- a note I hope we will not strike." He also observed that "our troops would regard static security mission as pretty inglorious business."

Admiral Sharp favored moving a Marine HAWK battalion to South Vietnam to increase air defense capabilities. General Westmoreland noted that he had already recommended deployment of two HAWK battalions to Da Nang, and the Ambassador joined

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40. As will be recounted, the JCS repeated and confirmed their oral recommendations of 1 November in writing three days later; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-933-64 to SecDef, 4 Nov 64, App to JCS 2339/153, 3 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (3 Nov 64).

him in urging that this occur as soon as possible. Both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV favored employing US aircraft within South Vietnam, to supplement the VNAF and FARM GATE whenever suitable targets were identified. Ambassador Taylor, however, thought that "we are missing few, if any, lucrative targets now with our present VNAF/FARM GATE force." He also noted that by December the number of operationally available VNAF aircraft would be substantially increased when the fourth A-1H squadron had completed its training.[41]

Ambassador Taylor's reply also responded to a joint State-Defense message sent him on 1 November, following the noon meeting. The message set forth the considerations being weighed in Washington more fully than General Wheeler's corresponding message. The Ambassador's initial dispatches following the Bien Hoa attack had been given careful thought, the writers said.

> - There is no doubt here that this event adds considerably to cumulative factors pointing toward much harder policy in near future. At same time, we would find it hard to portray attack as major act of escalation in itself, since it differs only in degree and extent of damage from such previous incidents as CARD sinking and recurrent attacks on US personnel and equipment playing military roles. We have also been reluctant to give any appearance of reacting only when US personnel affected.

(The USN supply ship CARD had been sunk at the Saigon docks by a VC explosive charge on 1 May 1964; no personnel casualties resulted.)

> In addition above reasons arguing against one-shot retaliatory treatment, all of us here, including JCS, are negative on a tit-for-tat policy as basis for real action against the North. Not only is it hard to define such a policy, but all our studies and war games have indicated that in the end it conveys a weak signal to Hanoi and also has maximum disadvantages in wider international sphere.

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41. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 020400Z Nov 64, JCS IN 10442; (TS) Msg, Saigon 1368 to State, 2 Nov 64, JCS IN 10572; (TS-GP 2) Msg, COMUSMACV MACJ00 12962 to CJCS, 2 Nov 64, JCS IN 10617; OCJCS File, "Bien Hoa Incident."

With specific reprisal action tentatively rejected, Washington officials saw the Bien Hoa attack as significant chiefly for bringing "measurably nearer point of decision on systematic wider actions against North." They recognized, nevertheless, that support of GVN morale was one of the factors arguing for some early action, such as release of US aircraft for overt employment against the Viet Cong. While this move would increase capabilities appreciably, it had the disadvantage of assuming an explicit US combat role for the first time. Also, sooner or later the US planes would probably attack innocent civilians through error, with unfortunate repercussions. The deployment of US security battalions to Bien Hoa, Da Nang, and Nha Trang was also under consideration. This move could have the desirable appearance of "securing decks for action," but State and Defense officials were uncertain how much it would really improve security, and it would "add to our casualties and general exposure." They asked the Ambassador and COMUSMACV to comment.[42]

Ambassador Taylor replied that "from Saigon end of line, the Bien Hoa attack looks quite different from the view set forth" in the joint State-Defense message. "It was unique as an attack directed specifically against US units and equipment," under circumstances unrelated to the day-to-day advisory effort, in which US forces expected to take losses. He cited its points of similarity with the Tonkin Gulf incidents.

> Finally, it demonstrated a new tactic, the employment of surprise attack by massed mortar fire, with such success that the US B-57 capability in this country was knocked out in about 15 minutes. Hence, we cannot view it as a VC aggression which is merely an improved version of similar past conduct. It is clear that Hanoi also views this as something special and expects something from us.

With regard to the views of GVN officials on the Bien Hoa attack, Ambassador Taylor felt that, if anything, they were less concerned than they ought to be. The event had occurred during a double holiday when few newspapers were published, and the general public had scarcely reacted. A press release by General Khanh had understated the damage suffered, and he had left town without attempting to consult the Ambassador. "For the moment," Taylor wrote, "I believe no action needs to be

42. (TS-GP 1) Jt State-Def msg 978 to Saigon, 020001Z Nov 64, JCS IN 10364, same file.

considered purely for impact on local morale. However, if there is no US reaction, our prestige is going to sag, both with friend and enemy."[43]

The general viewpoint of the joint State-Defense message prevailed at the White House meeting on 2 November, which General Wheeler attended. In a message to Admiral Sharp shortly afterward, the Joint Chiefs of Staff summed up the conclusion reached as being that "appropriate response to Bien Hoa attack is in order but such response need not be immediate. However, another similar VC attack would require immediate action by US forces possibly on the order of 1B of CINCPAC Frag Order 3." Concern had been expressed at the meeting over the adequacy of security measures around air bases and other sensitive US installations in South Vietnam. The Chairman had given assurance that General Westmoreland was pursuing this matter vigorously with GVN military officials.[44]

In reply to the last point, CINCPAC declared that General Westmoreland would continue to do all within his power to make the US installations secure, but "they are inherently vulnerable." Most of them were situated in the midst of populated areas and could be made safe only if rigid population controls were applied by the GVN -- a time-consuming process at best. Admiral Sharp said that the Viet Cong had had the capability to attack any of the US air bases for some time. He believed that the enemy had refrained in the past from fear of strong US retaliation, had recently made a deliberate decision to risk a new level of hostilities, and now would be encouraged by the lack of a determined US response to launch further attacks. "Since the air bases in Vietnam are congested, clearly insecure and without dispersal facilities of any kind," CINCPAC wrote, "we should not expose any more airplanes and American personnel on these bases than are necessary for the immediate mission. Aircraft can be moved readily in and out of RVN as requirements dictate."[45]

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43. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1368 to State, 2 Nov 64, JCS IN 10572, same file.

44. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1470 to CINCPAC, 2 Nov 64, same file. Concern about the security of US installations and personnel was a major secondary theme running throughout the discussions following the Bien Hoa attack; the measures considered are treated in more detail in Ch. 16.

45. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 040353Z Nov 64, JCS IN 12399, same file.

At the White House meeting on 2 November General Wheeler had presented the JCS views that had first been given orally to the Secretary of Defense the previous day. At the same time, the task of reducing these views to writing for formal submission was under way.[46] On 4 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent their approved memorandum to Secretary McNamara. It confirmed their recommendation of the following specific operations: strikes against five targets in Laos and low-level air reconnaissance over part of NVN; after preparation, a strong B-52 night attack on the Phuc Yen airfield, followed the next morning by restrike and concurrent attacks on POL and airfields at Hanoi and Haiphong, plus a VNAF strike at Vit Thu barracks; continued action thereafter consisting of armed reconnaissance over infiltration routes in Laos, air strikes against infiltration routes and targets in NVN, and "progressive PACOM and SAC strikes against the targets listed in the 94 Target Study."

In justification the Joint Chiefs of Staff cited both general and specific considerations. Noting that they were already on record as concluding that the current level of actions was not sufficient to stabilize the situation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said that "there now appears to be a South Vietnamese Government that can provide at least an initial basis for a more positive program of US actions," aimed at causing North Vietnam to cease its support of the insurgents. Specific justification lay in the VC attack on Bien Hoa, which they joined Ambassador Taylor in characterizing as "a deliberate act of escalation and a change of the ground rules under which the VC have operated up to now." This enemy action called for a prompt and strong response.

> Undue delay or restraint on our part could be misinterpreted by our allies in Southeast Asia, as well as by the DRV and Communist China. Such misinterpretation could encourage the enemy to conduct additional attacks, including acts of terrorism, against US personnel and their dependents.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed any declaration committing the United States to a tit-for-tat reprisal formula. This concept they held to be unduly restrictive, in that it

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46. (C) Note to Control Div, "Draft Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Recommended US Courses of Action in Relation to Viet Cong Attack on Bien Hoa Airfield, 1 November 1964," 2 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (3 Nov 64).

would concede the initiative to the enemy and impose inflexibility on both the nature and level of US response. Rather than reprisal against comparable targets, they recommended undertaking the full program of operations they had listed.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that evacuation of the estimated 1,600 US Government dependents from South Vietnam should begin concurrently with the first daylight strikes against the North. They noted that there were also some 3,100 nonmilitary US nationals and US-sponsored personnel in the country. The standing objection to evacuation was the expected adverse psychological impact on the government and people of South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff thought that if the move occurred in conjunction with strikes against the North, this impact would be more than offset by favorable reaction to the increased US military activity.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff closed their memorandum of 4 November with the following summary of their beliefs:

> a. We have reached a major decision point in Southeast Asia;
>
> b. The United States should continue to pursue its stated objective of keeping Laos, Thailand, and SVN free from communist domination. Military actions such as recommended herein are necessary contributions to this objective; and
>
> c. Early US military action against the DRV would lessen the possibility of misinterpretation by the DRV and Communist China of US determination and intent and thus serve to deter further VC attacks such as that at Bien Hoa.[47]

A Month of Critical Consultations Begins

While the President and his senior advisors had concluded on 2 November that no immediate retaliation should be mounted for the Bien Hoa attack, the event did set a course of critical and comprehensive deliberations in motion. The further consultations regarding US courses of action in Southeast Asia

47. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-933-64 to SecDef, 4 Nov 64, App to JCS 2339/153, 3 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (3 Nov 64).

occupied the next four weeks and culminated in meetings held after Ambassador Taylor's return to Washington late in November.

At the White House session on 2 November an NSC Working Group was formed, with Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy as Chairman, to prepare a policy paper based on consideration of all possible courses of action. Indicative of one of the major areas of concern were the instructions given General Wheeler at the White House. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to provide a detailed examination of possible North Vietnamese or Chinese Communist military reactions to air strikes against the North. As the Chairman described the purpose for the Joint Staff later in the day, "this paper would be designed to anticipate enemy reactions, lay out our response to such reactions and define in detail the preparatory measures which we should undertake prior to mounting an attack so that we could respond in a timely, effective fashion to any enemy initiative."[48]

JCS Views on Countering Enemy Reaction, 14 November

The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided their views to the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum with detailed appendices on 14 November. In it they adhered to their recommendations of 4 November, repeating, as a quotation, the paragraphs outlining the program of military operations they favored. "Although these actions were recommended for the attack on Bien Hoa, they comprise an option equally applicable and available for immediate implementation in the event of other serious provocations in Southeast Asia."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said that "no significant logistic or transportation deficiencies are anticipated in carrying out the attacks against the targets listed in the 94 Target Study," but certain additional deployments would be necessary at the time of the decision. These included deployment from the CONUS to the Southeast Asia area of two USAF tactical fighter squadrons and additional tactical reconnaissance and tanker capability, as well as bringing the number of attack carriers in the area to three. (All of these were actions that CINCPAC had recommended during the exchanges following the Bien Hoa attack.)

48. (TS-GP 3) CM-228-64 to D/JS, 2 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2339/152, 2 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (2 Nov 64) sec 1.

The assessment of probable North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist (CHICOM) reaction did not differ notably from the one the Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted less than three weeks earlier, on 27 October.

> The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the DRV and the CHICOMs will make every effort through propaganda and diplomatic moves to halt US attacks directed against North Vietnam. Although the DRV will take all actions to defend itself, the DRV and CHICOMs would be unlikely to expand the conflict. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that Communist China would be very reluctant to become directly involved in the fighting in Southeast Asia lest this be taken by the United States as a cause for major retaliation against the Chinese mainland. However, as the severity of US attacks against the DRV increases, the CHICOMs would feel an increased compulsion to take some dramatic action to counter the impact of the US pressures. This CHICOM response may take the form of the deployment of ground forces into northern Laos, ostensibly at the invitation of the Pathet Lao, or some similar action short of direct confrontation with US forces. It is the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Chinese communists probably would not openly engage US forces unless they felt it was necessary to prevent collapse of the communist regime in North Vietnam. Therefore, there would not be high risk of the introduction of large-scale Chinese ground/air force combat units unless major US/GVN ground units had moved to occupy areas of the DRV or communist-held territory in northern Laos, or unless the Chinese had committed their air or naval power and had subsequently suffered attacks on CHICOM air force bases in China.

Admittedly, however, "there is always a chance that Peiping might intervene either for reasons that seem irrational to us or because they miscalculated the objectives of US moves and US resolve to remain in the area."

One of the appendices analyzed nine possible enemy courses of action and matched them against the available US and allied responses, with data on objectives, forces, deployments, and timing where feasible. "The salient conclusion which can be drawn from this analysis is that the United States and its allies can deal adequately with any course of action the DRV and/or CHICOMs decide to pursue," the Secretary was advised.

The capability to support the US military responses that might be required had been surveyed. The study revealed no significant logistic or personnel deficiencies until the uppermost levels of action were reached. Shortfalls were anticipated when approaching full implementation of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-64, which involved sending nearly six divisions with supporting air and naval forces to Southeast Asia, and to a lesser extent when implementing the strongest actions of OPLAN 39-65. Meeting these deficiencies would require some mobilization, mainly of Air Force reserve transportation units and Army reserve combat service support units, and the extension of terms of active duty. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought it improbable that the enemy would adopt a course of action that required full implementation of these plans in response. In any event, they said, "risks involved are considered to be more acceptable than the alternatives of continuing the present course or withdrawal from Southeast Asia."[49]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff closed their memorandum of 14 November by recommending that it be forwarded to the President and that its findings be reflected in the report being prepared by the NSC Working Group. The Secretary of Defense replied that both this memorandum and the JCS recommendations of 4 November were being carefully considered during the current interdepartmental study of courses of action in Southeast Asia. He gave assurance that the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would accompany the report when ultimately submitted to the President.[50]

A JCS Program for Increasingly Severe Military Pressures, 18 November

A few days earlier, on 10 November, Secretary McNamara had asked General Wheeler to provide JCS recommendations on courses of action to bring "controlled and increasingly

49. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-955-64 to SecDef, 14 Nov 64, Encl A to JCS 2339/152-1, 9 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (2 Nov 64) sec 1.
50. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," 17 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2339/152-2, 19 Nov 64, same file, sec 2. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Recommended US Courses of Action . . .," 13 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2339/153-1, 16 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (3 Nov 64).

severe military pressure on North Vietnam."[51] The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded in a memorandum with extensive appendices on 18 November.

At the outset the Joint Chiefs of Staff made clear that in their view the preferred course of action was the one they had already recommended, most recently in their memorandum of 14 November. It would fulfill the "initial hard knock" concept, by destroying at the first blow the enemy's main air capability and POL storage. The current memorandum provided a recommended military program for use if higher authority chose instead to apply controlled, systematically increased pressures against North Vietnam. For such a program, the Joint Chiefs of Staff listed the following objectives as appropriate:

a. Signal the willingness and determination of the United States to employ increasing force in support of national objectives with respect to RVN and Laos; namely, an independent and stable noncommunist government in RVN and a free and neutral Laos under the terms of the Geneva Accords of 1962.

b. Reduce, progressively, DRV support of the insurgencies in RVN and Laos to the extent necessary to tip the balance clearly in favor of the Governments of RVN and Laos by:

(1) Reduction of the amount of support available through destruction of men, material, and supporting facilities;

(2) Reduction of the amount of support available through diversion of DRV resources to increased homeland defenses and alerts; and

(3) Reduction of the rate of delivery of the available support through destruction of bridges and other LOC choke points; staging facilities and transport; and through interruption of movements by attacks on selected fixed targets, armed route reconnaissance, raids, and waterborne interdictions.

51. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/157, 13 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (13 Nov 64) sec 1.

c. Punish the DRV for DRV-supported military actions by the Viet Cong/Pathet Lao (VC/PL) against the Governments of RVN and Laos, including the US casualties which have resulted from those actions.

d. Terminate the conflicts in Laos and RVN only under conditions which would result in the achievement of US objectives.

Understandably, the detailed military program was very similar to the one recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 October, which had listed actions in an ascending order of severity. The program submitted on 18 November was more explicit regarding targets and numbers of sorties required; it departed from the October memorandum by omitting the final possible step of committing "US and Allied ground forces into Southeast Asia as required," although it contained a somewhat similar provision under collateral actions.[52]

The specific actions recommended, in sequence, were: 1) resume DESOTO patrols; 2) intensify 34A operations with emphasis on MAROPS and addition of air operations against selected targets; 3) expand air and initiate ground cross-border operations to interdict the flow of enemy personnel and materiel through the Laos Panhandle; 4) at the discretion of Saigon authorities, permit RVN forces to pursue and destroy Viet Cong elements crossing into Cambodia; 5) conduct US armed reconnaissance and interdiction on Routes 6, 7, 8, 12, and 23 in Laos and air strikes against Pathet Lao forces and facilities throughout Laos; 6) conduct low-level reconnaissance of infiltration-associated targets near the Laos border in North Vietnam and attack LOCs in that area and in the DMZ; 7) expand reconnaissance coverage of North Vietnam, with extension to Cambodia if necessary, and conduct air strikes against infiltration-associated targets in North Vietnam (446 sorties against 13 targets south of the 19th Parallel, followed by 594 sorties against 14 targets north of the 19th Parallel); 8) conduct aerial mining of North Vietnamese ports, initiate "a naval quarantine/blockade," and increase the severity of attacks on NVN targets; 9) be prepared to extend maritime operations as necessary to control shipping to Cambodia; 10) conduct air strikes against remaining military and industrial targets in

52. JCSM-902-64, 27 Oct 64, is treated fully in Ch. 12, including the SecDef action of referring it to Amb Taylor, whose comments will be described hereafter.

North Vietnam, completing the 94 Target List; and 11) by amphibious and airborne operations, establish one or more lodgements on the NVN coast, of sufficient magnitude to pose a plausible threat. In addition, US forces should stand ready to take appropriate reprisal action in the event of a NVN attack on the DESOTO patrol or of provocation by the Viet Cong similar to the Bien Hoa raid.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also listed collateral actions to be taken at the time of decision to undertake the program, including evacuation of dependents from Laos and South Vietnam and deployment of US forces for security and deterrent purposes as indicated in the appropriate CINCPAC OPLANs. The further collateral actions were to reintroduce a MAAG-type supply and training mission to Laos and to "deploy additional US (and Thai or other Allied) forces as necessary to: (1) conduct required operations; (2) deter further communist aggression; (3) defend key Mekong points; and (4) logistically support operations."[53]

Three days later the Secretary of Defense indicated that this JCS memorandum had been added to the materials receiving careful consideration during the current interdepartmental study.[54]

The Comments of Ambassador Taylor

A message had been received from Ambassador Taylor on 3 November, commenting at the request of Secretary McNamara on the program of action recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 October. Most of the Ambassador's points were equally applicable to the JCS submission of 18 November and moreover expressed a viewpoint that he was to maintain in the consultations of the following weeks.

Ambassador Taylor indicated his complete agreement with the thesis that the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam required the application of measured military pressures to induce the Hanoi government to stop supporting the Viet Cong

53. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-967-64 to SecDef, 18 Nov 64, Encl A to JCS 2339/157-1, 15 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (13 Nov 64) sec 2.
54. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," 21 Nov 64, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2339/157-1, 24 Nov 64, same file.

"and to use its authority to cause VC to cease or at least to moderate their depredations." But unless the United States was going to react very soon to the Bien Hoa attack along the lines he had recommended, the Ambassador favored delay in instituting more positive measures until the new Huong government found its footing. Action during this interim period might consist of intensified 34A operations, with the addition of air strikes against selected targets, conducted covertly by the VNAF. As he had in other recent messages, Ambassador Taylor opposed the JCS suggestion that US aircraft be used against the Viet Cong, supplementing the VNAF and FARM GATE efforts, but he stated the reason somewhat differently. "It amounts to departure for no clear gain from the principle that the Vietnamese fight their own war in SVN."

The Ambassador also opposed DESOTO patrols, except for essential intelligence purposes. "If we are seeking an excuse for action, it is to our interest to strike Hanoi for its malefactions in SVN and not for actions in the Bay of Tonkin against the US Navy." Besides, he noted, the most recent Tonkin Gulf incident, the firing at radar-detected targets on the night of 18 September, had "developed in such a way as to reduce our ability to use subsequent episodes as a credible basis for action." US action should be tied to Hanoi's support of the Viet Cong, not to the defense of purely US interests, and ample justification was available. He cited infiltration activities, the Bien Hoa raid, and increasing VC sabotage of the Saigon-Da Nang railway.

Ambassador Taylor saw "nothing but disadvantage in further stirring up the Cambodian border" by allowing hot pursuit. "We don't often catch the fleeing VC in the heart of SVN," he observed; "I see little likelihood of doing much better in Cambodia." He cautioned that Prince Sihanouk's reaction might generate difficulties outweighing the gain.

The Ambassador's comments on the JCS recommendations of 27 October closed with "a final word":

> It is well to remind ourselves that "too much" in this matter of coercing Hanoi may be as bad as "too little." At some point, we will need a relatively cooperative leadership in Hanoi willing to wind up the VC insurgency on terms satisfactory to us and our

SVN allies. What we don't want is an expanded war in SEA and an unresolved guerrilla problem in SVN.[55]

Two further messages from Ambassador Taylor a week later provided additional information and comment pertinent to the study going on in Washington. He was convinced that "the next few months will be critical to the success of the new government and to our efforts to bring about some degree of stabilization in the internal political situation of SVN." Even under favorable circumstances it would require three to four months to get the Huong government functioning effectively. The Ambassador planned to encourage the GVN to establish a series of short-term objectives that were reasonably attainable. Success in these endeavors would "provide a point of departure from which we can later undertake more ambitious projects, military and civilian, inside and outside SVN."[56]

The Ambassador reported on 10 November that the Mission Council was giving some thought to defining the minimum level of government required to provide a basis for mounting military pressures against the North. "I would describe that minimum government as one capable of maintaining law and order in the urban areas, of securing vital military bases from VC attacks, and gearing its efforts with those of the USG." But, Taylor asked, "do we withhold all action against the DRV (except those of the morale-sustaining type) until we get this minimum government? What if we never get it?"

> My own answer would be that it is highly desirable to have this kind of minimum government before accepting the risks inherent in any escalation program. However, if the government falters and gives good reason to believe that it will never attain the desired level of performance, I would favor going against the North anyway. The purpose of such an attack would be to give pulmotor treatment for a government in extremis and to make sure that the DRV does not get off unscathed in any final settlement.

The Ambassador's message revealed some of the difficulties of working with a people among whom willingness to sacrifice for a larger national purpose was not a common attribute.

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55. (TS) Msg, Saigon 251 to OSD, 3 Nov 64, JCS IN 12008, OCJCS File, "Vietnam/November 64," Book 2.

56. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1440 to State, 9 Nov 64, JCS IN 17815, same file.

> At the moment the problem is not so much with the government, which means well, as with major outside groups such as some Buddhists, Catholics and politicians who refuse to give it support and are trying to tear it down before it even has a chance. . . . I point to articles in the American press showing clearly that the American people are becoming impatient with the politicking in Saigon with enemy at the gates of the city. My Vietnamese listeners never argue back but sadly acquiesce in the validity of such judgments. Unfortunately, they do not know how to remedy the situation, except at some damage to what they feel are their personal interests, and for all too many Vietnamese this is unthinkable.

Yet the South Vietnamese were "an individually capable and courageous people who do not want to be ruled by the North," and there was a surprising degree of vitality and resiliency in the country at large that was generally unaffected by the political turmoil in Saigon.

> Thus we must hang on, doing our best in the hope that out of this welter some real leadership will eventually emerge, and play for the breaks. Taking the initiative against the North is one-way to force the breaks.[57]

Comments of Mr. Rostow

As the NSC Working Group continued its study of courses of action, another view was heard, differing considerably from that of Ambassador Taylor or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Mr. Walt W. Rostow, Chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, addressed a memorandum to Secretary McNamara on 16 November, following a conversation the previous day. "I am concerned that too much thought is being given to the actual damage we do in the North, not enough thought to the signal we wish to send," Rostow wrote. The signal, he believed, should consist of three parts:

> a) damage to the North is now to be inflicted because they are violating the 1954 and 1962 Accords;
>
> b) we are ready and able to go much further than our initial act of damage;

57. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1445 to State, 10 Nov 64, same file.

c) we are ready and able to meet any level of escalation they might mount in response, if they are so minded.

Rostow was convinced that "we should not go forward into the next stage without a US ground force commitment of some kind." Placing US combat troops in South Vietnam, and even in Laos, would make clear to Hanoi's leaders that they would encounter US strength on the ground if they chose invasion as the response to air attacks on their homeland. Also, withdrawal of these US ground forces could be an important bargaining counter in subsequent negotiations. "Ground forces can sit during a conference more easily than we can maintain a series of mounting air and naval pressures."

As for the air strikes against the North, Rostow thought the first ones should be designed merely to establish that the North Vietnamese would thenceforward be subject to attack for their continuing violations of the 1954 and 1962 agreements. Accordingly the initial operation should be "as limited and as unsanguinary as possible." It should establish the principle rather than wreak major damage.[58]

By 17 November the NSC Working Group had prepared a preliminary draft report for comment. By that date, also, it was established that Ambassador Taylor would arrive in Washington by 27 November to participate in the discussions. The further stages of consultation were expected to produce recommendations on a course of action in Southeast Asia for submission to the President by 1 December.[59]

58. (TS-GP 1) Memo, W.W. Rostow to SecDef, "Military Dispositions and Political Signals," 16 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2343/493, 18 Nov 64, JMF 9155.3 (16 Nov 64). In the above account the fact that Rostow intended that US troops be introduced specifically into RVN and possibly the Laos corridor is drawn from a later memo along the same lines; (TS-GP 3) Memo, W.W. Rostow to SecState, "Some Observations As We Come to the Crunch in Southeast Asia," 23 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2339/162, 25 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (23 Nov 64). Both Rostow memos were circulated to the JCS, but their author, soon to depart for a conference in South America, apparently took no part in the later discussions.

59. (S-GP 1) JCS 2339/161, 17 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (17 Nov 64) sec 1.

Further discussion and development awaited the arrival of Ambassador Taylor, who was expected in Washington on 26 November.

The Views of Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV

A courier had already carried the initial NSCWG working papers to Ambassador Taylor. On 24 November Admiral Mustin was dispatched to Hawaii with copies of the Bundy-McNaughton summary paper of 21 November and the JCS memorandum of 23 November, to give to Admiral Sharp and to the Ambassador during his stop at CINCPAC Headquarters en route to Washington.[9]

Just before Ambassador Taylor's departure from Saigon, General Westmoreland had provided him an assessment of the military situation. COMUSMACV was pleased with the way the RVN armed forces had "weathered the political storm over the past four months." His earlier concern over the disruption and disunity that might be caused by reprisals against officers for their political or religious affiliations had lessened, since there had been few instances of personnel changes for reasons of political expediency. Still more encouraging was the substantial increase in strength throughout the RVNAF. The results of a special call-up of men in the 20-25 age group had exceeded expectations. Beginning in late October about 10,000 men had reported for induction, and the conscription drive had also spurred volunteering. General Westmoreland believed that the 1964 year-end strength goals of the regular forces would be met by 1 February 1965.

Improved promotion policies, pay, and dependent housing continued to have favorable effect on armed forces morale, and capabilities were increasing. The VNAF would soon have four combat-ready A-1H squadrons and under current plans would activate two more during 1965. A fourth VNAF H-34 helicopter squadron would be operational by March. General Westmoreland reported improvement in VNAF pilot proficiency and favorable impact of the increased US advisory effort throughout South Vietnam. At the paramilitary level, however, the Popular Forces, although increasing in number, had "failed to achieve an effective identity with the local rural population." This problem required urgent attention.

9. (S) Msg, CJCS to Amb Taylor, Saigon, JCS 5119-64, 23 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov-Dec 64.

that senior officials would have to be carefully briefed in preparation for questions from Congress and the press on why the earlier, lower estimates had been discarded.[7]

By this stage of the consultations the Joint Chiefs of Staff at least had the satisfaction of knowing that the Option B being discussed was a true statement of their own concept of B, and not an imprecise version drafted by someone else. But the prospect of seeing it adopted as the US policy appeared slight. Certain revised pages for the Bundy-McNaughton draft summary paper of 21 November were issued after the 24 November meeting, but none of them affected its assessment of Option B. The paper indicated that at some stage during application of the strong military measures of Option B, "Hanoi might decide that the pain it was incurring was greater than the gains of continuing its present strategy," and the communist leaders might agree to negotiate toward some form of restoration of the 1954 agreements. But the paper also sketched an alternative prospect:

> South Vietnam might come apart while we were pursuing the course of action. In such a case, we would be in the position of having got into an almost irreversible sequence of military actions, but finding ourselves fighting on behalf of a country that no longer wished to continue the struggle itself.

Option B was judged to have "considerably higher risks of major military conflict with Hanoi and possibly Communist China."

> If we found ourselves thus committed to a major military effort, the results could be extremely adverse to our position in other areas, and perhaps to American resolve to maintain present world-wide policies, unless we achieved a clearly satisfactory outcome in a fairly short time.[8]

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7. (TS-GP 3) AsstSecState (FE), "Memorandum of Executive Committee Meeting, November 24, 1964," 25 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jul 64-Jun 65. The above discussion also draws on a memo circulated before the meeting, defining the issues to be discussed; (TS) Memo, AsstSecState (FE) to SecState et al., "Issues Raised by Papers on Southeast Asia," 24 Nov 64, same file.

8. (TS) Memo, AsstSecState (FE) to SecState et al., "Attached Papers Concerning Southeast Asia," 26 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jul 64-Jun 65. (TS) Revised Draft, "Summary: Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," 26 Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Taylor Visit, Nov. 64."

or Option C would improve GVN performance and make possible an improvement in the security situation." It was also generally believed that if Hanoi did withdraw its support of the Viet Cong, the security problem in South Vietnam could be solved in time if the GVN held together. "However, the struggle would still be long."

Of particular concern to the Joint Chiefs of Staff was the fact that most of the high-level advisors believed that Option B was significantly more likely to lead to major escalation of the hostilities than Option C. For this and other reasons most of the conferees dissented from the statement in the original NSCWG draft that Option B offered the best prospect of attaining the full US objectives. On the other hand, they agreed that the loss of South Vietnam would be "somewhat more serious than stated" in the original draft--a shift toward the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

One question discussed at the meeting on 24 November was: "Can Option C be carried out in practice under the klieg lights of a democracy, in view of its requirements that we maintain a credible threat of major action while at the same time seeking to negotiate, even if quietly?" It had been raised chiefly by advocates of Option A, who pointed to the difficulties experienced in pursuing a policy similar to C during the negotiating period of the Korean war, 1951-1953. Secretary Bundy recorded the following conclusion:

> There was a consensus that the requirement of Option C--maintaining military pressure and a credible threat of major action while at the same time being prepared to negotiate--<u>could</u> in practice be carried out. The difficulties and domestic pressures were noted, but it was felt that continuing military actions could handle such pressures and also pressures for premature negotiations or concessions.

One feature of the action contemplated to justify and explain a program of stronger US operations was the public release of information on enemy infiltration. At the meeting on 24 November concern was expressed that the latest reports from the field, estimating infiltration at a substantially higher level not only currently but for past years, might call forth charges of "framing evidence to suit out policy." It was agreed

Course C' is not recommended as the preferred course of action. However, should a controlled program of systematically increased pressures be directed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend the program of actions contained in JCSM-967-64.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff closed their memorandum of 23 November to the Secretary of Defense by recommending that "Course B, as defined in this paper and which offers the best probability of attaining the stated objectives, be implemented at this time." The Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Wheeler as their representative in high-level meetings, were to adhere to this recommendation throughout the subsequent consultations.

Appendices to the memorandum discussed each of the five courses of action in detail and made still clearer the advantage the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw in Course B as compared to the others. "A sharp blow, because of the boldness and resoluteness of its delivery, will discourage rather than encourage the enemy to escalate," they said. It would convey an unmistakable signal of US determination and would confront the communist leaders with the necessity of making a single, major decision, at once. The Joint Chiefs of Staff foresaw that if Course C or C' was followed, the enemy might be led to marshal his resources and draw aid from allies to match each progressive step in the US program with a new level of reaction. In this way a scale of hostilities might be reached that hardly differed from that of Course B, but it would lack the advantage of B's strong initial strikes against the communist air capability and POL storage. Under Course C, it might be said, Hanoi's leaders could keep in the game by advancing a few white chips on every round. Under Course B they could continue only by putting a stack of blue chips in the center of the table.[6]

A meeting of principal advisors was convened on 24 November to discuss the key issues, attended by Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Mr. McCone, Under Secretary of State George Ball and Assistant Secretary William Bundy, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, and General Wheeler. In a subsequent memorandum Secretary Bundy recorded it as the group's opinion that the situation in South Vietnam would deteriorate further under Option A, "but that there was a significant chance that the actions proposed under Option B

6. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-982-64 to SecDef, 23 Nov 64, Encl A to JCS 2339/161-2, 22 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (17 Nov 64) sec 1.

c. Course C: Is inconclusive as to accomplishment of over-all objectives, because it is undertaken without a clear determination to see things through in full. Its uncertain pace could permit and encourage enemy build-ups to counter our own. Thus it would raise the risks and costs to us of each separate military undertaking, would invite further escalations on the part of the enemy, and would make miscalculations regarding the resolve and determination of the United States more likely. At any specific level of intensity, this course of action appears likely to entail the highest military risks of those considered, and to foster progressively increasing adverse political pressures in many quarters.

d. Course C': Offers a probability of achieving our objectives through progressively reducing the DRV support to the insurgencies. Its systematic force build-up would add further deterrence to possible CHICOM intervention, and should make miscalculation of US resolve less likely. Should escalation occur, it can be dealt with adequately and on terms more favorable than those applicable in Course C above. From a strictly military point of view this course of action involves probable higher military costs and casualties than Course B, for example, through failure to eliminate DRV air and DRV facilities available to CHICOM air at the outset. The determination signaled by this course should enlist substanial US public and world support, while giving pause to the opposition.

e. Course B: Offers the best probability of achieving our objectives at the least risk, casualties, and cost, and with the least probability of enemy miscalculation. In addition to its military advantages and its reduced probability of escalation, this course of action offers greater psychological impact and presents to all concerned a clear and unequivocal picture of US determination and US objectives. The possibility of intervention by the CHICOMs is judged to be less likely than in Course C'. There should be no problems beyond those in Courses C or C' in dealing with any world opinion which might oppose this course of action.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff rejected Course A' because it abandoned the US objectives, and Course A because it offered no reasonable prospect of achieving them. They did not recommend Course C, "because it is inconclusive as to attainment of our objectives, yet entails potentially high risks and costs."

Course C' was a more resolute version of C, bringing it into conformity with the program the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended a few days earlier for use if higher authority chose to apply controlled, systematically increased military pressures against North Vietnam. They defined it as follows:

> Undertake a controlled program of graduated military pressures, systematically applied against the DRV, in coordination with appropriate political pressures. This course is distinguished from Course C by the advance decision to continue military pressures, if necessary, to the full limits of what military actions can contribute toward US national objectives. The military program for this course of action is the program set forth in JCSM-967-64, dated 18 November 1964.

Finally, the strongest was Course B, as redefined by the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

> Undertake a controlled program of intense military pressures against the DRV, swiftly yet deliberately applied, designed to have major military and psychological impact from the outset, and accompanied by appropriate political pressures. The program would be undertaken on the basis that it would be carried through, if necessary, to the full limits of what military actions can contribute toward US national objectives; it would be designed, however, for suspension short of those limits if objectives were earlier achieved. The military program for this course of action is the program recommended in JCSM-955-64, dated 14 November 1964.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed the probable consequences of the five courses of action as follows:

> a. Course A': Abandons our objectives, sacrifices the military advantages attainable from a firm position on the mainland of Southeast Asia, and initiates progressive deterioration in our military position throughout the Western Pacific and in our political position world-wide.
>
> b. Course A: Puts some added demands on the DRV, but not commensurate with those imposed by the DRV on RVN. Thus it offers no identifiable probability of accomplishing our objectives, nor of alleviating the critical situation in RVN. The present possibility of internal collapse in RVN could lead to accelerated take-over by the communists, and entails substantial risks to US personnel and equipment in country during the attendant disorders.

deliberate approach, and should be designed to give the US the option at any time to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not. These decisions would be made from time to time in view of all relevant factors.

The negotiating part of this course of action would have to be played largely by ear. But in essense we would be indicating from the outset a willingness to negotiate in an affirmative sense. We would at the outset clearly be sticking to our full present objectives, but we would have to accept the possibility that, as the whole situation developed, we might not achieve these full objectives unless we were prepared to take the greater risks envisaged under Option B. In essence, Option C is a medium risk/medium hope of accomplishment option.5

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed there were five alternatives open to the United States, rather than three. Two of the five corresponded to Options A and C in the NSCWG draft. The draft's Option B, however, they found to be "not a valid formulation of any authoritative views know to the Joint Chiefs of Staff." On the one hand it did not feature the strong initial blow at critical NVN targets that they recommended; on the other it appeared to commit the United States to a nonstop campaign against the targets of the 94 Target List, without pauses or negotiating probes. The Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed a substitute version that did conform to their views.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff listed the five options for the Secretary of Defense in ascending order of severity and determination. Course A', they said, was implicit in the NSCWG draft but not separately identified. It was to "terminate commitments in RVN and Laos, and withdraw under conditions which impair as little as possible our standing in the eyes of the world." The second option, Course A, remained as originally defined: "continue actions within our present policies, including feasible improvements within the boundaries of those policies."

Course C (the original Option C) the Joint Chiefs of Staff characterized in a way that foreshadowed their subsequent rejection of it:

Undertake a program of graduated military and political initiatives to apply additional pressures against the DRV, without necessarily determining in advance to what degree we will commit ourselves to achieve our objectives, or at what point we might stop to negotiate, or what our negotiation objectives might be.

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5. (TS-GP 1) NSCWG, Draft Working Paper, Section III, 17 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (17 Nov 64) sec 1A.

of the insurgencies in RVN and Laos. Early implementation of political and military actions designed to achieve these objectives, in addition to continued aggressive programs in SVN, offers the greatest assurance of success.[4]

As possible courses of action the NSCWG draft had identified three options open to the United States:

Option A would be to continue present policies indefinitely. This would involve maximum assistance within South Viet-Nam, together with limited external actions in Laos and by the GVN covertly against North Viet-Nam. We would continue to seek every possible additional measure for expansion of the present effort that would fit within the present policy framework. We would also take specific individual reprisal actions not only against such incidents as the Gulf of Tonkin attack but also against any recurrence of VC "spectaculars" in South Viet-Nam (particularly but not solely if such spectaculars were aimed at US installations). Under this option, the aim of such reprisal actions would be to deter and punish such VC actions in the south, but not to a degree that would create strong international negotiating pressures. Basic to this option is the continued rejection of negotiation in the hope that the situation will improve . . . .

Option B would call for continuing present policies as above, but its key ingredient would be a systematic program of military pressures against the north, meshing at some point with negotiation, but with pressure actions to be continued at a fairly rapid pace and without interruption until we achieve our present objective of getting Hanoi completely out of South Viet-Nam and an independent and secure South Viet-Nam reestablished. This option can be labelled a "fast/full squeeze." Basic to it is that we would approach any discussions for negotiation with absolutely inflexible insistence on our present objectives.

Option C might be labelled "progressive squeeze-and-talk." It would consist of present policies, plus an orchestration of (1) communications with Hanoi and/or Peiping, and (2) additional graduated military moves against infiltration targets, first in Laos and then in the DRV, and then against other targets in North Viet-Nam. The military scenario should give the impression of a steady

4. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-982-64 to SecDef, 23 Nov 64, Encl A to JCS 239/161-2, 22 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (17 Nov 64) sec 1.

Terminate the personnel and materiel costs attendant to pursuing a long, drawn-out conflict.

Conversely, a US withdrawal would have serious consequences. It would:

a. Presage the collapse of the US position in SEAsia and the consequent weakening of the US defense posture in the Western Pacific.

b. Presage the early altering of the Free World orientation of the remaining countries of SEAsia, followed by uncertainties as to Nationalist China, Japan and Korea.

c. Increase the vulnerability of the Indian subcontinent to communist penetration.

d. Increase the strength and influence of Communist China and decrease its vulnerability to US actions.

e. Tend to isolate Australia and New Zealand.

f. Portray US unwillingness or inability to deal with "wars of national liberation" and consequently encourage the communists to extend such "wars" into other areas.

g. Weaken US prestige and influence throughout the world.

In their memorandum of 23 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff turned next to another basic matter: the US objectives. They cited NSAM 288 of 17 March 1964 and NSAM 249 of 25 June 1963 as the source of their understanding that the established national objectives included "a stable and independent noncommunist government in the Republic of South Vietnam, and a stabilized situation in Laos which conforms to the Geneva Accords of 1962." The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered these objectives "valid and essential to maintaining the US security position world-wide."

They further consider that the best probability of success in attaining these ends will be afforded by achieving the prerequisite objective of causing the cessation of North Vietnamese (DRV) support and direction

In the memorandum that they addreessed to the Secretary of Defense on 23 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff declared that Southeast Asia was "an area of major strategic importance to the United States, the loss of which would lead to grave political and military consequences in the entire Western Pacific, and to serious political consequences world-wide." An appendix to the memorandum supported this view in detail, spelling out the strategic importance of Southeast Asia in the following terms:

> a. The immediate strategic importance of SEAsia lies in the political value that can accrue to the United States through a successful stand against the communist insurgencies in RVN and Laos. Also of vital importance is the psychological impact that a firm position by the United States will have on the countries of the world--both free and communist.
>
> b. RVN is a military keystone in SEAsia and is symbolic of US determination in Asia. The United States is committed in the eyes of the world to the defense of RVN as a matter of national prestige, credibility, and honor with respect to world-wide pledges and declaratory national policy.
>
> c. SEAsia is strategically situated between Communist China and the Indian sub-continent and Australia. It is the southern anchor of the US and Free World defense posture in the Western Pacific.
>
> d. SEAsia is of unique economic importance as a major source of rice for the food-deficit countries of Asia and is among the world's primary sources of natural rubber and tin. Control of the area, therefore, would not only be important to communist economic development, but would convey additional political leverage in dealing with countries which depend upon Southeast Asia's resources.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff listed the advantages that would follow from a US success in South Vietnam, including that it would:

> Demonstrate to the world US will and determination to fulfill its commitments.
>
> Discredit "wars of national liberation."
>
> Open a new era of confidence in SEAsia with the consequent increased possibilities for improving other potentially unstable situations in the area.

government in South Vietnam could collapse at almost any time, though the chances seem better than even that it can hang on for the next few weeks or months and thus afford a political base for US-South Vietnamese prosecution of the war.

B. North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. North Vietnamese leaders appear confident that Viet Cong victory is near. They may direct the Viet Cong to undertake increased attacks on US and South Vietnamese units, but they are almost certainly not anxious to become involved in war with the US, and--given a continuation of present circumstances--will probably continue to be careful to avoid the costs and risks of major, overt involvement in the Viet Cong insurrection. Meanwhile, despite a large and growing North Vietnamese contribution to the Viet Cong insurrection, the primary sources of Communist strength in the South remain indigenous. Even if severely damaged, North Vietnam--should it choose--could still direct and support the Viet Cong insurrection at a reduced level. Increased US pressures on North Vietnam would be effective only if they persuaded Hanoi that the price of maintaining the insurrection in the South would be too great and that it would be preferable to reduce its aid to the Viet Cong and direct at least a temporary reduction of Viet Cong activity.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff gave intensive consideration to the development of their views on the NSCWG working papers. The Joint Staff had identified a number of issues requiring comment, the first being concern that the papers contained "an understatement of the gravity to the United States, both militarily and politically, of the possible loss of South Vietnam to the communists." In order to address this point, the Joint Chiefs of Staff set forth basic considerations in full in their response. They also drew together in a single integrated treatment the two major expressions of views they had recently submitted: JCSM-955-64, 14 November, containing the JCS preferred course of action to cause North Vietnam to cease supporting and directing the insurgencies in Laos and South Vietnam (now being called "the fast full squeeze"), and JCSM-967-64, 18 November, containing a program of graduated military pressures to reduce NVN support of the insurgencies ("the progressive squeeze").[3]

3. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/161-1, 19 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (17 Nov 64) sec 1. The JCS submissions of 14 and 18 November have been treated in detail in Ch. 13.

Chapter 14

THE PRESIDENTIAL DECISIONS OF 1 DECEMBER 1964

JCS Comments on Initial Policy Draft, 23 November

Following the Viet Cong mortar attack on the Bien Hoa Air Base on 1 November 1964, an NSC Working Group (NSCWG) headed by Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy had been established to survey all possible US courses of action in Southeast Asia. Working-level inputs from the Joint Staff were supplied by the Director for Operations, Vice Admiral L. M. Mustin, USN. By mid-November the NSCWG had completed a set of draft working papers and had distributed it to the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence.[1]

The schedule called for submission of comments by 23 November. Secretary Bundy indicated that the comments should be directed at the issues raised in the NSCWG working papers, not at improving their language, since the final product would be a shorter summary paper. A first draft of the summary paper, written by Secretary Bundy and Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) John T. McNaughton, was circulated on 21 November, for revision in the light of the scheduled discussion of the issues.[2]

The intelligence assessment of the current situation in South Vietnam that underlay the material in the NSCWG working papers (given here as summarized in the Bundy-McNaughton paper) was as follows:

> A. South Vietnam. The political situation remains critical and extremely fragile. The security situation in the countryside continues to deteriorate. Although it is possible that the new government in Saigon can improve South Vietnamese esprit and effectiveness, this appears unlikely on the basis of present indications. Non-Communist

1. (TS-GP 1) NSCWG, Draft Working Paper, 13 Nov 64, JMF 9150 (17 Nov 64) sec 1A. (TS) J3M-2413-64 to D/JS, 7 Nov 64; (TS) DJSM-1804-64 to CJCS, 10 Nov 64; same file, sec 1.

2. (S) Memo, AsstSecState (FE) to SecDef, Dir CIA, and CJCS, "Review of Working Drafts on Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," 17 Nov 64; (S-GP 1) JCS 2339/161, 17 Nov 64; JMF 9150 (17 Nov 64) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Draft, "Summary: Courses of Action in Southeast Asia," 21 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2339/161-3, 23 Nov 64, same file, se

Although encouraged by the current and prospective increases in the effectiveness of the RVNAF, General Westmoreland said that "the pacification program as a whole has not made comparable progress, and in many important areas has regressed." He hoped to induce all levels of RVN command and administration to set definite, attainable short-range goals whose achievement would restore momentum to the pacification effort. Further, he believed that US influence in planning, programming, and execution at the Saigon level must be increased. The establishment of US advisors in the central government offices was necessary "if the civil and military effort is to be coordinated and managed effectively." Finally, there was the matter of North Vietnam's support of the insurgency. "The external threat we must deal with as soon as some governmental stability is manifest and the counter insurgency campaign makes some progress."10

General Westmoreland's comments on this last point were set forth more fully in a message to General Wheeler on 27 November. He described the one respect in which his views differed from those being carried to Washington by Ambassador Taylor, as follows:

> I believe we must assure ourselves that GVN is established on reasonably firm political, military and psychological base before we risk the great strains that may be incurred by vigorous external operations. Ambassadors Taylor and Johnson tend to think that we can't wait for these conditions to develop and that present government requires morale boost by way of immediate dramatic action well beyond pattern of present policy. I feel that there is good prospect of things holding together until March or April. By that time RVNAF should be in far better shape to support expanded external operations and to capitalize on blows to VC morale which must inevitably result from expanded operations to North.

General Westmoreland recommended following Option A until "government has predictable stability for a few months," there was "some positive momentum in pacification," and several other conditions were satisfied. For action thereafter he favored Option C rather than Option B. With regard to the latter COMUSMACV said, "Once this option is exercised, US will be committed to follow through, regardless. His further objections were that "we don't want to appear to be taking on GVN's fight for them at this

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10. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 6191 to CJCS, 28 Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Taylor Visit, Nov 64."

stage," and that GVN officials might become "unhealthily preoccupied with external operations to detriment of pacification." He thought that friends and enemies alike might interpret Option B as "an act of desperation on part of US to salvage lost cause."[11]

Admiral Sharp had already been heard from, on 23 November. He favored immediate adoption of a program resembling the JCS Course C'. "We still have not made it clear to Hanoi and Peiping that the cost of pursuing their current objectives will become prohibitive," CINCPAC wrote.

> What is needed is a campaign of systematically and gradually increased measured military pressures against the DRV conducted in conjunction with a coordinated diplomatic and psychological program. This campaign would aim to convince the communists that destruction will continue to occur until they cease supporting the insurgency . . . .
>
> The required military actions in this campaign call for initial air strikes on infiltration routes, moving to infiltration-associated targets and then expanding to other important targets. Geographically, the air strikes would commence in the panhandle of Laos, move into the southern part of NVN and gradually move northward. The pattern would be systematic and progressive attacks of ever-increasing intensity and severity. However, sufficient time would be allowed between strikes to determine DRV and CHICOM reaction.

This option would not commit the United States irrevocably to escalation of the hostilities to any particular level, CINCPAC said, and it would not be necessary to strike Phuc Yen until such time as the enemy aircraft based there began to interfere with US operations.

Admiral Sharp held that the justification for such a controlled program of attacks had already been established by the Bien Hoa raid and other acts of the enemy. There was reason to believe that infiltration and military activity in the Laos Panhandle were increasing. "It is time to reverse this trend."[12]

With respect to the Huong government in South Vietnam, CINCPAC had merely expressed the hope that it would attain some stability and effectiveness. In fact, however, a new round of

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11. (TS) Msg, COMUSMAC MAC 6164 to CJCS, 27 Nov 64, same file.
12. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 230515Z Nov 64, JCS IN 32601, same file.

public turmoil had started. On Sunday, 22 November, some 5,000 demonstrators had marched on Huong's official residence in Saigon, demanding dismissal of the government. They were dispersed by the police, who used tear gas and acted with a firmness that appeared to promise fulfillment of Huong's earlier declaration that demonstrations would be suppressed.

Four days later, just as Ambassador Taylor was preparing to depart, a Buddhist leader demanded that the High National Council express lack of confidence in Prime Minister Huong, requiring his resignation. The HNC rejected the demand, however, and in the face of continuing demonstrations the government imposed a curfew on 25 November, followed by martial law two days later.

A DIA assessment supplied to General Wheeler on 27 November said that "at no time during the past 18 months have oppositionists displayed any sense of responsibility towards the national government." They fomented street demonstrations to achieve their personal aims, eliciting a response particularly from the students and intellectuals in the cities. The most recent disturbances arose from dissatisfaction with the composition of Huong's cabinet and could be traced to certain Buddhist leaders and to one militant Catholic priest, each of whom apparently believed Huong should have sought his approval of the officials selected. Also, "South Vietnamese politicians, disgruntled because of their exclusion from posts providing opportunity for personal gain, have expressed strong opposition." The DIA report noted that one of the foremost Buddhist leaders, Tri Quang, was not actively opposing the government. He believed its downfall was inevitable, making overt action unnecessary.[13]

Doubt regarding the survival of the Huong government, despite admirable qualities displayed by the Prime Minister himself, was one of the themes of the paper Ambassador Taylor submitted to the other conferees upon his arrival in Washington on 26 November. This paper and the Ambassador's subsequent counsel were of high importance in shaping the outcome of the deliberations.

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13. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dir, DIA to CJCS, "Appraisal of Current Situation in South Viet-Nam," 27 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov-Dec 64.

> After a year of changing and ineffective government, the counterinsurgency program country-wide is bogged down and will require heroic treatment to assure revival. . . . The northern provinces of South Viet-Nam which a year ago were considered almost free of Viet-Cong are now in deep trouble. In the Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh area, the gains of the Viet-Cong have been so serious that once more we are threatened with a partition of the country by a Viet-Cong salient driven to the sea. The pressure on this area has been accompanied by continuous sabotage of the railroad and of Highway 1 which in combination threaten an economic strangulation of the northern provinces.

> This deterioration of the pacification program has taken place in spite of the very heavy losses inflicted almost daily on the Viet-Cong and the increase in strength and professional competence of the Armed Forces of South Viet-Nam. Not only have the Viet-Cong apparently made good their losses, but of late, have demonstrated three new or newly expanded tactics: The use of stand-off mortar fire against important targets, as in the attack on the Bien Hoa airfield; economic strangulation on limited areas; finally, the stepped-up infiltration of DRV military personnel moving from the north.

"Perhaps more serious than the downward trend in the pacification situation, because it is the prime cause, is the continued weakness of the central government." Ambassador Taylor saw small chance of a long life for the Huong government. "Indeed, in view of the factionalism existing in Saigon and elsewhere throughout the country, it is impossible to foresee a stable and effective government under any name in anything like the near future."

> It is an inescapable fact that there is no national tendency toward team play or mutual loyalty to be found among many of the leaders and political groups within South Viet-Nam. Given time, many of these conditions will undoubtedly change for the better, but we are unfortunately pressed for time and unhappily perceive no short-term solution for the establishment of stable and sound government.

So long as there was no effective central government with which to mesh the US effort, "the latter is a spinning wheel unable to transmit impulsion to the machinery of the GVN."

> The ability of the Viet-Cong continuously to rebuild their units and to make good their losses is one of the mysteries of this guerrilla war. We are aware of the recruiting methods by which local boys are induced or compelled to join the Viet-Cong ranks and have some general

appreciation of the amount of infiltration of personnel from the outside. Yet taking both of these sources into account, we still find no plausible explanation of the continued strength of the Viet-Cong if our data on Viet-Cong losses are even approximately correct. Not only do the Viet-Cong units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix, but they have an amazing ability to maintain morale. Only in rare cases have we found evidences of bad morale among Viet-Cong prisoners or recorded in captured Viet-Cong documents.

North Vietnamese direction and support took the form of "endless radioed orders and instructions" and the continuous infiltration of trained cadre and military equipment by land and water.

If, as the evidence shows, we are playing a losing game in South Viet-Nam, it is high time we change and find a better way. To change the situation, it is quite clear that we need to do three things: first, establish an adequate government in SVN; second, improve the conduct of the counterinsurgency campaign; and, finally, persuade or force the DRV to stop its aid to the Viet-Cong and to use its directive powers to make the Viet-Cong desist from their efforts to overthrow the government of South Viet-Nam.

Given the time limitation, Ambassador Taylor wrote, the United States would have to settle for something considerably less than an ideal government in South Vietnam.

However, it is hard to visualize our being willing to make added outlays of resources and to run increasing political risks without an allied government which, at least, can speak for and to its people, can maintain law and order in the principal cities, can provide local protection for the vital military bases and installations, can raise and support Armed Forces, and can gear its efforts to those of the United States. Anything less than this would hardly be a government at all, and under such circumstances, the United States Government might do better to carry forward the war on a purely unilateral basis.

The United States should continue to aid, advise, and encourage the South Vietnamese government, try to restrain the minority groups seeking its overthrow, and use all possible influence to maintain continuity of both organization and leadership. To raise the morale and confidence of the government and people of South Vietnam, Ambassador Taylor favored attacks against

the infiltration system in Laos and increased OPLAN 34A operations against North Vietnam by sea and air. While the latter would be covert in the sense of being disavowed, "their occurrence could be made known in such a way as to give the morale lift which is desired." The United States also should launch reprisal bombings for major Viet Cong depredations in South Vietnam.

> All these actions, however, may not be sufficient to hold the present government upright. If it fails, we are going to be in deep trouble, with limited resources for subsequent actions. It is true that we could try again with another civilian government but the odds against it would be even higher than those which have confronted the Huong government. We might try in a second civilian government to take over operational control by U.S. officials if indeed the GVN would agree to this change. However, there are more objections to this form of U. S. intervention than there are arguments in favor of it. Another alternative would be to invite back a military dictatorship on the model of that headed of late by General Khanh. However, Khanh did very poorly when he was on the spot and we have little reason to believe that a successor military government could be more effective. Finally, we always have the option of withdrawing, leaving the internal situation to the Vietnamese, and limiting our contribution to military action directed at North Viet-Nam. Such action, while assuring that North Viet-Nam would pay a price for its misdeeds in the South, would probably not save South Viet-Nam from eventual loss to the Viet Cong.

As for bringing military pressures to bear on North Vietnam, the Ambassador noted that the first rung of the ladder of escalation would have been occupied by "the initiation of intensified covert operations, anti-infiltration attacks in Laos, and reprisal bombings mentioned above as a means of stiffening South Vietnamese morale." Beyond that, attacks on North Vietnam could be mounted, beginning with infiltration-related targets such as staging areas, training facilities, communications centers, and the like. Progressively enlarged, these attacks could extend ultimately to "the destruction of all important fixed targets in North Viet-Nam and to the interdiction of movement on all lines of communication."

The undertaking of such a program would require prior consultation with Prime Minister Huong and General Khanh. "They will be taking on risks as great or greater than ours," and

their views would deserve a serious hearing. "If, as is likely, they urge us with enthusiasm, we should take advantage of the opportunity to nail down certain important points such as:

a. The GVN undertakes (1) to maintain the strength of its military and police forces; (2) to replace incompetent military commanders and province chiefs and to leave the competent ones in place for an indefinite period; (3) to suppress disorders and demonstrations; (4) to establish effective resources control; and (5) to obtain U.S. concurrence for all military operations outside of South Viet-Nam.

b. The U.S. undertakes responsibility for the air and maritime defense of South Viet-Nam.

c. The GVN undertakes responsibility for the land defense of South Viet-Nam to include the protection of all U.S. nationals and installations.

d. The GVN accepts the U.S. statement (to be prepared) of war aims and circumstances for negotiations.

Shortly after initiating an escalation program it will be important to communicate with the DRV and the CHICOMs to establish certain essential points in the minds of their leaders. The first is that under no circumstances will the United States let the DRV go unscathed and reap the benefits of its nefarious actions in South Viet-Nam without paying a heavy price. Furthermore, we will not accept any statement from the DRV to the effect that it is not responsible for the Viet-Cong insurgency and that it cannot control the Viet-Cong actions. We know better and will act accordingly. However, the enemy should know that the United States objectives are limited. We are not seeking to unify North and South Viet-Nam; we are seeking no permanent military presence in Southeast Asia. But on the other hand, we do insist that the DRV let its neighbors, South Viet-Nam and Laos, strictly alone.

Furthermore, we are not trying to change the nature of the government in Hanoi. If the North Vietnamese prefer a Communist government, that is their choice to make. If the DRV remains aloof from the CHICOMs in a Tito-like state, we would not be averse to aiding such a government provided it conducted itself decently with its neighbors.

But with all, we are tired of standing by and seeing the unabashed efforts of the DRV to absorb South Viet-Nam into the Communist orbit against its will. We know that Hanoi is responsible and that we are going to punish it until it desists from this behavior.

Ambassador Taylor did not doubt that the enemy would mount counteractions. The Viet Cong would intensify their activities, and the North Vietnamese might engage in limited air and ground attacks on South Vietnam, using regular military units "and perhaps volunteers from Red China. It is quite likely that they will invite some CHICOM military forces into the DRV if only to reinforce its air defense." If these counteractions failed and the enemy came under unbearable pressure, the communist leadership might feign submission or choose some other course. Ambassador Taylor would "leave negotiation initiatives to Hanoi."

Whatever the course of events, we should adhere to three principles:

a. Do not enter into negotiations until the DRV is hurting.

b. Never let the DRV gain a victory in South Viet-Nam without having paid a disproportionate price.

c. Keep the GVN in the forefront of the combat and the negotiations.

Attached to Ambassador Taylor's paper of 26 November was his "Suggested Scenario for Controlled Escalation." The actions in the scenario were not to begin until intensified 34A operations and air strikes and armed reconnaissance over Laos had been in progress for some time; it was also assumed that information on enemy infiltration would have been released in Saigon and Washington. The scenario began with the consultations with Huong and Khanh that the Ambassador had sketched; it continued through a rather deliberate sequence of actions until a moderate level of air strikes against infiltration targets in North Vietnam was reached. Ambassador Taylor cautioned that if the Hanoi government indicated willingness to discuss a settlement, the United States must avoid "becoming involved in a cease fire vis-a-vis the DRV and/or the VC accompanied by strung-out negotiations."[14]

14. (TS) "Amb. Taylor's paper," "The Current Situation in South Viet-Nam - November, 1964," n.d. [26 Nov 64], OCJCS File, Taylor Visit, Nov 64."

One of the early items in the Taylor scenario was "cease travel to Vietnam of additional dependents, but take no action to evacuate dependents already in Vietnam pending further developments." It happened that, in another connection, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had advised the Secretary of Defense of their views on this matter on the same day, 26 November. The Joint Chiefs of Staff thought it undesirable to announce a suspension of movement of US dependents to South Vietnam, for two reasons:

a. A policy announcement of this nature would inevitably raise in the minds of the South Vietnamese and others the thought that the United States was embarking upon a course of withdrawing from its commitments in South Vietnam.

b. Such an announcement might well focus the attention of the Viet Cong on US dependents now in the country, thereby placing them in jeopardy.

They repeated their view that dependents should be withdrawn shortly prior to or concurrently with the initiation of overt US military action against North Vietnam.[15]

Further Consultations Shape the Recommendations to the President

Ambassador Taylor met with the group of senior advisors in a wide-ranging discussion on 27 November. It was concluded that while the emergence of a neutral, nonaligned Republic of South Vietnam would be acceptable to the United States, a government genuinely devoted to nonalignment and insured against communist take-over could not appear until after the Viet Cong were defeated.

The materials General Westmoreland had contributed to the discussion were reviewed, with both Ambassador Taylor and Secretary McNamara dissenting from his belief that conditions in South Vietnam would improve and that a firmer base for stronger actions would be available six months hence. The Ambassador doubted that the situation would hold together for long if the United States merely continued its current programs under Option A, whereas he thought that stronger action along the lines of Option C would have a definitely favorable effect on GVN and South Vietnamese performance and morale. Others in the group suggested that "the strengthening effect of Option C could at least buy time, possibly measured in years."

15. (S-GP 4) CM-277-64 to SecDef, 26 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2343/496, 27 Nov 64, JMF 9155.3 (26 Nov 64).

Secretary Bundy recorded the following tentative conclusion:

> It was urged that over the next two months we adopt a program of Option A plus the first stages of Option C. The likelihood of improvement in the government seemed so doubtful that to get what improvement we could it was thought that we should move into some parts of C soon.[16]

At this meeting Ambassador Taylor presented a list of thirteen questions on aspects of the initial NSCWG papers that had not seemed clear to him.[17] Several of them fell within the purview of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who responded promptly. They indicated that the JCS conception of Option B would require an estimated 20 strike days for implementation, while their preferred version (C') of Option C would require two to three months. "These courses of action are designed, however, for suspension short of these time spans if objectives are earlier achieved." To the question, "What do we do if the Huong government collapses some place along the B or C track?", the Joint Chiefs of Staff answered as follows:

> These courses of action are expected to decrease the likelihood of a collapse of the Huong government. Should a collapse occur, however, we must establish and sustain a government at least through attainment of our objectives. If necessary, reinstatement of military control should be considered as an acceptable course of action.[18]

At their meeting on 27 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff surveyed the status of the consultations. It was clear that the Joint Chiefs of Staff stood alone in advocating Option B. The three senior officials in the field did not agree with them. General Westmoreland favored continuing along the lines of Option A for upwards of six months; Admiral Sharp's recommendation was a firm endorsement of Option C. The most influential of the three, Ambassador Taylor, favored Option A plus the initial stages of Option C, and none of the other senior advisors in Washington appeared to support stronger action than this.

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16. (TS) AsstSecState (FE), "Memorandum of Meeting on Southeast Asia, November 27, 1964," 27 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov-Dec 64.

17. (S-GP 1) Amb Taylor, "Questions Requiring Answers," 27 Nov 64, Encl to JCS 2343/498, 28 Nov 64, JMF 9155.3 (27 Nov 64) (1).

18. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-1005-64 to SecDef, 1 Dec 64 (derived from JCS 2343/498-1), same file.

After an extended discussion the Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed that, barring a change of US objectives, the position they had taken in JCSM-982-64 on 23 November was the recommended course. That paper had restated and focused attention on the avowed US objectives, with the hope that the reception it received would reveal any change of thought at the highest policy level. No senior official had drawn back from a statement of objectives that bespoke a US determination to stand firm against communist expansion in Southeast Asia, and specifically in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that the military course of action they had recommended followed logically from this determination. It was designed to accomplish the objective in the most assured and effective way, in the least time and with the fewest casualties. General Wheeler had expressed the underlying thought in a reverse form in an annotation he made on one of the papers used at a high-level meeting:

> If we do not undertake B or C', we must establish new objective in SEA. JCS would need to study new objective and draw appropriate military plans.19

The high-level discussions to date had registered opposition to Option B on three main counts. The first was the judgment of most of the conferees that this course was the one most likely to lead to major hostilities with North Vietnam and possibly Communist China. It was also argued that choice of Option C would provide greater flexibility and control, since decision to proceed to Option B would still be possible; moving immediately to Option B would commit the United States to an irreversible sequence of actions.

The third objection turned on the incompatibility of Option B with one of the principles enunciated in Ambassador Taylor's paper: "keep the GVN in the forefront of the combat and the negotiations." The JCS plan for the implementation of Option B involved the use of SAC aircraft and a program of bombing in which there would be hardly more than token VNAF participation. Ambassador Taylor thought it highly important that the war retain the appearance of a conflict in which South Vietnam was defending itself against communist aggression and insurgency, with the United States supporting to the degree necessary. It should not

19. Annotation by CJCS on (TS) Memo, AsstSecState (FE) to SecState et al., "Issues Raised by Papers on Southeast Asia," 24 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jul 64-Jun 65.

be converted to a US war against North Vietnam, mounted largely from South Vietnamese territory. He thought that the VNAF, particularly after its fourth A-1H squadron became operational in December, would be capable of taking the lead in bombing strikes against the North, at a level below Option B. In exploration of this point the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 November asked for CINCPAC's estimate of the maximum number of A-1H sorties the VNAF could generate against North Vietnam, currently and in the future, and for his views on the effect this commitment would have on air support of operations within South Vietnam.[20]

Further considerations that bore on the policy deliberations were indicated in a set of papers that Secretary Bundy circulated to the principal advisors on 28 November. In the papers he had attempted to work out a scenario for "the Immediate Action Program."

> The problem is a difficult one, a real jigsaw puzzle in which you have to weigh at every point the viewpoints of:
>
> a. The American Congress and the public.
>
> b. Saigon.
>
> c. Hanoi and Peiping.
>
> d. Key Interested Nations.[21]

Although not strongly indicated in the documents until this point, concern regarding the public and Congressional reception of the policy they might frame had almost certainly been a major factor in the thought of all the conferees, fed by such items as the editorial comment that had appeared in the New York Times on 25 November:

> The hawks seem to be emerging from the dovecotes of the Johnson Administration now that the election is over and another Vietnam reassessment is under way. All five members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are said to be pressing for broadening the conflict. And Ambassador Taylor . . . has talked publicly of bombing both Vietcong infiltration routes in Laos and "training and staging areas in North Vietnam itself."

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20. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2368 to CINCPAC, 27 Nov 64.
21. (TS) Memo, AsstSecState (FE) to Southeast Asia Principals, "Scenario for Immediate Action Program," 28 Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Taylor Visit, Nov 64."

. . . .

Only two months ago, in Manchester, N.H., President Johnson expressed these views about "going north" in Vietnam: "I want to be very cautious and careful and use it only as a last resort when I start dropping bombs around that are likely to involve American boys in a war in Asia with 700 million Chinese . . . . So we are not going north and we are not going south; we are going to continue to try to get them /the South Vietnamese/ to save their own freedom with their own men."

If there is to be a new policy now, if an Asian war is to be converted into an American war, the country has a right to insist that it be told what has changed so profoundly in the past two months to justify it.[22]

With reference to public opinion, the Bundy papers included worksheets on the timing and nature of a White House statement at the conclusion of the conferences, consultation with Congressional leaders, and a major speech, preferably by the President. Concurrently a background briefing on infiltration might be staged in both Saigon and Washington, followed a week or so later by publication of a detailed report on the order of a white paper. Regarding the background briefing on infiltration the worksheet contained the following comment:

This will be a major action, since it shows not only that it has been increasing this year, but that it has probably been greater all along than we realized. It will have a major public play in the US, and may well kick up a storm. We need to make this one stick as a prelude to all else.[23]

Further discussion among the senior advisors on 28 November gave more definite shape to their conclusions, and the following day Secretary Bundy circulated a draft action paper. Headed "Draft NSAM on Southeast Asia," it had already been reviewed by Ambassador Taylor, Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton, and Mr. Michael Forrestal of the State Department. The paper was virtually ready for submission to the President, subject to one more meeting of the advisors, to be held on 30 November in

22. NY Times, 25 Nov 64, 36.
23. (TS) Memo, AssSecState (FE) to Southeast Asia Principals, "Scenario for Immediate Action Program," 28 Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Taylor Visit, Nov 64."

Secretary Rusk's conference room. General Wheeler went to that meeting prepared to raise several points that had been developed during a morning session of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[24]

The JCS comments were directed at clarification and improvement of the text, not at reshaping the concept along the lines of the Option B that the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to regard as the optimum course. The concept as stated in the Draft NSAM on Southeast Asia was as follows:

> A. US objectives in South Vietnam (SVN) are unchanged. They are to:
>
> 1. Get Hanoi and North Vietnam (DRV) support and direction removed from South Vietnam, and, to the extent possible, obtain DRV cooperation in ending Viet Cong (VC) operations in SVN.
>
> 2. Re-establish an independent and secure South Vietnam with appropriate international safeguards, including the freedom to accept US and other external assistance as required.
>
> 3. Maintain the security of other non-Communist nations in Southeast Asia including specifically the maintenance and observance of the Geneva Accords of 1962 in Laos.
>
> B. We will continue to press the South Vietnamese Government (GVN) in every possible way to make the government itself more effective and to push forward with the pacification program.
>
> C. We will join at once with the South Vietnamese and Lao Governments in a determined action program aimed at DRV activities in both countries and designed to help GVN morale and to increase the costs and strain on Hanoi, foreshadowing still greater pressures to come. Under this program the first phase actions within the next thirty days will be intensified forms of action already under way, plus (1) US armed reconnaissance strikes in Laos, and (2) GVN and possibly US air strikes against

24. (TS) AsstSecState (FE) to Southeast Asia Principals, 29 Nov 64, same file. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Chairman's Debrief of the 28 Nov NSC Policy Group Meeting on Southeast Asia," 30 Nov 64, Jt Sect Files.

the DRV, as reprisals against any major or spectacular Viet Cong action in the south, whether against US personnel and installations or not.

D. Beyond the thirty-day period, first phase actions may be continued without change, or additional military measures may be taken, including the withdrawal of dependents and the possible initiation of strikes a short distance across the border against infiltration routes from the DRV. In the latter case this would become a transitional phase.

E. Thereafter, if the GVN improves its effectiveness to an acceptable degree and Hanoi does not yield on acceptable terms, /or if the GVN can only be kept going by stronger action,/ the US is prepared--at a time to be determined--to enter a second phase program, in support of the GVN and RLG, of graduated military pressures directed systematically against the DRV. Such a program would consist principally of progressively more serious air strikes, of a weight and tempo adjusted to the situation as it develops (possibly running from two to six months). Targets in the DRV would start with infiltration targets south of the 19th parallel and work up to targets north of that point. This could eventually lead to such measures as air strikes on all major military-related targets, aerial mining of DRV ports, and a US naval blockade of the DRV. The whole sequence of military actions would be designed to give the impression of a steady, deliberate approach, and to give the US the option at any time (subject to enemy reaction) to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not. Concurrently, the US would be alert to any sign of yielding by Hanoi, and would be prepared to explore negotiated solutions that attain US objectives in an acceptable manner. The US would seek to control any negotiations and would oppose any independent South Vietnamese efforts to negotiate.

Next, the paper for submission to the President set forth a "Thirty-Day Action Program" for the first phase spoken of in the concept. It began by treating the White House statement to be issued and the materials Ambassador Taylor was to use in his consultations with the Huong government. Further, "at the earliest feasible time, we will publicize the evidence of increased DRV infiltration." This would be accomplished by on-the-record presentations to the press in Washington and Saigon, special briefings for Congressional leaders and the Ambassadors of key allied nations, and later publication of a detailed report.

Meanwhile the US Ambassadors in Laos and Thailand would inform government leaders there in general terms of the concept the United States intended to follow, seeking their support. Specifically, the approval of Souvanna Phouma would be obtained for an intensified program of US armed reconnaissance over the Panhandle area and along infiltration routes in central Laos. The concept would be explained more fully to the governments of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. In consultation with Prime Minister Harold Wilson during his forthcoming visit, the President would seek full British support but would not ask for any additional contribution to the effort in South Vietnam in view of the British commitment in Malaysia. Both political support and additional contributions would be sought from the other three SEATO nations, with the Philippine Government being pressed particularly to complete its plan for supplying an 1800-man task force. The attempt to enlist more "third country aid" would extend to other countries as well.[25]

The United States would make no special approach to Communist China during the 30-day period, but "we will convey to Hanoi our unchanged determination and objectives, and that we have a growing concern at the DRV role, to see if there is any sign of change in Hanoi's position." Similar representations would be made to the Soviets, "not in the expectation of any change in their position but in effect to warn them to stay out, and with some hope they will pass on the message to Hanoi and Peiping." No US activity at the United Nations was planned, except explanation and defense of any US reprisal action that might occur.

Military actions listed in the paper for the initial 30-day period included intensified 34A MAROPS by GVN forces and increased US high-level reconnaissance over North Vietnam. Also to be intensified were the strikes by the Royal Laotian Air Force against the infiltration system in Laos, supported by US CAP and flak suppression missions when needed. Beyond that, "US armed air reconnaissance and air strikes will be carried out in Laos, first against the corridor area and within a short time against Route 7 and other infiltration routes in a major operation to cut key bridges." (The term

25. For a summary of the contributions of other nations during 1964, see Ch. 16.

"air strikes" had been added following General Wheeler's explanation that armed reconnaissance did not include the type of pre-briefed operations necessary to cut specific bridges.)

Viet Cong provocation justifying reprisal was expected. "We should be alert for any appropriate occasion," the paper read, and it listed enemy attacks on Saigon, on provincial or district capitals, on important airfields or major POL facilities, or against US citizens as some of the possible incidents that might bring retaliation. Reprisal would be undertaken, preferably within 24 hours, against one or more targets in North Vietnam. "GVN forces will be used to the maximum extent, supplemented as necessary by US forces." The reprisal targets, generally associated with infiltration, would be selected from those located south of the 19th Parallel. Combined US-GVN planning would be initiated immediately both for reprisal action and for possible later air strikes across the border into North Vietnam.

Stopping the flow of US dependents to South Vietnam had been contemplated, possibly as one of the early actions during the initial 30 days. At the meeting on 30 November General Wheeler again presented the JCS opinion on this matter, and it was substantially accepted. The action was not definitely scheduled; the United States would be prepared to stop the flow at an appropriate time, chosen with due regard for the signal it would convey.

The paper closed with the following list of deferred actions, not to be taken within the 30-day period but open to consideration for adoption thereafter:

1. Major air deployments to the area.

2. Furnishing US air cover for GVN MAROPS.

3. Resuming destroyer patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin. . . .

4. Evacuation of US dependents.

5. US low-level reconnaissance into the DRV.

6. GVN/US air strikes across the border, initially against the infiltration routes and installations and then against other targets south of the 19th Parallel.

On behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Wheeler had asked whether it was intended that air strikes and reprisal action be limited to targets south of the 19th Parallel. He was assured that this was intended.[26]

Thus the course of action being recommended to the President could be characterized as an intensified Option A, to be pursued for at least a 30-day period. Thereafter, if the government of South Vietnam gave evidence of greater stability and effectiveness, decision could be made to move to Option C. The conception held of Option C called for its implementation with less speed and determination than the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended.

The course being recommended fell far short of Option B, the strong line of action that was the prime recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This JCS view was to have a final hearing, however, for it had been agreed that General Wheeler would present it orally to the President during the meeting scheduled at the White House on 1 December.

The Presidential Decisions of 1 December

Gathered at the White House on 1 December to advise the President were Vice President Humphrey, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Ambassador Taylor, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, General Wheeler, Mr. McCone, and Assistant Secretaries McNaughton and William Bundy. In preparation for the meeting General Wheeler had written a paper that restated the recommendations the Joint Chiefs of Staff had consistently advanced since the Bien Hoa attack a month earlier. The President heard the Chairman's presentation with care and attention. Without reading the paper verbatim, General Wheeler covered all its points and had opportunity to amplify several of them in response to the President's questions. The text was as follows:

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26. (TS) AsstSecState (FE) to Southeast Asia Principals, 29 Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Taylor Visit, Nov 64". No copy has been discovered in the available records of the recommendations as finally submitted to the President. The latest form in which the recommendations may be read is the draft paper of 29 Nov, as modified by changes known to have been made at the meeting on 30 November.

U. S. COURSE OF ACTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend initiation of sharp military pressures against the DRV, starting with an attack in force on the DRV, subsequent to brief operations in Laos and US low-level reconnaissance north of the boundary to divert DRV attention prior to the attack in force. This program would be designed to destroy in the first three days Phuc Yen airfield near Hanoi, other airfields, and major POL facilities, clearly to establish the fact that the US intends to use military force, if necessary, to the full limits of what military force can contribute to achieving US objectives in Southeast Asia, and to afford the GVN respite by curtailing DRV assistance to and direction of the Viet Cong. The follow-on military program--involving armed reconnaissance of infiltration routes in Laos, air strikes on infiltration targets in the DRV, and then progressive strikes throughout North Vietnam--could be suspended short of full destruction of the DRV if our objectives were earlier achieved. The military program would be conducted rather swiftly, but the tempo could be adjusted as needed to contribute to achieving our objectives.

2. The JCS have maintained constant and close surveillance over the situation in Southeast Asia for many months. Our recommendation as to the best US course of action derives from two major bases:

a. Southeast Asia is an area of major strategic importance to the US, the loss of which would lead to grave political and military consequences in the entire Western Pacific, and to serious political consequences world-wide.

b. National policies establish US objectives in Southeast Asia to include a stable and independent non-Communist government in the RVN (NSAM 288, 17 March '64) and a stabilized situation in Laos which conforms to the Geneva Accords of 1962 (NSAM 249, 25 June '63).

3. Other factors to which we attach much weight are:

a. The consensus of official opinion is that the GVN is unlikely to grow stronger; in all probability it will become weaker as the guerrilla war drags on and internal political dissension continues.

b. At some point, the continued political turmoil will affect adversely the military effort against the Viet Cong, thereby tipping both the political and military scales in favor of the Communists.

c. We know that the DRV is directing the VC insurgency in SVN and supporting it with sizable numbers of trained military leaders and technicians and substantial logistic means. We know that this support is being illegally moved through Laos and Cambodia into SVN.

d. To date, the DRV has underwritten the insurgency in SVN at minimum costs to themselves in people and material.

4. In sum, the JCS consider that, if military action against the DRV is not undertaken at an early date, a Communist victory in SVN must be foreseen. To suffer defeat in this first "War of Liberation" in a strategically important area will, we believe, incubate other such wars. Communist dogma calls for exploitation of success.

5. Furthermore, the JCS recommend a "hard knock" on DRV resources by US forces early in the military program. We believe that an early and heavy attack on DRV combat aircraft and POL has the following military, political, psychological and economic advantages:

a. In-country combat aircraft and air support facilities will be destroyed, thereby reducing the offensive and defensive air capabilities of the enemy, losses to ourselves, danger of retaliatory strikes against SVN, and logistic support to the VC and PL.

b. The DRV (and ChiComs) will be impelled to provide greater defense capabilities, thereby siphoning off resources which could be used offensively.

c. The DRV and Red China will know from the outset the threshold of military activity established by the United States. Since our action will not be ambiguous, or of minor effect, they must face up to the alternatives of war or accomodation to US objectives.

d. Destruction of POL in-country in the DRV will impose a stricture on land and air communications and, to some degree, on their limited industry. In any event, it will forecast to them what the future will hold if tney continue on their present course.

6. The JCS recognize that any course of action we adopt, except early withdrawal from SVN, could develop eventually into the course they advocate. This fact reinforces our belief that we should profit by the several advantages of forthright military action initiated upon our decision. In other words, if we must fight a war in Southeast Asia, let us do so under conditions favorable to us from the outset and with maximum volition resting with the United States.[27]

At the White House meeting there was no dissent regarding the importance of Southeast Asia to the United States, the US objectives, and the other elements of the situation as the Chairman described them. The President's advisors agreed that the government of South Vietnam was unlikely to grow stronger. Its sudden collapse did not appear imminent, but the interplay of Viet Cong aggressiveness and GVN weakness would probably yield a continuing debilitation of the government unless effective measures were taken. With regard to the final paragraph, which General Wheeler did read at the meeting, all present acknowledged the truth of the first sentence: whatever choice of policy was made, the further development of the situation might

27. (TS) CM-283-64 to CSAF et al., 1 Dec 64, OCJCS File, "Taylor Visit, Nov 64."

lead eventually to adoption of the strong military measures the Joint Chiefs of Staff advocated now. For various reasons, including most prominently concern over the weakness and instability of the GVN, the strong course was rejected.

President Johnson accepted substantially the program recommended by his advisors. Some of its elements were deferred for later decision, such as the provision of US air cover for GVN MAROPS. Timing of the implementation of the 30-day first phase would be keyed to Ambassador Taylor's return to Saigon. Assuming a favorable outcome of his consultations with Huong and Khanh, the approved military actions would begin about 15 December.[28] General Wheeler described them in a message to Admiral Sharp, as follows:

> First phase actions (about 30 days) would consist of intensified MAROPS, intensified high level recce of DRV, intensified RLAF strikes in Laos, and approximately two missions per week of four sorties each conducted by US aircraft in Laos. Subsequent to the foregoing and deployment of 100/150 aircraft to Southeast Asia plus alert of US ground forces for movement, we would conduct low-level recce of targets near border in DRV and US/RLAF/GVN air attacks in DRV near Laotian border.

Thereafter, decision could be taken to conduct US-GVN air strikes against North Vietnam during the next two to six months, starting with targets south of the 19th Parallel and working northward. Mining of NVN ports and naval blockade might be decided upon at at later stage.[29]

The decisions made on 1 December included a general acceptance of the intention of launching reprisal strikes following any major VC or NVN attacks or incidents in South Vietnam or at sea. The President ordered a vigorous and expanded diplomatic effort to obtain commitments from other free world nations for the dispatch of men, materials, and supporting services to South Vietnam. The central document

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28. (TS) Note to Control Div, "The Chairman's Debrief of the 1 December White House Meeting on Southeast Asia," 2 Dec 64; (TS) Note to Control Div, "The Chairman's Debrief of the 3 December NSC Policy Group Meeting on SEAsia," 4 Dec 64; same file.

29. (TS) Msg, JCS 5208-64 to CINCPAC, 3 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov-Dec 64.

embodying the agreed policy was the set of instructions the President would give to Ambassador Taylor. It was to be brought to finished form in further discussions following the 1 December meeting.30

It was notable that the White House statement issued on 1 December avoided heralding the consultations during Ambassador Taylor's visit as marking a new turn in US policy regarding South Vietnam. Among other things, no emphasis was given to the infiltration data, whose release Secretary Bundy had once thought of as "a prelude to all else." Whereas earlier drafts of the White House statement had included announcement that a report on infiltration would be released shortly, the statement as issued contained only the following reference:

> The meeting reviewed the accumulating evidence of continuing and increased North Vietnamese support of the Viet Cong and of North Vietnamese forces in, and passing through, the territory of Laos in violation of the Geneva accords of 1962.31

The subsequent history of this matter may be sketched briefly. After extended discussions during December of the desirability of releasing the infiltration data, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara did provide a briefing for Congressional leaders on 21 January 1965. Since leakage to the press was now likely, arrangements were made for background briefings for correspondents in Saigon and Washington on 26 January.32 The Department of State published a detailed and documented report on 27 February, titled Aggression from the North: the Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam. Besides describing the significant volume of the infiltration, it presented numerous case studies proving that the personnel being introduced into South Vietnam were drawn from regular NVN military units.33

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30. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/499, 3 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (3 Dec 64).

31. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (21 Dec 64), p. 870.

32. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/164, 12 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (12 Dec 64). (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/166, 19 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (19 Dec 64). (S-GP 3) Jt State-Def Msg, State 1513 to Saigon, 22 Jan 65, JCS IN 89380; (S) Msg, State 1531 to Saigon, 25 Jan 65, JCS IN 92449. (S-GP 3) 2nd N/H of JCS 2343/490, 10 Feb 65, JMF 9155.3 (31 Oct 64).

33. Dept of State Bulletin, LII (22 Mar 65), pp. 404-427.

The final paragraphs of the White House statement of 1 December 1964 were as follows:

> The President instructed Ambassador Taylor to consult urgently with the South Vietnamese Government as to measures that should be taken to improve the situation in all its aspects.
>
> The President reaffirmed the basic U.S. policy of providing all possible and useful assistance to the South Vietnamese people and government in their struggle to defeat the externally supported insurgency and aggression being conducted against them. It was noted that this policy accords with the terms of the congressional joint resolution of August 10, 1964, which remains in full force and effect.[34]

34. Dept of State Bulletin, LI (21 Dec 64), p. 870.

Chapter 15

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL DECISIONS, DECEMBER 1964

Ambassador Taylor Confers with the GVN

Ambassador Taylor returned to Saigon after the consultations in Washington bearing written instructions from the President. Dated 3 December, they constituted the authoritative statement of the decisions reached at the White House meeting two days earlier.

> During the recent review in Washington of the situation in SVN, it was clearly established that the unsatisfactory progress being made in the pacification of the Viet Cong was the result of two primary causes from which many secondary causes stemmed; first, the governmental instability in Saigon and the second, the continued reinforcement and direction of the VC by the North Vietnamese Government. To change the downward trend of events, it will be necessary to deal adequately with both these factors.
>
> It is clear, however, that these factors are not of equal importance. There must be a stable, effective government to conduct a successful campaign against the Viet Cong even if the aid of North Vietnam for the VC should end.

Ending North Vietnamese support, while important, would not in itself end the war against the Viet Cong. It would only contribute to the creation of conditions favoring a successful pacification campaign within South Vietnam.

> Since action against North Vietnam is contributory, not central, we should not incur the risks which are inherent in such an expansion of hostilities until there is a government in Saigon capable of handling the serious problems involved in such an expansion and of exploiting the favorable effects which may be anticipated from an end of support and direction by North Vietnam.

Therefore, there were certain minimum criteria of performance that the Huong government must meet before new measures against North Vietnam would be either justified or practicable. The government should be able to speak to and for its people, to maintain law and order in the principal population centers, and to make effective plans and see them executed by military and police forces entirely responsive to its authority. Further, the government must have the military strength to cope with the probable enemy reactions to a program of increased pressures.

Ambassador Taylor was instructed to urge the GVN to make a particular effort to accomplish the following objectives, both for their inherent value and as a gauge against which governmental effectiveness could be measured:

1. Improve the use of manpower for military and pacification purposes.

2. Bring the armed forces and police to authorized strength and maximize their effectiveness.

3. Replace incompetent officials and commanders. Freeze the competent in place for extended periods of service.

4. Clarify and strengthen the police powers of arrest, detention and interrogation of VC suspects.

5. Clarify and strengthen the authority of provincial chiefs.

6. Make demonstrable progress in the Hop Tac operation around Saigon.

7. Broaden and intensify the civic action program using both military and civilian resources to produce tangible evidence of the desire of the government to help the hamlets and villages.

8. Carry out a sanitary clean-up of Saigon.

While the Huong government pursued these objectives, the United States would increase its use of air power against the infiltration routes in Laos, in conjunction with the efforts of the Royal Laotian Government, and it would encourage intensified MAROPS by GVN forces. "In

combination, these operations in Laos and at sea constitute the first phase of military pressures to reduce infiltration and to warn the DRV of the risks it is running." Meanwhile the armed forces of the GVN and the United States would stand ready to execute prompt reprisals for any unusual enemy action, and the US Mission was authorized to enter into planning with the GVN for this purpose.

"As a second phase, the United States is also prepared to consider a program of direct military pressure on the DRV, to be executed after the GVN has shown itself firmly in control."

> This second phase, in general terms, would constitute a series of air attacks on the DRV progressively mounting in scope and intensity for the purpose of convincing the leaders of DRV that it is to their interest to cease to aid the Viet Cong and to respect the independence and security of South Vietnam, properly assured by appropriate international safeguards.

In these attacks the United States would participate in support of the VNAF "and at the request of the Government of Vietnam." The US Mission was authorized to engage in combined planning with the GVN for these operations, with a clear understanding that the United States gave no advance commitment to implement the plans.[1]

Ambassador Taylor returned to a South Vietnamese capital in which calm had not been entirely restored following the demonstrations and brief imposition of martial law in late November. As the Embassy assessed the situation, oppositionist Buddhist leaders had the power virtually to immobilize the government, but they could not force Prime Minister Huong to resign. They charged the government with failure and repression, claiming that religious persecution was its intended next step, but the Buddhists offered no

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1. (TS) "Instructions from the President to Ambassador Taylor," 3 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64. Amb Taylor was also instructed to advise the GVN of the US effort to gain commitments for increased participation from other Free World nations.

concrete program of their own. When pressed for specific measures, they talked of respecting "the people's wishes" and "completing the revolution."[2]

Ambassador Taylor met with Huong, Deputy Premier Vien, and General Khanh on 7 December for consultation and presentation of a written statement derived from his instructions. These three were the only GVN officials to whom the Ambassador revealed the US program. Their initial reaction was generally favorable, although perhaps not so enthusiastic as might have been hoped. Huong and his aides accepted as reasonable the US index for measuring GVN progress and agreed to work out details in future meetings. Despite the demonstrations and widespread opposition, the Prime Minister asserted that his government was already "able to speak for and to its people."[3]

The further consultations concluded with the issuance of a joint communique on 11 December. It said that the US Government had "offered additional military and economic assistance to improve the execution of the Government's programs and to restrain the mounting infiltration of men and equipment by the Hanoi regime in support of the Vietcong." It highlighted provisions for increasing the military, paramilitary, and police forces, and the fact that the GVN and the US Mission were "making joint plans to achieve greater effectiveness against the infiltration threat." Ambassador Taylor's instructions had said that the Huong government had "the complete support of the USG in its resistance to the minority pressure groups which are attempting to drag it down." This thought appeared in blander language in the communique, as a simple expression of full US support "for the duly constituted Government of Prime Minister Huong." It was enough, nevertheless, to set off Buddhist protests that the United States was responsible for maintaining Huong in power against "the just desires of the Vietnamese people and the Buddhist Church."[4]

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2. (C) Msg, Saigon 1726 to State, 5 Dec 64, JCS IN 44569.
3. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1746 to State, 7 Dec 64, JCS IN 46777.
4. NY Times, 12 Dec 64, 1, 3.

Khanh's Purge of the HNC, 20 December

The next round of trouble, and a serious one, came not from the Buddhists but from General Khanh. Earlier in the month the Armed Forces Council, dominated by Khanh and the Young Turk faction among the military officers, had devised a regulation requiring the retirement of all general officers with over 25 years of service. It was aimed particularly at General Minh (still out of the country) and the three "Dalat Generals" who had been associated with him. On 18 December General Khanh petitioned the High National Council (HNC) to promulgate the regulation.

When the HNC did not promptly comply, Khanh and the Armed Forces Council met late on 19 December and determined to proclaim the dissolution of the High National Council and to arrest certain of its members. Most of the arrests occurred during the early hours of 20 December; eight HNC members were taken into custody as well as a number of other individuals tabbed as political agitators. In a telecon to Washington, General Westmoreland declared that "by arresting members of the High National Council, which is the interim legislative branch of the government, the military leaders have in fact abrogated the charter of the land."5

The Deputy COMUSMACV, Lieutenant General John L. Throckmorton, had gone to the RVNAF high command headquarters early on 20 December, seeking an explanation from the Young Turk officers he found there. The VNAF commander, General Ky, declared that he was not the leader but that he had been designated as spokesman because of his superior knowledge of English. He denied that any military coup was intended; action had been taken solely against the HNC, some of whose members were under communist influence and were undermining the government. Ky claimed that the prior assent of Prime Minister Huong and Chief of State Suu to the dissolution of the HNC had been obtained. The military officers saw their action as strengthening the government and leading to greater stability. The armed forces still supported Huong and Suu and had sought no change in the cabinet.

5. (C-GP 4) Telecon, COMUSMACV to NMCC, 200110Z Dec 64, JCS IN 59716, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov-Dec 64.

General Throckmorton replied that, whatever the merits of the action, the failure to consult or even notify the US Mission was an affront to the US Government. The purge of the HNC jeopardized the confidence the United States had reposed in South Vietnam's military leaders and "rendered unpredictable the continuation of US support." General Throckmorton persuaded Ky to postpone his scheduled press conference until he and other spokesmen for Khanh had had a meeting with Ambassador Taylor.[6]

Generals Ky and Thieu, Admiral Cang, and the I Corps Commander, General Thi, went to the Embassy shortly before noon on 20 December. As Ambassador Taylor reported the meeting, "I very forcefully expressed my disappointment in the action they had taken, made it clear they had jeopardized US support in everything they had been seeking, and asked for their explanation." The four Vietnamese officers averred that the decisions were made by General Khanh and that the Armed Forces Council was merely advisory to him. The Ambassador told them that their midnight meeting and the subsequent purge of the HNC would appear to Washington and the rest of the world as another military coup. He stressed the importance of maintaining the duly constituted government.[7]

On the following day Ambassador Taylor was able to bring General Khanh into conference. At first, Khanh claimed that the HNC dissolution was a decision of the Armed Forces Council; when pressed, he conceded that he was responsible, though still maintaining that he was carrying out the will of the majority of the officer corps. "I then asked him," Taylor reported, "if he felt he had acted . . . consistent with the conduct of a loyal ally. . . . I was obliged to tell him that he had lost my confidence."

> Khanh then asked whether, under the circumstances, he should retire from his present position. I was prepared for this question since we had discussed the matter earlier in the morning in the US Mission Council,

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6. (C) Telecons, COMUSMACV to NMCC, 200607Z Dec 64, JCS IN 59810, and 200750Z Dec 64, JCS IN 59902, same file.
7. (C) Msg, Saigon 1870 to State, 20 Dec 64, JCS IN 60048.

where I found all members unanimous in feeling that Khanh must go. Hence, I replied in affirmative. . . . Perhaps he might enjoy traveling abroad.8

Once away from the Ambassador's formidable presence, however, Khanh denied that he had ever agreed to step down. News correspondents readily detected an anti-American tone in the order of the day that Khanh issued to the RVNAF on 22 December:

> Faced with the country's critical situation, the armed forces again have assumed their responsibility before history.
>
> On 20 December 1964 the Armed Forces Council withdrew its confidence from and proclaimed the dissolution of the High National Council. This institution, set up amidst the hopes of all the people and the armed forces, was exploited by counter-revolutionary elements who placed partisan considerations above the homeland's sacred interests.

Khanh cited the above decision as "proof of the armed forces' good faith." The Armed Forces Council still supported the civilian government of Chief of State Suu and Prime Minister Huong. Then came the lines that signaled the beginning of Khanh's campaign against Ambassador Taylor and the influence of the United States in the affairs of South Vietnam:

> We make sacrifices for the country's independence and the Vietnamese people's liberty, but not to carry out the policy of any foreign country. . . . Better to live poor but proud as free citizens of an independent country rather than in ease and shame as slaves of the foreigners and communists!9

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8. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1881 to State, 21 Dec 64, JCS IN 60342.

9. (U) FBIS 30, 22 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.

General Khanh circulated versions of the two interviews with the Ambassador in which Taylor was depicted as ill-tempered and domineering and some of his remarks were recast as insults to South Vietnam's national honor. He charged the Ambassador with meddling in the country's internal affairs and told an American correspondent that "if Taylor did not act more intelligently, Southeast Asia would be lost."[10] On 23 December Khanh assembled the members of the Armed Forces Council, played on their wounded pride, and induced them to endorse a letter to the Chief of State and the Prime Minister that amounted to a request that Ambassador Taylor be declared persona non grata.

The Department of State had just countered with a strong statement issued in Washington:

> Ambassador Taylor has been acting throughout with the full support of the United States Government. As we have repeatedly made clear, a duly constituted government exercising full power on the basis of national unity and without improper interference from any group is the essential condition for the successful prosecution of the effort to defeat the Viet Cong and is the basis of United States support for that effort. This is the position Ambassador Taylor has been expressing to Vietnamese leaders.[11]

Other US statements and orders made it clear that to follow the line General Khanh indicated would bring a break in US-GVN relations and an end to US assistance. Prime Minister Huong "conspicuously avoided mentioning the matter to Ambassador Taylor," and in following days the discord was smoothed away with satisfactory explanations all around. Dissolution of the High National Council had to be accepted as a fait accompli, however. The Embassy received intimations that some of the Young Turk officers, notably General Ky, had become convinced that Khanh had acted exclusively in his own interests throughout the affair, but there appeared no prospect of forcing him out of the Commander in Chief's post for some time.[12]

10. AP news ticker excerpts, 23 Dec 64, same file. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1939 to State, 25 Dec 64, JCS IN 64737. (S) Msg, Saigon 1950 to State, 26 Dec 64, JCS IN 64948.

11. Dept of State Bulletin, LII (11 Jan 65), p. 39

12. NY Times, 27 Dec 64, 1. (S) Msg, Saigon 1951 to State, 26 Dec 64, JCS IN 64974. (S) Msg, Saigon 1999 to State, 30 Dec 64, JCS IN 68412. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2010 to State, 31 Dec 64, JCS IN 69494.

None of the legalisms the State Department devised for preserving the appearance of continued constitutional government in South Vietnam could erase the fact that the Huong government existed at the sufferance of the military officer corps, headed by an increasingly less tractable General Khanh. The recent events were a definite rebuff to US hopes for governmental permanence and stability in Saigon, making less likely a decision to move to the stronger Phase II actions of the US program. Arising unexpectedly on 20 December, the political crisis had not affected the beginning of the Phase I military actions, however. They had gone forward in accordance with the 15 December target date.

Intensified OPLAN 34A Operations

Immediately following the Presidential decisions of 1 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had asked CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to submit plans for increasing the frequency of GVN MAROPS under OPLAN 34A, in two "Packages." Package One would consist of a series of shallow penetration raids on the NVN coast, to begin about 15 December and continue for 30 days or longer. The raids were to be directed at targets offering the greatest psychological impact, with their military utility and the actual degree of destruction achieved regarded as secondary. Package Two actions might be ordered at any time after the 30-day period. They would feature employment of US aircraft to protect the MAROPS vessels from attack by NVN air and surface craft, and restrictions on certain targets above the 19th Parallel might be lifted.[13]

On the basis of the replies of Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland, with some modification, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 December recommended a program to the Secretary of Defense. Package One provided for specific target bombardments and harassment sweeps by PTFs (fast patrol boats) against targets of opportunity along the southern coast of North Vietnam, to be implemented about 15 December. Package Two added US air cover for a schedule of similar operations. Normally eight aircraft would accompany the PTFs, four armed for air-to-air and four for air-to-surface operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that

13. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2524 to CINCPAC, 2 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (2 Dec 64).

necessary training and command and control arrangements could be completed in time to allow implementation of Package Two by 15 January 1965. Both packages included as corollary missions the capture of NVN naval craft and the destruction of junks, after removing the crews.[14]

Deputy Secretary Vance replied on 14 December with approval for implementation of the corollary missions and of Increments 1 and 2 of Package One, less their coastal harassment features. Increments 3 and 4 of the package were approved in principle, with the same exception and with implementation to be deferred until reactions to the first two increments were observed. Secretary Vance deferred decision on Package Two and the related rules of engagement the Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted.[15]

Running concurrently with this round of recommendations and partial approval was a successful JCS effort to gain a greater degree of flexibility in the procedures for scheduling 34A MAROPS. The system in effect involved approval by State, Defense, and White House officials in Washington, first of a monthly program for planning purposes and then of each individual mission immediately prior to its execution. General Westmoreland was convinced that better results would be obtained if he was permitted greater latitude in scheduling the individual missions, in accordance with local weather and sea conditions and the readiness of crews and equipment. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented this view to the Secretary of Defense on 8 December, recommending that after Washington endorsement of the monthly program, COMUSMACV should submit packages of up to five missions for execution approval. With that approval obtained, General Westmoreland would be free to schedule the operations at his discretion, subject to coordination with Ambassador Taylor.[16]

14. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-1042-64 to SecDef, 12 Dec 64 (derived from JCS 2343/502), same file.

15. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "Intensification of OPLAN 34A Maritime Operations (S)," 14 Dec 64, Att to JCS 2343/502-1, 16 Dec 64, same file.

16. (TS-GP 1) CM-295-64 to SecDef, 8 Dec 64; (TS-GP 4) Memo, CSA to CJCS, "Trip Report, Vietnam, 8-12 December 1964," 21 Dec 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64. Initiation of the approval system several months earlier is described in Ch. 13.

Deputy Secretary Vance obtained approval of this proposal. At a meeting of the principal advisors on Southeast Asia on 19 December, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, the White House official concerned with OPLAN 34A scheduling, indicated that he was willing to "consider group approval of still larger packages if necessary, having due regard to our veto capabilities if a changed political situation should so require." At that meeting it was pointed out that the MAROPS approved so far did not represent any significant intensification of the program. Moreover, the prospects for greater activity in the near future were slight owing to seasonal sea conditions. No maritime operations had been completed for some three weeks past.[17]

BARREL ROLL

Another of the Phase I actions agreed to by the President on 1 December was a limited application of US air power against infiltration activities in Laos. To be sure, US aircraft were already engaged in operations over Laos, in the CAP and flak suppression flights provided when necessary to assist the Royal Laotian Air Force in its attacks on targets in the Laos panhandle. In addition to the long-standing high-level reconnaissance of South Vietnamese border areas, the United States had instituted the YANKEE TEAM reconnaissance flights over Laos in May 1964. Although authorized to return hostile fire and to attack known enemy antiaircraft positions, YANKEE TEAM flights did not have the mission of destroying infiltration targets. They were designed to provide intelligence and proof of infiltration, as well as to give evidence of the US military presence in Southeast Asia. From May until the end of 1964, 880 YANKEE TEAM missions were flown. The total of 1,257 sorties was shared by carrier aircraft of the Navy and USAF planes of the 2d Air Division, stationed in South Vietnam.[18]

The increased activities directed on 1 December were to consist of US armed reconnaissance and prebriefed air strikes

17. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, Dir J-3, "Meeting of NSC Principals, 19 December 1964," 19 Dec 64, Att to JCS 2339/166, 19 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (19 Dec 64).

18. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, pp. 269-272.

against infiltration routes and facilities in the Laos corridor. Initially only the program for the first week of the 30-day period was being considered, consisting of two missions of four aircraft each, separated by at least three days. At General Wheeler's direction, Joint Staff representatives sought guidance from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), including discussion of routes to be subjected to armed reconnaissance and of secondary targets to be struck with unexpended ordnance. Assistant Secretary McNaughton indicated that the risks to US aircraft should be held to a minimum, with no overflight of North Vietnam permitted. Further, "the purpose of the missions was to send a signal of deeper US involvement, the signal to be more psychological in nature than of pure military effectiveness."

Meanwhile the US Ambassador in Vientiane (William Sullivan, who had recently succeeded Leonard Unger in this post) had obtained the approval of Souvanna Phouma for US armed reconnaissance against infiltration routes in Laos. Souvanna had specifically requested flights over Routes 7, 8, and 12. The first of these lay north of the panhandle area.[19]

On 11 December the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a message to CINCPAC alerting him to be prepared to conduct the two missions following receipt of execution orders on or about 14 December. At the same time the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense describing the two missions and recommending approval of their execution. They advised him that the message to CINCPAC had set forth the following:

> a. Armed reconnaissance of Route 8 between its junction with Route 12 and a point not closer than two miles from the DRV border; secondary target if ordnance not expended during armed reconnaissance: military strong point on Route 12 (RLAF Target No. 21).
>
> b. Armed reconnaissance of Route 121 and Route 12, the latter between Ban Na Kok and a point not closer than two miles from the DRV border; secondary target if ordnance not expended during reconnaissance: Tchepone Barracks (RLAF Target No. 3).

19. (TS-GP 1) J-3 TP 180-64 (Rev.), 11 Dec 64, JMF 9155.2 (11 Dec 64).

> . . . The message also prescribed that he may use optimum conventional ordnance, select aircraft at his option with the restriction that strike aircraft may not be launched from Thai bases, provide anti-MIG combat air patrol, conduct poststrike reconnaissance and search and rescue (SAR) operations, and that he should coordinate with the American Embassy in Vientiane.[20]

At a meeting of senior advisors the following day, 12 December, after adding a prohibition of the use of napalm, "Mr. McGeorge Bundy said the program fulfilled precisely the President's wishes, that he would so inform the President, and that it should be executed unless advised separately to the contrary by him." The conferees agreed that there should be no public statement concerning the air operations over Laos, though the question would be reopened if a US aircraft were lost.[21]

Later on 12 December the Secretary of Defense orally confirmed the White House approval, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff dispatched the action message to CINCPAC. The operations had been given the nickname BARREL ROLL.[22]

The first BARREL ROLL mission was conducted on 14 December by F-105 aircraft of the 2d Air Division. The USAF planes scored rocket hits in the target area at the military strong point on Route 12 and attacked a secondary bridge in the Nape Highway Bridge area. Carrier aircraft of the USS RANGER performed the second mission on 17 December. The third, four days later, was the first BARREL ROLL armed reconnaissance over Route 7. Two further missions were accomplished before the end of the month. All flights were

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20. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2848 to CINCPAC, 11 Dec 64; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-1041-64 to SecDef, 11 Dec 64, Encl A to JCS 2344/103, 11 Dec 64; JMF 9155.2 (11 Dec 64).

21. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, Dir J-3, "Meeting of NSC Principals, 12 December 1964," 12 Dec 64, Att to JCS 2339/164, 12 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (12 Dec 64).

22. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2883 to CINCPAC, 12 Dec 64. (C-GP 4) Memo, Dir, Corres and Directives Div, OASD(Admin), to Secy JCS, "Operations in Laos," 17 Dec 64, JMF 9155.2 (11 Dec 64).

conducted during daylight hours, but no enemy personnel or traffic were observed. The US flights received occasional AA and ground fire, spotted several unmanned AA positions, and inflicted damage on a number of buildings at enemy installations. The BARREL ROLL operations continued thereafter, the sixth mission being flown on 2 January 1965.[23]

Plans to Strengthen the RVNAF

A commitment to renewed effort to increase the size and effectiveness of RVN military forces was another feature of the US program launched by the President's decisions of 1 December. Measures to accomplish this were for the most part already under review. For instance, on 24 November COMUSMACV had recommended an increase in the RVNAF force structure, in which Ambassador Taylor and Admiral Sharp had concurred. The current authorized strength of the regular forces was 243,599, while that of the paramilitary forces was 212,246. General Westmoreland recommended that approximately 140,000 men be added during the coming year, 1965.[24]

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 17 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff endorsed the recommended increase as "necessary to provide additional forces for implementation of the national pacification programs and for preventing further deterioration in the military situation." The decisive stage of the consideration did not occur until well into 1965, however. Although the Secretary of Defense approved in principle on 13 January, implementation awaited final approval by the Department of State, negotiations with the GVN, and arrangement of the MAP funding. In any event, the increases were not to be applied until after the RVNAF reached its currently authorized strength, about 1 February 1965.[25]

Another matter was the brief reconsideration given during December to the plans for expanding South Vietnam's air forces. On 15 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff had

23. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 217-64, 21 Dec 64, and subsequent OPSUMs.
24. (S-GP 3) JCS 2343/500-1, 11 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64) sec 2.
25. (S-GP 3) JCSM-1047-64 to SecDef, 17 Dec 64 (derived from JCS 2343/500-1); Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Increase in RVNAF Force Structure (U)," 13 Jan 65, Att to JCS 2343/500-2, 14 Jan 65; same file. The force structure proposal is treated in greater detail and the outcome described in Ch. 22.

recommended to the Secretary of Defense that two further A-1H fighter squadrons--the fifth and sixth--be added to the VNAF during 1965. They cited the fact that existing VNAF and FARM GATE resources were insufficient; as many as a third of all requests by ground commanders for close air support missions were not being honored because of non-availability of aircraft. In the face of an upward trend in Viet Cong activity and with the functioning of the air request net itself steadily improving, this shortfall appeared certain to reach still more serious proportions in the coming months. The proposed increase in the VNAF would require retention of FARM GATE for training purposes, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. They recommended that two FARM GATE squadrons be maintained until the sixth VNAF squadron had become fully operational, following which a determination could be made regarding the requirements for a residual training capability.[26]

Secretary McNamara approved the VNAF expansion program on 6 November, with the following schedule:

a. 1 May 1965 - Activate the 5th VNAF Squadron with 10 aircraft.

b. 1 June 1965 - Increase 5th VNAF fighter squadron to full strength of 25 aircraft.

c. 15 Sep 1965 - Activate the 6th VNAF Squadron with 10 aircraft.

d. 15 Oct 1965 - Increase 6th VNAF fighter squadron to full strength of 25 aircraft.

He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to submit recommendations regarding the disposition of FARM GATE at such time as the fifth VNAF squadron became operational.[27]

Ambassador Taylor called this decision into question in a message on 9 December. He thought "we should not embark

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26. (S-GP 4) JCSM-875-64 to SecDef, 15 Oct 64, Encl A to JCS 2343/417-2, 12 Oct 64, JMF 9155.3 (23 May 64).

27. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamese Air Force Fighter Squadrons," 6 Nov 64, Att to JCS 2343/417-3, 9 Nov 64; Msg, JCS 1830 to CINCPAC, 13 Nov 64; same file.

on an expansion of VNAF by two more A-1H squadrons since the training requirements will reduce operational VNAF aircraft during the coming critical months." The Ambassador believed it would be better to reinforce FARM GATE and the VNAF with B-57 jet bombers.

> It is my understanding that VNAF presently has pilots capable of flying 8 B-57s at once if maintenance is provided by USAF. Although we are committed to support the fifth and sixth A-1H squadrons under current understandings, the substitution of a modest jet program would, I believe, overcome any GVN objection to cancelling these last two squadrons.[28]

It was evident to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that Ambassador Taylor was not properly informed. Only six VNAF pilots, chiefly senior command personnel, had received limited transition training in the B-57. They were qualified for daytime, visual, noncombat flying only. Also, the schedule for activating the additional squadrons had been devised with full consideration for the ability of the VNAF to absorb them; implementation should not produce the problem the Ambassador had cited.[29]

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 12 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff registered their disagreement with Taylor's proposal and reaffirmed their support of the VNAF expansion program. They noted that addition of B-57s to the VNAF force structure could have major political implications, since the Geneva Accords prohibited the introduction of jet aircraft. They believed it should be considered as an issue separate from the projected increase in fighter squadrons.[30]

No change was made in the scheduled VNAF expansion. It should be noted, however, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not opposed to the introduction of jet aircraft into South Vietnam. On 4 September they had recommended that 15 VNAF pilots and the required maintenance personnel receive jet

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28. (S) Msg, Saigon 1758 tc State, 9 Dec 64, JCS IN 48728, JMF 9155.3 (9 Dec 64).
29. (S-GP 3) JCS 2343/503, 10 Dec 64, same file.
30. (S-GP 3) JCSM-1040-64 to SecDef, 12 Dec 64, App A to JCS 2343/503, 10 Dec 64, same file.

training in the continental United States during 1965 and that ten jet aircraft be provided to South Vietnam early in 1966. The Secretary of Defense had disapproved this recommendation, believing that the undertaking would not contribute significantly to the current counterinsurgency battle and that "it would tend to duplicate, at considerable cost, the task of air defense that the U.S. must be ready to perform for the foreseeable future."[31]

One further US action should be mentioned. It had long been recognized that if military pressures were mounted against the North that might bring enemy air attacks in retaliation, air defense resources in South Vietnam would have to be increased. When action against the North appeared more likely following the first Tonkin Gulf incident in August, a Marine LAAM (HAWK) battalion was alerted on 1 September for deployment from the CONUS to Da Nang. During the greater heightening of tensions following the Bien Hoa attack on 1 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with Secretary McNamara's approval, directed movement of the Marine HAWK battalion to the Western Pacific. The unit sailed on 18 November. During the more than two weeks it was in transit, an additional Marine HAWK battery remained on alert for airlift to Da Nang in the event of an emergency.[32]

Meanwhile CINCPAC had carried out his orders to perform an on-the-ground survey of the optimum siting of the unit in South Vietnam and to analyze the security and support problems its deployment would present. On 25 November Admiral Sharp recommended early approval of deployment of the HAWK battalion, less one battery, to Da Nang. The remainder of the battalion should be located on Okinawa as an interim measure pending further siting and security developments. Both Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland concurred in his recommendation.[33]

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31. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-768-64 to SecDef, 4 Sep 64 (derived from JCS 2343/436-1); Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Jet Training for South Vietnamese Pilots," 25 Sep 64, Att to JCS 2343/436-2, 29 Sep 64; JMF 9155.3 (11 Aug 64).

32. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/497, 27 Nov 64, JMF 9155.3 (27 Nov 64).

33. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 252150Z Nov 64, JCS IN 36221, same file.

As the embarked unit neared its destination, decision was made at a high level in Washington that it should not proceed for the present to South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly ordered the two ships carrying the HAWK battalion to Okinawa, where they were unloaded on 7 December. Two days later General Westmoreland renewed the recommendation that the battalion be deployed to Da Nang, because "the missiles are needed now."[34]

On 11 December Ambassador Taylor was authorized to inform the GVN that two batteries of HAWK air defense missiles were in a position of readiness for prompt deployment to South Vietnam whenever needed.[35]

The Mode of Phase I Implementation

The Presidential decisions of 1 December had not provided the go-ahead for any major action. Within the Phase I program of the first 30 days, only the BARREL ROLL missions over Laos were a new activity, and the guidance was that these operations should "send a signal of deeper US involvement" rather than strive for a high level of military effectiveness. Restraint had been apparent as well in the scheduling of 34A MAROPS and the disposition of the HAWK battalion.

At a meeting of senior officials on 19 December, which General Johnson attended as Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the program of BARREL ROLL missions beyond the first two of 14 and 17 December was one of the matters discussed. According to the meeting record, "General Johnson pointed out that this program is not as strong as that recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and that it provides no significant intensification as compared with the previous week's operations."

> This was acknowledged. Mr. Vance stated that that was a criterion governing preparation of the program. Mr. McCone confirmed that there is not yet any indication that the DRV has recognized any change

34. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 6373 to CJCS, 9 Dec 64, File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.
35. (S) Jt State-Def msg, State 1247 to Saigon, 11

in the nature of our military operations as the result of last week's program. Consensus was that this was the way things should remain for the next two weeks.[36]

Later in December, after the dissolution of the High National Council and the falling out between Ambassador Taylor and General Khanh had given US officials further reason to proceed cautiously, a still greater disposition toward restraint was displayed in the response to the Brink Hotel bombing.

The Brink Hotel Explosion

On Christmas Eve a powerful blast shattered the Brink Hotel, an American BOQ in downtown Saigon. One US Army officer and one US civilian were killed and 63 US servicemen and civilians were injured, besides one Australian officer and 43 Vietnamese. Unknown persons had delivered this blow, apparently by parking an explosive-laden automobile in the hotel's first-floor garage.[37]

Ambassador Taylor characterized the bombing as a "major terrorist attack directed squarely at US personnel," and he termed it providential that only two fatalities had resulted. The incident was clearly one of the type that had been marked for reprisal in recent US consultations. But the Ambassador saw a counterindication in the "present absence of clear proof that bombing is work of VC."

> Another question arises as to timeliness of initiating reprisals in view of our sorry relations with RVNAF. I would get around this point by excluding Vietnamese from participation and by using sea-based US aircraft for strike. We can tell our military opposite numbers that it is kind of operation we would have liked to conduct jointly but could not in present state of our relations.

36. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, Dir J-3, "Meeting of NSC Principals, 19 Dec 1964," 19 Dec 64, Att to JCS 2339/166, 19 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (19 Dec 64).
37. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 221-64, 26 Dec 64.

The Ambassador advised Washington that he was withholding recommendation to execute a reprisal attack pending the outcome of the investigation of the source of the Brink bombing.[38]

A joint State-Defense message in reply later on Christmas Day cited further reasons for caution, stemming mainly from the current political difficulties in South Vietnam. If a reprisal was mounted, "Hanoi would hardly read into it any strong or continuing signal in view of overall confusion in Saigon."

> Hanoi might well share what would certainly be strong reaction in US opinion and internationally that we were trying to shoot our way out of an internal political crisis. Under present circumstances of Saigon disunity, it would be hard for American people to understand action to extend war. Moreover, unless evidence crystal clear, there might be some suspicion at least internationally that BOQ bombing was not in fact done by VC. For these reasons, we are not convinced reprisal action desirable as of now, but we are prepared to make quick decision if you make recommendation with different assessment. . . . .

Should reprisal be decided on, the prospective target was already chosen: the Vit Thu Lu military barracks in lower North Vietnam.[39]

Admiral Sharp was next heard from, with a strong recommendation that the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese masters not be allowed to escape unscathed as they had following the Bien Hoa attack. He favored an immediate strike against the military barracks, saying "this is the language the VC understand."[40]

By 28 December Ambassador Taylor had concluded there was no reason to hold back. "Although we will probably never have evidence which will stand up in court of VC

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38. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1941 to State, 25 Dec 64, JCS IN 64762.
39. (TS) Jt State-Def msg, State 1355 to Saigon, 25 Dec 64, JCS IN 64849.
40. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 262150Z Dec 64, JCS IN 65166.

complicity in the Brink bombing, no one in this part of the world has slightest doubt of VC guilt." He reported that the radio voice of the National Liberation Front was claiming credit for the explosion. "They say that they did it and we should treat them accordingly." The US Mission Council was unanimous in recommending that a reprisal bombing attack be executed as soon as possible against the Vit Thu Lu barracks. General Westmoreland would like to include some VNAF participation in the primarily US operation. "As US relations with RVNAF seem to be improving at the moment and since there were 43 Vietnamese casualties in the Brink bombing," Ambassador Taylor did not oppose this suggestion.[41]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly endorsed the Ambassador's views regarding Viet Cong responsibility for the Brink bombing, which they called "a deliberate act aimed directly at US forces in South Vietnam." In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 28 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought approval for the dispatch of an action order to carry out the reprisal recommended by Ambassador Taylor and Admiral Sharp.

> The attack should be primarily a US operation, in such strength as to assure a high probability of target destruction. If VNAF readiness and time permit, the VNAF should participate. Two CVAs are presently on station, which, with in-place land-based air, provide adequate strength for this attack within an estimated six-hour reaction time.

The message the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed for dispatch to CINCPAC would instruct him to launch the operation on 30 December, Saigon time, employing 40 strike sorties from US resources, plus any further sorties the VNAF might be able to provide. He was to use optimum conventional ordnance, excluding napalm.[42]

A meeting of senior officials presided over by Secretary Rusk occurred at mid-day on 28 December. Some of those present were opposed to mounting an attack in view

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41. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1975 to State, 28 Dec 64, JCS IN 65666, JMF 9155.3 (28 Dec 64).

42. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-1076-64 to SecDef, 28 Dec 64, Encl to JCS 2343/510, 31 Dec 64, same file.

of the political instability in Saigon and the time elapsed since the Brink incident. It was agreed that Secretary Rusk and McGeorge Bundy would consult with the President at his Texas ranch the following day.[43] By early evening on 29 December the Secretary had signaled Ambassador Taylor that "highest levels today reached negative decision on proposal . . . for reprisal action for BOQ bombing." General Wheeler had similarly informed Admiral Sharp.[44]

An Afterword by General Wheeler

On the last day of the year General Wheeler sent a personal message to Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland. The Chairman said he still had not been apprised of "the factors which influenced highest authority to disapprove recommendations of Ambassador Taylor, CINCPAC, and JCS to undertake reprisal for Brink bombing." He then provided his own assessment of the probable reasons, such as the following:

> The presence of U.S. dependents in South Vietnam. This has been a matter of continuing concern to highest authority and was specifically referred to by Secretary Rusk at our meeting on 28 December. There is concern in Washington, amounting almost to conviction, that our dependents are liable to attack as a VC/DRV reprisal to a U.S. attack against the DRV. While our dependents remain in South Vietnam, I consider that forceful action by the U.S. outside the borders of South Vietnam is practically precluded.

General Wheeler was convinced that the continued presence of US dependents was "a hurdle which trips decisions."

The second factor he cited was "doubt in some Washington sectors that security measures of critical installations in Saigon and elsewhere are adequate." He had encountered an attitude among some officials "to the effect

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43. (S) Msg, JCS 5458-64 to CINCPAC, 28 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.

44. (S) Msg, JCS 5464-64 to CINCPAC, 29 Dec 64, same file. (TS) Msg, State 1365 to Saigon, 29 Dec 64, JCS IN 67453, JMF 9155.3 (28 Dec 64).

that lax security not only invites but in some curious way justifies a VC attack and thereby inhibits us from retaliatory action."

Next, there was "a widespread and strong belief, shared by some DOD senior officials, that reprisals must be executed within 24-36 hours." To wait longer was to remove the US action "from the reprisal to the offensive area," making it an escalatory act. Finally, there was the underlying fact that "U.S. policy determination currently is limited to the decision to exert a limited squeeze on the DRV; no decision had yet been taken to move militarily against the North."

General Wheeler anticipated that with the reconvening of Congress in the new year there would be "sharp inquiries into U.S. policy in South Vietnam, the conduct of the war and the reasons for our lack of success. The Congress and the American people are increasingly concerned about the situation in Southeast Asia." He believed, however, that their concern was not that the United States was engaged in a war; it stemmed from frustration "that we are not winning the war."

General Wheeler counseled the two commanders to look to the maintenance of the US capability for prompt retaliation. Despite the recent decision against reprisal, some officials continued to talk of the need for a 6-hour reaction time in response to VC or NVN provocation. The Chairman had advised them more than once that if VNAF participation was desired, an additional 24 hours would be required to arrange it. Beyond that, General Wheeler said,

> We must continue to press the military and the civilians in Saigon to submerge their differences and fabricate a reasonably sound governmental structure; . . . we must somehow convince the Washington policymakers that our security arrangements are as good as the type of war we are fighting will permit.[45]

45. (S) Msg, JCS 5485-64 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 31 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.

Referring specifically to "the GVN disarray on Christmas Eve" and its effect on the reprisal decision, General Wheeler said that "the political confusion in Saigon does not encourage nor, indeed, permit the U.S. to increase the stakes in Southeast Asia." He could as well have used these words to explain the course US policy had taken throughout 1964.

On 8 April 1964 a message from the Office of the Secretary of Defense advised CINCPAC that all action relating to the Model Plan was suspended. The message quoted a White House statement of 17 March as the current guidance:

> The policy should continue of withdrawing U.S. personnel where their roles can be assumed by South Vietnamese and of sending additional men if they are needed. It will remain the policy of the U. S. to furnish assistance and support of South Vietnam for as long as is required to bring Communist aggression and terrorism under control.

The OSD message contained parallel instructions regarding the Military Assistance Program. CINCPAC was to suspend the planning of MAP on a five-year basis and give intensive attention to the immediate and forthcoming fiscal years, 1965 and 1966. Ceilings had already been established at $143.1 million for Vietnam FY 65 MAP and $143.0 million for FY 66. An expectation that more than this would be needed was evident in the instruction given CINCPAC: "requirements above these program levels should be identified as separate packages." Immediate needs, rather than long-term program projections, were to govern the provision of US men and materials to South Vietnam.[3]

As has already been recounted, in July the United States determined to increase the number of military advisors in South Vietnam substantially. For all purposes, more than 8,000 men were added during the year. This brought the total US personnel commitment to 23,292 by the end of 1964, drawn from the Services as follows:[4]

USA	14,679
USN	1,109
USMC	900
USAF	6,604
Total	23,292

3. (S-GP 4) Msg, DEF 963028 to CINCPAC, 8 Apr 64, same file.

4. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, Figure I-6, following p. 4.

Chapter 16

THE US ESTABLISHMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM, 1964

The US Personnel Commitment

President Johnson, shortly after assuming office in November 1963, reaffirmed the White House statement of 2 October that had set the goal of substantial achievement of the purposes of the US advisory effort in South Vietnam during the next two years. The expectation was that a major withdrawal of US military personnel would be possible after 1965.[1]

At that moment CINCPAC had nearly completed work under his instructions to revise the plan for the transition, on a faster time schedule. On 5 December 1963, Admiral Felt submitted the "FY 65-69 Accelerated Model Plan (CPVSN) for Republic of Vietnam." As directed, the revised plan assumed that the Viet Cong insurgency would be brought under control in the northern provinces during 1964 and in the rest of the country during 1965. In the northern provinces (I and II Corps Tactical Zones and part of the III Corps Zone) the RVNAF would begin its phase-down to a postinsurgency force structure during 1965, and elsewhere during 1966. As the RVNAF assumed the air, transportation, and communications functions currently being performed by US units, the latter would be withdrawn, along with the US advisors. By FY 1968 the entire RVNAF would have reached its postinsurgency force level of 119,700, and only a residual US MAAG establishment would remain in South Vietnam.[2]

Even at the time of submission it was becoming clear that the assumption on which the Model Plan was based was unlikely to be fulfilled. By the end of December, and in his statements during the following months, President Johnson was saying that the United States would maintain personnel and equipment in South Vietnam for as long as necessary to assist the GVN in putting down the insurgency.

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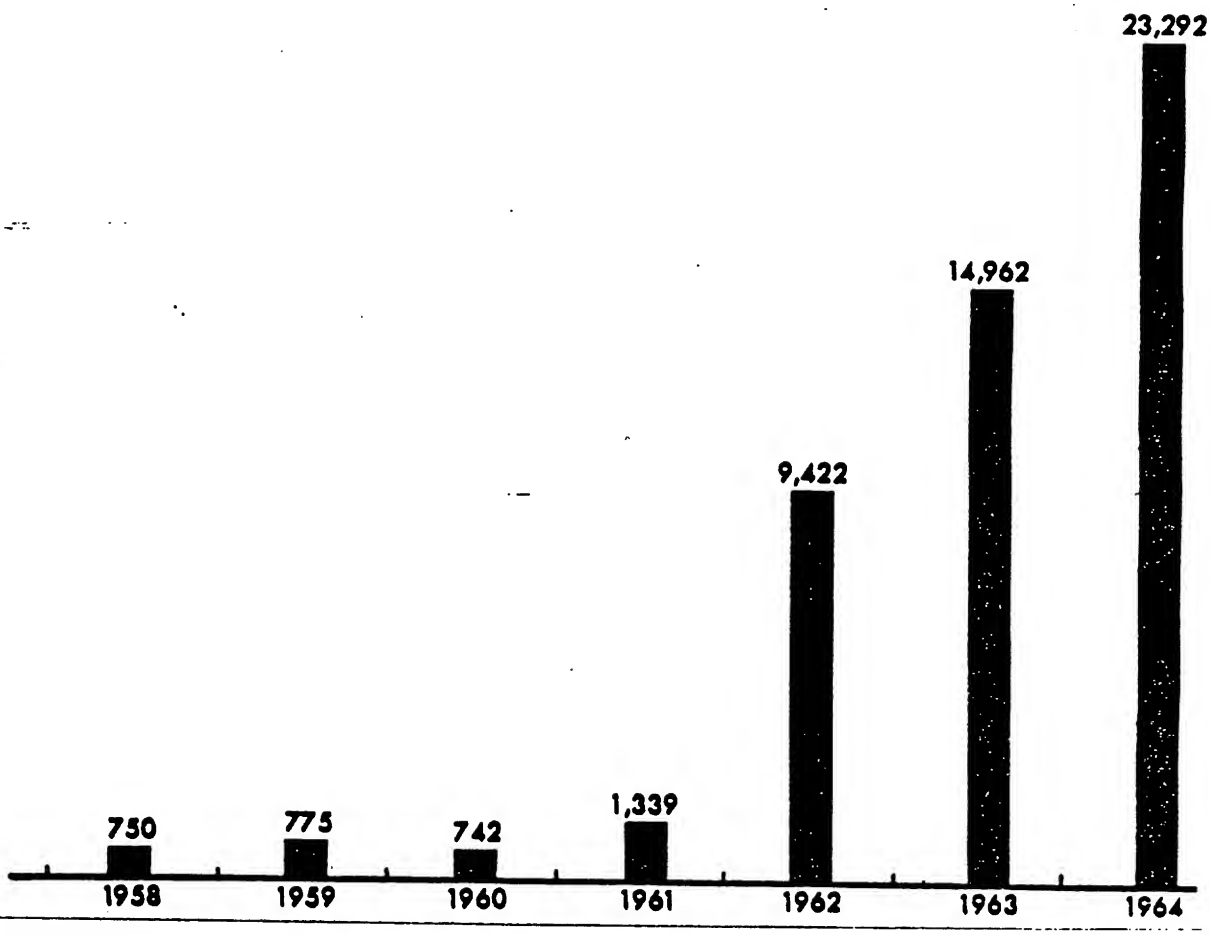
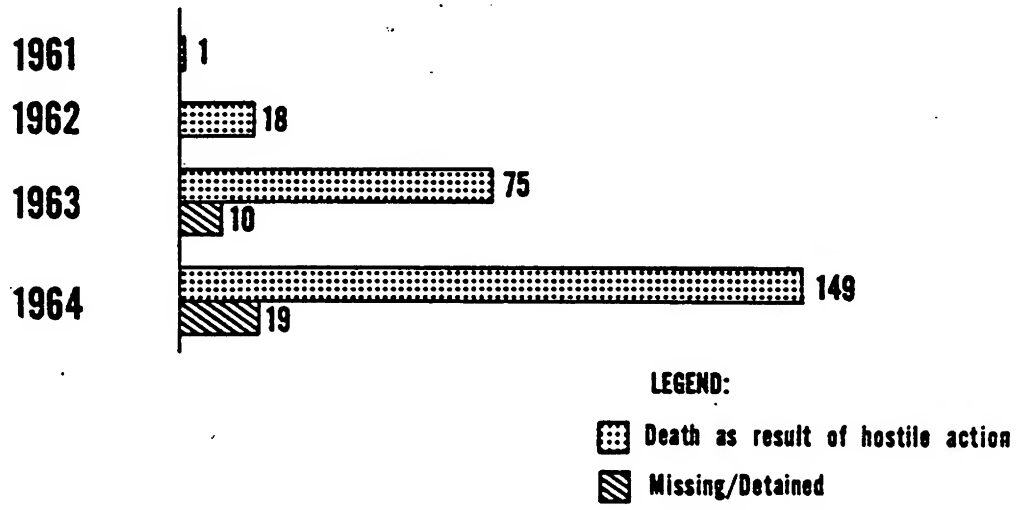
1. (TS-GP 1) NSAM 273, 26 Nov 63, Att to JCS 2343/297, 29 Nov 63, JMF 9155.3/5410 (22 Nov 63) sec 2.
2. (S-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, Ser 001260, 5 Dec 63, Att to JCS 2343/262-5, 12 Dec 63, JMF 9155.3/3360 (25 Jan 63) sec 5.

BUILDUP OF U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL RVN

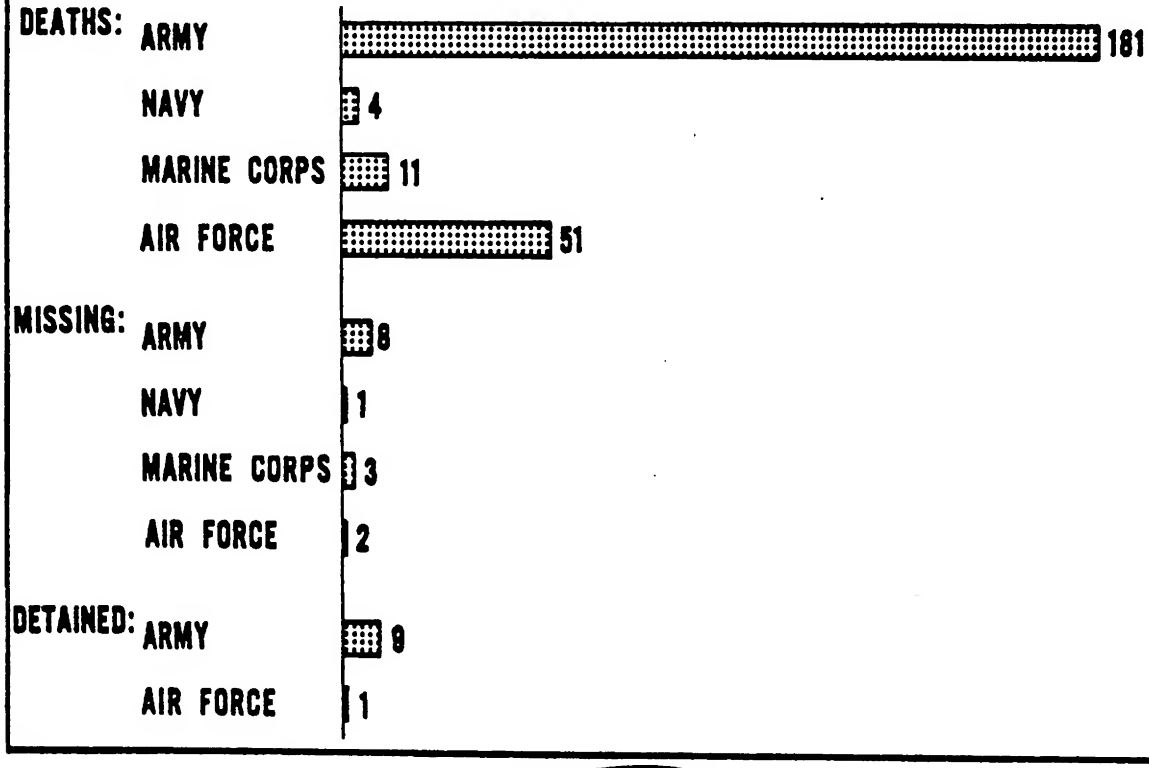


(TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964.

CASUALTIES AMONG U.S. PERSONNEL IN RVN 1959 - 1964



U.S. PERSONNEL CASUALTIES AS RESULT OF HOSTILE ACTION IN RVN 1961 - 196



Other lines of relationship included: 1) the direct line of operational command from CINCPAC to COMUSMACV and thence to the US forces and military agencies in South Vietnam; 2) administrative logistic support channels from the PACOM component commands to the Service component elements of the MAAG establishment; 3) the US Ambassador's overall responsibility for MAP administration, expressed through a direct relationship with CHMAAG; 4) coordination and liaison among the Ambassador, COMUSMACV, other US agencies in the country, and the GVN.[6]

On 18 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that as part of their continuing attention to improving the US effort in South Vietnam, they were studying possible organizational changes. Among other things, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV had been asked for their views on the desirability of disestablishing MAAG, Vietnam, and merging its functions with MACV.[7]

Both officers, Admiral Felt and General Harkins, opposed the change. The latter said that the current organization was "understood by all" and was working well. COMUSMACV believed that "suggested US reorganization with attendant problems involving new relationships would be counter-productive." CINCPAC's reasons were similar:

> We will be unduly rocking the boat to no practical purpose since COMUSMACV already clearly exercises operational command over MAAG and advisors. This arrangement enables COMUSMACV and staff to concentrate on counterinsurgency effort and frees them from laboring on MAP administrative and logistical details as well as other nuts and bolts which law requires MAAG's to perform.[8]

After study, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to defer making any recommendation on this organizational matter until after the return of the Secretary of Defense and General Taylor from their March trip to South Vietnam. During that visit, however, Secretary McNamara directed General Harkins to perform a feasibility study of possible

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6. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/335, 28 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) (E) sec 1.
7. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-136-64 to SecDef, 18 Feb 64, Encl to JCS 2343/317-2, 14 Feb 65, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64).
8. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/335, 28 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) (E) sec 1.

Owing to the rank and quality of the personnel assigned, this commitment had an impact on the US Services that was out of proportion to the numbers involved. At the end of 1964 the Vice Chief of Staff, Army, General Creighton H. Abrams, remarked that the US Army had "the equivalent of about 4.8 divisions worth of majors and captains, about 3.5 divisions worth of lieutenants and about three divisions worth of master sergeants" in South Vietnam.[5]

As the number of US personnel increased and the advisory effort was extended to the district level and to all ARVN battalions, casualties rose during 1964. The number of US servicemen killed, 149, was just short of twice the figure for 1963.

US Military Organization in South Vietnam

As 1964 opened, the US military organization in South Vietnam displayed two major elements, both subordinate to CINCPAC. One was headed by the Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV); the other by the Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (CHMAAG). The former exercised operational command over all US military activities in the country; the latter was responsible for the administration of day-to-day MAAG functions. Nearly 3,000 US personnel were under CHMAAG's direction, while COMUSMACV's headquarters was a relatively modest establishment of less than 400 people.

On military assistance matters, two channels of communication existed. One ran from CINCPAC through COMUSMACV to CHMAAG for all matters dealing with MAAG current operations and training; through the other, CINCPAC addressed CHMAAG directly concerning military assistance and force deployment objectives and MAP plans and programs under development. COMUSMACV had opportunity to comment to CINCPAC regarding MAP plans and programs, and CHMAAG kept COMUSMACV informed of his direct contacts with CINCPAC.

5. Ibid., p. 310

b. Any substantial reorganization now is undesirable in light of predictable adverse impact on the operational effort and on the stability of the RVN Government. CINCPAC agrees.

The Chairman and the Chief of Staff, Army, held the opposite view. They believed that "COMUSMACV, the commander in the field with basic responsibility for the success or failure of operations in the Republic of Vietnam, should be allowed to organize his headquarters as he sees fit provided he does so within his resources and without detriment to his mission."

In this case, COMUSMACV has stated that his reorganization plan could be accomplished with a saving of personnel and with minimum disruption (approximately one month); furthermore that this plan would constitute an important step toward elimination of duplication and improvement of responsiveness to command. His recommended solution is a clean-cut one which eliminates the dual US military channels of authority existing in Vietnam . . . .[11]

Secretary McNamara rendered his decision on the same day, 8 April, in favor of the reorganization as proposed by COMUSMACV. In informing CINCPAC the Joint Chiefs of Staff made the following stipulations:

The present organization of MACV as a subordinate unified command in RVN should be retained. However, in the Service manning of his headquarters, COMUSMACV may adjust the manning proportion so as to reflect the particular interests and degree of involvement of the Services.[12]

Later in the month General Harkins submitted a proposed JTD for the new organization resulting from absorption of MAAG by MACV. It listed a total of 3,580 officers and men--more than authorized for the previous organization. The distribution and differences were as follows:

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11. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-288-64 to SecDef, 8 Apr 64 (derived from JCS 2343/335-5), JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) (E) sec 2.

12. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "MACV/MAAG Reorganization," 8 Apr 64, Att to JCS 2343/335-7, 8 Apr 64; (C-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5802 to CINCPAC, 10 Apr 64; same file.

consolidation of MAAG and MACV. As COMUSMACV understood the Secretary's intention, the "fundamental objective is to streamline U. S. command organization in Vietnam for improved efficiency."[9]

COMUSMACV's reorganization plan reached the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 14 March. Its main feature was disestablishment of the MAAG headquarters as a separate echelon and absorption of its functions by MACV's J-staff elements. The field and training advisors would be directly under COMUSMACV's command, without CHMAAG as an intermediary. In explaining the concept General Harkins wrote that "MACV is more in the nature of a Specified Army Command rather than a Subordinate Joint Command."

> The nature of the warfare being conducted; the fact that about 65% of the American military are Army; and the fact that about 95% of RVNAF forces are Army, validates the appropriateness of this conclusion. Nevertheless, recognizing the joint aspects of the operation, the "J" staff would be retained. However, the staff would be heavily weighted with Army representatives and would contain Directorates purely Army in makeup and devoted to peculiar Army tasks.[10]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff delivered a split recommendation to the Secretary of Defense on 8 April. The Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps members opposed the disestablishment of MAAG:

> a. The concept of a subordinate unified command in South Vietnam, as developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and implemented by CINCPAC, remains fundamentally sound. MAAG, Vietnam, should be retained as an entity under MACV, although some individual functional adjustments should be made between the MAAG and MACV, including the transfer of functions which bear directly on combat advisory assistance and support for RVN Armed Forces.

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9. (S) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2343/355--Vietnam and Southeast Asia (U)," 2 Mar 64, same file. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 220912Z Mar 64, same file, sec 2.

10. (C-GP 3) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, "Study on Reorganization of Hq MACV and MAAG," [12] Mar 64, Att to JCS 2343/335-3, 14 Mar 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64) (E) sec 1.

COMUSMACV should be manned by the Air Force rather than the Army, was made the subject of a separate paper.[15]

On 6 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the proposed MACV JTD be approved "on an interim basis." They recognized that further adjustments would probably be necessary in the future and noted that both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV were instituting manpower survey actions. Secretary McNamara approved on 29 June.[16]

The question of Service balance in the three senior military positions in South Vietnam--COMUSMACV, Deputy COMUSMACV, and Chief of Staff, USMACV--had a somewhat longer history. The position of deputy commander had been added to the organizational structure at the beginning of 1964. Lieutenant General William C. Westmoreland, USA, had arrived in Vietnam on 27 January to assume the duties of Deputy COMUSMACV.

Earlier, in November 1963, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed that when the Marine Corps Major General then serving as Chief of Staff completed his tour in mid-1964, he would be succeeded by an Air Force officer. During the March visit, however, Secretary McNamara directed that COMUSMACV be permitted to recommend the manner of filling the post. Later in the month General Harkins requested that Major General R. G. Stilwell, USA, then serving as Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, USMACV, became his next Chief of Staff. CINCPAC concurred. Since both Generals Harkins and Westmoreland were Army officers, this would assign all three senior positions to one Service.[17]

On 9 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their divergent views to the Secretary of Defense:

> a. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Chief of Staff, US Army, concur in the recommendation as submitted.

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15. (S-GP 4) "Air Force Statement of Nonconcurrence," Encl E (removed from paper by Decision) to JCS 2428/360-1, 22 May 64, same file. (S-GP 3) JCS 2343/408, 3 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3 (3 Jun 64).

16. (S-GP 4) JCSM-484-64 to SecDef, 6 Jun 64 (derived from JCS 2428/360-1); Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "MACV 15 May 1964 Joint Table of Distribution (U)," 29 Jun 64, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2428/360-1, 2 Jul 64; JMF 1040.1 (1 May 64) sec 2.

17. (S-GP 4) JCS 2428/348, 3 Apr 64, JMF 9155.3/5000 (12 Mar 64).

	Army	Navy	AF	MC	Civ	Total
Proposed MACV JTD	3000	199	341	40	0	3580
MACV/MAAG currently authorized	2705	191	336	39	2	3273
Difference	+295	+8	+5	+1	-2	+307

General Harkins explained that the additional personnel were needed to provide more men and officers for the field advisory effort, to support new staff functions, and to support "previously performed but unsupported functions."[13]

CINCPAC, although not recommending disapproval, was critical of the JTD. Besides noting that the original objective of saving personnel had not been attained, he thought the proposed staff structure complex and unwieldy and saw some possibilities of conflict of responsibilities. Admiral Felt objected, also, that the reorganization would make MACV "basically an Army headquarters, with the Air Force and Naval commands serving as appendages." It moved away from the objective he cited: "maintain and improve the unified effort in Vietnam."[14]

General LeMay initially objected that "approval of the proposed MACV JTD would in effect result in a de facto Specified Army Command." It would provide a staff whose joint Service representation was inadequate for "successful prosecution of current joint operations in Vietnam." Moreover, should there be occasion to implement certain of CINCPAC's contingency plans for wider hostilities, COMUSMACV would become the Commander, US Forces Southeast Asia, directing sizable forces of all Services. "The wisdom of fighting such a force without a true joint staff is questionable," General LeMay said. During the JCS consideration, however, one of his main contentions, that the position of Deputy

13. (C-GP 4) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, Ser 0415, 23 Apr 64, Att to JCS 2428/360, 6 May 64; (S-GP 4) JCS 2428/360-1, 22 May 64; JMF 1040.1 (1 May 64) sec 2. The figures given are those of the J-1 report in JCS 2428/360-1, which corrected certain discrepancies in COMUSMACV's submission.

14. (C-GP 4) CINCPAC, First Endorsement, Ser 0339-64, on COMUSMACV Ltr, Ser 0339-64, 1 May 64, Att to JCS 2428/360, 6 May 64, JMF 1040.1 (1 May 64) sec 2.

b. The Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps concur in the recommendation, but as a matter of principle do not agree that the three senior positions should be filled by the same Service.

c. The Chief of Staff, US Air Force, feels that, considering the importance of air strategy in Vietnam, the Air Force is not properly represented among the three senior positions in USMACV. Therefore, he does not concur in the recommendation, but considers that the next Chief of Staff, COMUSMACV, should be an Air Force officer.

Secretary McNamara the following day approved the appointment of General Stilwell as Chief of Staff, USMACV.[18]

The parallel question of filling the Deputy COMUSMACV position arose soon afterward. General Harkins was scheduled to return to the United States late in June and to retire on 1 August. The President had approved the succession of General Westmoreland to the command position, which would leave the Deputy COMUSMACV post vacant.

In a preliminary discussion the Joint Chiefs of Staff, less the Chairman, reached general agreement that the next Deputy COMUSMACV should be an Air Force officer. They asked General Taylor to communicate this view to Admiral Felt, General Harkins, and General Westmoreland, whose comments the Chairman had indicated he wished to have before reaching a decision.[19]

General Westmoreland's comments, in which General Harkins concurred, were received on 6 May.

I feel strongly that if there is to be a deputy commander, MACV, he should be Army not Air Force. I fully concur with the feeling expressed by the Secretary of Defense that this is predominantly a land campaign and therefore senior commanders should be prepared by experience and orientation primarily to deal with problems involving ground operations.

18. (C-GP 4) JCSM-295-64 to SecDef, 9 Apr 64, Encl to JCS 2428/348-1, 9 Apr 64; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Chief of Staff, U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Command, Vietnam," 10 Apr 64, Att to JCS 2428/348-2, 13 Apr 64; same file.

19. (S) Msg, JCS 1999-64 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 4 May 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 64.

He believed an Air Force Lieutenant General would be "of marginal effectiveness as an assistant" and that introduction of this officer would displace the highly satisfactory arrangement under which the Commander of the 2d Air Division, Major General J. H. Moore, currently provided advice on air matters to COMUSMACV. Effective integration of air considerations in the command's planning was assured also by the fact that the MACV J-5 was headed by an Air Force Major General. General Westmoreland did not feel that a deputy commander was necessary. If it was considered prudent for contingency backup purposes to have a senior officer in such a position, he would recommend that it be combined with the Chief of Staff's post.[20]

Commenting on the exchange of messages between Generals Taylor and Westmoreland, in which both had referred to Secretary McNamara's views, Admiral Felt wrote with what appeared to be resignation:

> "My effort to imbue the principle of unified team effort seems to have come to naught. Insistence on exclusive recognition of parochial interests creates an unhappy and unhealthy situation. The facts belie a contention that the campaign in RVN is exclusively Army. We have made a serious effort to lead the Vietnamese into a unified effort in their organization, planning and execution. It is disappointing to see a proposition put forward on our side that only a foot soldier understands the kind of warfare being conducted in RVN. A unified command concept is required by the terms of reference given to COMUSMACV.[21]

The matter became more pressing as the date of General Harkins' departure from South Vietnam approached. On 12 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted divergent views to the Secretary of Defense. The Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps believed that the post of Deputy COMUSMACV should be filled and that, "in order to preserve the unified nature of the command," the deputy should be from a Service other than that of the commander. "Further, in view of the

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20. (S) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV MAC 2217 to CJCS, 6 May 64, same file.
21. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 071926Z May 64, same file.

increased air activity in Vietnam and the possibility of contingency plan implementation involving expanded air operations, there is a need to broaden the frame of reference in the MACV command element to meet these circumstances." Therefore, they recommended that the Deputy COMUSMACV be supplied by the Air Force.

The Chief of Staff, Army, dissented. He believed that "there is ample and able Air Force representation in Vietnam," made effective by the excellent relationship between General Westmoreland and General Moore. He discounted the need for a separate contingency backup commander, holding that the Chief of Staff, General Stilwell, was fully qualified to assume command in an emergency. General Wheeler recommended acceding to the desire General Westmoreland had expressed on 6 May that no Deputy COMUSMACV be assigned.[22]

The Secretary was informed that the Chairman would submit his opinion separately. General Taylor wished to consult with General Westmoreland once more, to learn whether a further five weeks of experience had altered his views. General Westmoreland replied that he saw no need for appointment of a Deputy COMUSMACV in the immediate future. "However, in consideration of all factors including possible expansion of conflict and the presence of a contingency command backup," he had concluded that assignment of a deputy about 1 August would be prudent.[23]

> For the time being, I would not combine the Deputy and Chief of Staff functions. In view of the role I would assign the Deputy involving matters of insurgency, basic ground combat, frequent negotiations with ARVN generals, and supervision of our field advisors, I recommend that he be an Army officer.

General Taylor carried a memorandum containing his views to the Secretary of Defense on 18 June. He believed there was a definite need to fill the position of Deputy COMUSMACV. "An energetic prosecution of the Pacification Program will increase the workload of COMUSMACV both in the field and in Saigon," at a time when his concern with MAP activities would

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22. (S-GP 3) JCSM-514-64 to SecDef, 12 Jun 64, Encl to JCS 2343/408-1, 12 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3 (3 Jun 64).

23. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6864 to COMUSMACV, 15 Jun 64, same file. (S) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV MAC 3077 to CJCS, 18 Jun 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 64.

also rise owing to the disestablishment of the MAAG. "It seems clear that General Westmoreland will need a deputy even to a greater degree than did General Harkins."

> As is suggested by the above enumeration of tasks, the deputy should be an across-the-board generalist capable of acting as an alter ego to General Westmoreland either in the field or in Saigon. This concept of the task argues against the proposal to create a three-star air deputy in order to give greater weight to the air campaign. Such an arrangement would not give General Westmoreland the across-the-board reinforcement needed and would tend to erode the position of the Commanding General, 2d Air Division, Major General Moore, to whom General Westmoreland now looks for the conduct of the air campaign.

"A final consideration," General Taylor wrote, "is the importance of having as Deputy Commander, MACV, a potential successor to COMUSMACV" in the existing combat situation in South Vietnam. "The deputy should be an Army officer as it is hardly conceivable in view of the nature of the counter-insurgency operations that we would want a COMUSMACV from another Service." General Taylor recommended that an Army deputy be assigned who would be provisionally regarded as the successor to COMUSMACV. Secretary McNamara recorded his approval of the Chairman's memorandum on 18 June.[24]

Major General John L. Throckmorton, USA, was subsequently selected. Promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General, he assumed the position of Deputy COMUSMACV on 2 August 1964.[25]

Problems of US Military-Civilian Coordination

In South Vietnam the overall responsibility for US activities and authority over political and basic policy matters rested with the Ambassador. COMUSMACV had a specific and direct responsibility for US military policy and operations, under the political guidance of the Ambassador. Their Washington superiors expected the Ambassador and COMUSMACV to coordinate

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24. (S-GP 3) CM-1427-64 to SecDef, 15 Jun 64, Att to JCS 2343/408-2, 19 Jun 64, JMF 9155.3 (3 Jun 64). Although dated 15 Jun 64, CM-1427-64 contained a reference to Westmoreland's message of 18 June; that it was hand-carried by CJCS to SecDef on the latter date is indicated by annotation on copy in OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 64.

25. (C) JCSM-569-64 to SecDef, 13 Jul 64, JMF 1141 (29 Jun 64).

their efforts closely and keep one another fully informed regarding their contacts with GVN military and political officials. The relationship that existed between Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and General Paul D. Harkins, in 1963 and until mid-1964, did not entirely fulfill this ideal.

The findings of Secretary McNamara during his visit to South Vietnam in December 1963 tended to support complaints General Harkins had made about the aloofness of the Ambassador and lack of effective Embassy coordination of the US effort. On returning to Washington the Secretary told the President that Ambassador Lodge maintained no regular official contact with COMUSMACV. "Lodge sends in reports with major military implications without showing them to Harkins," he said, "and does not show Harkins important incoming traffic." Secretary McNamara did not suppose that Ambassador Lodge was following any conscious policy of excluding the chief US military official in South Vietnam from his counsel. The difficulty appeared to be one of personality; "he has just operated as a loner all his life and cannot readily change now." During the visit Secretary McNamara had done what he could to counter this deficiency by alerting other officers of the Embassy to the need for closer coordination.[26]

When Ambassador Lodge made a move several months later toward centralized control of one aspect of US activities, however, he encountered resistance. At an Embassy meeting on 21 April he passed out a memorandum to those present, including COMUSMACV, which stated that US agency heads should seek no appointments with General Khanh without prior clearance and approval by the Embassy. Such appointments would be taken up with the Deputy Chief of Mission. If an agency head was summoned by the GVN leader, he would respond but would notify the Embassy that he intended to do so. "One purpose of these measures," the Ambassador stated, "is to reduce to a minimum the amount of time which General Khanh must give to American visitors. His time is very precious and should only be allotted to matters that are absolutely vital." A further purpose was "to make sure that all US agencies follow the same broad line."[27]

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26. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Vietnam Situation," 21 Dec 63, OCJCS File, Reports on SVN (Trip File Folder), Envelope #4.

27. (C) Memo, Amb H. C. Lodge to COMUSMACV et al., 21 Apr 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 64.

General Harkins did not read the memorandum until later in the day. He then responded with a memorandum of his own to the Ambassador, quoting from the COMUSMACV terms of reference, which had been agreed to by the Secretaries of State and Defense and signed by the President. The document charged him with "direct responsibility for all United States military policy, operations and assistance" and granted "authority to discuss both the United States and Vietnamese military operation directly with the President of Vietnam and the leaders of the Government of Vietnam." While indicating that he would continue to keep the Ambassador informed of any such discussions, General Harkins said he could not feel bound by the recent memorandum.[28]

Ambassador Lodge submitted the conflicting interpretations of authority to Washington for resolution. The initial draft for a reply prepared in the Department of State gave virtually full support to the Ambassador's position. When General Taylor saw the proposed text he objected strongly and was backed by Secretary McNamara. After further consultation, Secretary Rusk sent a letter to Ambassador Lodge whose terms were acceptable to the Department of Defense. The Secretary indicated a means of accommodation that he thought compromised neither COMUSMACV's authority to discuss military matters with high GVN officials nor the Ambassador's overall supervisory authority. Lodge was entitled to receive advance notice of any such discussions, including the purpose, and he could provide policy guidance to General Harkins if required. It was suggested, however, that COMUSMACV's visits to General Khanh not be subject to clearance with the Deputy Chief of Mission. Secretary Rusk expressed the hope that Lodge and Harkins would consult together with such frequency that the question of calls on General Khanh would be disposed of as a routine matter. At the same time, General Taylor advised General Harkins that since this letter had the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense, it should be regarded by COMUSMACV as a directive.[29]

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28. (U) Memo, COMUSMACV to Amb Lodge, 22 Apr 64, same file.
29. (C) Memo, AsstSecState (FE) to SecState, 7 May 64, with two draft letters and note by SecDef; (C) Msg, JCS 2190-64 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 15 May 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 64.

As the end of his tour in South Vietnam approached in June, General Harkins expressed himself as still dissatisfied with the Ambassador's methods and procedures. It was his observation that Lodge rarely consulted anyone, including the Deputy Chief of Mission. "I am hardly ever privy to messages bearing on the military prior to dispatch from the Embassy," he told General Taylor on 7 June.[30]

General Westmoreland, already designated as Harkins' successor, had taken the opportunity of the plane ride back from the Honolulu Conference a few days earlier to speak frankly to Ambassador Lodge about deficiencies in the US official establishment. He reported to General Taylor on 6 June that he had pointed to a lack of clear definition of responsibilities as the source of faulty coordination of the pacification task. Ambassador Lodge appeared to favor one of Westmoreland's suggestions, that COMUSMACV be named as the Ambassador's executive agent for coordination of all US efforts toward pacification. Ambassador Lodge was unwilling to advocate such a designation, however, unless asked by Washington to recommend improvements.[31]

Later in June Ambassador Lodge resigned, and the President appointed General Taylor to succeed him. The new Ambassador was invested with full responsibility for all US programs in South Vietnam, including whatever degree of command and control over the military effort he considered appropriate.[32]

Within a week after his early July arrival in Saigon, Ambassador Taylor instituted several measures to improve the coordination among US agencies. First, he placed all US activities under the direction of a newly created US Mission Council. The membership included the Ambassador, the Deputy Ambassador, COMUSMACV, the senior AID, USIA, and CIA officials, and Mr. William Sullivan, who also served as full-time executive coordinator. The Ambassador announced that all existing committees would be surveyed with a view to consolidation, expansion, or perhaps elimination.[33]

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30. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 2833 to CJCS, 7 Jun 64.
31. (C) Msg, Deputy COMUSMACV MAC 2815 to CJCS, 6 Jun 64.
32. (S) Msg, State 20 to Saigon, 2 Jul 64.
33. (S) Msg, Saigon 41 to State, 7 Jul 64.

Ambassador Taylor declared it his intention "to have this mission operate as a team and to present a coordinated front not only to the Vietnamese but also to Washington." Uncoordinated communications from US agencies in South Vietnam to their parent organizations in Washington had produced confusion at both ends of the line in the past. He now required that all outgoing communications be routed through Saigon, except on very routine or technical matters. Also, all field reports would be sent first to appropriate elements of the US Mission in Saigon, which would determine the manner and means of repeating the information to superiors in Washington. Finally, the Ambassador established a 44-hour work week for all US civilian agencies in Saigon.[34]

The working relationship established between Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland was particularly close. COMUSMACV's messages to CINCPAC and Washington on major subjects commonly included notice of the Ambassador's concurrence or a fuller expression of his views. Ambassador Taylor's practice was typified by the following remark in a message to General Wheeler, referring to certain closely held preliminary papers for a conference in Washington: "In this connection you should know that I have cut Westy completely into these matters and that I have his views on the . . . papers."[35]

Later in the year Ambassador Taylor turned his attention to improving US coordination in Southeast Asia as a whole, to meet a need that had often been cited during his service in Washington. Noting that national policy decisions were being implemented by separate actions of the US Embassies in Saigon, Bangkok, and Vientiane, and by COMUSMACV and the Seventh Fleet as well as by the military forces of the countries of the area, on 16 September he proposed a formal politico-military coordinating committee for Southeast Asia, reporting to the State and Defense Departments. Both Ambassador Martin in Bangkok and Ambassador Unger in Vientiane soon indicated their general agreement with the proposal.[36]

On 25 September a joint State-Defense message, to whose composition the Joint Chiefs of Staff had contributed, endorsed the goal of close coordination on politico-military matters

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34. (C) Msg, Saigon 117 to State, 16 Jul 64. (U) Msg, Saigon 254 to State, 30 Jul 64.

35. (S) Msg, Saigon JPS 538 to CJCS, 23 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.

36. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2339/142-2, 23 Oct 64, JMF 9150 (22 Sep 64) sec 1.

among the three US Embassies. Washington officials suggested that Ambassador Taylor continue to convene ad hoc meetings when required, with military representation provided also on an ad hoc and informal basis. Should he conclude that a more formal arrangement was needed, the Ambassador was invited to submit proposed terms of reference.37

The three Ambassadors met in Saigon on 8 October, and two days later Ambassador Taylor forwarded draft terms of reference for a group to be known as the Coordinating Committee for US Missions Southeast Asia (SEACOORD). It would "coordinate policy recommendations and military operational matters affecting more than one mission."

> With respect to military and related operational matters, the committee will coordinate the operations and actions of their respective missions and component elements within the sphere of their competence and authority from Washington. The committee will also act as a clearing house for the exchange of information on all military or other operations affecting more than one post . . . . The committee will not exercise executive authority over any mission or military command.

In support of SEACOORD there would be a standing military committee, known as SEAMIL, with COMUSMACV or his representative as Chairman.38

Ambassador Taylor's idea was burgeoning into reality in Saigon more rapidly than some officials in Washington had expected. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to mature their views on the proposed terms of reference, the Joint Staff advised them that "the problem for the military appears to have become one of providing adequate military advice while at the same time avoiding the growth of an irregular command line which could circumvent the established US military chain of command, or which would erode established channels for continuous exchange of military information."39

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37. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-826-64 to SecDef, 24 Sep 64, Encl to JCS 2339/142-1, 25 Sep 64; (U) 1st N/H of JCS 2339/142-1, 5 Oct 64; same file.

38. (S) Msg, Saigon 1080 to State, 10 Oct 64, JMF 9150 (22 Sep 64) sec 1.

39. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2339/142-2, 23 Oct 64, same file.

General LeMay had expressed his concern more bluntly. He told his JCS colleagues that study of the recent messages indicated that "this committee is concerning itself not only with political and military coordination but with a wide range of military operations and specific details of air operations."

> In effect, this committee can shift primary influence over military operations in SE Asia, not simply RVN, to the US Ambassador in Saigon. Recommendations on military matters will inevitably be handled increasingly in State Department channels with the responsible unified commander, and perhaps the JCS as well, expressing what must be after-the-fact views.40

The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided their comments on the terms of reference to the Secretary of Defense on 6 November. They noted that they viewed Southeast Asia "as a militarily strategic entity." The established unified command system and the provisions of CINCPAC's contingency plans reflected this view and provided "effective military command arrangements responsive to present and anticipated situations in the area." The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized the necessity for political coordination in Southeast Asia "and for the established military structure to provide advice and information."

They advised the Secretary that Admiral Sharp considered that military representation during meetings of SEACOORD was essential. He had proposed procedures that the Joint Chiefs of Staff endorsed and that they had written into the revised terms of reference they recommended for adoption. Under the JCS revised terms, CINCPAC would be represented at SEACOORD meetings as he deemed appropriate, and he could designate additional representatives to sit on SEAMIL. COMUSMACV remained the SEAMIL Chairman.

In their revision the Joint Chiefs of Staff had given particular attention to the statement of SEACOORD's objectives. They deleted the more direct references to "military" and

40. (TS-GP 3) CSAF J-23-64 to JCS, 12 Oct 64, same file.

"military operations" from the Taylor draft, making "political or politico-military" matters the central concern of the committee:

> The objectives of SEACOORD are to coordinate policy recommendations and political actions including those which would have a major effect on military operational matters in more than one country. SEACOORD will also act as a clearing house for the exchange of information on all political or politico-military operations affecting more than one post. . . . recommendations will be forwarded through existing political and military channels.

The point of greatest concern to the Joint Chiefs of Staff was stated in their basic memorandum:

> The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the establishing of SEACOORD and the intent of the TOR in no way change the existing military relationships or the established chain of command for the conduct of military operations.[41]

Even as the Joint Chiefs of Staff were submitting their recommendations, SEACOORD was holding its first formal meetings in Saigon, with COMUSMACV, CINCPACAF, and CINCPAC's J-5 chief in attendance. At the close of the second meeting General Westmoreland proposed that SEAMIL be abandoned as a formal organization. Ambassador Taylor agreed. COMUSMACV reported to General Wheeler on 11 November that the experience of the meetings had brought conviction that no separate military committee was needed.

> SEACOORD is a political/military organization designed to exchange viewpoints and to insure coordination of approved programs. Ad hoc groups can meet as appropriate to explore any problem and I visualize an ad hoc get-together by military respresentatives of the missions involved prior to most SEACOORD meetings.[42]

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41. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-935-64 to SecDef, 6 Nov 64 (derived from JCS 2339/142-2), JMF 9150 (22 Sep 64) sec 2.

42. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 5908 to CJCS, 11 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.

On 9 December Secretary McNamara informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that in view of the satisfactory functioning of SEACOORD for approximately two months, he thought it unnecessary to suggest revision of the group's terms of reference. But he delivered the following observation:

> I agree with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the establishment of SEACOORD in no way changes the existing military relationships in the established chain of command for the coordination of military operations.[43]

The Use of Advisors

The US advisors, military and civilian, performed the central function that the United States had undertaken in South Vietnam. The concept was that the advisors would train and assist the Vietnamese, helping them to help themselves. As General Westmoreland later wrote:

> Our national policy was and remained based on meticulous recognition that the Republic of Vietnam was a free and independent sovereign state, with full freedom of choice. Therefore, in all of our endeavors, both within the military and at embassy level, our role was to provide advice and assistance; and our relationship was that of an ally. We could advise and persuade our Vietnamese counterparts, but we could not direct or dictate to them. The ultimate decisions remained Vietnamese.[44]

Some resistance from GVN officials to increasing the numbers and involvement of US advisors had been encountered during the period of the Diem regime. It came as an unwelcome surprise to US officials that this attitude did not change when a group of officers headed by General Minh overthrew Diem in November 1963. In a consultation with Ambassador Lodge on 10 January 1964, leaders of the Minh government said plainly that they did not want US personnel going into districts and villages. General Minh observed that the

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43. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Politico/Military Coordination in Southeast Asia," 9 Dec 64, Att to JCS 2339/142-5, 11 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (22 Sep 64) sec 2.

44. (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 116.

French, even at their most heavy-handed, had never gone into villages or districts. To do so made the United States seem more imperialistic than France and played into the hands of the Viet Cong.

General Minh and his colleagues were also unhappy because of alleged visits by MAAG and MACV personnel to observe military training among the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. The Generals wanted these sects to produce Vietnamese, not "American-type," soldiers. General Don pointed out that the GVN had had a somewhat similar difficulty a year earlier when the US advisors fed the Montagnards a better ration than the Vietnamese Army received. Further, General Minh claimed that the CIA was making contacts with the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. If this continued, the CIA would "get the Cao Dais and the Hoa Haos away from us. We simply cannot govern this country if this kind of conduct continues."[45]

The tenor of these remarks caused some concern in Washington, where expansion of the advisory effort was under consideration. Ambassador Lodge was informed that his superiors had come to believe in "the essentiality of the formal, recognized advisory framework down to battalion and province level, and now to include the subsector [district], where it can be established." Since the presence of US personnel gave the best assurance that US materiel was being used to full advantage, the Ambassador was requested to continue his efforts to introduce more advisors, perhaps at first on an experimental basis in a few districts.[46]

Washington officials were eager to make more effective use of civilian advisors as well. Early in January General Minh had remarked to Ambassador Lodge that perhaps a joint US-GVN "brain trust" might be a good idea. The remark, when reported to Washington, was seized upon by the State Department as an opportunity to introduce US advisors into the highest echelons of the GVN. President Johnson endorsed the concept, and on 11 January the State Department informed Ambassador Lodge that "high-level advisors may be essential

45. (S) Msg, Saigon 1288 to State, 10 Jan 64.
46. (S) Jt State-Def Msg (State 1072) to Saigon, 17 Jan 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 63-Feb 64.

key to instilling ingredient most sorely lacking in GVN: efficiency and urgency of action." The United States was prepared to send civilian experts to work side by side with the most senior GVN officials in the various areas of government.[47]

Ambassador Lodge had no enthusiasm for the project. He advised the Secretary of State that General Minh had said nothing further about the "brain trust" idea and that apparently it had been merely a phrase used in conversation rather than a serious proposal. "Very much doubt whether GVN would like the idea of high-powered Americans on an 'opposite number' basis in adjacent offices to them all through the government," the Ambassador wrote. "Believe this would have a 'colonial' touch which they would have a hard time explaining away."[48]

After the Minh government was overthrown by General Khanh on 30 January, there was a gradual change in the GVN attitude toward accepting more US advisors. At first, Ambassador Lodge reported that the Khanh government, like its predecessor, would probably resist US attempts to introduce high-level advisors into the GVN structure. The outlook began to change with the development of the National Pacification Plan in April. General Khanh, recognizing the lack of qualified Vietnamese administrators and executives, asked for and received several experienced US civilians. They were assigned as counterparts to cabinet ministers dealing with finance and economics, foreign affairs, civil administration, and press relations.[49]

Meanwhile, in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 18 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had urged further expansion of the advisory effort. They recommended encouraging General Khanh to accept US advisors at all levels considered necessary by COMUSMACV, noting that "this is particularly applicable in the critical provinces where the advisory effort should be expanded and should reach down to the subsector level." Also, US civilian advisors should be offered for service at all echelons of the GVN, to provide civil administration expertise until a corps of Vietnamese administrators could be trained.[50]

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47. (S) Msg, State 1055 to Saigon, 11 Jan 64.
48. (S) Msg, Saigon 1304 to State, 14 Jan 64.
49. (S) Msg, Saigon 2126 to State, 6 May 64.
50. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-136-64 to SecDef, 18 Feb 64, Encl to JCS 2342/317-2, 14 Feb 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (5 Feb 64).

After further study and JCS recommendations, it was decided at the Honolulu Conference in early June to seek General Khanh's agreement to an increased US advisory effort. The United States wished to place advisors at the battalion level throughout the RVNAF and to extend the advisory effort to paramilitary forces at the district level in eight critical provinces. On 25 June General Khanh accepted these proposals.[51]

The advisory effort at the province and district level was largely concerned with implementation of the pacification program. At the time the expansion was approved, there was a USOM advisor to each province chief. With extension of the effort to the district level, a shortage of US civilians for assignment meant that military officers would have to assume some civil advisory duties. In addition, the number of military advisors at the province level was to be increased to give greater aid to the province chiefs in the administration of both military and civil programs that contributed directly to the pacification effort.[52]

By November, advisory teams were operating in 75 districts and half of the 239 districts in the critical provinces were scheduled to be manned by the end of the year. COMUSMACV reported that there had been an excellent response to the effort so far. Casualties were light, the advice was well received, and USOM-USIS-MACV coordination was excellent at the district level.[53]

US Participation in Combat Operations

The task of the US military advisor was to counsel, assist, and instruct South Vietnamese fighting men, without himself engaging the enemy except in self-defense. In practice, as in the case of FARM GATE, some US personnel had become directly involved in combat operations. For the Americans with other units that made contact with the enemy, the temptation to take action without going through the formality of advising was understandably strong.

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51. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC JOO 5432 to JCS, 25 Jun 64.
52. (S-GP 1) JCSM-465-64 to SecDef, 30 May 64, Encl to JCS 2343/388, 28 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (28 May 64) (1).
53. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 6191 to CJCS, 28 Nov 64, OCJCS File, "Taylor Visit, Nov 64."

On 21 April Senator Everett M. Dirksen and Representative Charles A. Halleck accused the Johnson Administration of hiding the facts about US involvement in South Vietnam from the American people. They said evidence was mounting that the United States was actually fighting the war. The two Republican leaders cited the letters of Captain Edwin G. Shank, USAF, written to his wife and released by her after his death in Vietnam on 24 March. Captain Shank had been shot down while on a FARM GATE mission.[54]

Early in May the Shank letters were published in Life. They contained statements that US pilots were actually doing the fighting in South Vietnam and that the VNAF personnel accompanying them on FARM GATE missions were "airmen basics," not student pilots receiving training.[55]

At a conference with COMUSMACV in Saigon on 13 May, Secretary McNamara stressed the potentially unfavorable impact on public support of the US effort in Vietnam of allegations such as those contained in the Shank letters. He reaffirmed the US policy that fighting in RVN would be done by the Vietnamese themselves and said that any exception to this policy must be approved by the highest authority. The FARM GATE concept had been adopted as a specific exception, reluctantly approved with the understanding that it was an essential supplement to GVN capabilities and temporary in nature. The Secretary of Defense ordered an immediate program to train enough VNAF pilots to assure that they would ultimately be able to carry on the air war in RVN entirely on their own.[56]

After the Secretary's return to Washington, General Taylor sent the following message to CINCPAC:

> Since the initiation of US participation in counterinsurgency action in South Vietnam, it has been the policy of the US Government that US military personnel will not take part in combat. This policy is reaffirmed subject to the following exceptions.

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54. NY Times, 22 Apr 64, 1.
55. Life, 8 May 64, pp. 34B-39.
56. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC JOI 3849 to CINCPAC, 14 May 64, OCJCS File 091, Vietnam Trip, 9-14 May 64.

The continued use of so-called FARM GATE aircraft is authorized subject to the condition that they fly bona fide operational training missions against hostile targets to prepare the participating VNAF personnel for eventual replacement of US pilots. The ultimate objective is elimination of the requirement for FARM GATE aircraft.

It is recognized that helicopter operations will continue to introduce US personnel into combat situations. It is emphasized that helicopters are for use as transport and their weapons are for the protection of vehicles and passengers. Armed helicopters will not be used as a substitute for close support air strikes.

US military personnel assigned as advisors to RVNAF units will be exposed to combat conditions only as required in the execution of their advisory duties.[57]

The publicity given to the Shank letters caused an inquiry to be launched by the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Armed Services. Hearings in executive session were held on 24-26 June, under the chairmanship of Senator John C. Stennis. The declared purpose was "to obtain firsthand information upon the situation in South Vietnam, the purpose and mission of the Air Force units assigned there, the contribution being made by the United States . . . and related matters." After hearing the testimony of eight returned USAF pilots, the Secretary of the Air Force, and other Air Force officials, the Stennis Subcommittee produced a classified "Summary Analysis" that caused considerable concern within the Department of Defense.[58]

With the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense, General Wheeler sent a copy to Ambassador Taylor on 17 July, making the following comment in his covering letter:

Other than taking the appropriate corrective action, the Chiefs are not sure just how they may be drawn into any exchange over the summary. However, in order to prepare ourselves, we have had the Joint Staff analyze the summary and isolate those areas and

57. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6399 to CINCPAC, 20 May 64.
58. (TS) "Summary Analysis of Hearings Held by Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee on the Situation in South Vietnam," Encl to Ltr, Senator John C. Stennis to SecDef, 9 Jul 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, "Hearings by Stennis Committee . . . ."

issues about which we should be particularly concerned . . . . It is possible that some of the operational procedures described in the summary may be, or may have been, at variance in some respects with established policy; however, we hope that sufficient corrective action has been taken to bring the procedures back into line with policy and that such positive action can be reported.[59]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to send a team to Saigon to investigate and report on the allegations made by the Senate Subcommittee. Individually, the allegations raised no issues not already addressed by the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Air Force, or the Secretary of the Army in testimony on the same broad subject before Congressional committees during May and June 1964. Collectively, however, the allegations implied high-level mismanagement of operations in Vietnam and deliberate repression or misrepresentation of facts.[60]

The JCS team submitted its report on 5 August. The basic purpose was "to provide the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the facts and background in order that they would be able to address intelligently the allegations of the Stennis Committee, in the event they were called upon to do so." The key issues and the facts as determined by the JCS team were as follows:

Allegation #1. The official policy of the Pentagon is that U.S. Forces, including the Air Force, are in South Vietnam as trainers, instructors, and advisors, only, and that they have not been and are not in a combat status, whereas USAF pilots have been engaged in combat operations. Further it was the policy to keep such information from the American people.
Answer. In the opinion of U.S. military personnel stationed in South Vietnam (SVN) they are and have been in "combat operations." . . . COMUSMACV stated ". . . US service personnel are frequently introduced into combat situations. For this reason individuals are given combat pay and awarded combat decorations." . . . With regard to allegations that it was the policy to keep information from the American people, the team had no basis for determining facts on this subject.

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59. (TS) Ltr, CJCS to US Amb Saigon, 17 Jul 64, same file.
60. (TS) DJSM-1203-64 to CJCS, 16 Jul 64, same file.

[redacted]

Allegation #2. USAF Air Commando pilots flew actual combat missions without assistance from the Vietnamese aboard and without giving training or instruction to him except in the most general sense of the word. As a rule the Vietnamese aboard were basic airmen without any prior aviation experience or training.
Answer. Essentially true until May 1964. Since then all Air Commando Squadron combat flights have been training missions with a bona fide VNAF pilot trainee on board receiving instruction. The USAF pilots in the MAAG still fly combat missions while accompanying VNAF on combat missions. This is done as part of their assigned tasks as instructors and advisors.

Allegation #3. Visiting high level officials receive distorted or incorrect briefings on activities of the USAF Air Commando Squadron.
Answer. May have been true. However, Ambassador Taylor was asked about the incident referred to in the testimony. He stated that . . . he was fully briefed on and was aware of all aspects of the 34th Tactical Group's missions including FARM GATE operations.

Allegation #4. Rules of Engagement placed substantial restrictions upon USAF pilots. They felt the Army operated under more flexible rules.
Answer. The allegation is correct. . . . The missions of USAF and U.S. Army armed aircraft are different. The USAF mission is one of training VNAF pilots and observers while the Army mission is one of supporting ARVN in tactical operations.

Allegation #5. There was a considerable lack of cooperation and coordination between the Air Force and the Army in the conduct of military operations in South Vietnam.
Answer. This has been true in the past. Cooperation and coordination are now better than they have been in the past and are still improving.

Allegation #10. Comparative . . . USAF-VNAF pilot losses indicate that USAF pilots are not as effective as VNAF pilots or that USAF pilots are flying the more dangerous missions or that the VNAF has a much more superior aircraft in the A1H.
Answer. There is no single or positive answer as to why USAF combat pilot losses exceed those of the VNAF. However, three possible reasons are:

[redacted]

1. USAF pilots flew many missions in T-28 and B-26 aircraft which were more vulnerable than the armored AlH aircraft.
2. USAF pilots flew the majority of their missions in the Delta region where aircraft damage has been 11 times greater than for other areas of SVN.
3. VNAF pilots do not press the attacks as aggressively as USAF pilots. This is the opinion of the U.S. advisors at the regimental and battalion levels.

Allegations 6-9, omitted above, had to do with the types of US equipment used in RVN and with the mission of one VNAF squadron.[61]

CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and the Joint Staff had also submitted comments on the allegations, all in substantial accord with the findings of the JCS investigating team. The available records contain no indication that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had occasion to reply to the issues raised in the Stennis Subcommittee's "Summary Analysis," which did not become public.[62]

At the end of October Ambassador Taylor reported that he had just discovered another instance of US pilots engaging in combat operations. In this case the personnel were members of the USAF advisory group assigned to VNAF squadrons, not FARM GATE pilots.

> I find that since late 1961 USAF advisors have been flying single-seater VNAF aircraft on tactical missions and delivering ordnance in combat under the same conditions as the VNAF pilots of their units they advise. The only restriction is that the US pilot never attacks a target before it has been attacked by a VNAF pilot. . . .
>
> While I have known that these advisors fly with their squadrons to monitor operational tactics and performance, I did not know until now (nor did General Westmoreland) that as a routine matter they carry and expend ordnance in the same manner as their VNAF comrades. If this situation has been understood by others, it has

61. (TS) Memo, Deputy D/JS to CJCS, "Trip Report of the Fact-Finding Group Visiting South Vietnam in Connection with 'Summary Analysis' of Hearings . . . ," 5 Aug 64, JMF 9155.3 (5 Aug 64).

62. (TS-GP 1) CINCPAC Comments on Stennis Report, n.d.; (TS) Memo, C/S USMACV to Deputy D/JS, 2 Aug 64; (TS) DJSM-1203-64 to CJCS, 16 Jul 64; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, "Hearings by Stennis Committee . . . ."

never come out in the many discussions of related subjects which I have attended in the JCS and elsewhere. As a result, I have inadvertently made some incorrect statements in Congressional hearings on the subject of use of US personnel in combat.

Warning that under current conditions, some US personnel were likely to be involved in any VNAF strike mission, Ambassador Taylor recommended a quiet JCS review of the matter "to decide what, if anything, should be done at this juncture."[63]

A message from CINCPAC followed, in which Admiral Sharp said that some members of his staff had been aware that the USAF advisors were flying combat missions but that the matter had not come to his attention since assuming command. To General Wheeler he recommended that no directive stopping the practice be issued.

> These advisors cannot be very effective unless they fly with their squadrons and participate with them in the combat missions. They will be particularly ineffective if after three years they suddenly are grounded . . . . To do so at this point would surely cause some publicity and also would not be understood by the Vietnamese.

CINCPAC pointed out that US helicopter crews and ground force advisors were participating in combat actions every day. COMUSMACV fully concurred in his views.[64]

The available records contain no evidence that any restrictions were placed on the role of USAF advisors in South Vietnam at this time. Later, with the changes in US policy regarding the employment of US pilots and aircraft that occurred in 1965, the cited practices were no longer nonconforming.

Development of Facilties

The US construction policy in effect at the beginning of 1964 had been devised in the light of the expectation that US involvement in South Vietnam was temporary and would be reduced within the foreseeable future. The policy looked mainly

63. (S) Msg, US Amb Saigon JPS 389 to SecState, SecDef, and CJCS, 30 Oct 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.
64. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 310344Z Oct 64; (U) Msg, COMUSMACV MACV 5791 to CINCPAC, 3 Nov 64; same file.

to the maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of existing facilities. Any new construction was tailored to minimum requirements for the safety, health, and welfare of US personnel.

At midyear, however, broad new construction requirements developed when the decision was made to expand the US military advisory effort. Requirements also increased for construction in support of US contingency plans and operations. By September new programs had been developed and approved. So far the funds for base construction in South Vietnam had for the most part been charged to MAP, following a concept of "joint use" bases, sponsored by the host nation and having possible US contingency application. In the Autumn of 1964 the Department of Defense decided that future construction to support US forces would be Service funded.[65]

On returning from a trip to Southeast Asia in April, the Secretary of State had proposed maintaining a permanent US naval presence in South Vietnam.

> There would be substantial psychological benefits to South Vietnam and a useful signal to Hanoi in maintaining a US naval presence at Tourane or Camranh Bay until pacification of South Vietnam is assured. This need not involve elaborate shore installations. A carrier task force, with visible training flights over Vietnam would underline our seriousness of purpose and make it clear that we do not intend to be pushed out of Southeast Asia. Such a presence could also have a stabilizing influence on Laos.[66]

After consulting CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff commented on Secretary Rusk's proposal on 25 April. They agreed that more US Navy ships and planes should be seen in the western part of the South China Sea. This naval presence need not be limited to specific areas of Vietnam and need not be continuous, they advised the Secretary of Defense. They recommended that units of the Seventh Fleet "show the flag" along the entire

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65. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, pp. 338-344; 1965, pp. 528-529.

66. (S-GP 1) SecState, "Summary of Additional Steps in South Vietnam," 20 Apr 64, Att to JCS 2343/360, 21 Apr 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (20 Apr 64).

coast periodically and that increased numbers of small ships visit RVN ports. The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed stationing a carrier task group (CTG) in a particular location, however, since this would restrict its mobility and place it in danger from mines. They proposed instead that a CTG be moved into waters near Vietnam and conduct air operations, including training flights over land areas. They also suggested that US amphibious training exercises conducted in RVN shore areas and estuaries might strengthen the signal of US determination to Hanoi.[67]

Ambassador Lodge, in commenting on the JCS proposal, suggested that a better alternative might be to establish a skeletonized naval installation at Cam Ranh Bay, which could also serve as a US beachhead in case of emergency. The base would establish a US presence "in a way which is defensible without depending on Viet-Nam and without political complications or involvement of dependents." Other advantages cited by the Ambassador were that very little construction would be needed and the base could be used as a counter in any diplomatic negotiations.[68]

CINCPAC agreed. He now told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he believed the CTG movement should be deferred indefinitely, until a situation arose in which the deployment would have immediate psychological or combat significance. "I believe that there is merit in Ambassador Lodge's idea of establishing a USN base at Cam Ranh Bay and recommend that steps be taken looking to the future to ensure unrestricted operational use of Cam Ranh Bay and to obtain base rights involving the adjacent land area." Admiral Felt proposed that CINCPACFLT be directed to conduct a survey of the bay and its environs to determine its possibilities.[69]

On 8 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that a survey be made immediately with a view to establishing a naval facility at Cam Ranh Bay on an austere basis. Concurrently, they said, the extent of the base rights required should be determined and US naval forces should begin using the bay as an operational anchorage as soon as

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67. (S) Msg, JCS 5966 to CINCPAC, 22 Apr 64; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 222333Z Apr 64; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-356-64 to SecDef, 25 Apr 64 (derived from JCS 2343/363); JMF 9155.3/3100 (20 Apr 64) (A).

68. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2101 to State, 2 May 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (1 May 64) sec 1.

69. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 052336Z May 64, same file.

feasible. Establishment of the base would demonstrate to leaders in both North and South Vietnam the US commitment to continuing involvement in the struggle. The base would provide support for naval operations along the Vietnamese coast and would offer a site for amphibious training and seaplane operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that establishment of the base would involve a further direct US military confrontation with the Viet Cong, that adequate security would have to be provided, and that some shore installations would have to be constructed. On 9 May the Secretary of Defense approved a survey of the Cam Ranh Bay site, and CINCPAC was directed to undertake it.[70]

The survey forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 November indicated that the Cam Ranh Bay area was suitable for use as a fleet anchorage and amphibious training area with relatively good security. It was also suitable for establishing an austere facility ashore with good growth potential. As there was no current operational need for a naval shore facility, CINCPAC recommended in December that further action be held in abeyance until requirements for a US presence in the area were established. In the meantime, the United States had obtained clearance from the GVN in November to use Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang harbor for USN seadrome operations.[71]

As more US personnel and equipment arrived in Vietnam the need for expanded facilities became more acute. In November CINCPAC sought approval to build two airfield installations, one a new jet-capable field at Chu Lai, the other a second runway at Da Nang. The main justification was that planned deployments under CINCPAC OPLANs could not be accommodated by existing facilities, given their increased utilization by forces already in South Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense approved the construction in December. These were the first major US installations programmed for support of US units not directly associated with an advisory or military assistance mission.[72]

In July COMUSMACV had called attention to the lack of adequate hospital facilities in Saigon. After approval in

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70. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-399-64 to SecDef, 8 May 64 (derived from JCS 2343/368-1); Msg, JCS 6242 to CINCPAC, 9 May 64; same file, sec 1.

71. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/368-2, 13 Jan 65; (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080257Z Dec 64; same file, sec 2.

72. (TS-GP 3) DJSM-1861-64 to CJCS, 28 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Southeast Asia Jul 64-Jun 65. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 123.

Washington, he requested from the GVN an area near Tan Son Nhut Air Base for construction of a new hospital. Both authority to begin construction and GVN consent had been received by November, but the hospital would not be ready for approximately ten months. At year's end interim measures were being considered, including the Ambassador's suggestion of using a hospital ship.[73]

Base Protection

The adequacy of the protection for US personnel, equipment, and installations received continuous attention from US officials. Concern for the security of the Saigon area, where there were many US dependents, had prompted CINCPAC on 1 April to request the deployment of a second Army MP company to South Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense approved the request on 27 April.[74]

As the year progressed, with mounting evidence of Viet Cong strength and aggressiveness, the safety of US personnel and installations outside the capital became a matter of equal concern. After the deployment of more US aircraft to RVN in August in consequence of the Tonkin Gulf incidents, General Westmoreland voiced his apprehension regarding the security of the air bases where the planes were stationed, principally Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa near Saigon, and Da Nang. He described the bases as "loaded with U.S. aircraft and none . . . defended to our satisfaction." They were tempting targets for the Viet Cong, particularly vulnerable to night attack with mortar or rifle fire. COMUSMACV asked that certain US troop units be placed "on call" to defend the airfields if they were attacked by a force the RVNAF could not handle.[75]

On 29 August CINCPAC added his recommendation that the United States prepare to furnish troops to protect installations in South Vietnam, mainly because of the GVN's instability and possible future inability to do the job. After reviewing the situation and receiving the approval of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC on 1 September that they expected the additional aircraft that were crowding the air bases would be withdrawn. With reference to COMUSMACV's request for "on call" units, they believed the existing system

73. (TS-GP 3) DJSM-1861-64 to CJCS, 28 Nov 64, OCJCS File 091 Southeast Asia Jul 64 - Jun 65.

74. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 012250Z Apr 64; (S) Note to Control Div, 27 Apr 64; JMF 9155.3/3100 (1 Apr 64).

75. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 8149 to CINCPAC, 15 Aug 64.

of DEFCONs and alerts made possible adequate readiness conditions without committing forces beforehand. Admiral Sharp was informed that "now is not the time to take the actions requested." Before any of his OPLANs were put into effect, however, CINCPAC's views and recommendations regarding "prudent deployment" of more forces would be carefully considered.[76]

Assuming that the RVNAF carried out its commitment to guarantee the security of US forces stationed on the air bases, the measures then in effect appeared adequate to meet the potential threat. In August COMUSMACV had arranged for special provisions at the three main bases. Combined defense plans were prepared, and both US and RVNAF units on the bases were given tasks in support of the plans. Three RVNAF airborne battalions were assigned, one to each of the big air bases. Two USA infantry officers were assigned to the staff of the USAF commanders at Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut to act as advisors and assist in planning ground defense.[77]

These measures were insufficient, however, to prevent the highly successful Viet Cong mortar attack on the Bien Hoa air base in the early minutes of 1 November. General Westmoreland explained that while the provisions made had increased the effectiveness of the defenses against direct ground attack, they had "done little to protect against mortar attack such as that experienced." There were hundreds of sites in wooded areas and hamlets within mortar range of the bases that the Viet Cong could reach without being detected, so long as the local inhabitants were afraid to report them. COMUSMACV was continuing the effort to improve the base defenses, but he said there was no assurance that similar VC attacks would not take place at other critical facilities, which were equally vulnerable and glutted with aircraft.[78]

In the Washington consultations immediately following the Bien Hoa attack, consideration was given to deploying a Marine special landing force to Da Nang and two Army or Marine battalions to the Saigon area to provide local security. Both Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland opposed these measures,

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76. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8230 to CINCPAC, 1 Sep 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 374.

77. (TS-GP 4) DJSM-1491-64 to CJCS et al., 1 Sep 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep-Oct 64.

78. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 212890 to JCS, 2 Nov 64.

however, with the latter commenting, "We hesitate at this juncture to admit by such action that the host government cannot defend bases used by us and to take the big step in committing organized U. S. ground units in combat with the V. C."[79]

With regard to air base security, General Westmoreland soon reported that aircraft were being dispersed and, where practicable, would be revetted. The alert posture of US air units had been raised and US guards on airfields reinforced. He was urging further measures on the GVN, including the stationing of more security troops at major installations, intensified partolling, and control of population movements around airfield perimeters.[80]

On 25 November CINCPAC endorsed a COMUSMACV request for 502 US military personnel (57 Army, 292 Air Force, 153 Marines) to enhance the internal security of US airfields in South Vietnam. The personnel included Air Police, Army MPs, and Marines to augment a reinforced rifle company at Da Nang. The Army and Marine forces were ordered to RVN on 2 December from CINCPAC's own resources. Shipment of the Air Police from the CONUS still awaited Secretary McNamara's approval.[81]

Somewhat earlier both Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland had indicated that after careful consideration of using US combat troops for outer perimeter and area security around the bases, they had rejected the idea. They noted that it would require at least one battalion at each airfield and that the presence of US troops could cause the GVN to lose interest in the defense of the installations, despite their joint use by the RVNAF, and relax its performance of the security mission. Further, they believed that US troops would not be effective in inhabited areas because of lack of language capability and the absence of authority to search private dwellings.[82]

When the Chief of Staff, Army, visited South Vietnam in early December he discussed the security of air bases and other

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79. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1451 to CINCPAC, 1 Nov 64; (TS-GP 2) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC JOO 12962 to CJCS, 2 Nov 64, JCS IN 10617; OCJCS File, "Bien Hoa Incident."

80. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 2413365 to JCS, 6 Nov 64.

81. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 252110Z Nov 64; (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 271150Z Nov 64; (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 012025Z Dec 64.

82. (TS-GP 4) J-3 Briefing Sheet for CJCS on JCS 2343/501, 22 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (9 Dec 64).

important installations with General Westmoreland. COMUSMACV reiterated his view that it was not possible to establish safeguards that would provide a complete guarantee against damage to any particular base. He was continuing his efforts to improve coordination between the base commanders, responsible for internal security, and the province chiefs who were responsible for external security. General Westmoreland had also directed a study to be made of the possibility of using ground surveillance and countermortar radar to improve the defenses of critical installations.[83]

During JCS consideration of the problem in December, General LeMay pointed out that the 502 personnel recently requested could enhance internal security, but "this proposed increase will have little effect unless there is adequate RVNAF perimeter and airfield area defense." He proposed that CINCPAC be asked for a current assessment of the RVNAF capability to provide reasonable security for US forces from Viet Cong attack. General LeMay said that if the information reported led to a judgment that "the RVNAF is not now accomplishing this task to the satisfaction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then U.S. combat troops should be deployed to South Vietnam to assume this responsibility." On 23 December the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested such a report from Admiral Sharp.[84]

Third Country Assistance

Secretary of State Rusk returned to Washington in April 1964 after visiting South Vietnam and participating in the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in Manila. The SEATO meeting had been particularly successful from the viewpoint of the United States. It had ended with a communique in which the Foreign Ministers of seven nations joined in expressing "grave concern about continuing Communist aggression against the Republic of Vietnam." They declared that defeat of this aggression was "essential" to the security of Southeast Asia.[85]

Secretary Rusk returned with a list of measures to improve the counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam for recommendation

83. (TS-GP 4) Memo, CSA to CJCS, "Trip Report, Vietnam, 8-12 December 1964," 21 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov-Dec 64.
84. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2343/501, 9 Dec 64; (S-GP 4) CSAFM L-49-64 to JCS, 23 Dec 64; (S-GP 4) Msg,JCS 3186 to CINCPAC, 23 Dec 64; JMF 9155.3 (9 Dec 64).
85. Dept of State Bulletin, L (4 May 64), p. 692.

to the President. The first item, a proposal to seek more assistance from other countries, undoubtedly reflected the encouragement he had received at Manila.

> It is important to engage more "flags" in South Viet-Nam, both on political and practical grounds. There is reason to believe that more help could be obtained from Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. An effort should also be made to increase aid from such non-SEATO countries as Japan, West Germany, Nationalist China and others. Assistance of all types should be welcomed; military units and personnel, economic, technical and cultural.[86]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided their views to the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 25 April. They concurred generally with the recommendation, although noting that "direct participation by SEATO or other third country combat units in military counterinsurgency operations in South Vietnam is not considered practical or desirable under present circumstances."

> On the other hand, advisory personnel, supplies, and equipment provided by SEATO and other nations could make significant contributions to the over-all advisory effort while at the same time lending an international character to our involvement. . . . The numbers of personnel contributed by any one nation should be limited, and the organizational arrangements for their employment should be calculated to ensure that US control of the total advisory effort is not jeopardized, and confusion is not introduced as a result of differing military doctrines.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that engineer, medical, and transportation units, in particular, could be employed effectively in a civic action role.[87]

The concept of third country support was not a new one. The United Kingdom, France, Japan, and West Germany had been

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86. (S-GP 1) SecState, "Summary of Additional Steps in South Vietnam," 20 Apr 64, Att to JCS 2343/360, 21 Apr 64, JMF 9155.3/3100 (20 Apr 64).

87. (S-GP 1) JCSM-352-64 to SecDef, 25 Apr 64 (derived from JCS 2343/360-1), same file.

providing commodity aid and technical assistance for some time. Australia had deployed a 32-man army training team to South Vietnam in 1962 and had integrated it with the US advisory effort. In early 1964, Chinese Nationalist forces were giving covert support to OPLAN 34A operations and to Father Hoa's pacification program in Hai Yen.[88]

President Johnson mentioned the matter briefly at his press conference on 23 April, expressing the hope that "we would see some other flags in there" in a united attempt to halt the spread of communism. The President's remarks hardly indicated the scope of the campaign being launched by the United States to obtain more third country assistance. The State Department instructed all US Embassies on the matter on 1 May. Meanwhile the GVN had been asked to prepare a "shopping list" indicating the types of assistance needed in South Vietnam. The Department of State circulated a summary of the shopping list to 27 US Embassies for action early in July, while with US encouragement the GVN appealed to a still larger number of nations for assistance.[89]

One of the first to reply was the Government of the Republic of Korea, which offered to send combat units to South Vietnam. The offer was declined with appreciation, it being pointed out that the United States itself had not been asked by the GVN to introduce ground combat forces. The difficulties of employing foreign troops were apparent; even the GVN forces had little success in distinguishing the Viet Cong from the local population. The Republic of Korea soon dispatched a mobile surgical hospital and ten karate instructors.[90]

On 20 July, New Zealand deployed a military engineer team and a surgical team for assignment to civic action projects in South Vietnam. The following month Australia increased its support by sending a detachment of six transport aircraft and 74 personnel, while the Philippine Government contributed 34 personnel, consisting of two medical teams and a number of civic action and psychological warfare specialists. Thailand had given 10,000 galvanized iron sheets and 100 tons of cement.[91]

88. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964, p. 386. (TS) Msg, State 1865 to Saigon, 7 May 64.
89. Public Papers, Johnson, 1963-1964, vol. I, p. 522. (S-GP 3) JCS 2339/145, 1 Oct 64, JMF 9150 (1 Oct 64). (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 353
90. (S-GP 3) JCS 2339/145, 1 Oct 64, JMF 9150 (1 Oct 64)
91. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. p. 71. (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68. pp. 261-263.

In connection with the continuing US encouragement of third country assistance, officials in Washington systematized the criteria for funding the effort in early October. The United States would urge each nation to bear as much of the cost of its contribution as possible but would not insist on this so firmly as to cause the donor to withdraw the offer. When it was clearly impossible for the nation to pay for its contribution, all costs related to MAP-supported end-items owned by that country would be charged to its MAP account. If the end-item was of a type that would be expended in South Vietnam or would remain there, its cost would be charged to the RVN MAP. Where aid in more general types of commodities was involved, "commercial consumables" not paid for by the donor would be charged to the GVN budget, if possible. Should their cost exceed the GVN funds available, the United States would work out some other arrangement for paying for them.[92]

On 3 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied higher authorities with a list of types of contributions the Philippine Government might make, for use during a visit of President Macapagal to Washington. It included a special forces company, engineer and medical units, and technicians in the signal, ordnance, transportation, and maintenance fields. During subsequent consultations at the military level in Manila in November, with COMUSMACV representatives participating, a plan evolved for an 1800-man tri-service task force, which would include Philippine security troops for protection of the engineer, medical, and other units the force contained. The Philippine Government appeared in earnest in considering a contribution of this size.[93]

One of the decisions made by President Johnson on 1 December was to mount a wider and more intensive effort to obtain commitments from other Free World nations. In

92. (C) Msg, State 791 to Saigon, 8 Oct 64.
93. (S-GP 3) JCSM-847-64 to SecDef, 3 Oct 64 (derived from JCS 2339/145), JMF 9150 (1 Oct 64). (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, Dir J-3, "Meeting of NSC Principals, 12 December 1964," 12 Dec 64, Att to JCS 2339/164, 12 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (12 Dec 64). (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1964. p. 387.

advising GVN leaders of the US program, Ambassador Taylor said that the United States had no desire to internationalize the war along the lines of the Korean conflict, but it did want to make Free World support "concretely evident" in South Vietnam. In support of this endeavor the US funding policies were revised. The United States was now prepared to pay all costs incurred by other countries in providing units to South Vietnam.[94]

At a Washington meeting of senior officials on 12 December to consider means of implementing the President's decisions, State Department representatives presented the following tabulation of third country assistance that had been made available to South Vietnam to date:

Country	Nature of Aid	Persons in RVN
Australia	Combat advisors, aircraft and crews, medical aid, technical aid, civic action aid, radio station	167
New Zealand	Army engineers, surgical team, educational aid	32
Philippines	Medical aid, psywar assistance	34
Korea	Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, karate instructors	140
Thailand	Aircraft crews, jet training, cement and roofing	17
U. K.	Police aid, professor, educational and technical equipment	7
Canada	Medical aid, scholarships, wheat	1
China	Agricultural aid, psywar assistance, electric power aid	85

94. (TS) Msg, Saigon 1763 to State, 9 Dec 64, JCS IN 48778. The President's decisions of 1 Dec 64 are treated in Ch. 14. (S—NOFORN-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2010 to USCINCSO et al., 15 Dec 64; (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 150134Z Dec 64, JCS IN 55452.

Germany	Professors, technical experts, credits	12
Iran	1,000 tons of petroleum products	0
Italy	Surgical team	9
Japan	Electric power aid, medical aid	80
Malaysia	Counterinsurgency training (outside Vietnam) and equipment	0
Switzerland	Microscopes	0
	Total	584

(France maintains 482 persons in Viet-Nam, primarily engaged in medical and educational activity.)

Additional assistance in immediate prospect included medical aid from Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey, and medical supplies, surgical equipment, or pharmaceuticals from Austria, Brazil, Denmark, and Israel. More significant contributions might be obtained, with proper effort, from Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Nationalist China, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea. The expectation of receiving the 1800-man Philippine task force continued, although the project had been slowed by domestic political considerations, including the necessity of obtaining legislative sanction for an expeditionary force (in fact, the Philippine contribution was not to reach these proportions until 1966).

Japan had already provided approximately $1,500,000 in medical and commodity assistance and had completed a large hydroelectric power project in South Vietnam. Japan could be expected to continue economic assistance but would not contribute military units. In South America diplomatic approaches were being made in an effort to obtain politically significant but essentially token assistance. "The best bets in Latin America are Brazil and Argentina," the State Department paper read.

The Government of the United Kingdom regarded its position as Co-Chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference as precluding any extensive engagement in military activities in South Vietnam; besides, British forces were already committed in defense of Malaysia. Canada and India cited their membership

in the International Control Commission as reason or excuse for avoiding any commitment of personnel, but the Canadian contribution of commodities nearly matched that of Japan in dollar value.[95]

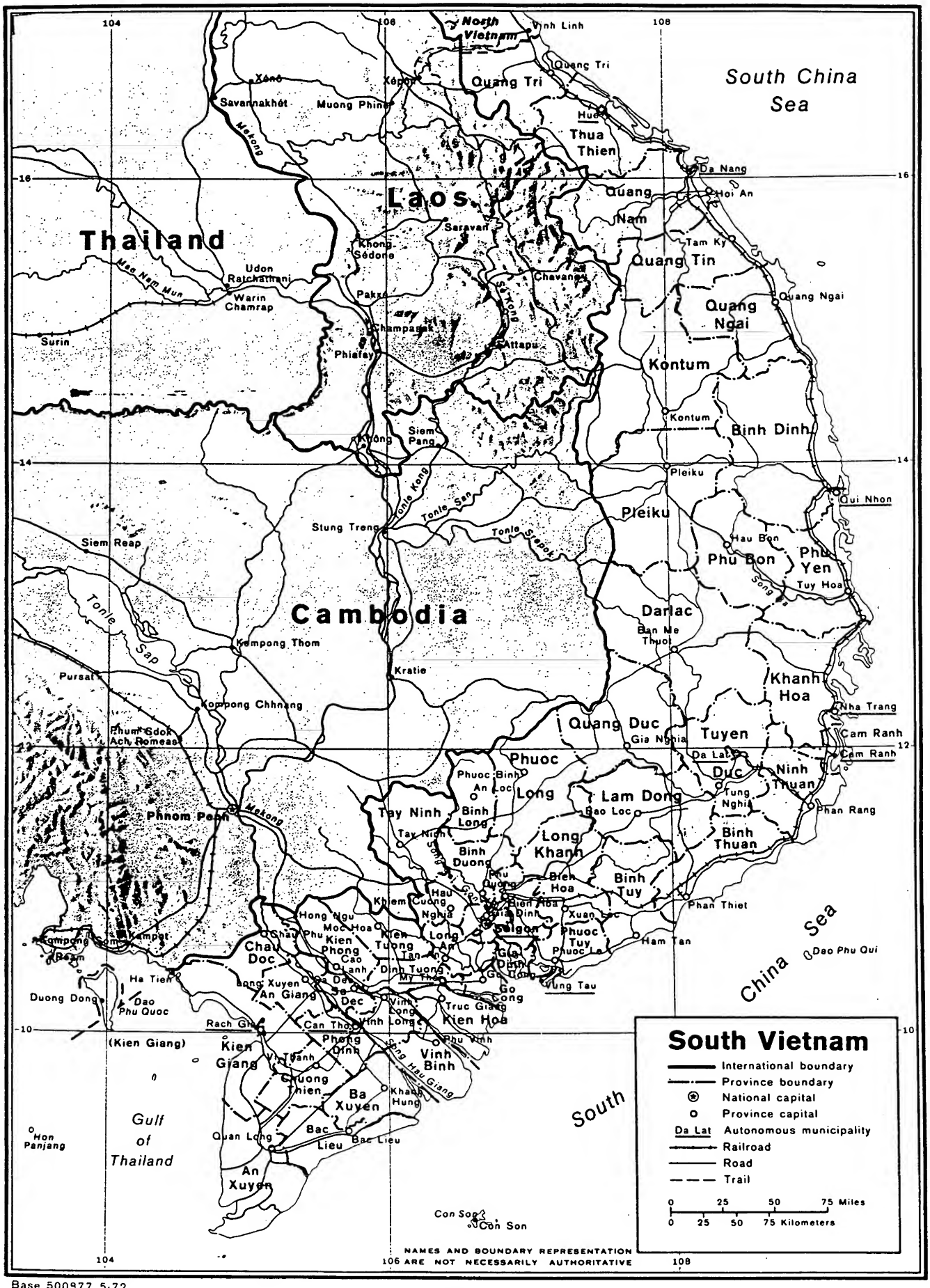
On 18 December the State Department suggested to the Embassy in Saigon that a combined US-GVN-Third Country organization be established to "provide policy and coordinate varied activities of participating nations." Once general policies had been defined, day-to-day coordination of military operations and support activities would be charged to COMUSMACV. Nonmilitary contributions would be the responsibility of USOM or other appropriate agencies.[96]

A US agency, which might later serve as the US element of a combined organization, was established four days later. It was soon titled the Free World Military Assistance Office. Ambassador Taylor had concluded that "Third Country Aid" should be discarded in favor of "Free World Assistance." The latter term suggested that the other participating countries were on the same plane as the United States; the former implied a lesser status.[97]

95. (S) Memo, Dept of State to Pres, "Third Country Assistance to Viet-Nam," 11 Dec 64, Ann B to JCS 2339/164, 12 Dec 64, JMF 9150 (12 Dec 64).

96. (S) Msg, State 1304 to Saigon, 18 Dec 64, JCS IN 59392.

97. (S) Msg, Saigon 1854 to State, 18 Dec 64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 71.



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Map I

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THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM 1960 - 1968

PART II

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
1 July 1970

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Chapter 17

THE US COMMITMENT GROWS

As 1965 began, it appeared that the US policy of furnishing only military equipment and counsel to nations threatened by the communists had failed in Vietnam as it had failed in Korea. The United States now faced squarely the choice of either entering more directly and at increased risk and cost into the war in Vietnam or, by inaction, of allowing the communists to prevail. In view of the growing support being furnished the insurgents by NVN, and the critical governmental weakness and waning military fortunes of the RVN, the necessity for a decision while choice was still possible grew more urgent each day. In the first months of the new year, the President, moved as much by events as by the various arguments of his several advisors, ordered stronger, more direct military, economic and political actions in Vietnam. Like the year 1962, in which President Kennedy had greatly increased US support of the RVN, 1965 was to mark a definite turning in the national policy toward Vietnam.

Signs of an Enemy Victory

At no time had the VC seemed so close to a decisive military victory over the RVN as in early 1965. The weakened and dispirited forces of the RVN were no match for the insurgents. In major battles, in patrol skirmishes, and in ambushes throughout the country the ARVN and its paramilitary cousins, the RF and the PF, consistently suffered costly and discouraging defeat at the hands of their highly motivated, more skillful enemy.

The VC made good use of their superiority, taking the initiative nearly everywhere in the RVN and closing LOCs almost at will. No longer were they restricting themselves to hit-and-run tactics. And there was good reason to believe that they might be shifting to a strategy of committing larger units against the ARVN in pitched battles. In early January, for example, in a fierce and protracted encounter around Binh Gia, forty miles southeast of Saigon, the VC inflicted heavy losses on the ARVN. US military intelligence

experts believed that this battle might mark a turning point toward a more intense phase of the war.[1]

As to VC strength, US intelligence authorities believed that the communists were now employing about 30,000 regular VC troops and from 60 to 80 thousand part-time guerrillas in RVN--an increase of from 8 to 10,000 regulars during 1964. This rise was considered remarkable in view of the high number of casualties, estimated at 21,000, that the VC had sustained. US experts judged that only a well-established, efficient military-political organization could sustain such losses and still be able to function with greater effectiveness than ever. The fact that the VC had professional command, logistics, communications, and personnel systems to support their specialized military tactics seemed to confirm that the VC were being directed from Hanoi. Captured documents, interrogation reports, and other sources of information showed that the broad guidance on policy, strategy, and doctrine flowed from the top governmental levels in Hanoi. The organization for insurgency which had, the United States believed, been planned in Hanoi was well suited both militarily and politically to its task.

Regular VC forces (main force units that had been identified in the RVN) comprised 5 regiments, 47 battalions, and 135 companies. Early in 1965, strong concentrations of these units were located in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces in the northern I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ). Regular VC units were thinly scattered throughout the central area in the II CTZ but again were heavily distributed in the III and IV CTZs north and south of Saigon. The irregular local guerrillas were most dense in this same southern area of the RVN.[2]

As of 1 January, COMUSMACV had no definite proof that any organized units of the NVA had entered the RVN, although such entry was suspected. It was believed, however, that nearly half of those infiltrated during 1964 were native to NVN. COMUSMACV estimated that 37,449 persons had entered from NVN to join VC units during the period 1959 to the end of 1964. He could confirm, on the basis of POW interrogations,

1. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History 1965, p. 109.
2. (S-NOFORN) Special DIA IB 1 Feb 65; (S-NOFORN) DIA IB, 14 Jan 65, p. S-3.

only 19,678 of these infiltrators, however. One report indicated that approximately 7,500 had infiltrated during 1964.3

As a yardstick of their success at the beginning of 1965, the VC controlled almost one quarter of the rural population and more than half of the countryside of the RVN. Throughout virtually all the nation, the VC were intensifying their tactics of terror against the people. Citizens who favored the GVN were terrified into silence and compliance or eliminated, while those who were uncommitted cooperated with the VC out of sheer fright. The security situation in the larger urban areas was less serious, but there were definite signs that the VC had moved into such cities as Saigon and Da Nang and could, when they chose, create a much more serious security problem in those thickly populated areas.

Strategically, it appeared at the beginning of 1965 that the VC meant to cut off the northern portion of the RVN by driving from the mountains to the sea in the northern part of the II CTZ, sending their main force units from their base camps in Laos and Cambodia across the central highlands to the populous coastal provinces on the South China Sea.

The Republic of Vietnam

The plight of the RVN was discouraging from nearly every view. Pacification, on which a succession of GVN and US officials had pinned high hopes, had come to a virtual standstill by 1965. Unable to respond effectively to the VC initiatives, the RVNAF had been forced into an increasingly defensive role. And it was clearly evident that without a great deal more outside assistance the RVNAF and, consequently, the RVN was going down to defeat.

Statistically at least, the RVN surpassed the VC in armed strength. In January 1965, the RVN had 245,000 men in its regular forces, 99,000 in the RF, 165,000 in the PF, and 31,500 National Police. The regular forces included a 220,000 ARVN and a 7,000-man marine corps generally employed as a reserve force. It also had an 8,000-man navy (VNN) and 11,000-man air force (VNAF). Neither of these latter forces was considered particularly effective by US military authorities. Because the enemy could strike at places and times of his own choosing under conditions completely favorable to him

3. (S NOFORN) DIA IB, 25 Feb 65, p. S-3.

and because the forces of the RVN had to be spread throughout the country, the numerical superiority of these forces gave them no real advantage. Adding to the problem was the extreme difficulty of shifting troops and supplies from one area of the RVN to another, particularly with the enemy controlling many of the main LOCs. As the tempo of VC attacks rose, the ARVN was being struck hard in widely separated district capitals, their garrisons of regular forces and regional militia being defeated in rapid succession. In the rural areas, ARVN columns and the PF were being destroyed in numerous ambushes. VC night assaults visited havoc on scattered hamlets and outposts.[4]

US statistical reports forecast the scope of the impending military defeat. In the first month of the new year, the RVNAF suffered 3,313 killed and wounded. While casualty figures might be dismissed as an indication of a brave defense by outnumbered forces, a more ominous picture emerged when these figures were read in conjunction with desertion and weapon losses figures. COMUSMACV reported that in January, 7,000 men had deserted the RVNAF, about the same monthly rate as prevailed in 1964. In the following months this figure would soar to over 11,000 per month. In the first two months of 1965, weapons losses averaged approximately 2,000 units per month.[5]

Political Turmoil Continues

This somber story of military failure was occurring against a background of growing political chaos in the RVN. Sapped by uprisings and coups since late 1963, the GVN had, by 1965, become a jumble of mutually antagonistic factions, religious, political, and military--all maneuvering for control. Government ministries and provincial leaders operated with little direction or support from the central government, and this near-paralysis in government seriously crippled the war effort. Lacking confidence in the ability of the GVN to govern or to prosecute the war, important elements of the population, especially within the large and influential Buddhist community, had become increasingly permeated with antiwar, antigovernment, and anti-US sentiment.

4. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) DIA, SIS-267-65, Jul 65.
5. Ibid.

The immediate problem, the growing rift between the new Huong government and the Generals, seemed capable of solution. Ambassador Taylor, renewing the efforts he had begun in December to bring about a reconciliation between civilian and military leaders, urged the principals in both factions to negotiate. He succeeded to the extent that on 5 January the Generals and the GVN agreed that Chief of State Suu and Prime Minister Huong would make a public statement that the military had returned full power to the civil government and that the government intended to hold early elections for a national assembly. Simultaneously, the Generals, headed by Khanh, would announce their support for the Huong government and its election plan and would release the persons arrested on 20 December. In addition to these provisions, the communique, finally issued jointly on 9 January, vested all legislative power temporarily in the Chief of State.[6]

Ambassador Taylor doubted that the agreement would last long. Washington, too, had doubts about the effectiveness of the agreement and instructed Taylor to avoid to the extent possible any action that would commit the United States to either the civilian government or to Khanh. For his part, Taylor worked for the integration of the military into the government. This, he hoped, would give them a sense of participation, but not actual control, of the administration. At the same time he tried to make clear the US position regarding the need for political stability so that the various power groups which might be planning "adventures" would know in advance that the United States would not support them.[7]

As the result of behind-the-scenes negotiations, Prime Minister Huong and the Generals reached a solution on the participation of the military in the government which appeared to meet US specifications. On 18 January, Huong reshuffled his cabinet, appointing four generals to the formerly all-civilian body: Nguyen Van Thieu, Commander of IV Corps, became Second Deputy Prime Minister; Tran Van Minh (Little Minh), Chief of Staff of the RVNAF, became Armed Forces Minister of Youth, Sports, and Civil Defense, another new post; and Linh Quang Vien, Director of the Military

6. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2079, 2080, 2099 to State, 060532Z, 071155Z and 091050Z Jan 65, JCS IN 73113, 74666, and 76658.
7. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2133 and 2166 to State, 121150Z and 160823Z Jan 65, JCS IN 78849 and 83669.

Security Service, was appointed Minister of Information and Psychological Warfare. Huong also dismissed two ministers who were objectionable to the Buddhists.[8]

Bringing the military into the government gave some promise of a more stable GVN, capable of prosecuting the war more effectively. Unfortunately, the settlement between the civilian government and the military did not eliminate the longstanding Buddhist unrest. The Buddhist leadership had remained quiet during the political crisis, but their objectives remained unchanged. They deeply resented Huong's decree of 8 December 1964 creating a General Buddhist Association and wanted him replaced. Tri Quang and the other leaders also attacked Huong for showing weakness vis-a-vis the generals.[9]

On 19 January, Buddhist leaders announced an anti-Huong campaign. They told US Embassy officers that there was no longer any possibility of reaching agreement with Huong on outstanding differences, as he had neither goodwill toward the Buddhists nor power of his own to carry out any agreement. They announced a hunger strike, to death if necessary, by five institute bonzes to secure the overthrow of Huong. Ambassador Taylor noted that this marked a full resumption of the Buddhist confrontation with the government and closed the door to any negotiated settlement between the Huong government and the Buddhists.[10]

True to their pledge, the priests launched their hunger strike and Buddhist-inspired students led a demonstration against the government in Saigon. Similar demonstrations continued in the following days and spread to the other major cities, with the bonzes threatening self-immolations to achieve their demands. As the disturbances spread, they became increasingly anti-American, with demonstrators calling for an end to US interference in RVN internal affairs and the

8. NY Times, 19 Jan 65, p. 1. (C) Msgs, Saigon 2176 and 2182 to State, 180459Z and 181111Z Jan 65, JCS IN 84668 and 85801. (S) Msg, Saigon 2201 to State, 200647Z Jan 65, JCS IN 87097.

9. (C) Msgs, Saigon 2016 and 2047 to State, 020825Z and 051230Z Jan 65, JCS IN 71059 and 73126.

10. (C) Msg, Saigon 2200 to State, 200905Z Jan 65, JCS IN 87113.

expulsion of Ambassador Taylor. The anti-American reaction reached a climax on 23 January when a mob sacked and burned the USIS library in Hue.[11]

In the midst of this turmoil, the Buddhist leaders reached an agreement with General Khanh: in return for a guarantee of religious freedom, the Buddhists pledged to support a military government for two years and to avoid political activity. US Deputy Ambassador Johnson quickly pointed out to Khanh that the Buddhists had twice in the last six months attempted to veto a Vietnamese government, and he questioned the ability of any new government, even with such an agreement as Khanh had mentioned, to resist successfully Buddhist pressure. Johnson also tried to make "entirely clear" to Khanh that the United States had "less than no enthusiasm" for such a change in government.[12]

Despite this warning, General Khanh and the AFC ousted the Huong government on 27 January. Khanh announced that he would immediately convene a twenty-member military-civilian council, representing religious, political, and military groupings, which would choose a new chief of state and advise the government on important decisions. The Chief of State, with the approval of the new council, would then select a prime minister to form a government. This government would have the responsibility of convening a national assembly. Khanh added that the provisional charter of 20 October 1964 continued in effect, except for those provisions conflicting with "the spirit of this decision." The AFC would remain the "supreme body" until the new council was formed and a government selected, when it would revert to its position as executive body of the military. In the interim, until the new government was formed, the AFC named Nguyen Oanh, Huong's Second Deputy, Acting Prime Minister.[13]

The successful coup once more left the United States with the bleak prospect of supporting a military dictatorship under General Khanh. Putting the best face on the situation, the State Department instructed Ambassador Taylor to deal

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11. (C) Msgs, Saigon 2214, 2219, 2257, and 2262 to State, 201425Z, 210610Z, 231125Z, and 231313Z Jan 65, JCS IN 87235, 87936, 90785, and 90770.

12. (S) Msg, Saigon 2282 to State, 251121Z Jan 65, JCS IN 91762.

13. (U) Msg, Saigon 2307 to State, 270349Z Jan 65, JCS IN 93956. (C) Msg, Saigon 2308 to State, 270403Z Jan 65, JCS IN 93767.

with the new government, not raising the question of recognition lest it might create problems for other countries having relations with the GVN. Taylor was to treat with Khanh in a manner that would neither increase Khanh's prestige nor consolidate his power, but would leave the United States in a position to continue an effective relationship with him should his regime prove viable. At the same time the United States would maintain a flexible position with regard to potential opposition to Khanh among other military leaders and useful contacts with the Buddhists, pending clarification of Khanh's intentions and prospects.[14]

For his part, Ambassador Taylor was still convinced that a stable government in Saigon was impossible so long as Khanh remained on the scene. He reported to the State Department that Khanh's ability to stay in power would depend largely on the support of both the Buddhist leaders and the Generals, and Taylor doubted that Khanh could keep both these groups in line. He believed Khanh incapable of maintaining even that minimum level of stability necessary to allow the United States to continue the war at the present level. He urged that the United States take every possible step to prevent Khanh's becoming Chief of State. Taylor had already informed General Ky, who was known to be concerned over the possibility of a Khanh-led GVN, that the United States was not backing Khanh. With Washington's approval, the Ambassador subsequently informed several other of the influential Generals that the United States did not support Khanh. The United States thus was in the position of contributing to the downfall of the "de facto" leader of the GVN, without having a candidate to replace him.[15]

14. (S-GP 3) Msg, State 1542 to Saigon, 27 Jan 65, JCS IN 94576. (S-GP 3) Msg, State 1562 to Saigon, 29 Jan 65, JCS IN 97870.

15. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2382 and 2389 to State, 030535Z and 031107Z Feb 65, JCS IN 11361 and 11594. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2391 to State, 031405Z Feb 65, JCS IN 11766. (TS-GP 3) Msg, State 1601 to Saigon, 4 Feb 65, JCS IN 12612; (S) Msg, Saigon 2400 to State, 041145Z Feb 65, JCS IN 13335.

The United States Military Position in the RVN

The deteriorating military position of the RVN and unabating political turmoil in the nation affected US military planning and actions in Vietnam and caused considerable concern to US military, as well as political, leaders in early 1965. US involvement in the defense of the RVN had steadily increased since 1959 until, by the beginning of 1965, with over 23,000 uniformed Americans in RVN, the United States had become an active belligerent in virtually everything but name. The US Army had about 15,000 men in RVN, about one-third acting in advisory roles or in staff support positions directly under COMUSMACV, the rest providing combat support and combat service support to the RVNAF and US advisors. The US Air Force was employing over 6,000 personnel in RVN to train and develop the VNAF, while a 650-man US Marine unit operated a medium helicopter squadron in support of RVNAF operations in IV CTZ. The US Navy had approximately 1,500 men in the Vietnam area, all employed in administrative and logistic support roles. Despite this impressive commitment of US armed forces and the continued infusion of US supplies and equipment for the RVNAF, the crisis steadily worsened.[16]

Concern over the lack of a sound government and the adverse effect of this on the military situation caused General Wheeler to suggest to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV that they press military and civilian leaders in Saigon to submerge their difficulties in their own national interest. General Westmoreland, with the concurrence of Ambassador Taylor, on 6 January issued guidelines to MACV advisors to be used in discussions of the political situation with the RVN counterparts. He stressed that the primary US concern was for "stable government in place, able to speak for all its components," adding that the absence of such a government was blocking the US-GVN ability to move ahead more vigorously with the war. He urged the rapid restoration of conditions favorable to the pursuit of the war.[17]

16. (S) Recapitulation of US Strength Increases in South Vietnam, 1 Mar 64; (S-GP 4) DJSM-187-65 to CJCS, 16 Feb 65; OCJCS File 091 Feb 65.

17. (S) Msg, Saigon 2053 to State, 6 Jan 65, JCS IN 73522.

The Dependent Problem

Because the RVN in earlier years had been considered a relatively safe area for Americans, some of the US military and civilian personnel, especially those assigned to the Saigon area, had been allowed to bring their dependents to the RVN. By 1965 there were more than 1,500 dependents in the country. With the increasing political troubles and the upsurge in VC activities in the RVN, the presence of dependents became a source of great worry to the President, who feared for their safety should a full-scale revolution erupt as a result of the political crises or should the VC direct a terror campaign against them. The chances of this latter eventuality appeared on the rise of 1965. In the past year, attacks against American personnel had increased sharply, with 61 major attacks resulting in death to 19 Americans and injury to 253.[18]

Withdrawal of these dependents from the RVN had been seriously considered several times in the past. Ambassador Taylor had opposed such action mainly on the ground that it would adversely affect the people and the government leaders of the RVN. By 1965, however, other factors had begun to appear. The presence of dependents, for example, had an inhibiting effect on the freedom of US military action in Vietnam. General Wheeler was convinced, for example, that the continued presence of US dependents had been a major factor in causing the President to hold back in ordering further reprisals against NVN.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted all US dependents evacuated from the RVN prior to or concurrent with the initiation of overt US military action against NVN. In the light of the Brink Hotel bombing and the growing boldness of the VC, they recommended to Secretary McNamara on 4 January the withdrawal of all US dependents from RVN as soon as it was possible to do so in orderly fashion. The

18. (C) MACV Catalogue of Incidents, CINCPAC SDO item number 001, 29 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov-Dec 64.

Secretary forwarded the JCS views for consideration at the "highest levels of government."[19]

At an interdepartmental meeting on 15 January, Defense and State officials discussed the possible reduction of dependents in the RVN and requested participants to provide further information on this subject. The Joint Staff concluded that the advantages of withdrawal in terms of military freedom of action far outweighed the disadvantages, and that anything less than complete withdrawal of all US dependents would not result in the required military freedom of action.[20]

The dependent question was still under review when the deteriorating political situation in late January heightened the threat to security of Americans in the RVN. On 26 January, CINCPAC informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the present instability in Saigon, the tenuous security arrangements, and the general vulnerability of US personnel to attack by "dissident elements" made it prudent to withdraw US dependents from the RVN. Admitting the serious political implications of such action, Admiral Sharp stated that because of the worsening situation, evacuation was no longer primarily a political problem but must be decided on the basis of "the actual and growing danger to American lives." On the next day, however, COMUSMACV reported that developments in Saigon had reduced the danger to Americans, and he recommended against evacuation because of its profound, and perhaps disastrous, impact on the RVN.[21]

General Wheeler supported CINCPAC. While agreeing with COMUSMACV that withdrawal at this time would have a great

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19. (~~S~~) Msg, JCS 5485 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 31 Dec 64, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov-Dec 64; (~~S~~) CM-277-64 to SecDef, 26 Nov 64, Encl to JCS 2343/496, JMF 9155.3 (26 Nov 64); (~~S~~) CM-359-64 to SecDef, 4 Jan 65; (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, OSD to Secy, JCS, 19 Jan 65, Encl to 1st N/H of JCS 2343/512; (~~TS~~) Note, sgd Bottomley, 4 Jan 65; JMF 9155.3 (4 Jan 65).

20. (~~TS~~) J3M-69-65 to D/JS, 18 Jan 65; DJSM-65-65 to ASD(ISA), 18 Jan 65; JMF 9155.3 (4 Jan 65).

21. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 270155Z Jan 65, JCS IN 93713. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 271715Z Jan 65, JCS IN 93924.

impact in the RVN and the rest of Southeast Asia, he was not persuaded that the impact would necessarily be disastrous. General Wheeler believed that Khanh and other "adventurers" in Saigon were using US dependents as hostages to pressure for their ends. The withdrawal of dependents would free US hands by removing these hostages, by shocking "Khanh and company" into the realization that there were limits to US patience, and by clearing the decks for possible future action.[22]

The establishment of the caretaker government on 28 January returned a measure of stability to the RVN and the United States again deferred the question of dependent evacuation.

Proposals for Additional Military Measures in Vietnam

The 30-day period originally scheduled for the completion of Phase One of the Presidential program elapsed in mid-January. While the military portions of the program were well under way by that time, the political side had not fared so well. The program that had seemed so sound in Washington did not follow the prescribed schedule in RVN. To expect an effective GVN to develop in only 30 days proved wishful thinking. The political situation in Saigon by mid-January was no better, and perhaps worse than it had been in early December. The growing anti-American tone of the Buddhist agitation alarmed both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC. On 25 January, CINCPAC positioned an Amphibious Ready Group within a 24-hour reaction time of Da Nang. The next day, at COMUSMACV's request and because of the threat to the US Consulate at Hue and US property in Saigon, he repositioned two Task Groups (TG 76.5 and 76.7) within a six-hour reaction time of Saigon.[23]

As the governmental turmoil in Saigon continued through January and February, Phase One of the program was extended into a second month. US military leaders, however, became increasingly impatient to get on with the military actions they had proposed, and recommendations and preparations for

22. (S) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC, 271547Z Jan 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 65.
23. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 20-65, 26 Jan 65, p. 4, and 21-65, 27 Jan 65, p. 5.

these operations became of major concern during this period. One of these recommendations was for the use of US jet aircraft in a strike role in the RVN. At the height of the Buddhist unrest, US intelligence experts reported the possibility of VC attacks on district and provincial towns and on critical US installations, especially during the coming Tet period. General Westmoreland himself was convinced that the VC would try to win a spectacular victory during the festival season to coincide with this period of "extreme political uncertainty," and he warned that the widespread civil demonstrations and disorders had so committed RVN forces as to impair their ability to handle any emergency situation without sacrificing the security of metropolitan areas. He noted that the discipline and efficiency of the VNAF in particular had diminished because of General Ky's preoccupation with politics. He asked for authority to use US jets in RVN subject to the following conditions: concurrence of the US Ambassador prior to exercising such authority; the decision to use the US jets would be made by COMUSMACV personally, or by his Deputy, provided that: 1) he considered the situation such that the VC could gain a major victory or that numbers of American lives would otherwise be lost; 2) strikes by US jet aircraft would be controlled by US ground or airborne observers who were in touch with the situation on the ground and the location of friendly troops; 3) reliable intelligence indicated a major VC concentration beyond the capacity of the VNAF or USAF commando units to strike effectively (US jet aircraft might also be employed to take advantage of the opportunity to launch spoiling attacks); and 4) appropriate clearance would be effected in advance with the RVNAF. The Embassy concurred with COMUSMACV's request, and, with White House and State Department agreement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 January authorized the restricted use of US jet aircraft in combat operations in RVN for the first time.[24]

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended the resumption of patrols by US destroyers along the coast of NVN in October 1964, higher authority had deferred a decision. At that time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had wanted to establish and maintain a legitimate US presence in international waters, to resume intelligence collections, and to continue to exert pressure on NVN. As one of the military

24. (TS-GP 2) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 260532Z Jan 65, JCS IN 92948. (TS-GP 2) Msg, JCS 4213 to CINCPAC, 27 Jan 65.

programs under Phase I, DESOTO patrols assumed a new significance. On 28 January the Joint Chiefs of Staff alerted CINCPAC to prepare for a resumption of DESOTO patrols on or about 3 February, the first since their suspension in mid-September. They ordered that the patrols should not be provocative, remaining 30 nm off both the NVN mainland and Hainan Island and south of 20 degrees north latitude. They did, however, authorize patrol ships and supporting aircraft to return fire if attacked, permitting patrol ships to pursue the enemy to the recognized three-mile territorial limit and aircraft hot pursuit inside territorial waters against surface vessels and into hostile air space (including NVN, Hainan Island, and mainland China) against aircraft when necessary to achieve destruction of identified attack forces.[25]

In planning for resumption of DESOTO patrols the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the possibility of NVN attacks on the destroyers and consequent US reprisals. They ordered CINCPAC to preposition retaliatory forces prior to commencement of the patrol and directed him to proceed with reprisal planning against five targets in the southern part of NVN. The five targets were all from the JCS Outline Plan of 14 November 1964 for air operations against NVN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed CINCPAC to prepare a further strike increment for the VNAF against an additional NVN target.

In the next few days the JCS revised their reprisal planning guidance to provide greater flexibility in reprisal options and to include targets considered "more suitable in terms of Washington objectives." They asked CINCPAC to develop reprisal plans based on three attack options. In ascending order these options increased the scale of the attack, although all three options were against low-value military targets, primarily barracks areas, in southern NVN.[26]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not the only ones anticipating NVN attacks on DESOTO patrols. Ambassador Taylor even hoped that the planned patrol would bring about the opportunity for US reprisals. On 31 January he told Washington that an NVN attack on a DESOTO patrol followed by

25. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4244 to CINCPAC, 28 Jan 65.
26. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 4297 and 4484 to CINCPAC, 29 Jan and 3 Feb 65.

immediate, strong, and effective US retaliation would offer "a priceless advantage to our cause here."[27]

The DESOTO patrol planned for 3 February was never conducted. It was postponed first because of Tet (2-6 February), and later, to prevent it from coinciding with the visit of Premier Kosygin to Hanoi.[28]

In support of another of the Phase I actions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff late in January asked the Secretary of Defense to approve additional OPLAN 34A Maritime operations. Such covert operations had continued throughout January based on the first four increments of Package One actions furnished to COMUSMACV on 15 December 1964. On 5 January 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had authorized VNAF air support for 34A Maritime operations south of the 18th Parallel and on 21 January the Joint Chiefs of Staff had codified and consolidated approval procedures to give COMUSMACV the maximum possible flexibility for planning and advance approval within the limitations set by higher authority.

By the end of the month, COMUSMACV had completed three of the four increments. On 30 January, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary of Defense to approve an additional four increments under Package One. COMUSMACV had prepared these additional increments at JCS direction, using the original Package One planning guidance of early December 1964. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out to the Secretary of Defense that all the actions recommended were of types previously approved for execution with the addition of one new action providing for PTF harassment of coastal villages by firing illumination and leaflet 81mm mortar shells over the villages, but so designed that no physical harm would be done to the inhabitants or houses. The Deputy Secretary of Defense approved the four new increments, and after coordination with the White House and the State Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC and COMUSMACV of this approval. OPLAN 34A Maritime operations were based on these increments until

27. (~~TS~~) Msg, Saigon 2359 to State, 31 Jan 65, JCS IN 98620.
28. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4422 to CINCPAC, 2 Feb 65; (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4612 to CINCPAC, 4 Feb 65.

mid-June 1965, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted additional increments to the Secretary of Defense.[29]

Reprisals

Throughout this period, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to be concerned with the general question of reprisals. On 29 January, in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, they pointed out that the VC had carried out 61 attacks against US military and civilian personnel in RVN during 1964, and reviewed their previous proposals for retaliation against NVN. They repeated their argument that US failure to respond to major VC/NVN attacks against US personnel could be misconstrued and result in further attacks against Americans. Noting Ambassador Taylor's support for reprisals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff once again recommended a positive, timely, and appropriate response to the next significant provocation in order to signal Hanoi that further provocations would bring prompt and destructive US retaliation. They urged the execution of such a reprisal against selected NVN targets within 24 hours of the incident, using the VNAF to the extent feasible. They also provided Mr. McNamara with a resume of reprisal actions of varying intensity for which plans were available for rapid execution. Again, the Secretary of Defense noted the Joint Chiefs of Staff views and passed them on to the State Department and the White House.[30]

Because of the increased high level interest in operations against NVN, on 1 February the Chief of Staff, Army, in a memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned that any direct military pressure against NVN carried an inherent risk of overt Chinese Communist intervention. He urged the Joint Chiefs of Staff not to ignore this risk, and recommended a program of additional military actions to prepare the United States for the eventuality of direct CHICOM intervention in

29. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 3486 and 3995 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 5 and 21 Jan 65. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-72-65 to SecDef, 30 Jan 65 (derived from JCS 2343/516); (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4707 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 052211Z Feb 65; JMF 9155.3 (15 Jan 65).

30. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-70-65 to SecDef, 29 Jan 65 (derived from JCS 2343/514); (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, Encl to 1st N/H of JCS 2343/514, 8 Feb 65; JMF 9155.3 (22 Jan 65).

Vietnam. This program provided for increasing readiness measures that would eventually culminate in major deployments to support military pressures against NVN.[31]

The Pleiku Attack - A Turning Point

Before the JCS had sufficient time to consider the program proposed by the Chief of Staff, Army, the VC took an action that was to have a profound effect on US national policy toward Vietnam and which led eventually to a significant widening and strengthening of the US commitment in Vietnam. In the early morning hours of 7 February (Saigon time), the VC fired a devastating mortar barrage at the US advisor's compound and airfield at Pleiku, killing eight US military personnel, wounding 108 others, and damaging or destroying 20 US aircraft. The Pleiku attack was followed 45 minutes later by a VC barrage against a POL storage area at Chap Chai airfield near Tuy Hoa in which five South Vietnamese died and POL stocks were destroyed. The VC carried out a third attack at this same time against a series of villages 15 miles northeast of Nha Trang, but no further casualties were inflicted.[32]

The US response was swift and unequivocal. From the field COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, Ambassador Taylor, and McGeorge Bundy, who was in Saigon at the time, all called for reprisals against NVN. In Washington, where it was the late afternoon of 6 February, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Deputy Secretary of Defense briefed the President on the attacks. A National Security Council meeting followed, and a plan for retaliatory action was drafted. This plan called for US/RVNAF reprisal strikes against military targets in the southern part of NVN, accompanied by the air deployment of a HAWK LAAM battalion to RVN, and the removal of US dependents from RVN. After consulting with Ambassador Taylor in Saigon, who concurred but requested modification of the reprisal targets, the President approved the plan. The targets finally approved were the four recommended by Ambassador Taylor. These targets were all NVN military barracks

31. (TS-GP 3) CSAM 36-65, 1 Feb 65, Encl to JCS 2343/520, 5 Feb 65, JMF 9155.3 (1 Feb 65).

32. (TS-GP 3) Telecon, MACV to NMCC, 070805Z Feb 65, JCS IN 17098. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 31-65, 8 Feb 65, p. 5. Statement by SecDef, 7 Feb 65, Dept of State Bulletin, LII (22 Feb 65), pp. 239-240.

(Dong Hoi, Vit Thu Lu, Chap Le, and Vu Con) in areas supplying men and arms for attacks in RVN. US forces would strike the first three targets, while VNAF and FARM GATE aircraft would hit Vu Con. All targets were on the JCS list of reprisal attack options, forwarded to CINCPAC on 3 February.[33]

When informed of the planned reprisals, the GVN was enthusiastic. Acting Prime Minister Oanh "readily" concurred and General Khanh, when contacted by General Westmoreland, also approved. Taylor told Oanh that "this reprisal action was a significant new step which we should take enthusiastically and with a visible clearing of the boards for possible future action." Taylor informed Oanh that the United States meant to prepare for such future action by bringing in HAWK missiles to Da Nang and possibly evacuating US dependents. He urged the GVN to think of ways to exploit these reprisals and to demonstrate that "a new and encouraging element" had been added to the war.[34]

On 7 February the JCS ordered CINCPAC to execute the reprisal strikes, using "optimum conventional ordnance," excluding napalm, on Dong Hoi, Vit Thu Lu and Chap Le Barracks, with the VNAF and FARM GATE aircraft hitting Vu Con Barracks. They also alerted CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to expect an announcement within the next 12 hours of the decision to withdraw all US dependents from South Vietnam. The evacuation was to be "expedited but orderly" with CINCPAC designating safe havens and providing the necessary airlift. At the same time, the State Department notified US Ambassadors in key world capitals of the pending reprisals. The Department instructed the Ambassadors (except those in Moscow and Paris) to inform their host governments of the action being taken.[35]

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33. (TS) NMCC EA Chronological Log, 6 Feb 65, OCJCS File, Pleiku Incident. Statement by SecDef, 7 Feb 65, Dept of State Bulletin, LII (22 Feb 65), pp. 239-240. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4484 to CINCPAC, 030019Z Feb 64.

34. (S) Msg, Saigon 2417 to State, 070430Z Feb 65, JCS IN 16924.

35. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4766 to CINCPAC, 070220Z Feb 65. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 4756 and 4758 to CINCPAC, 070246Z and 070428Z Feb 65. (S-GP 1) Msg, State Circular 1438, 6 Feb 65 (11:41 PM EST) JCS IN 17080.

CINCPAC acted at once to carry out the reprisals, placing all PACOM forces in Vietnam, Thailand, and the South China Sea area on DEFCON 2 and the remaining PACOM forces west of 160°E longitude on DEFCON 3. He directed CINCPACAF, CINCPACFLT, and COMUSMACV to execute the strikes. Weather conditions on 7 February forced the cancellation of three of the four strikes, including the VNAF/FARM GATE strike on Vu Con Barracks, but 49 aircraft from the USS HANCOCK and USS CORAL SEA hit the remaining target, Dong Hoi Barracks, losing one US plane in the attack.[36]

Ambassador Taylor recommended to Washington that authority be given "at once" to reschedule the three cancelled missions on the morning of 8 February (Saigon time). But because high State Department and Defense officials wished to avoid the appearance of a continuing series of attacks, further air strikes by US forces were not approved. The rescheduling of the VNAF strike on the Vu Con Barracks, with suitable weather alternate targets, was authorized and executed on 8 February. One VNAF plane was lost.[37]

To be ready for possible NVN retaliation, the President approved, and the JCS directed, the immediate air movement of the Headquarters plus one battery of the Marine LAAM battalion from Okinawa to Da Nang. (The first LAAM battery became operational at Da Nang on 8 February.) The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to alert the remainder of the LAAM battalion for movement to Vietnam and alerted the 173d Airborne Brigade for transfer by air from Okinawa to RVN. They also instructed CINCPAC to position one Amphibious Group with the Marine SLF off Cap St. Jacques and CINCSTRIKE to alert 10 tactical fighter squadrons for movement to WESTPAC. CINCPAC had recommended alerting only three squadrons, but the President had directed that 10 be alerted.[38]

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36. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 070750Z Feb 65, JCS IN 17259. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACAF, CINCPACFLT, and COMUSMACV, 070300Z Feb 65, JCS IN 16845. (~~TS~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 31-65, 8 Feb 65, pp. 1, 7.

37. (S) Msg, Saigon 2419 to State, 070636Z Feb 65, JCS IN 17047. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 4764 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 071459Z Feb 65; JCS 4775 to CINCs, 081000Z Feb 65.

38. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 4760 to CINCPAC and CINCSTRIKE, 070455Z Feb 65; JCS 4762 to CINCPAC, 071341Z Feb 65. (~~TS~~-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, vol II, p. 451. (S) Note to Control Div, "US Reprisals Against Viet Cong Attacks in South Vietnam," 7 Feb 65, OCJCS File, Pleiku Incident. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4766 to CINCPAC, 071707Z Feb 65.

In Saigon, Acting Prime Minister Oanh and Ambassador Taylor jointly announced the reprisal action. The brief announcement stated that military action had been taken against installations in NVN which had been directing and supporting aggression in RVN.[39]

Following the Saigon statement, the White House announced the VC attacks and justified the subsequent reprisal action. The statement emphasized that the US/GVN action was in response to provocations ordered and directed by Hanoi and was justified because of the markedly increased and continuing NVN infiltration of the south. The White House stressed that the joint response had been "carefully limited" to military areas that were supplying men and arms for attacks in the RVN. The statement added that the United States, as it had frequently said, sought "no wider war." Whether or not this course could be maintained lay with Hanoi, the key to the situation being the cessation of infiltration from NVN and a "clear indication" of Hanoi's intention to cease aggression against its neighbors.[40]

Addressing the nation, the President announced his decision to withdraw US dependents from RVN and warned that expanded US action in Vietnam might continue. He stated that it had become clear that Hanoi had undertaken a more aggressive course of action against both RVN and American installations and that the United States had no choice "but to clear the decks and make absolutely clear our determination to back South Vietnam in its fight to maintain its independence." The President also announced the deployment of the HAWK air defense battalion to RVN and stated that other reinforcements "in units and individuals" might follow.[41]

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39. (S) Msg, Saigon 2426 to State, 071015Z Feb 65, JCS IN 17183.

40. White House Statement, 7 Feb 65, Dept of State Bulletin, LII (22 Feb 65), pp. 238-239.

41. The first US dependents departed Saigon on 8 Feb and by 19 Feb all medically-able US dependents (1,593) had left South Vietnam. Statement by the Pres, 7 Feb 65, Dept of State Bulletin, LII (22 Feb 65), p. 239. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 32-65, 9 Feb 65, p. 4 and 41-65, 19 Feb 65, p. 5.

Radio Hanoi claimed that the "unjustified" attack had been "victoriously rebuffed," alleging to have downed the "aggressor" US aircraft. Both Moscow and Peking condemned the US "provocation" and pledged support and assistance to Hanoi, but both statements were cautions, neither raising the specter of a broad conflict or portraying the US action as a threat to world peace.

Unfortunately from a political standpoint, Soviet Premier Kosygin was in Hanoi at the time of the reprisal strikes. The Soviet Ambassador to the United States, in private discussion with Department of State officials, assailed the bombing, saying he believed it was actually related to Kosygin's visit to Hanoi. He was assured that this was not the case and that the United States, when it first learned of Kosygin's plans to visit Hanoi had taken certain steps, including the calling off of the DESOTO patrols. Hanoi had forced the bombing of its territory by the outrage at Pleiku.[42]

For months the Joint Chiefs of Staff had urged higher authorities to retaliate against VC/NVN provocations against US personnel to indicate to Hanoi that such attacks would bring prompt and destructive US reply. The Pleiku reprisal was, apparently, not a sufficient deterrent; just two days later, on 10 February, VC bombs destroyed a US enlisted man's billet (the Viet Cuong Hotel) in the coastal city of Qui Nhon, killing 23 soldiers of the 140th Aviation Maintenance Battalion and wounding 22 others.[43] Again, CINCPAC recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff strong retaliation by both US and VNAF planes. Ambassador Johnson, after reviewing the situation with General Westmoreland, agreed that this "serious VC atrocity" justified prompt air reprisal. Taylor reported to Washington that both the MACV and VNAF planners were at work on specific recommendations on targets for reprisal. Ambassador Taylor had already alerted Acting Premier Oanh of the possible reprisal and General Westmoreland was alerting General Khanh.[44]

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42. (S) Msg, Saigon 2435 to State, 080825 Z Feb 65, JCS IN 17792. (C-GP 1) USIA Special Memo, 10 Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 65. NY Times, 9 Feb 65, p. 1; 10 Feb 65, p. 1. (S) Memo of Conversation, Dobrynin and Thompson, 15 Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 65.

43. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 34-65, 11 Feb 65, p. 1 and 40-65, 18 Feb 65, p. 1.

44. (TS-GP 2) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 101540Z Feb 65, JCS IN 21384. (S) Msg, Saigon 2491 to State, 10 Feb 65, JCS IN 21442.

Within hours of the attack, the President met with the NSC, including Admiral McDonald, Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to consider actions to be taken in retaliation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended seven targets in NVN as reprisal targets. The Secretary of Defense proposed to the President that three of these targets, the Thanh Hoa Bridge and two barracks areas, be bombed. Because of objections that the bridge was too far north--it was just below the 20th parallel--the President directed that only two targets, the Chanh Hoa barracks and the Vu Con barracks, would be hit.

Acting on the President's decision, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered CINCPAC to execute reprisal strikes against NVN during daylight hours of 11 February, designating Chanh Hoa barracks as the primary US target and Vu Con barracks as the primary VNAF target.[45]

Accordingly, on 11 February 1965, the United States launched the largest reprisal air strike to date against NVN. More than 100 planes from the USS HANCOCK, USS RANGER, and USS CORAL SEA struck Chanh Hoa barracks, while 28 VNAF planes, supported by 22 US aircraft, hit their weather alternate target, Chap Le barracks. Both attacks were successful, although the US lost three planes in the Chanh Hoa strike.[46]

Upon the completion of the strikes, the White House announced that US air elements had joined the VNAF in attacks against military facilities in NVN used for the training and infiltration of VC personnel into South Vietnam. The Washington statement justified the strikes as reprisal not only for the Qui Nhon incident, but also as a response to additional direct provocations by the Hanoi regime, citing the increased number of VC ambushes and attacks against RVN and US personnel since 8 February. The White House stated that the US Government had been in consultation with the GVN and that, while both governments wished to avoid spreading the conflict, they felt compelled to take action. Following the White House announcement, Ambassador Taylor and Acting

45. NY Times, 11 Feb 65, p. 1 (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 4962 and 4973 to CINCPAC, 10 Feb 65.
46. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5010 to NSA et al., 11 Feb 65. (~~TS~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 35-65, 12 Feb 65, p. 3.

Premier Oanh released a joint statement in Saigon giving the details of the reprisal and echoing the Washington justification.[47]

In the reprisal strikes on 7, 8, and 11 February against Dong Hoi, Chap Le and Chanh Hoa a total of 267 sorties had been directed against a total of 491 buildings. Only 47 buildings had been destroyed and 22 damaged, and operations at the target areas were relatively unimpaired. Secretary McNamara informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, in spite of the limited effectiveness of the strikes, he was quite satisfied with the results. "Our primary objective, of course," he said, "was to communicate our political resolve. This I believe we did." He then showed that he really was not satisfied at all, pointing out that "future communications of resolve" would carry a "hollow ring" unless the US planes did more damage than in this case. He expressed concern and doubt over the adequacy of the military planning and/or the execution of future missions, observing that "Surely we cannot continue for months accomplishing no more with 267 sorties than we did on these . . . missions."[48]

Secretary McNamara was not alone in feeling that the reprisal planning and techniques for strikes against NVN could stand some improvement. General Westmoreland felt the same way, although for different reasons. On the day following the Qui Nhon reprisals, COMUSMACV sent a lengthy message to Admiral Sharp criticizing the procedures which had been used and describing just how much confusion and lost motion had taken place in Saigon on 10 and 11 February getting ready for these reprisals. Particularly he complained about lack of information on what was going on, and about the seemingly unnecessary changes in direction which took place in the two-day period. He charged that his 2d Air Division had worked all night for no purpose and that units were "whiplashed" and confused by orders and counter orders.[49]

47. White House Statement, Dept of State Bulletin, LII (1 Mar 65), p. 290; Joint US-South Vietnamese Statement, ibid., p. 291.

48. (S) Memo, SecDef for CJCS, 17 Feb 65, OCJCS Files 091 Vietnam, Feb 65.

49. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV 130356Z, Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 65.

Admiral Sharp responded by reminding General Westmoreland of the several specific directives that had been issued, assigning responsibilities and establishing relationships, and forwarding target information. CINCPAC also stated that the system was in his opinion capable of doing the job very well.

With particular regard to the 11 February reprisals, Admiral Sharp listed for COMUSMACV those activities that had preceded the strike in which he had been personnally involved. Upon being notified by the CINCPAC duty officer of the attack upon Qui Nhon, Admiral Sharp had immediately called Saigon and had directed CINCPACFLT to return the carrier HANCOCK to Point Yankee and to start loading his aircraft for reprisal strikes. He had directed CINCPACAF to alert his forces in SE Asia and at Clark Air Force Base. He had called General Wheeler in Washington and then called Admiral Mustin, J-3, to recommend the Option 3 attacks provided by the existing operational order.[50]

He reminded Westmoreland that, under the terms of the operations orders in effect on 10 and 11 February, CINCPACAF had been directed to plan for USAF strikes against NVN, and that specific orders, still current on 10 and 11 February, had directed COMUSMACV to continue planning for the VNAF to strike its assigned target. Both of these standing orders had been provided by the existing operations order, paralleled by numerous phone conversations with the various commands involved. "You and the component commanders were given information just as fast as we received it," Sharp told Westmoreland. "This flow of information, combined with the clear directives that I have outlined above, should have resulted in a minimum of confusion." While Sharp agreed it was unfortunate that COMUSMACV's officers worked all night to no purpose and in confusion, he noted that the Navy's carrier forces, operating under similar instructions and orders, were not confused and had carried out their preparations and strikes smoothly and with a minimum of fuss in accordance with the basic operations order.[51]

COMUSMACV was informed by CINCPAC that in future similar situations it was his intention to continue to exercise operational command through CINCPACFLT for carrier forces, CINCPACAF for USAF forces and through COMUSMACV for the VNAF. He was

50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.

convinced that this system would work as smoothly as any for a complicated joint, combined operation of this nature. "In this operation Commander, 2d Air Division works for you in planning the VNAF strikes and for CINCPACAF in planning the USAF strikes. This two-hatted arrangement will work perfectly well if we all will recognize it as a fact of life and help him in this difficult assignment."52

The US response to the Pleiku and Qui Nhon attacks was more than mere reprisal; it marked a turning point in the war. Within a four-day period, the United States had carried out two air attacks against NVN, ordered the withdrawal of all US dependents from RVN, deployed a HAWK battalion to Da Nang, moved additional aircraft to WESTPAC, and warned that reinforcements in units and individuals might soon follow. In announcing his decision to take these steps, President Johnson stated that the United States had no choice but to "clear the decks," making absolutely clear its continued determination to back the South Vietnamese fight for the maintenance of its independence. Ambassador Taylor called the reprisals a "significant forward step" in demonstrating US determination, and a "good foundation" for embarking on a graduated reprisal program to bring increased pressure on NVN to cease its intervention in the South.53

52. Ibid.

53. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2455 to State, 9 Feb 65, JCS IN 19338. (TS-GP 1) Msg, State 1693 to Saigon, 11 Feb 65, JCS IN 06067.

Chapter 18

THE QUANTUM JUMP--ROLLING THUNDER

Even before the Pleiku reprisals the development of US policy on Vietnam had reached a stage at which basic decisions concerning the nature and level of US actions in the RVN and against NVN could no longer be postponed. The decision for reprisal in early February, although significant, was an interim decision, the precursor but not the prototype of more vital decisions that lay in the offing. The direction that US policy would now take depended on a number of difficult judgments. These judgments involved, among others, the real gravity of the military and political situations in the RVN, the capabilities and intentions of the enemy in the RVN and in NVN, and the consequences to the US national interest of success or failure in Vietnam. In a broader context the United States would also have to judge the effect of its military and political actions in Southeast Asia upon its relations with its allies, with its potential enemies, and with neutral or uncommitted nations throughout the world.

Although President Johnson was resolved to prevent the seizure of the RVN by the communists, he believed that he needed more information and better answers to certain important questions before making these final judgments and the decisions that would logically follow. In early February, therefore, he sent a party headed by Mr. McGeorge Bundy, one of his most trusted advisors, to the RVN to talk with Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland. Bundy had been a prime mover in formulating such policy as had emerged from the November-December meetings in Washington. Bundy's instructions from the President called for a broad-ranging inquiry to evaluate relative capabilities and prospects of enemy and friendly forces, the effectiveness and progress of present US programs, the political situation in the RVN, and the actions that the United States might take outside of the RVN to influence the war favorably. With specific reference to actions against NVN, Bundy was to examine the feasibility of initial shallow penetrations by air into NVN, followed by actual attacks on targets, and to determine how this action should begin and what preliminary actions would be required.

Bundy's investigation had been carried out in RVN before the VC attack on Pleiku. He and the party returned to the United States immediately after this attack.

The Bundy Report-7 February 1965

Upon his return, Mr. Bundy gave the President advice which appears to have had significant effect on the President's decisions in the next few weeks and months.

Initially, Bundy gave his advice in a memorandum, telling the President the same things the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been telling him for several months--unless the United States did something soon, it was going to lose in Vietnam and it could not afford to lose. "The international prestige of the United States and a substantial part of our influence, are directly at risk in Vietnam," Bundy said. There was no way of unloading the burden on the Vietnamese or of negotiating a way out at present. A negotiated withdrawal would mean surrender "on the installment plan."[1]

Bundy had found great uncertainty among both Vietnamese and Americans in Vietnam. The Vietnamese were nervous about the sincerity of the United States; their political leaders were fearful, and their military leaders wary. The rank and file Vietnamese displayed a general lassitude and a lack of commitment or purpose. As to the Americans, the morale of junior officers was sustained by their demanding tasks and dedication. The senior officials, on the other hand, bore heavy responsibilities and Bundy noted "one can sense the inner doubts of men whose outward behaviour remains determined." Bundy took some heart in a slowly rising effectiveness of the RVNAF and in the resilience of the Vietnamese people who, though war-weary, were anxious not to fall under communist domination.

He had, in spite of a careful examination of the political scene, come away with mixed judgments. In the short run, the current interim government was strong enough to allow the United States to take its immediate military reprisals and other actions. At a longer range, to support broader and more meaningful programs to unify the country, a stronger government would have to be created. Ambassador Taylor and Mission

1. (~~TS~~) Memo for the Pres from McGeorge Bundy, "Re The Situation in Vietnam," 7 Feb 65, OCJCS Vietnam Special File, Black Notebook.

personnel felt that Khanh was dangerous, could not be trusted, and would fail eventually. They believed also that the Buddhists were dangerous and would have to be faced down, if necessary militarily. The Buddhists, if they kept their power, would unseat any government that did not bow to their demands. Bundy said of these views, "We tend to differ with the mission on both counts." Bundy saw no one else than Khanh in sight who could combine military authority with some sense of politics. The Buddhists would have to be incorporated in the affairs of the GVN rather than be eliminated.

If, by reprisals, the immediate situation in RVN could be saved, the most important order of business for the United States would be the establishment of an improved and broadened pacification program, particularly the nonmilitary elements. Bundy felt that, because of the predominant role of the US military, "and because of the generous spirit and broad mind" of General Westmoreland, military units, particularly Special Forces, might play a much more important role in pacification than in the past.

"The prospect of Vietnam is grim," Mr. Bundy warned the President. "The energy and persistence of the Viet Cong are astonishing. They can appear anywhere--and at almost any time. They have accepted extraordinary losses and they come back for more. They show skill in their sneak attacks and ferocity when cornered. Yet the weary country does not want them to win." The United States must take every chance to convince the Vietnamese people of the firmness of its commitment to them. For this "overriding reason" Mr. Bundy now recommended a policy of sustained reprisal against NVN. "Once such a policy is put in force, we shall be able to speak in Vietnam on many topics and in many ways, with growing force and effectiveness," Bundy said.

He warned that the struggle would be long and that it was important to make this clear to the people of the United States and to the people of the RVN. "Too often in the past we have conveyed the impression that we expect an early solution when those who live with this war know that no early solution is possible," he said.

Mr. Bundy, speaking for the group who had accompanied him to RVN as well as himself, then told the President that the best available way of increasing the United States' chances of success in Vietnam was to carry out a policy of "sustained reprisal" against NVN by launching air and naval

attacks against that nation. He pointed out that it would be costly and risky to follow this course, but cost and risk could be accepted. The United States might have to attack the whole air defense system of NVN. "US casualties would be higher--and more visible to American feelings--than those sustained in the struggle in South Vietnam," he added. When compared to the costs to the United States of being defeated in RVN, however, the program would be cheap. It was not sure-fire. It might fail. But in Bundy's view the United States should make the effort.[2]

These reprisals should be carried out in partnership with the GVN, keyed initially to specific acts of violence such as the Pleiku incident. Once the program was launched, however, it could be continued without relating it to any specific enemy act. It must be made clear to Hanoi and to the world that the United States was not out to destroy or conquer NVN. Reprisals would stop when provocation stopped. The program should be preceded by world-wide explanation of its purpose, but once bombing began publicity should be kept to a minimum.

The bombing of NVN should begin at a low level, increasing only gradually, indeed, decreasing if the VC seemed to be responding by reducing their terrorism in the RVN. The object was not to "win" the war against Hanoi, but to influence favorably the war in the RVN. This course of action bore with it, however, a risk of greatly increased VC terrorism and possibly greater involvement by Hanoi and Communist China.

Bundy also stated that the attack against Pleiku had created an ideal opportunity for the prompt development and execution of sustained reprisals. Among the "major necessary steps" he suggested to the President were: 1) complete the evacuation of dependents, 2) deploy necessary supporting forces for contingency plans, 3) initiate joint planning with GVN on both civil and military level, 4) take necessary diplomatic steps, 5) publicly renew US commitment to its programs in RVN.

2. (TS) Annex A to Memo, Bundy for the Pres, 7 Feb 65, same file.

The Eight Week Program

At a meeting at the White House on 8 February, Bundy discussed his proposals with the President and his other chief advisors. All present, including the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, agreed that the United States should now embark on a program of sustained actions against lower risk targets in the southern part of NVN. Mr. Bundy put it in terms of starting off with what looked like reprisals and then expanding the program as appropriate. The President approved this approach. After the meeting, however, the Secretary of Defense told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that there was some "leeway" in the Presidential approval and that what was now needed was a program with specific bombing actions that the President could approve.

He asked for a program covering eight weeks, designed as reprisal actions against NVN/VC provocations, with two or three attacks scheduled each week. The Secretary also stipulated that he be given a list of those types of provocative incidents that could be used as reasons for initiating the program, that large-scale air deployments be made to PACOM to support the program or its aftermath, that the security of RVN bases be taken into account, and that plans be made to counter any NVN/CHICOM ground intervention. Only in case of NVN/CHICOM air intervention would attacks be made against the communist MIG base at Phuc Yen. He also directed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff plan for VNAF participation in the attacks on NVN.3

In readying their proposals the JCS used the detailed, in-depth plans, including target lists, that had been under preparation for months within the Joint Staff and at CINCPAC's headquarters. They considered also the views of Ambassador Taylor, who had been clearly heartened by the reprisals of 7-8 February and had immediately asked for more. Ambassador Taylor, who agreed with Bundy that the current reprisals had established a good foundation for other bombing, told the Secretary of State on 9 February that the bombing should be part of a measured and controlled series of actions against NVN, taken in reprisal for its intervention in the RVN with the objective of forcing an end to such intervention. He wanted VNAF pilots to participate with US flyers in attacks

3. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-100-65 to SecDef, 11 Feb 65 (derived from JCS 2339/169), JMF 9155 (10 Feb 65).

against purely military targets. In line with Bundy's recommendation, Taylor suggested that "reprisals" could be mounted against any general catalog or package of VC/NVN acts in the RVN and not necessarily in response to some particularly grave act. Taylor considered that the US response would be tantamount to the "so-called Phase II escalation" but "justified on the basis of retaliation."[4]

Taylor concluded by saying ". . . I believe a Phase II program based largely on graduated reprisals offers the best available means of exerting increased pressure on the DRV leaders to induce them to cease their intervention in SVN, while at the same time being more manageable in terms of domestic and international opinion and with our friends. I recommend that we proceed along this track."

In developing the eight week program the Joint Staff progressed swiftly because of the work already accomplished on targeting, deployments, and other support requirements. Some differences arose over the deployments necessary to support the eight week program. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force originally proposed to deploy 15 additional squadrons to the Western Pacific. The Chief of Staff of the Army considered this an excessive number, inconsistent with the NVN/CHICOM threat and the scope of air operations visualized for the first eight weeks of operations. There were, said General Johnson, already 865 US aircraft in the Western Pacific and the USAF was capable of deploying very rapidly if the need arose. He believed, therefore, that an additional nine squadrons would be sufficient to the mission at hand. The Chief of Staff of the Army did not agree either that the concurrent ground force deployments being proposed would be adequate. One US infantry division was required in northeast Thailand, as a minimum, with a second division in the same area advisable.[5]

4. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2445 to State, 9 Feb 65, JCS IN 19338.

5. (TS-GP 1) CSAM-58-65 to JCS, 10 Feb 65; (TS) Army flimsy, unnumbered, n.d., tabled by CSA, 10 Feb 65, 1400; JMF 9155 (10 Feb 65).

Compromise solutions were worked out on these points, and at their meeting on 10 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the eight week program prepared by the Joint Staff.[6]

The program of military actions which the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary in a memorandum on 11 February was primarily a plan of air strikes, but it also provided for naval gunfire bombardment, continuation of covert operations, resumption of DESOTO Patrols, and cross-border ground operations into Laos.[7]

The Air Strikes

The bombings in NVN which the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed were against targets located south of the 19th Parallel. They also proposed, however, armed reconnaissance of Route 7 in NVN close to the Laotian border. These air attacks were scheduled for the first eight weeks at the rate of four fixed targets per week. Armed reconnaissance would be flown over two road segments each week. All targets proposed were military in nature and were taken from the JCS 94 Target List. The estimated number of sorties required for each target, either with tactical or strategic bombers, was also provided Secretary McNamara. Fixed targets were barracks or storage depots and areas, with a few LOC targets, such as bridges, included.

In order to support these attacks, to provide security for strike forces, to deter aggression by NVN or CHICOM forces, and to improve US readiness to "cope with possible escalation," the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the immediate deployment of the following: 1) 9 additional Tactical Fighter Squadrons (TFS) from the CONUS to WESTPAC; 2) 30 B-52 bombers from CONUS to Guam; 3) one Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) consisting

6. (TS-GP 1) Briefing Sheet, J-3 for CJCS "JCS 2339/169-Courses of Action Southeast Asia - First Eight Weeks (S)"; (TS-GP 1) SM-140-65 to JCS, 11 Feb 65; (TS-GP 1) Dec On Rpt, J-3 to JCS "Courses of Action Southeast Asia - First Eight Weeks (S)," 12 Feb 65 (derived from JCS 2339/169); JMF 9155 (10 Feb 65) secs 1 and 2.

7. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-100-65 to SecDef, (derived from JCS 2339/169) 11 Feb 65, JMF 9155 (10 Feb 65).

of a Regimental Landing Team (RLT) and a Marine Air Group (MAG) from Okinawa and Japan to Da Nang; 4) one US Army Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division from Hawaii to Thailand; 5) a fourth CVA to the Western Pacific; 6) one MEB from Hawaii to WESTPAC; 7) the necessary combat support and service support units outlined in CINCPAC 39-65 to support the above forces. At the same time a US Army Airborne Brigade, the 173d, should be alerted for shipment to Vietnam. The 3d MEF (-) and the 25th Infantry Division (-) should be kept in an advanced state of readiness with the necessary amphibious and sealift prepositioned and airlift alerted. Remaining forces contained in CINCPAC plans 32-64 and 39-65 should also be alerted.

The Chief of Staff of the Army agreed with the recommended deployments as far as they went. But he wanted additional ground forces--at least one US infantry division and, preferably, two,--moved to northeast Thailand. General Wheeler supported the strike program and the recommended deployment. But he was not sure that the deployment problem had been examined carefully enough, and proposed that, once the forces recommended had reached their stations, additional deployments should be studied as a matter of priority. The Secretary of Defense was informed that such a study was already taking place.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff listed in detail the forces which should be deployed, as a minimum, in the event a large-scale intervention by NVN or CHICOM forces took place. These were the forces called for in CINCPAC contingency plans. In conjunction with the military actions recommended in the current eight week program, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that operations already taking place should be continued and, where feasible, intensified.

They told Mr. McNamara that their proposals would demonstrate to NVN that it had better mend its ways or face "more serious punishment." And they suggested that if Hanoi did not show some inclination to lessen its support of the VC and the PL even after being bombed, the United States should extend its bombing north of the 19th Parallel, intensifying the bombing if necessary.[8]

8. Ibid.

While making the point that the program would be initiated in response to enemy activities of a provocative nature, the Joint Chiefs of Staff foresaw that the need for such justification would lessen. "As this program continues," they told the Secretary of Defense, "the realistic need for precise event-association in this reprisal context will progressively diminish." They did however include the list of examples of provocative acts which might trigger the program since he had asked for it specifically.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff predicted that Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow would "make every effort through propaganda and diplomatic moves to halt the US attacks." Hanoi would do everything possible to defend itself, perhaps even launching overt attacks against RVN and Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not foresee any immediate lessening of VC attacks. But if the United States were able to resist the almost certain international pressures and to ignore communist threats of escalation, chances would improve that Hanoi would reduce its support of the VC. US attacks on NVN would probably cause Communist China reluctantly to take some dramatic action such as sending in "volunteers," a la Korea 1950. The Soviets, in addition to strong diplomatic and propaganda efforts, would almost certainly provide NVN some form of military support such as antiaircraft artillery and radars. There was an even chance that Russia would send in SAM's (SA-2) along with "technicians." If China and Russia went further and started open aggressive action, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured Secretary McNamara that "the United States and its allies can deal with them adequately."

These recommendations of 11 February by the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not exceed, but merely reinforced, the strong recommendations they had made in November for action against NVN. In certain respects, such as targeting, these latest proposals were more specific; in other respects--bombing of Phuc Yen and weight of effort, for example--less comprehensive. Their proposals were not approved at once or in detail, but, complementing as they did the proposals by Bundy and Taylor, were reflected both in short-range and longer-range actions directed by the President in the days and weeks that followed.

Commenting on the need for a stronger and more positive military program against NVN, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed CINCPAC on the same day the JCS memorandum went forward to the Secretary that he did not like the impression being created generally that the

United States was responding only to VC "spectaculars" against Americans. He was opposed to letting the intermittent attacks against NVN slip into the "tit-for-tat" pattern. Any concept which limited the United States to a particular type of retaliatiory action or in the timing and location of strikes, would automatically hand the initiative to Hanoi and color world opinion against the United States. "Our objective," he told Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland on 11 February, "is to move to a concept of 'sustained reprisals' which will permit us to apply military pressures in the manner and at times and places of our choosing. We must build a bridge between 'tit-for-tat,' and 'sustained reprisal.'" This bridge was already being built and was the path by which the United States crossed from Pleiku and Qui Nhon to ROLLING THUNDER.[9]

ROLLING THUNDER

On 12 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC to develop "as a matter of urgency" reprisal plans which had three attack options: Option I - Vu Con Barracks, Quang Khe Naval Base, Xom Bang Ammo Depot; Option II - Option I plus Phu Van Supply Depot, Vinh Son Supply Depot, Phu Qui Ammo Depot; Option III - Option II plus Thanh Hoa Bridge, Thien Linh Dong Support, Phu Van Ammo Depot E. Certain weather-alternate targets included radar sites, barracks and an airfield. On 16 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved for planning purposes a somewhat different group of options covering generally the same targets but in a different order of priority.[10] Slightly later on the same day the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to CINCPAC the "illustrative 8-week program of military action against low risk targets in North Vietnam," which they said was being "discussed at the highest levels." This was the air strike program that they had recommended to the Secretary of Defense on 11 February. Admitting that this program was intended only as a guide and could well be drastically revised, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told CINCPAC that they were interested in interdicting the Hanoi-Vinh railway, roads, highway bridges, ferries and radar and telecommunication facilities. "From our preliminary analysis," they said, "we

9. (TS) JCS 0531-65 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 11 Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 65.

10. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 5095 to CINCPAC, 12 Feb 65; 5332, 16 Feb 65.

have concluded that the LOC net should not be attacked until we are authorized to go to the 20th Parallel, but the program on this category of target should be initiated early before AA defenses increase." They wanted no piecemeal attacks on the radars and telecommunications, but a complete, systematic and integrated attack.[11]

On 13 February the Department of State informed Ambassador Taylor that the President had approved a program of "measured and limited" air actions to be carried out jointly with the GVN against selected military targets in NVN. For the time being these targets would all be located south of the 19th Parallel. It was expected that these attacks would take place only once or twice a week with two or three targets being hit on each day of operations.[12]

Concurrent with US bombing of the North an approach would be made to the United Nations to make clear that Hanoi was the aggressor and that the United States was "ready and eager" for talks to bring the aggression in RVN to an end. Ambassador Taylor was instructed to go at once to the GVN and seek its agreement to the US program. Anticipating, perhaps, some reluctance on the part of the GVN to come out publicly in favor of negotiating an end to the war, the State Department reminded Taylor to assure the RVN that this was actually for the purposes of putting the GVN/US side in a stronger diplomatic position than would be the case if they waited for a third party to urge them to the conference table. He could tell the GVN that the United States was determined to continue with its military actions regardless of any Security Council deliberations or ensuing "talks" unless and until Hanoi brought its aggression to an end. "Our demand will be that they cease infiltration and all forms of support and also the activity they are directing in the South," the Department of State explained.

ROLLING THUNDER Falters

In direct extension of the planning message calling for reprisal strikes that had gone to CINCPAC on 16 February, the

11. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5349 to CINCPAC, 16 Feb 65.
12. (TS) Msg, State 1718 to Saigon, 13 Feb 65.

Joint Chiefs of Staff on 18 February sent him an execute order directing US air strikes on 20 February against Quang Khe Naval Base and, if weather forced a transfer of targets, against Vinh Linh and Vit Thu Barracks. The RVNAF with US support would strike Vu Con Barracks or, if weathered out, Dong Hoi airfield. The nickname of this reprisal strike was to be ROLLING THUNDER I (RT I).[13]

A coup d'etat against the GVN began at 1300 Saigon time on 19 February. Among the developments connected with this abortive attempt to seize power, General Ky, standing by General Khanh for the moment, threatened to use the RVNAF to bomb Tan Son Nhut airbase where rebel forces were concentrated. General Westmoreland prevailed upon Ky in "the strongest terms" to "put aside such nonsense." Although the coup fell through and the RVNAF did not bomb its own fields, it was obvious that bombing NVN on 20 February was now out of the question. Admiral Sharp called Washington on 19 February and recommended the postponement of ROLLING THUNDER I. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with his recommendation and the Joint Chiefs of Staff called off RT I on the same day.[14]

Because of the postponement General Wheeler asked CINCPAC if he felt the operation had been compromised and whether or not targets for US strikes should be changed. CINCPAC, however, considered it highly unlikely that US targets had been compromised by the delay.[15]

The strikes were rescheduled for Monday, 22 February, and a warning order for RT II was sent to CINCPAC on 20 February.[16] On the next day RT II was slipped back to 23 February. One day later, because the effects of the coup still lingered, RT II was postponed to 24 February.[17] On 23 February COMUSMACV

13. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5555 to CINCPAC, 18 Feb 65.
14. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2654 and 2671 to State, 19 Feb 65; (TS-GP 3) JCS 5572 to CINCPAC, 19 Feb 65.
15. (TS) NMCC Telecon, Wheeler to Sharp and Westmoreland, item 004, 191542Z Feb 65.
16. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5606 to CINCPAC, 20 Feb 65.
17. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5700 to CINCPAC, 22 Feb 65.

learned that the RVNAF was still on alert. His air staff notified him that the VNAF pilots were not in acceptable physical condition to fly in RT II and recommended a 24 hour postponement. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, upon being advised by General Westmoreland, changed the execution date again to 25 February.[18]

On 24 February RT II was cancelled and a new mission, RT III, substituted for execution on 26 February. This mission was, in turn, cancelled and RT IV directed on the same date.[19] These two cancellations stemmed from bad weather conditions over the target area. A modification to the RT IV warning order was directed on 26 February with strikes set for 27 February.[20] With dreary monotony a further change in the date of RT IV was directed on 26 February and the air strikes ordered for Sunday, 28 February.[21]

On 27 February General Wheeler notified Admiral Sharp that at a meeting with the President on the evening of 26 February it had been recognized that RT IV probably could not be executed on 27 February because of bad weather. However, the bombings would take place on 28 February or as soon thereafter as weather permitted. On the same day he told Admiral Sharp that he would be receiving shortly a new warning order for a strike to be executed at first daylight on 1 March. He did not believe that the strike would take place because higher authority would cancel it owing to a communist conclave to begin in Moscow on that same day. It could well be postponed to 2 or 3 March. The Chairman noted also that ". . . we propose to use B-52's against U.S. primary target, Xom Bang Ammo depot."[22]

On 28 February still more changes took place with the date of the attack being changed to 1 March and, later in the day, to 2 March. The designation of the operation was changed

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18. (TS-GP 3) NMCC Telecon, COMUSMACV to JCS, 230945Z Feb 65; (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5711 to CINCPAC, 23 Feb 65.
19. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 5776 and 5791 to CINCPAC, 24 Feb 65.
20. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5948 to CINCPAC, 26 Feb 65.
21. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6048 to CINCPAC, 26 Feb 64.
22. (TS) Msg, JCS 0736-65 to CINCPAC, 27 Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 65. (TS) Msg, CJCS unnumbered to CINCPAC, 27 Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

to RT V and the primary US target changed from Quang Khe Naval Base to Xom Bang Ammo Depot. The VNAF was assigned the naval base as a primary target.[23]

Aerial reconnaissance in support of the proposed ROLLING THUNDER program was authorized for planning purposes on 26 February under the nickname BLUE TREE. CINCPAC was told that he should start plans for conducting medium level reconnaissance using six aircraft, mainly along key transportation routes south of the 19th Parallel in NVN. On the next day authorization to execute the reconnaissance flights concurrently and in conjunction with RT IV was sent to CINCPAC by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This authority was extended to RT V.[24]

The execute order for the first RT strike actually conducted against NVN, RT V, was issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 March. CINCPAC was authorized to strike the designated targets on 2 March "during daylight hours . . . if, but only if, US and VNAF primary targets can both be struck." If weathered out, "execute strikes against primary or alternate targets during daylight" on the following day. CINCSAC was at the same time advised that his B-52 forces would not take part in the strikes against NVN but that rather the PACOM forces, USAF planes from Thailand bases, would be used. The operations from these fields would be coordinated with the US Ambassador in Thailand. Optional ordnance, excluding napalm, would be used against the ammunition depot and the naval base.[25]

The first ROLLING THUNDER strike was carried out successfully on 2 March with 111 USAF planes and 19 VNAF planes attacking Xom Bang Ammo Depot and Quang Khe Naval Base respectively. The US strikes destroyed at least 75 percent of the depot with the VNAF strikes accounting for at least two gunboats at the naval base. Both forces encountered heavy antiaircraft fire. The VNAF lost 1 A-1H while the USAF lost two F-100s and three F-105s.[26]

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23. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 6069 and 6075 to CINCPAC, 28 Feb 65.
24. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 5959 to CINCPAC, 26 Feb 65; JCS 6043, 27 Feb 65; JCS 6071, 28 Feb 65.
25. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6091 to CINCPAC, 1 Mar 65.
26. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 49-65 and 50-65, 2 and 3 Mar 65.

Command and Relationship Problems

The complex nature of what Admiral Sharp had called a "joint and combined operation" posed many problems for US planners, not the least of which was the special relationship of COMUSMACV with the VNAF. In recognition of this, General Westmoreland, on the eve of RT V, had posed some interesting, speculative questions to General Wheeler and Admiral Sharp, more by way of bringing the problem to their attention than in expectation of any quick or easy solution. He pointed out for example that it would be most difficult to continue the "pretext of partnership" with the GVN if target selection, attack timing and force levels for the VNAF were decided in Washington. It was essential that the GVN have a sense of substantive participation in the attack planning and that there be a mutual spirit of trust between the respective planners and commanders. "How can one rationalize a Washington decision that the VNAF will be limited to 16 strike aircraft on a given target when General Ky judges 24 the proper number?" General Westmoreland asked.[27]

He wanted to know also how much authority he had to disclose strike information to the VNAF commanders through the 2d Air Division and for telling the VNAF of warning orders with respect to US plans and intentions. He pointed out that that the VNAF had some things to do themselves before taking off on strikes. They should be notified at least 24 hours in advance of TOT as a minimum and, more desirable yet, they should be given planning details 48 hours in advance. GVN planners should have a comprehensive picture of the entire operation of which they were to be a part within not less than 24 hours.

On the matter of cancellations of strike because of weather, a very important factor in view of the heavy rains common to Vietnam during the monsoon season, General Westmoreland wanted to be granted the authority to go or not to go locally. Washington decisions on weather, which was many thousands of miles away and which could change more swiftly than communications could keep up with it, seemed to him wasteful and sometimes dangerous. He also asked if there

27. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 1061 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 1 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

were some way "in which procedures and delegation of authority can be combined" to reduce the fatigue factor for highly placed commanders in Vietnam. Under current rules these men had to be constantly on the alert, which was nonproductive over the long pull. "At this end of the line," he said, "this situation inhibits vital trips to the field by myself and my key staff, repeatedly interrupts other equally essential work on pacification and counterinsurgency matters, and induces an unnecessary degree of stress on senior officials here who on one hand want to leave no stone unturned in preparation for reprisals, and on the other, want to minimize nonproductive preparations in operational units occasioned by changing plans."

COMUSMACV asked also what possible initiative he might have in Saigon with respect to "orchestrating" the graduated reprisal program with the actions being taken against NVN in other programs such as BARREL ROLL and OPLAN 34A actions. In these latter programs the decision to take actions was made in Washington or Honolulu with the "how" being left to COMUSMACV. "Experience indicates that the more remote the authority which directs how a mission is to be accomplished, the more we are vulnerable to mishaps resulting from such things as incomplete briefings and preparation, loss of tactical flexibility and lack of tactical coordination."

General Wheeler made a personal, immediate reply to Westmoreland, telling him that "we here recognize the policy and procedural difficulties" imposed on COMUSMACV and on the GVN by the "close control of ROLLING THUNDER exercised by Washington." For this reason General Wheeler did not intend to try to answer the several questions but to address the whole range of problems by assuring Westmoreland that the JCS and the Secretary of Defense were doing their best to clear away the hindrances and restrictions. He wanted COMUSMACV to be very clear on the point that there were "sizable and vexing" domestic and international political problems inherent in US military operations against NVN. Washington authorities were having to steer a careful course which would lead to the greatest possible effect on the enemy both in and out of RVN while keeping at a minimum the chances of bringing the Chinese Communist into open battle. The weather, Mr. Kosygin's visit to Hanoi, and the international communist conference taking place in Moscow had increased the difficulty of the existing

political problems and had adversely affected the ROLLING THUNDER program.[28]

As to the future, General Wheeler reminded General Westmoreland that when BARREL ROLL and YANKEE TEAM had first started they too were subjected to over-restrictive caveats. But as time went on many of these restrictions were lifted. The JCS were working toward setting up for ROLLING THUNDER a procedure similar to that employed in BARREL ROLL and YANKEE TEAM, with a previously approved bank of targets from which commanders in the field, using their own special knowledge of weather and operational factors could choose targets to strike. "In this connection," the Chairman stated, "it is most important to get off this next ROLLING THUNDER to break what seems to be a psychological/political log jam."

Use of Napalm

In the early missions against NVN napalm was not authorized. Even before the first RT strike was authorized, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force objected, on 17 February, that this restriction deprived US airmen of a very useful and legitimate weapon. He pointed out that US planes would be safest coming in at low altitudes and that in this situation, napalm was extremely effective. It could reduce the number of sorties needed to destroy "soft" targets such as parked aircraft, buildings, vehicles, unprotected personnel, fuel storage areas and radar-directed antiaircraft sites. Napalm was already being used against the VC in RVN and he felt that it should be used against targets in NVN.[29]

The State Department was known to oppose the use of napalm in Southeast Asia, basing its opposition on the idea that napalm was a terror weapon and that adverse reaction resulted from both friendly and neutral governments because of its use. For example, napalm was not being used in Laos, largely at the behest of the British Government. The Chief of Staff of the Army suggested, however, that the time was appropriate to raise the issue of the use of napalm in NVN with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State.[30]

28. (TS) Msg, JCS 0739-65 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 1 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.
29. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM-B-80-65 to JCS 17 Feb 65, Att to JCS 2343/526, JMF 9155.3 (12 Feb 65).
30. (TS-GP 1) CSAM 66-65 to JCS, 12 Feb 65, Att to JCS 2343/526, same file.

In a memorandum embracing much of the information furnished them by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force on the use of napalm, its qualities and the techniques of its employment, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 25 February recommended to the Secretary of Defense that napalm be used against NVN. When CINCPAC determined that napalm would increase the effectiveness of the strike force and/or result in a lower probability of friendly losses, or that targets were so located that collateral damage to noncombatant life and property would be minimized, or that targets were particularly vulnerable to napalm, he should be authorized to use it.[31]

Secretary of Defense McNamara supported the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and on 9 March President Johnson approved the use of napalm in ROLLING THUNDER strikes against NVN.[32]

ROLLING THUNDER-Relaxation of Restrictions

From confused and modest beginnings ROLLING THUNDER, the controlled and selective bombing of military and military-associated targets in NVN, grew into one of the keystones of the US strategy for winning the war in Vietnam. It was to become also one of the prime issues in later acrimonious debate over US policy in Vietnam. Regardless of the precedent set by the Tonkin Gulf, Pleiku, and Qui Nhon reprisals, deliberate bombing, without waiting for a specific provocation, marked a definite change in US policy. Whether NVN leaders "got the message" that the United States was determined to stop their support of the insurgencies was not discernible from their reactions. Those who expected spectacular political reaction did not see it at once. During March the United States continued to bomb limited military targets in NVN. Hanoi did not quit, RVN did not join ranks behind its leaders, Red China did not intervene, Moscow did not sever relations with the United States, and the American public gave little sign that it appreciated the depth of the latest change in policy. Although tight restrictions remained a burden to

31. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-127-65 to SecDef, 25 Feb 65 (derived from JCS 2343/526-1), JMF 9155.3 (12 Feb 65).
32. (TS) Memo to SecDef from ASD(ISA) "Use of Napalm Against North Vietnamese Targets (U)," 9 Mar 65, w/marginal notation by SecDef, Att to JCS 2343/526-1, JMF 9155.3 (12 Feb 65).

ROLLING THUNDER, the trend toward gradual relaxation of the rules wherever possible became apparent early in the program..

On 9 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered CINCPAC to carry out RT 6 during daylight on 11 March. The primary US target was the Phu Qui Ammo Depot (#40) north of the 19th Parallel, the primary VNAF target the military barracks at Vit Thu Lu (#36). Two US weather alternates, three VNAF weather alternates were established. Weather interfered and RT 6 was set back to 13 March. Because General Ky said that his pilots were "not in operational posture" the bombing did not actually take place until 14 March.[33] However, US planes took part only in support of the VNAF strikes since the US primary target was weathered out and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had, in the meantime, ordered US commanders not to strike their alternate targets. On 15 March, US planes finally bombed their primary target, Phu Qui Ammunition Depot.[34]

By this time it was fairly apparent to everyone, including the enemy, that the US bombing program was controlled and that it was intended to be systematic. But it was proving to be far from a dynamic and stunning blow to the enemy. A combination of bad luck, an erratic ally, and long-range control had resulted in the expenditure of a great deal of effort and expense with only marginal results.

On 13 March Ambassador Taylor in a cable to the State Department criticized the decision to hold back the US effort on RT 6 until the primary target could be struck. He said ". . . we may be attaching too much importance to striking Target 40 because of its intrinsic military value as a target. If we support the thesis (as I do) that the really important target is the will of the leaders in Hanoi, virtually any target north of the 19th parallel will convey the necessary message at this juncture as well as Target 40. Meanwhile, through repeated delays we are failing to give the mounting crescendo to ROLLING THUNDER which is necessary to get the desired results."[35]

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33. ([redacted]) Msg, JCS 6703 to CINCPAC, 9 Mar 65. ([redacted]) Msg, JCS 7017 to CINCAL et al., 13 Mar 65.

34. ([redacted]-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7025 to CINCPAC, 13 Mar 65; ([redacted]-NORTHORN-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 7035 and 7042, to CINCAL et al., 15 Mar 65.

35. ([redacted]) Msg, Saigon 2949 to State, 13 Mar 65.

On the next day, the Chief of Staff of the Army, who had just returned from an inspection tour in RVN, told the Secretary of Defense "To date the tempo of punitive air strikes has been inadequate to convey a clear sense of U.S. purpose to the DRV." He called for an increase in the scope and tempo of US air strikes against NVN. He admitted that such action could escalate and broaden the war but it could also achieve the US objective of causing Hanoi to cease its support and direction of the VC.[36]

He also took action to secure the removal of some of the "self-imposed restrictions" on ROLLING THUNDER. He noted that these restrictions had severely reduced the effectiveness of air strikes and had made it impossible to approach the goal of four missions each week. The particular restrictions that he recommended be removed at once were: 1) the requirement that a US strike be conducted concurrently with a VNAF strike; 2) the requirement that US planes strike only the primary target; 3) the ban on use of classified ammunition; 4) the narrow geographical limits imposed on target selection; 5) the requirement to obtain specific Washington approval before striking alternate targets when primary targets were not available because of weather or other local conditions. The President, on 15 March, approved removal of these restrictions. However, the ban on classified ammunition was not automatically removed; each specific request from CINCPAC for use of classified ammunition would be reviewed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[37]

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed CINCPAC on 16 March that during the meeting with the President the day before it was "announced" that at present the United States would avoid operations in NVN that would be likely to result in air clashes with MIGs in the Hanoi area. General Wheeler interpreted this to mean that, for the time being, air strikes must not be mounted north of the 20th Parallel. On 16 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff modifed BLUE TREE instructions to read: "Conduct daily BLUE TREE type reconnaissance over NVN south of the 20th Parallel." They authorized combat air patrol (CAP) for these missions but directed

36. (TS) Memo, CSA to SecDef et al., no sub, with attached Report On Survey of the Military Situation in Vietnam 14 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65. See Ch. 19 for more on General Johnson's report and Presidential action thereon.

37. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-379-65 to CJCS, 27 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

that if MIG aircraft were sighted the mission would withdraw. Escorting fighters would engage the MIGs only if necessary to protect the reconnaissance planes.[38]

On 16 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to carry out the next block of ROLLING THUNDER strikes, RT 7, during daylight hours between 19 and 25 March. This marked a new feature of the program with strikes authorized on a weekly basis so that bombings could be executed any time during the seven day period during daylight. Another innovation introduced with RT 7 was the inclusion of authority for US and VNAF planes to perform armed route reconnaissance along selected, limited segments of Route 1 in NVN as well as striking designated primary or alternate fixed targets.[39]

General Johnson's return from RVN, his recommendations for improvement of the situation there, and the top-level meeting with the President on 15 March, gave a new impetus to ROLLING THUNDER planning. On 17 March the Chief of Staff of the Air Force pointed out that the President had expressed an "urgent desire" to reverse the trend of events in Southeast Asia. General McConnell took the position that this could be accomplished only by the immediate and more forceful application of US military power against NVN. He believed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff must come up with a method for attacking and destroying the "source of DRV strength," and he presented them with a plan developed by the USAF staff which would, he believed, accomplish this. This plan was basically an air and naval offensive to destroy vulnerable resources of the enemy outside RVN and a stepped up campaign in the RVN to destroy his strength there. Concentrated airstrikes would begin immediately in the southern part of NVN, then move northward at intervals of 2-6 days until Hanoi itself would be bombed. As these were taking place other forces would be deployed to Southeast Asia to secure the necessary logistic facilities and to support the ARVN in its counterinsurgency operations.[40]

38. (TS) Msg, JCS 0936-65 to CINCPAC, 16 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 65. (S-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7185 to CINCPAC, 16 Mar 65.
39. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7167 to CINCPAC, 16 Mar 67.
40. (S-GP 1) CSAFM J-78-65 to JCS, 17 Mar 65, JCS 2343/549, JMF 9155.3 (17 Mar 65).

Before action could be taken on the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's memorandum, the Secretary of Defense, in discussion with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 20 March, asked that a 12 week air-strike program be developed for his consideration. He directed that air attacks on NVN be planned to avoid heavily populated areas and that they avoid direct attacks against airfields in NVN. The J-3 developed such a program and briefed the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and visiting Admiral Sharp, on 22 March.

After studying the proposed 12 week program at greater length, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 27 March that they did not subscribe to all of the Joint Staff's recommendations. The initial phase of the proposed program called for three weeks of interdiction of NVN LOCs south of the 20th Parallel, including the destruction of key bridges and intense armed reconnaissance. The second phase called for interdiction strikes north of the 20th Parallel, including strikes against radar and LOC targets in depth throughout NVN north of the 20th Parallel.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary that, while they were willing to recommend the staff's proposals for bombing NVN LOCs south of the 20th Parallel during the third, fourth and fifth week of the on-going program, they had definite reservations for the remaining weeks in which US planes would strike more deeply into NVN. They had instead directed a study of alternatives for a follow-on bombing program beginning with the sixth week.

Reflecting COMUSMACV's views on the need for better procedures and greater delegation of authority, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense that they believed the operational commander must have "flexibility in the execution of this military program in order to achieve a high degree of effectiveness." They affirmed that it was important that the field commander be able to detect and exploit targets of opportunity through frequent random reconnaissance operations.41

Earlier, the JCS had agreed that the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's concept for bombing NVN should be referred

41. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-221-65 to SecDef, 27 Mar 65 (derived from JCS 2343/551), JMF 9155.3 (17 Mar 65).

to the Service planners for consideration during the development of a proposed program of "optimum military actions" against NVN to follow the completion of the current remaining five weeks of bombing NVN. The J-3 should also consider the paper in his consideration of alternatives for a "follow-on program of air strikes" beginning with the 6th week of ROLLING THUNDER.[42]

In extension of this planning the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked CINCPAC for his views on 27 March. On 3 April, Admiral Sharp recommended a wide-ranging armed reconnaissance program sustained at the maximum feasible level of sorties, as well as strikes against important and varied types of targets south of 20° N. Further, he proposed that after completion of this program, operations be extended north against meaningful military targets, but avoiding the Hanoi and Haiphong areas.[43]

His views were considered along with those of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force in the preparation of a proposed memorandum for the Secretary of Defense. The draft memorandum by the Joint Staff included a proposal for a four week program of increasing intensity that would have moved the air strike effort north of the 20° N by 30 April and would include an attack on the important POL storage areas at Haiphong.

The Chief of Staff of the Army, however, took strong exception to the memorandum. While he agreed that the scope and intensity of US air strikes should increase, he wanted more gradual increases and particularly did not want strikes moved above 20° N "during this time period." Too little time had gone by to evaluate properly the results and effects of ROLLING THUNDER. And he was more than a little concerned over the possibilities of invoking Chinese intervention by operations close to the Chinese border. "I believe that frequent and random day and night armed reconnaissance below the 20th Parallel designed to insure maximum interdiction and disruption of the LOC into Laos and RVN should be the key element of the air strike

42. (TS) Amended Note to Control Div, "JCS 2343/549 - Concept for North Viet Nam (U)," 26 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (17 Mar 65).

43. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/551-1, 14 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (17 Mar 65). (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 040304Z Apr 65, JCS IN 91149.

program," the Chief of Staff of the Army declared. The Joint Chiefs of Staff referred the staff report to the J-3 as an input for further studies and did not send the proposed memorandum to the Secretary of Defense.[44]

The USAF and USN attacks against primary targets in RT 7 were launched as scheduled on 19 March with other attacks by the VNAF and the route armed reconnaissance taking place in the ensuing week.

US planners turned their attention to the enemy's radar systems in RT 8, which was scheduled for the period 26 March-1 April. The primary targets that CINCPAC was authorized on 24 March comprised a package of radar sites to be struck by US aircraft. Destruction of enemy radar systems and installations could pave the way for expanded bombing at lower cost. The VNAF was assigned barracks and an airfield as targets. Additionally, US pilots were authorized to carry out armed reconnaissance against NVN patrol craft along the coast of NVN and around the offshore islands of Hon Matt and Ile du Tigre. VNAF armed reconnaissance was authorized along a portion of Route 12.[45] CINCPAC made an effort to improve the efficiency of the scheduled VNAF strikes by requesting authority to send reconnaissance planes over VNAF targets before the strikes. The Joint Chiefs of Staff lacked authority to give him this permission. They therefore turned down his request but assured him that they would attempt to secure such approval in future RT programs. On the other hand, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had secured authority for low-level reconnaissance of the radar targets to be struck by US planes and had passed it on to CINCPAC.[46]

The strikes against the radar sites continued over a period of several days and, after only limited success in the first strikes, succeeded in destroying part of the enemy's radar system. The VNAF made a highly successful strike against Dong Hoi airfield in their part of RT 8. US pilots accompanying the VNAF in a support role took occasion on the flight back from the target area to sink several NVN boats.[47]

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44. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/551-1, 14 Apr 65; 1st N/H of JCS 2343/551-1, 20 Apr 65; JMF 9155.3 (17 Mar 65).
45. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7672 to CINCPAC, 24 Mar 65.
46. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 7699 to CINCPAC, 24 Mar 65; CINCPAC to JCS, 251321Z Mar 65; JCS 7787 to CINCPAC, 25 Mar 65; CINCPAC to JCS, 240900Z Mar 65.
47. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 28-31 Mar 65.

Ambassador Taylor, who visited Washington, D. C. in the last few days of March, observed to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the tempo of ROLLING THUNDER had now reached a "good" level. He believed that target detection should move north and work back and forth across the various target systems. He stated that a program of low-level reconnaissance should be started to build up a bank of current intelligence in advance of the strikes. The Ambassador also said that Haiphong harbor should be mined by the VNAF at an early date. He also wanted a "prestige" bridge at Thanh Hoa destroyed by bombing, with other bridges connecting NVN with Communist China also being struck eventually. He did not believe that MIGs at Phuc Yen had the capability to interfere with ROLLING THUNDER to the extent that had been estimated. Secretary of Defense McNamara agreed with Ambassador Taylor on the need for low-level reconnaissance and directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to collaborate with his office in developing a blanket request for CINCPAC to conduct unescorted, low-level reconnaissance anywhere in NVN. Among the guidelines which he furnished was the dictum that the reconnaissance planes must avoid the MIG patrol areas, Hanoi, and Haiphong. He agreed that in about 4 to 12 weeks the mining of Haiphong harbor should have become "politically feasible," and in about 12 weeks he hoped to secure agreement on bombing the two main bridges connecting NVN with China. He felt that this would bring very strong pressure on NVN.[48]

In a general assessment of ROLLING THUNDER, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed the Secretary of Defense on 6 April that these air strikes had not reduced the overall military capabilities of NVN in "any major way." The attacks had destroyed some Army supplies and ammunition stocks but had not inflicted any critical loss on the NVN capability for military operations. General Wheeler believed that the most damaging blow had been the destruction of the bridges at Thanh Hoa, Dong Phuong, and Dong Hoi, which slowed down logistical support of the southern portion of NVN. He felt that further strikes against LOCs leading south of the 29th Parallel would cause a "serious stricture" to NVN logistical support to the south, including that sent into RVN and Laos.

48. (TS) Note to Control Div, "The Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense with Ambassador Taylor (U)," 29 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

The enemy in NVN was building up his air defense, thereby increasing his costs in manpower and detracting from his economy. Outwardly, however, the NVN government appeared to be uninfluenced by US/VNAF air strikes. "In summary," General Wheeler told the Secretary of Defense, "I think it is fair to state that our strikes to date, while damaging, have not curtailed DRV military capabilities in any major way. The same is true as regards the North Vietnamese economy. The North Vietnamese people exhibit an understandable degree of apprehension for the future. The Hanoi Government continues to maintain, at least publicly, stoical determination."

49. (TS) CM-534-65 to SecDef, 6 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (3 Apr 65).

Chapter 19

LIMITED DEPLOYMENT OF US FORCES

Protecting US bases and installation in the RVN against enemy attack, long a matter of concern to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had become even more urgent with the launching of the first bombing reprisals against NVN. As decisions for even greater pressures against NVN were taken in February 1965, culminating in ROLLING THUNDER, the security of the US bases and forces in the RVN caused growing anxiety at high levels of the US Government and resulted in progressively more positive actions to insure the safety and integrity of the US military establishment in the South.

Steps to Improve Security of US Forces

In connection with the Tonkin Gulf reprisals, US officials had considered sending combat troops to the RVN specifically to protect US bases and personnel. General Westmoreland had rejected the idea, holding that too many US battalions would be needed to secure adequately all major US installations in RVN. The presence of large numbers of US troops might cause the GVN to lose interest in defending bases and to relax even further its already lax security measures. Moreover, there would be language and jurisdiction problems.[1]

By February 1965, however, General Westmoreland had changed his mind. The deepening pattern of VC violence directed specifically at US forces and installations, dramatized by the major attack against Pleiku, had convinced him that the war had reached a new plateau--one on which Americans were in great danger. ARVN control in three of the four Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ) was deteriorating rapidly. On 9 February COMUSMACV stated that it might be necessary to send in US combat forces of at least division strength to protect US personnel and

1. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-121-65 to SecDef 20 Feb 65 (derived from JCS 2343/525-1), JMF 9155.3 (11 Feb 65). A study by the Army Staff estimated that 44 battalions, or 4 plus divisions, would be needed to defend the 240 US bases, large and small in RVN.

installations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately pressed for precise judgments on the number and types of US troops that would be needed.[2]

General Westmoreland informed Admiral Sharp and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 17 February that the United States could no longer count on the RVNAF to protect US installations and personnel. He listed, in priority, those areas where US combat forces were needed: 1) Da Nang; 2) the Saigon/Bien Hoa/Vung Tau complex; and 3) the Nha Trang/Cam Ranh Bay area. Admiral Sharp agreed with the judgment and so informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[3]

Both commanders considered the US base at Da Nang to be the keystone of the US effort against NVN. Such programs as YANKEE TEAM, BARREL ROLL, and the OPLAN 34A depended heavily on this base for support. CINCPAC called it a likely target for the enemy and doubted the ability of the RVNAF to stop a serious enemy effort to seize it. The VC already had the capability to sabotage the Da Nang airfield, to attack it with 57mm recoilless rifles and mortars, or to attack it in battalion strength. Admiral Sharp said that it was important for the United States to act rather than react against this enemy threat. If the United States moved quickly to place adequate US combat forces in the area, it could deter an attack. But if it waited for a tragedy to occur, the reaction would have to be much greater in order to restore the security of the area. CINCPAC could readily furnish combat forces since two Marine Battalion Landing Teams (BLTs) were off the coast of RVN at the moment and could quickly be built to Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) strength by air and sea lift. He recommended that a MEB be deployed at once to the Da Nang area. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had, in connection with the eight week program, recommended accelerated deployment of the MEB. On 20 February they again recommended to the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum that the MEB be sent to the RVN at a total strength, including command and control elements, of about 8,500 men and officers. In order to reconstitute a Special Landing Force (SLF) Afloat when the MEB was deployed ashore, they recommended that a Marine Brigade from Hawaii be sent to the Western Pacific.[4]

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2. Ibid.
3. ([redacted]-GP 1) Msgs, COMUSMACV 0712 to CINCPAC, 17 Feb 65; CINCPAC to JCS, 180210Z Feb 65.
4. ([redacted]-GP 1) JCSM-121-65 to SecDef, 18 Feb 65, (derived from JCS 2343/525-1), JMF 9155.3 (11 Feb 65).

The JCS noted that as a bonus of the deployment to the Da Nang area, "our readiness posture for other contingencies in a strategically sensitive area of Southeast Asia will be significantly improved." The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary that additional measures were under study and that they would send him further recommendations.[5]

Ambassador Taylor informed Washington authorities on 22 February that he and General Westmoreland had agreed that there was no need to deploy US combat troops to RVN except to Da Nang. He had strong reservations on basing "any considerable number" of Marines at Da Nang and thus revising the long-standing US policy of keeping US ground combat troops out of the RVN. Once this policy was breached it would be very difficult to hold the line. The GVN would seek to unload other ground force tasks on the United States. The presence of US combat forces would breed friction with the local population. Conflicts would arise with the RVNAF on command relations. Ambassador Taylor also pointed out that the French had tried, and failed, to defeat the Viet Minh guerrillas. "White-faced soldier armed, equipped and trained as he is, is not suitable guerrilla fighter for Asian forests and jungles," Taylor declared. He doubted that US forces would do any better than had the French. "When I view this array of difficulties, I am convinced that we should adhere to our past policy of keeping our ground forces out of direct counterinsurgency role," Taylor said. Ambassador Taylor appreciated, however, General Westmoreland's concern for the safety of Da Nang and was willing to go along with the introduction of a Marine BLT to strengthen the base against overt assault.[6]

General Westmoreland on the same day asked that one BLT land at Da Nang as soon as possible to protect construction workers at the site of the HAWK battery and to secure the battery when in place. He asked also that, following this landing, a second BLT be sent in to provide inner perimeter security at Da Nang airfield. No tactical aircraft need be brought in, and the third BLT of the MEB should not come ashore in the foreseeable future.[7]

For his part Admiral Sharp informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 24 February that he considered the entire MEB must be landed at Da Nang as an act of prudence, to be taken before, not after, tragedy occurred. He believed that the vulnerability

5. Ibid.
6. ([redacted]) Msg, Saigon 473 to JCS, 22 Feb 65, JCS IN 36860.
7. ([redacted]-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 5633 to CINCPAC, 23 Feb 65.

of the US investment in Da Nang was as apparent to the enemy as it was to US authorities. With a strong mobile force around Da Nang providing a tight security for the airfield complex and good security for outlying installations, two ancillary benefits would emerge. First, the RVNAF would be encouraged to use its own troops for patrol and security operations; and second, the VC/NVA would have to regard Da Nang as a tougher target. Sharp wanted a jet attack squadron ashore, but was willing to have the deployments phased gradually. As first priority he wished a MEB command and control element, a surface BLT, and a helicopter squadron landed at once. Following this he wanted to build up ashore, using the US Marine security forces already at Da Nang to provide a second BLT. A third BLT would be landed when it could be effectively supported and employed.[8]

CINCPAC also asked that the deployment of the MEB be accompanied by deployment of one Marine F-4 squadron for close air support. He recommended that the Special Landing Force (SLF) be kept in the South China Sea on a 96 hour reaction time from RVN and that a MEB be moved from Hawaii to WESTPAC to replace the MEB landed at Da Nang.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff fully supported CINCPAC's recommendations and forwarded them, on the same day they were received, to the Secretary of Defense, urging that they be adopted. The only significant change they made to CINCPAC's recommendations was to ask for two squadrons of jet aircraft instead of one.[9]

On 26 February the President approved deployment of a helicopter squadron and two BLTs to Da Nang, but deferred decision on the movement of the remainder of the MEB, the command and support elements, and the jet squadrons.[10]

The deployment of the MEB was cleared by Ambassador Taylor with GVN Prime Minister Quat on 1 March. The two officials explicitly agreed that the United States could consider

8. (TS-GP 1) Memo, J-3 to JCS, 24 Feb 65, Encl to JCS 2343/525-2, JMF 9155.3 (11 Feb 65).
9. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-130-65 to SecDef, 24 Feb 65 (derived from JCS 2343/525-2), JMF 9155.3 (11 Feb 65).
10. (TS) Msg, JCS 0736-65 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 27 Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

that the GVN had requested these troops and that the United States was responding by furnishing them. On the next day General Westmoreland discussed the military details with Generals Thieu and Minh. The RVN officers expressed some concern that the civilian population in the area might react adversely to the introduction of the US Marines and agreed that these forces should be moved in as unobtrusively as possible to minimize the impact of their arrival. "The concern of the Vietnamese," General Westmoreland observed, "is that arrival of this large contingent of Americans could trigger demonstrations with overtones of cessation of hostilities and peace by negotiation."[11]

On 7 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to land at once a surface BLT, a helicopter squadron with MEB command and control elements, and minimum logistic elements. These forces were to "marry up" with combat and service elements already in the RVN. A second BLT would be landed to build up the MEB to two BLT strength. The SLF would remain in the South China Sea. The mission of these Marine forces would be to occupy and defend critical terrain features in order to secure Da Nang airfield, landing beaches, and other US facilities in the area. The Marine force was specifically not to engage in day to day actions against the VC. Additional forces would not be deployed unless directed by the JCS. Both Marine BLTs landed on 8 March.[12]

In the meantime other measures were taken to improve the security situation for US personnel in the Saigon area. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended approval of a CINCPAC recommendation that a reduced strength US Army Military Police Battalion be sent at once to RVN. Deputy Secretary Vance approved deployment of the battalion on 18 February.[13]

Changing the Role of US Forces

The bulk of Army and USAF units in RVN in February 1965 were combat support types. The United States did not intend,

11. (TS) Msg, Saigon 2798 to State, 1 Mar 65, JCS IN 45134. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC JOO 6394 to CINCPAC, 2 Mar 65, JCS IN 46032.

12. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6580 to CINCPAC, 7 Mar 65. (S) Marine Corps Commandant's Vietnam Chronology.

13. (S-GP 4) JCSM-110-65 to SecDef, 16 Feb 65 (derived from JCS 2343/524); (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 18 Feb 65, Att. to JCS 2343/524-1, JMF-9155.3 (22 Jan 65).

as a matter of policy, that these units or the military advisors to the RVNAF should engage in direct combat with the VC. Nevertheless, there were indications as the VC made gains during the early months of 1965 that US authorities were thinking more and more in terms of using US forces in a direct combat role. Admiral Sharp set the stage for this type of approach when he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 February, " . . . we need a positive statement of national policy and, specifically, a command decision as to whether or not we are or will participate actively in the fighting in RVN, or whether we will continue to adhere to our long standing policy that this is a Vietnamese war and that we are only advisors." He pointed out that the recent decision to allow the use of US jets in RVN had openly involved the USAF in the war in RVN.[14]

At a meeting at the White House on the evening of 26 February the President made it clear that US policy was to do everything possible to "maximize" US military efforts to reverse the unfavorable situation in Vietnam. Among the military steps discussed in "an exploratory way" was the possibility of sending in more US advisors at the combat unit level, the provision of more helicopters for both surveillance and fire support, the increased use of US jet aircraft in RVN, and the use of US naval vessels to assist the RVN in preventing infiltration by sea.

To provide the President with the latest and best possible information as a basis for making additional decisions on these and other matters of US concern in Vietnam, the Secretary of Defense requested the Chief of Staff Army, General Johnson, to visit the RVN in early March. General Johnson visited RVN from 5 to 12 March to "evaluate the need for and nature of additional supporting actions" in Vietnam. He talked with Ambassador Taylor, principal members of the US Mission Team, and with all key RVN political and military leaders.[15]

Ambassador Taylor told General Johnson that the basic unresolved problem was the GVN's inability to protect its people. Unless the people were safe and realized it, all programs in the RVN were either impossible or ineffective. If they were protected adequately, all other problems could be solved in a reasonable length of time. Taylor charged that the

14. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 262155Z Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 65.
15. (TS) Msg, JCS 0736-65 to CINCPAC, 27 Feb 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 65.

lack of progress in destroying the VC in the countryside stemmed from insufficient trained military, paramilitary and police forces, ineffective pacification programs resulting from GVN instability, and a popular apathy and dwindling morale--"the consequence of a long war with no end in sight."

Another primary concern, said Ambassador Taylor, was the growing strength of the VC. The RVN's open frontiers allowed infiltration, and the VC recruiting tactics were remarkably effective The heart of the overall problem was the continued support of the VC from NVN. The only way to stop it apparently was by the application of military pressures on NVN.

Ambassador Taylor cited historical factors as a main reason for the GVN's instability. The country had no heritage of loyalty to a single government or leader, and US aid, no matter how massive, was not going to bring about quickly such loyalty or unity in the people. He told General Johnson that it was now necessary to explore remedial measures for the RVN's ailments and listed 13 specific areas in which this should be done. Among the military measures to be explored, were the use of US manpower to offset shortages in the RVNAF and an increased tempo for both BARREL ROLL and ROLLING THUNDER.[16]

General Westmoreland in talking with General Johnson had conceded that the initiative lay with the enemy. The communists had consolidated political gains in the countryside, had increased their military strength, and had improved their organization, weaponry and logistic capability. The people were becoming convinced of the inevitability of VC victory. RVNAF losses were widely publicized but those of the VC were kept quiet. Looking to the future, Westmoreland forecast an increased VC offensive throughout RVN, particularly in the northern and central parts of the country. He anticipated a buildup of VC strength and a regrouping of main force units into larger formations. The enemy's strategy would aim at isolating the RVNAF in pockets, and thus cutting them off from the population, their supplies, and communications. If present trends continued, with no new elements introduced, within six months the RVNAF would be essentially a series of "islands of strength" clustered

16. (TS-GP 1) Memo, CSA to SecDef et al., 14 Mar 65. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

around the District and Provincial capitals. The RVN would be jammed with refugees in a "generally subverted countryside." And pressure would grow for the GVN to negotiate a settlement with the VC.

General Westmoreland decried the lack of a strong GVN which made coordinated, effective national resistance to the VC impossible. The RVN had done remarkably well in sustaining any government at all, but had succeeded only because of the resiliency of the people and the lingering momentum of previous years.

This grim politico-military picture led him to the conclusion that "we are headed toward a VC take-over of the country, sooner or later, if we continue down the present road at the present level of effort. This collapse could take place within a year. On the other hand, the GVN, with US assistance, might be able to hold out in its major bases and province towns for several years."

COMUSMACV believed that the United States must, as a matter of policy, "buy time." The United States must prevent the ARVN from being defeated in open combat by committing its own air forces in direct support of the ARVN wherever it was threatened by superior VC forces, and United States naval forces should be used to stop the infiltration of ammunition and other bulk supplies to the VC by ocean-going vessels. Moreover, US ground forces in addition to the MEB at Da Nang, might be needed elsewhere in RVN "for identical purposes or indeed to prevent a collapse in some particular area at a critical time." He also called for additional measures to increase the US capability in target acquisition, research, and analysis. Other steps his staff was carefully considering were; 1) use of CBU-1 munitions and nonlethal chemical and biological agents; 2) addition of three more UH-1B helicopter companies, one to each corps (using the Marine squadron at Da Nang for one corps); 3) addition of FACs and observation aircraft to provide a "tailored company/squadron" for each corps; 4) addition of one-half squadron of C-130s for in-country airlift. He admitted that his suggestions, if adopted, would bring into being a new basic policy toward the war in RVN. The United States would be committed to do whatever was necessary militarily to prevent defeat. But in his mind steps already being taken pointed toward the evolution of a new policy. "If a policy of direct US support and involvement is announced and if the measures discussed above are taken," COMUSMACV stated, "it is entirely possible that the adverse trends would be reversed. The VC are not 10 feet tall; they have problems which must be formidable." 17

17. Ibid.

In its impact upon US policy, General Johnson's report to the President ranked with General Taylor's report of 1961 to President Kennedy and with the Bundy report of the preceding month. In his written report General Johnson told the President substantially what Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland had said, although expanding on some of their views. He called for the adoption of measures by the United States under three categories: 1) measures to arrest the deterioration; 2) measures to free ARVN forces for offensive operations; 3) measures to contain infiltration by land.

Under the first category General Johnson proposed 21 specific military measures. These included introduction of more aircraft; removal of certain of the restrictions on ROLLING THUNDER (see Chapter 18); stepping up unconventional operations against NVN; expansion of US Seventh Fleet participation, particularly air, in the RVN; and a reorientation of BARREL ROLL to increase its effectiveness. He also suggested revision of procedures for funding and construction and other broad measures to build up the US base. These broad measures included acceleration of construction of jet airfields in RVN, increasing logistic support capability, and reorientation of this capability in RVN from north-south to east-west.[18]

Noting that the VC were tending more and more to attack in larger formations, frequently of one or more battalions, he also noted the need to free the ARVN from guard duties and to permit its employment along more suitable military lines. ". . . the time has come to decide," General Johnson declared, "how much the United States is willing to commit to the security of South Vietnam within South Vietnam. Consequently a clarification of US policy is required as to what we expect the Vietnamese to do for themselves and what the United States will provide as complementary forces." He then gave two suggested alternatives for deployment of a tailored division force which would free some ARVN units for offensive action against the VC in the critical II CTZ, the highlands areas of the RVN. The first was to deploy US combat units to take over security at the Bien Hoa/Tan Son Nhut airbase complex, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, and Pleiku. He did not feel that this action, which would free about six ARVN battalions and 25 RF companies, would be militarily sufficient, but judged it to be all that was "politically feasible within the US at this time"; his second alternative was to deploy US

18. Ibid.

combat units into the provinces of Kontum, Pleiku, and Darlac, also in the II CTZ. This would allow the movement of two ARVN divisions and eleven ARVN battalions into the coastal regions of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen and Phu Bon provinces where the VC had recently increased their pressure significantly.

To stop infiltration, General Johnson suggested invoking the SEATO Treaty and establishing an International Force south of the 17th Parallel across Quang Tri Province and the panhandle of Laos to the Mekong. He further suggested, that if this was not feasible, a four division US force be placed in the same geographical area. He also made certain broad suggestions on changing funding procedures within RVN to facilitate programming and adaptation to the war that was going on. "Time is running out swiftly in Vietnam and temporizing or expedient measures will not suffice . . . . The United States possesses capabilities which, if applied with speed, vigor, and imagination, can redress the present military imbalance without excessive risk of widening the conflict." 19

The President met with Secretary of Defense McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the afternoon of 15 March for a climactic discussion of General Johnson's recommendations. The meeting was marked by close questioning concerning the situation in various areas of the RVN, the reasons for the overall deteriorating security situation, and measures which could be taken to stem and reverse the adverse trends.

On the next day General Wheeler, in a cable describing this meeting, stated that the President viewed the outlook as bleak, but "one which must and will be overcome." He had made it clear that the United States would provide anything that would improve the posture of the GVN and the US in Vietnam. He had approved, in principle, the 21 specific actions that General Johnson had said must be taken to arrest the deteriorating situation.20

Four points, above and beyond those involved in General Johnson's recommendations, emerged from this meeting with the President. The President held the JCS responsible for the success of the war against the VC and he was currently dissatisfied with the progress being made. It now appeared to be

19. Ibid.
20. (TS) Msg, JCS 0936-65 to CINCPAC, 16 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

beyond the capabilities of the RVNAF to defeat the insurgents without direct participation of US combat units. The President appeared willing to provide whatever support was necessary to defeat the VC in the RVN. On the other hand he did not want to get more deeply involved with Communist China in the process, if this were avoidable.

General Wheeler also told Admiral Sharp that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were considering the two alternatives for deployment of US ground forces that General Johnson had included in his report. In addition, the thought had been advanced that a ROK division might also be involved as the nucleus of a SEATO force.

The Chairman also stated that General Greene, the Commandant, Marine Corps, had proposed to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the United States establish a series of about six "beach heads" along the RVN coast from Da Nang south to the Delta, each to be occupied by US combat forces of appropriate size. General Greene had pointed out that access to these areas from the sea would insure their supply and support and would provide a means of withdrawal if needed.

General Wheeler noted that these proposals to use US combat forces would modify existing policy in that they would commit US troops, in force, against the enemy. To be workable, therefore, whichever proposal was approved would require some sort of combined US/GVN command. On reflection, General Wheeler concluded, "I find that many of the reasons supporting our past practices have lost validity in the light of the situation facing us in South Vietnam. In other words, I believe that we must reexamine our past policies, measure their validity against our performance and that of the enemy and modify them as needed to stem and reverse an adverse tide." 21

General Wheeler described the President's attitude as one of "stark determination to do everything possible to better our situation and to attain our objective of 'making these people leave their neighbors alone.'"22

On 18 March General Westmoreland sought Ambassador Taylor's agreement to landing the third BLT of the MEB at Phu Bai. Taylor concurred despite his several reservations about the wisdom of this move. The Ambassador feared that this might be only the first of other moves that would commit more US combat forces in South Vietnam. He was keenly aware that the understrength RVNAF might have to be supplemented by foreign troops, and that commitment of a US division would shore up the badly deteriorating I and II CTZs, boost RVN civilian morale, and end talk that the United States was not serious in its efforts to help the RVN. Ambassador Taylor

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

was also aware of the probable adverse effects of such a commitment. To send in US combat troops would increase US involvement, expose more US forces to danger, and invite greater losses. It would also raise sensitive questions of command, and might encourage the GVN to "let the United States do it." There were other disadvantages as well, but the total effect for good or bad could not be measured, according to Ambassador Taylor, until the possible missions for a US division were examined. There were two obvious possibilities, use of the division in the high plateau or in defending key enclaves along the coast. In the first instance, aside from easier operating conditions, the US troops could use their superior mobility and firepower effectively in cutting off infiltration. In the latter case they would be used in a "rather inglorious static defensive mission" operating in a heavily populated area and fragmented to the point that command and control could become awkward.[23]

Ambassador Taylor had tentatively concluded that it would not be desirable to send a US division into RVN unless clear and tangible advantages outweighed the numerous disadvantages. The United States must determine how much of its own combat forces would close the manpower gap in RVN. Obviously the US division would make some contribution but it was not certain by any means that it would be enough to reverse the downward trend. If, on the other hand, the United States decided it would be worthwhile to send in the division, the best place for it would be in the highlands. This would be the more exposed position and "even permits one to entertain the possibility of a kind of Dien Bien Phu" if the VC cut off access to the coast by road.

The coastal enclave idea was safer and simpler even though less impressive and potentially less productive. Taylor wondered if the two deployment possibilities could not be combined in some way with the retention of a base coastal area, linked with a position inland.[24]

Admiral Sharp, on 18 March, agreed with the Chief of Staff, Army's view that to move US troops into the Bien Hoa-Tan Son Nhut complex would be useful, but it would have to be carefully arranged with the GVN. As to other deployments, CINCPAC held that no US combat troops should be moved into the plateau

23. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3003 to State, 18 Mar 65, JCS IN 67403.
24. Ibid.

area until Nha Trang and Qui Nhon, which were vital points of entry to the plateau from the coast, were fully secured. Any supply of US forces in the highlands should be by means other than air, which was undependable and already overtaxed. "U.S. assumption of responsibility for the defense of the provinces of Kontum, Pleiku and Darlac would position major combatant U. S. ground forces in a key area of Viet Cong interest and activity, and would impose major logistic problems," CINCPAC noted. It should not be started until the United States had assurance of full logistic support capabilities based on the coastal towns and was convinced it could keep the land LOCs open.[25]

Even before they received CINCPAC's views, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at their meeting on 17 March 1965, directed the Joint Staff to develop, as a matter of priority, a plan for the employment of US and allied forces in a combat role in the RVN. The concept of the plan was to include a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) in the Da Nang area, a US Army division force in the high plateau centering around Pleiku, and a ROK division force in the Bien Hoa-Vung Tau-Saigon area. Using this concept as a basis, the Joint Staff developed for the Joint Chiefs of Staff a draft memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, which contained recommendations for the specified deployments. The Chief of Staff, Air Force, did not agree. He said he did not believe the Joint Chiefs of Staff were ready to deploy an Army division to the Pleiku area. Although this had been discussed at the 17 March meeting, no decisions had been reached and there remained questions as to which units were to be deployed, the method of deployment, the concept of employment, and logistic support. In addition there was the question of military advisability of setting this division down in an area surrounded and controlled by the VC. He wanted the paper changed to show deployment of the Army division with supporting forces "to develop and expand additional coastal enclaves south of Da Nang to provide security for important installaations and for counterinsurgency operations."[26]

The Chief of Staff, Air Force, also proposed adding to the memorandum to the Secretary of Defense wording that would indicate a recommendation to increase the intensity and severity of ROLLING THUNDER and to deploy four of the nine squadrons called for in the eight week program on an accelerated basis.

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25. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 180840Z Mar 65, JCS IN 67919.
26. (TS-GP 3) Memo, J-3 to JCS, 18 Mar 65; (TS-GP 3) CSAFM-J-84-65, 19 Mar 65; JCS 2343/543. JMF 9155.3 (18 Mar 65).

On 19 March, after considerable discussion, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, withdrew his objection to deployment of the Army division to the Pleiku area, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to add the wording that he desired with regard to increasing air attacks on NVN and the deployment of the four squadrons. The resultant memorandum was approved and sent to the Secretary of Defense on 20 March.[27]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense that they now considered that US combat forces must be introduced in a combat role in RVN in sufficient strength to achieve "an effective margin of combat power" and to let the enemy know that the United States intended to stand by the GVN. Participation by ROK and other third country forces, if offered, would be valuable both psychologically and as actual combat assistance.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff then recommended the following deployments and actions:

> a. Expand mission of Marine elements at Da Nang to include counterinsurgency combat operations. Deploy remainder of the III Marine Expeditionary Force to the Da Nang area as requested by CINCPAC, with the same missions.
>
> b. Deploy, as soon as proper logistic support is insured, a US Army division with necessary supporting forces from the continental United States for employment in the central plateau, centered on the Pleiku area, for counterinsurgency combat operations.
>
> c. Deploy, as soon as practicable, a Republic of Korea Army division force to South Vietnam for counter-insurgency and base security operations.
>
> d. Deploy, as requested by CINCPAC, four of the nine Air Force squadrons . . . .

General Wheeler immediately notified CINCPAC of the recommendations that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had made to Secretary McNamara. He asked him to give, as soon as possible, his views on the logistic requirements and command arrangements necessary to carry out the JCS recommendations.[28]

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27. (TS) Dec On JCS 2343/543, 19 Mar 65; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-204-65 to SecDef, 20 Mar 65; JMF 9155.3 (18 Mar 65).
28. (TS) Msg, JCS 1008-65 to CINCPAC, 20 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

Admiral Sharp sent General Wheeler's message to General Westmoreland seeking his views and suggesting that he consider deploying the Army division to Qui Nhon initially to establish a logistic base, insure the security of the area, and carry out aggressive patrolling. After the base was established, the Korean division would take over from the US division, which would then move to the central plateau. He made other suggestions for possible employment of the ROK division in an enclave and asked for suggestions on command relationships between the ROK, the US Marines, and the RVN. COMUSMACV would have operational control of the Marines.[29]

In his reply General Westmoreland recommended that the III MEF be stationed in the Da Nang area and the Army division in the Qui Nhon-Pleiku area. The ROK division might best be used to provide security for airfield construction at Chu Lai. These deployments would also allow the opening of the rail line and of Highway One from Qui Nhon to Hue. Insofar as command arrangements were concerned, he and the commander of the RVNAF should act together on a "coordinate/cooperative" basis with each retaining command of his national forces. A small combined US/GVN staff would be maintained at the highest level in the field to mutually approve or disapprove staff actions. For this staff, which would have limited directive powers, General Westmoreland suggested a US Chief with a full-time RVN deputy.

Below this level the command relations and control arrangements would be played by ear with US and RVN units in the same area operating along lines agreed to by the intermediate unit or headquarters commanders. Close liaison would be maintained between these intermediate headquarters, with all directives passing through national channels. Because of the language problem, among others, the ROK units would be under US operational control--for all practical purposes under US command. These ROK forces initially would only be assigned area security missions. General Westmoreland foresaw attaching the ROK division to the MEF, with the Assistant MEF Division Commander being physically with the ROK Division commander in his headquarters. The concept thus presented was, General Westmoreland stated, only an interim arrangement and was susceptible to modification "if and when it becomes politically palatable or militarily essential" to have the United States take full command. He believed that he would have "de facto" control of RVNAF forces in any bilateral operations anyway.[30]

29. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 210053Z, Mar 65.
30. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 1566 to CINCPAC, 22 Mar 65. (See Ch. 22, Command Arrangements).

Ambassador Taylor went into greater detail on his ideas for employing US forces on 27 March when he informed the Secretary of State that it was quite clear that the existing operational units of the RVNAF were incapable of coping with the VC threat. The United States must decide what kind of strategy it would pursue during 1965, whether to base that strategy on the hope that ROLLING THUNDER would take care of the situation, whether to concentrate on reversing the downward trend in certain critical provinces, or whether to go all-out by injection of all possible military strength into RVN or, as he phrased it, "to go for broke to win rapidly." He then discussed the ideas which he had first presented earlier in March for the use of US forces, citing again the advantages of each. He also examined the matter of combining some of these ideas such as the use of mobile reserves operating out of offensive enclaves. He said that if the United States decided that additional ground forces were needed he would favor their employment "in accordance with the Offensive Enclave-Mobile Reaction" idea.[31]

Reporting to the Chairman, the Director, on 31 March, stated that additional approvals for deployment of US forces had reached a total of 32,686 in the RVN. Additional requests for authorizations totalling 3,882 were pending approval by the Secretary of Defense. This augmentation was independent of the combat forces that were currently being considered. The additional authorizations that would be required to attain a combat posture in the RVN amounted to 77,814 which, if approved, would bring the total authorization for US forces in the RVN to 116,341.[32]

At a meeting of the Secretary of Defense, Ambassador Taylor, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington on 29 March 1965, General Wheeler summarized the JCS views on how best to employ US and other "third country" forces. The Marine force at Da Nang should be built up to full MEF strength and its mission expanded to include active counterinsurgency. An Army division should be sent into the plateau area as soon as "logistically appropriate" and given a pacification mission. Other suggested deployments included a ROK division and 4 more .

31. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3120 to State, 27 Mar 65.
32. (TS) DJSM-395-65 to CJCS, 31 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.

tactical fighter squadrons to be sent into the battle area as space and logistic support became available. General Wheeler noted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff appreciated that the facts of "political and logistic" life would dictate the time phasing of this buildup.[33]

Ambassador Taylor again noted that rapid introduction of a force of this size would create a variety of political problems. He suggested that the size of the force be left open, but that planning proceed on the basis of an orderly buildup as political and logistic problems were resolved. The Secretary of Defense asserted that the MEB at Da Nang should be filled out to include support elements, thus making it self-sufficient. He believed that more US Army forces, probably somewhere between a brigade and a division, would be needed to relieve the ARVN for offensive pacification missions. He was not sure how or where third country forces should be employed or at what rate they should be introduced. He felt however that they should be introduced as rapidly as possible commensurate with political acceptability, logistic support, and useful missions for these forces.[34]

Ambassador Taylor then reviewed his ideas on employment of US combat forces, describing these under the general headings of "The Defensive Enclave," and "The Offensive Reserve - Strike Mission." He advocated establishing several enclaves along the coast and assigning them a combination offensive-counterinsurgency/strike role. To offset the requirement for more US forces in the RVN he favored keeping ready reserve forces afloat off RVN and on Okinawa for quick air reinforcement, if needed. General Johnson disagreed with employing US forces under the Offensive Reserve-Strike Mission initially, because of the proven lack of combat intelligence. He advocated instead setting up model territorial pacification operations in the three plateau provinces. Secretary McNamara expressed the view that planning should initially be accomplished for a number of offensive enclaves along the coast. As experience grew and logistic support was developed, the mission of US forces could be expanded and the setting up of plateau enclaves could be considered.[35]

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33. (~~TS~~) Note to Control Div, "The Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense with Ambassador Taylor (U)", 29 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

Chapter 20

LOGISTIC REQUIREMENTS - SHIFT TO A WAR FOOTING

United States deployment planning in the first months of 1965 was influenced decisively by the lack of an adequate logistic base and the sorry state of facilities and arrangements to support US forces in the RVN logistically. The JCS had recognized very early that the existing system for logistic support, minimal even for the advisory effort, would have to be revamped and strengthened before combat troops could be deployed, even under the fairly limited concepts first considered. To do otherwise would have been imprudent at the least. At a longer range, the entire structure of logistic support in Southeast Asia would require great improvement before US contingency plans to meet a wider threat in that area would have any real chance to succeed. In late 1964 and early 1965, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed themselves primarily to the narrower problem of providing, in advance, a system that would allow adequate support for additional men and units and, hopefully, would provide a base for further expansion.

Westmoreland's Assessment

The defects in the US logistic system within the RVN had been identified and catalogued by General Westmoreland in a detailed study sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff just a month before the important Washington meetings of November-December 1964. Reflecting the nature of its origins, the overall US logistic system, originally oriented in support of the RVNAF and gradually shaped by expediency and the semi-autonomous nature of US agencies in the RVN, was actually fragmented into 15 different, discrete, not particularly complementary systems, four of them quasi-military (CIA, USOM, CARE, and the Deputy Officer in Charge of Construction (DOICC)) and the remaining ten military (three RVNAF, seven US). Despite the several US military subsystems, the focal point of support was in the Saigon area with the result that advisors and units "up-country" often suffered from lack of adequate support. Nor was there any real common-user basis to the systems. Two subordinate commands under COMUSMACV were charged primarily with logistic support of forces. These were the US Army Support Command (USASCV), responsible for combat support to

the RVNAF; and the Headquarters Support Activity, Saigon (HSAS), charged with logistic support of the US forces in the RVN.[1]

On 30 October, General Westmoreland cited for CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff the principal "immediate shortcomings" of the US common-user system in RVN. These were 1) inadequate supervision of the handling of US cargoes at the up-country minor ports; 2) inadequate coordination of logistic functions among multiple MACV commands; 3) inefficiency stemming from a system that operated entirely on a retail basis from Saigon without having any up-country field depots; 4) incomplete support of US forces by HSAS in the common-user supply and services categories. He carefully described each of these deficiencies and its effect upon his command, saying that they should be remedied as soon as possible. In his recommendations for improvement of the system, COMUSMACV called for: 1) expansion of existing systems in volume to accommodate the increased strengths of US forces in RVN; 2) establishment of an integrated up-country retail common-user logistic system; 3) expansion of the base wholesale common-user logistic system into additional supply categories and into services not provided by HSAS; 4) integration of up-country retail and base wholesale common-user logistic systems; 5) elimination of duplication between HSAS and HQ Commandant, MACV, and other minor duplications of support functions; 6) "displacement" of HSAS with a US Army logistic command.

While General Westmoreland seemed, in these terse recommendations, to be calling mainly for a reorganization and revamping of the system in terms of responsibilities and functions and for several thousand trained specialists to man the system and make it work, there were far broader connotations involved. Any significant expansion of US strength in RVN would obviously require millions of dollars worth of construction for cantonments, depots, storage areas, and bases, for air fields and roads, and for improvement of ports and harbors. Stock levels of all types of essential supplies would have to be increased, maintenance and control facilities established, and distribution systems made ready. Major items of equipment would be needed and communications systems would require major improvements to support anything greater than a small addition of advisory personnel.

1. (S-GP 3) MACV Staff Study, "Improvement of US Logistics Systems in RVN," 26 Oct 64, JMF 9155.3 (10 Nov 64) sec 1.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed in principle with General Westmoreland's assessment and limited recommendations and took such actions as were possible in the next several months to support them. Beyond this, as the urgency of the situation in RVN rose early in 1965, they made other recommendations and took other actions to build up the logistic base for support of increased US involvement in RVN within the context of the broader question posed by the communist threat to all of Southeast Asia.

Additional Logistic Units and Personnel

The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not consider it "militarily prudent" to await a contingency before reorganizing the existing logistic support structure in the RVN. They began at once the necessary actions, directing CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to coordinate on a more detailed plan for reorganization, defining the requirement for the Army Logistic Command, and taking into account President Johnson's great interest in third country forces, support of which would be an additional requirement. On 23 December CINCPAC forwarded to the JCS a COMUSMACV plan, which he considered sound and realistic. In addition to asking for an Army Logistic Command of about 2,100 men, General Westmoreland in this plan also called for an Army Engineer Construction Group of 2,400, primarily for construction of camps and bases. The MACV J-4 visited Washington on 28 December to brief the Joint Staff on the plan.[2]

On 15 January the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he approve, in principle, the introduction of both the Army Logistic Command (Log Command) and the Engineer Construction Group, the former to provide a logistic structure capable of expansion of common-user support, the latter to "alleviate a shortfall" in US construction resources in RVN. They pointed out to the Secretary that by sending the Log Command to RVN, the United States would be preparing for "future adjustments in US strength and changes in method or tempo of operations." The Construction Group would augment the "saturated indigenous contract construction capability" and could operate under hazardous conditions at which civilian contractors would probably balk. They asked

2. (S-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS 23 Dec 64. (TS-GP 4) J-4 TP 12-64, 29 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (10 Nov 64), sec 2.

for immediate action to send an advance echelon of about 230 men of the Log Command to RVN, with the main body and the Construction Group to follow on a schedule than being determined through detailed studies.3

The Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 26 January that he was not clear on the real logistic capabilities in RVN and on just what needed to be done. On the next day, in a memorandum to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mr. Vance said that, even if the 4,500-man increase to support the Log Command and the Construction Group were granted, it would not eliminate any of the 15 separate systems, it would merely superimpose another. He desired simplification and increased effectiveness of the logistic arrangements in the RVN, but in order to pin down precisely the logistic problems, he intended to send Mr. Glenn Gibson, Deputy ASD (I&L), to RVN to talk with General Westmoreland's logisticians. He asked that the J-4, LTG Richard D. Meyer, accompany Gibson. The Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff agreed. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, observed to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the same day that the United States was getting itself into a difficult logistics situation in the RVN.4

Mr. Gibson and General Meyer interviewed every major commander in RVN, as well as CINCPAC and his component commanders and Ambassador Taylor. The report which they made to the Deputy Secretary of Defense on their return on 5 February confirmed that logistic deficiencies in "several functional areas," even for support of forces already in the RVN, were serious and that any significant deployment would so strain the logistics base that operational effectiveness of combat units could be "degraded." In the belief, however, that any corrective measures must be in consonance with contingency plans and should "facilitate rather than impede possible future accelerated and augmented U.S. operations in Vietnam," they made recommendations that were, in retrospect, on the cautious side and that did not lead to any swift amelioration of deficiencies.

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3. (TS GP 4) JCSM-33-65 to SecDef, 15 Jan 65 (derived from JCS 2343/486-4), JMF 9155.3 (10 Nov 64) sec 3.

4. (TS GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 27 Jan 65, Att to JCS 2343/486-5, JMF 9155.3 (10 Nov 64) sec 3.

Recognizing the defects in the system, the survey team's report to Mr. Vance agreed that the US Army was best prepared to coordinate and manage common supply and that an Army Logistic Command was the best vehicle for achieving this. Nevertheless the survey team recommended to Mr. Vance that he authorize, for the present, only a small advance party of the Log Command, building it up when appropriate by transferring persons already in RVN performing "housekeeping" functions. They did not believe that facilities were available for the deployment of the Construction Group or for the majority of the Log Command units, nor were funds available to construct such facilities. They recommended against sending the Construction Group, since the commercial contractor construction capability could "possibly" be expanded to take care of all necessary construction. This was in keeping with the tone of much of the survey team's report, which called for use of indigenous civilian and US civilian contract workers in lieu of US military wherever possible. On 12 February Mr. Vance disapproved introduction of the Engineer Group. He approved, in principle, the introduction of the Log Command but authorized early deployment of only 75 men and officers. He directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to complete promptly additional studies of the COMUSMACV Plan and to recommend to the Secretary of Defense actions to bring about the swiftest possible improvement in logistic posture while keeping down deployments. He appointed the Assistant Secretary of Defense (I&L) as the focal point for all necessary actions of the Office of the Secretary of Defense to simplify procedures, remove unnecessary administrative "constraints," and recommend staffing requirements for logistic support functions in the RVN.[5]

On 19 March further augmentation of the Log Command by 543 men and officers was recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A few days later, on 27 March, as decision on further deployments and the possible use of US forces in direct combat appeared imminent, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked that the full complement of the 2,100-man Log Command be authorized as soon as possible and that the Secretary reconsider his decision with respect to the Construction Group.[6]

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5. (TS-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 12 Feb 65, Att to JCS 2343/486-8; JCS 2343/486-11, 25 Feb 65; JMF 9155.3 (10 Nov 64) sec 4.

6. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-196-65 to SecDef, 19 Mar 65 (derived from JCS 2343/486-12); (TS-GP 4) JCSM-219-65 to SecDef, 27 Mar 65 (derived from JCS 2343/486-14); (TS-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 2 Apr 65, Att to JCS 2343/486-16; JMF 9155.3 (10 Nov 64) sec 5.

On the same day, in a personal message to General Wheeler, Admiral Sharp called for a US logistic force of between 18-20,000 personnel in RVN to support one Army division, the remainder of the III MEF, the ROK division, and additional air forces in RVN and Thailand. These men were in addition to logistic forces already in RVN but included the Log Command and the Construction Group. On 2 April in connection with other decisions on deployment and employment of forces, the President approved the deployment recommended by CINCPAC. The full Army Log Command and the Engineer Construction Group were approved for deployment as part of this package. (See Ch. 21.)[7]

The Meyer Report

In a separate report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Meyer on 5 February had explained, in greater detail than had the survey report rendered by him and Mr. Gibson, the state of logistic affairs in RVN, with particular emphasis on the specific defieiencies and requirements. The problems which he identified were not capable of quick or easy solution in most instances, and US officials would be compelled to take drastic and expensive measures over an extended period in order to alleviate these problems. The evidence indicates, however, that General Meyer's report was instrumental in bringing about action to improve the RVN logistic base earlier than might otherwise have been the case.

Real Estate and Construction

According to General Meyer, the greatest single factor affecting force deployment and logistic support in RVN was the shortage of real estate and facilities. There were at least nine different channels through which facilities might be programmed, funded, and constructed. But long lead times involved in securing approvals of funding, design, and materials, and in site selection, had resulted in unusually long delays. In February 1965, approved and funded programs for construction in RVN approximated $46 million. Various other proposals for construction awaiting funding and approval could reach at least $140 million. General Meyer noted that Raymond-Morrison-Knudsen (RMK), the civilian contractor for US construction in

7. (TS-GP 1) J-4 TP 3-65 for CJCS, 4 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 1.

RVN, could probably expand its capability far beyond the currently projected workload.[8]

General Meyer charged that lack of coordination between various US components in RVN and the tendency to "go it alone" without coordinating through MACV, had resulted in competition for real estate and delays in needed construction. There was an immediate need for a technical staff within MACV capable of 1) making a master plan for all installation development in the RVN, 2) coordinating facility sitings and real estate acquisitions, 3) coordinating and approving all component construction programs, and 4) establishing priorities for all facilities designed and constructed by the Deputy Officer in Charge of Construction (DOICC).[9]

General Meyer also stated that planning for programs in RVN by all Services and the MAP had, until recently, been on the assumption that US forces would be withdrawn by June 1965. This had resulted in constant adjustment, ad hoc solutions, and expensive crash actions, particularly with regard to construction. General Meyer told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that an integrated construction program should now be developed to support currently known requirements, using all available sources of funds. Additional reprogramming of current approved programs should take place as necessary.

"Long-range logistic planning should not be confused with short-range political actions and reactions, or on long-range military political objectives," he cautioned. "While the latter might well be to finish the job as soon as possible, long lead time actions (construction and other logistic programs) should be developed over at least a three year period."[10]

In-Country Military Reorganization

Supply and logistic problems were compounded in the RVN, in General Meyer's view, by the unconventional structure of the US military management organization. He pointed out that MACV's management structure was unique, thus complicating

8. (S-GP 4) Rpt, Dir of Log to JCS, 5 Oct 65, Att to JCS 2343/486-11, JMF 9155.3 (10 Nov 64) sec 4. Hereafter cited as "Meyer Rpt."
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

logistic and supply procedures. The amalgamation of MACV and the MAAG in 1964 had created, in effect, a fifth Service operating without backup structure and with ad hoc procedures. The 2d Air Division, which operated as a conventional component command structure, had the least administrative difficulty. The US Army Support Command, Vietnam (USASCV), was about 80 percent an Army component, having an overextended span of control, yet lacking the full capability of the 2d Air Division. The US Marine Corps and the US Navy units were essentially self-sufficient and small in numbers. Probably for this reason, they were without any major logistic problems. The advisors were in "no-man's land" and had no support authorized through Service channels.11

General Meyer proposed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff request CINCPAC to prepare a plan to remedy these structural peculiarities by: 1) making MACV a true area unified commander under CINCPAC; 2) confirming the 2d Air Division commander as an Air Force component commander in RVN; 3) redesignating USASCV as US Army, Vietnam, and giving it the same status and capability as 2d Air Division; 4) keeping the desirable features of Service command channels and backup support through the 13th Air Force in the Philippines and the US Army, Ryukyu Islands, on Okinawa; 5) giving the commander of the HSAS the additional duty of Commander NAV Forces Ashore, Vietnam; 6) as soon as practicable and on a corps area or other appropriate geographical basis, phase the responsibility for funding of logistic support of the MACV advisors to their own Service components. In some cases Navy advisors in predominantly Army areas could be shifted locally to Army support, but the Navy Commander ashore would have the responsibility to assure their support.

As follow-on actions, General Meyer proposed that the logistic responsibilities of the HQ Commandant, MACV, be phased out and that fiscal and funding procedures be established to relieve field commanders of working with the current inter-Service support agreements, which were cumbersome.

Coordinated Logistics Planning

General Meyer suggested that there was a real need for long-range logistic planning within the US structure in RVN.

11. Ibid.

The increase in US effort, the mutual dependence of the US and GVN elements, and the impact of "possible changes in direction" created a need for formal integration of logistic planning at the top level. Although there was much opportunity for mutual support and many logistics-type subpanels in RVN, military logistic problems tended to be solved either unilaterally or functionally. Many US quasi-governmental military or US civilian executive departments were involved. General Meyer pointed out that there was a requirement for a logistic planning and advisory council of the US Mission Council, with membership from the Embassy, USOM, CAS, MACV, 2d Air Division, USASCV, and HSAS at a minimum. This council would establish joint and combined long-range logistics objectives, standards, and policies affecting all US interests. It would determine mutual support, available or required, from indivisual plans and programs. It would exploit civil assistance (AID) programs to assist military logistic effort where mutually beneficial and would relate changes in military plans and strengths to logistic effort and "constraints."[12]

The Military Logistics Council

In proposing a top-level logistics council in RVN, General Meyer was calling on his own experience as a member of the Military Logistics Council (MLC) that had been established as an informal, but effective, coordination body by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in April 1963. The membership of this important body comprised the J-4, the Special Assistant for Strategic Mobility, Joint Staff (SASM), the Director, DSA, and the logistics chiefs of each of the Services. This MLC was an informal, but influential, body which served as a forum for discussion of logistic matters and problems of mutual interest. While not empowered to take actions in its own right, the very composition of the body, encompassing, as it did, the widest range of military logistics knowledge within the Department of Defense and composed of men in key positions, gave it an influence in logistics matters that enabled it to identify and solve many of the logistics problems, large and small, that developed in connection with the war in RVN. The MLC met regularly to consider these problems

12. Ibid.

and was instrumental in expediting solutions through Service channels or through joint action.[13]

In February, as a result of a Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, proposal to the Service Chiefs, the MLC was designated the central point of contact between the Joint Staff and the Service Staffs in logistics matters associated with the improvement of US readiness to support a higher level of actions in Southeast Asia. The MLC would provide the medium for transmission of information and for informal coordination of the Service logistic positions. The MLC would, in cases of disagreement, submit logistics problems to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for resolution.[14]

Maintenance

General Meyer noted that the US capability for maintenance of noninstalled equipment was practically nonexistent outside the Saigon area. In Saigon the US Army had a very small detachment of maintenance technicians augmented by local nationals, but up-country maintenance, for other than organized units, was limited to first echelon. The problem was particularly serious in maintaining such important items as portable generators, the only source of electric power in remote areas. General Meyer proposed that a field maintenance capability for Army vehicles, weapons, and signal equipment be established at Da Nang and that maintenance detachments be set up at existing US bases at Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Can Tho, and at each of the US aviation battalion locations. Roving maintenance teams would service other small units. At a longer range other field maintenance activities would have to be established when facilities were available to accommodate them. Better use of inter-Service maintenance arrangements for common items was also indicated.[15]

13. (U) Interv, Willard J. Webb with CAPT C.E. Smith, USN, Chief, Plans Division, J-4, 16 Jan 69.

14 (TS-GP 4) JCS 2339/174-2, 7 Mar 65, JMF 9155 (19 Feb 65) sec 3.

15. (S-GP 4) Meyer Rpt.

Ammunition Handling and Storage

In view of the possibility of commitment of US combat forces, it was essential to establish an ammunition supply system to provide for the orderly receipt, storage, and issue of ammunition. Input had exceeded the handling and depot capacities both in-country and at enroute staging bases, resulting in violations of safety rules and regulations. General Meyer stated that a safety surveillance capacity was lacking even though urgently required. Long lead time projects were underway to provide additional ammunition handling and storage facilities. Other possibilities such as "floating storage" and better delivery schedules were being looked into. Projects underway to position additional lighterage capability in RVN would improve the ability to handle ammunition at in-country ports. The J-4 recommended that US Army and USAF supervisory personnel be placed at each major ammunition dump to supervise the labor force, to maintain records, and to establish surveillance and safety measures. In the meantime, US ammunition should be stored at GVN ammo storage points as much as possible.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff made General Meyer's report available to the Joint Staff for their information in connection with the continuing efforts to coordinate the closely related requirements for improvement of the RVN logistics base and for the other readiness measures involved in the deployments projected for SVN.

General Meyer's observations on the logistic weaknesses were reinforced by the Chief of Staff, Army, upon his return from the RVN in mid-March. As had General Meyer, General Johnson noted the seriousness of the construction problem. Among his recommendations which the President approved, he suggested that MACV be provided with "quick release" authority and funds for construction projects in RVN to permit meeting tight deadlines and to reduce the scope of activities which would otherwise require extensive military construction effort. He suggested that a MACV-controlled stockpile of construction materials and equipment be established within three or four days' sailing time of RVN to assure the timely availability of essential supplies and equipment. At the same time General Johnson noted the great need to reorient the supply flow in the RVN from north-south to east-west in order to shorten the delivery times and to decrease reliance on Saigon. He also recommended beginning dredging operations

at the harbors of Da Nang, Qui Nhon, and Nha Trang so that ocean-going ships could berth at those up-country ports to land supplies.[16]

Support of Contingency Plans

All of the requirements for improving the logistics base in the RVN lay within the broader scope of the requirements for supporting US military operations contemplated, under CINCPAC OPLANs 32-64 and 39-65, to meet any concerted communist attack on Southeast Asia. Virtually no actions were contemplated or taken in RVN which did not contribute to the strengthening of the overall US position to carry out those broader contingency plans. In late February, at the direction of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (I&L), the Joint Staff, the Services, and the DSA made an analysis of the ability of the United States to carry out these contingency plans as of 20 February 1965. Logistics factors were included as a major consideration of this analysis. With specific regard to RVN the following broad requirements were noted: 1) improvements to rail and road nets in RVN; 2) improvements to secondary ports and provision of lighterage capability; 3) construction and/or improvement of airfields at Bien Hoa, Da Nang, Chu Lai, Tam Ky, Tan Son Nhut, Pleiku; and 4) construction of a hospital facility at Saigon.[17]

Construction of Airfields in RVN

CINCPAC had stated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in late 1964 that if the United States intended to remain in Southeast Asia, a stronger and more responsive system of airfields would have to be developed. He had recommended that a jet-capable airfield be constructed at Chu Lai at an estimated cost of $6.5 million and that a second jet-capable runway be constructed at Da Nang parallel to and similar to the existing runway at a cost of about $3.5 million. On 11 November 1964 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had informed the Secretary of

16. (TS-GP 1) Memo, CSA to SecDef et al., 14 Mar 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 65.
17. (S-GP 4) JCS 2339/174-2, 7 Mar 65, JMF 9155 (19 Feb 65) sec 3.

Defense that because of the contemplated increase in deployments and the need to enhance the logistic support capability and to cope "more flexibly with a wide range of future exigencies," these projects at Chu Lai and Da Nang should be approved. They also recommended that funds be made available for architectural and engineering studies in connection with with these projects.[18]

Secretary McNamara generally agreed with the need for improved base support in Southeast Asia, and he approved interim funding for the architect-engineer studies required prior to expansion of the Da Nang airfield and the new field at Chu Lai. He deferred a decision on actual construction, however, to await the outcome of these studies and to evaluate the need for these facilities "in light of the current situation."[19]

With the development early in 1965 of new courses of action to meet the growing enemy threat, it became more and more obvious that more facilities would be required. The United States had increased the number of personnel and aircraft in RVN and had thus created a very high density of aircraft of all Services at the three major airfields in RVN. The situation prompted CINCPAC to provide the Joint Chiefs of Staff with a timetable indicating that the design work for the Chu Lai airfield could be completed by 1 August 1965. If the funds required were made available in April, by June the design work would be sufficiently advanced so that actual construction could begin. Both projects could be completed by June 1966. The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately passed this information on to Secretary McNamara, stating that "The changing military situation and fluid political environment in Southeast Asia underscore the importance of contingency preparations." They pointed out that Da Nang, Tan Son Nhut, and Bien Hoa air bases, the only jet-capable airfields in RVN, had approached the point of saturation. There were five airfields in Thailand but these were subject to some limitations, including longer flying time to targets and restrictions imposed by the Government of Thailand.[20]

18. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-950-64 to SecDef, 11 Nov 64, JMF 9155.3 (26 Sep 64).
19. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Airfield Support of Contingency Plans for Southeast Asia (U)," 23 Dec 64, same file.
20. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-144-65 to SecDef, 4 Mar 65 (derived from JCS 2343/483-2), JMF 9155.3 (26 Sep 64).

The Da Nang/Chu Lai area had major military advantages which should, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, be exploited. These were the fact that the area could be supported by sea over the beach, it was ideally located for strikes against NVN or South China, and it was directly accessible from the US bases at Okinawa and in the Philippines. In view of the "constant increase of communist activity in Southeast Asia, the need to prepare for a wide variety of courses of action which includes sizeable air operations, the high density of aircraft of all Services and RVNAF and low dispersal capability," the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary of Defense reconsider his deferral of the projects at Chu Lai and Da Nang. They further recommended that the projects be funded under a special contingency authorization or other authorization, such as MAP or AID, and not out of a Service budget.[21]

Secretary McNamara approved the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommendation that the new airfield be built at Chu Lai and the additional runway and connecting taxiways be built at Da Nang. He ordered construction begun as soon as possible. He stated, however, that because the projects had been "Navy sponsored" from the start, owing to the predominant Marine usage under CINCPAC OPLANs, the Department of the Navy would be the sponsoring Service and would furnish funds from its military construction program.[22]

Laying the Ground Work for an Expanded War

Closely allied to the construction and other requirements for logistic readiness were important measures that would have to be taken to lay the ground work for an expanded war in RVN. It was possible that a much greater US involvement, up to and including a full-scale war, would result from enemy reaction to US actions in Vietnam. Thus far, US military, economic, and political programs in Southeast Asia had been geared to a situation in which US forces were not directly involved in combat. On 16 March, after talking with the Chief of Staff, Army, General Wheeler told the Director, Joint Staff, that there was a need for early action to shift US governmental procedures

21. Ibid.
22. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Additional Airfield Support for Southeast Asia," 18 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (26 Sep 64).

and operations to a footing more suitable for the prosecution of the war. Substantial adjustments would have to be made in military programs, and changes in programming methods and program execution might be needed. He instructed the Director, Joint Staff, to direct the Joint Staff to prepare quickly specific recommendations for adjustments that could be made within the authority of the Secretary of Defense and the President and for adjustments requiring legislation, funding, military personnel, direction and control of US military operations in Vietnam, and any other authorizations required, including standby authority.[23]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff called at once on the field commanders to describe those problems that had developed within their areas of responsibility as a result of trying to carry on wartime operations using procedures geared to a peacetime situation. Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland replied promptly, and their views were used extensively by the Joint Staff in the preparation of its study.[24]

As a result of this study on 2 April 1965 the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense which set forth in detail the various problems that existed in bringing support of RVN operations up to a wartime footing.

"The effectiveness of US military actions in the measure and scope now required to prosecute the war in Vietnam will be enhanced by the adjustment of those present peacetime US policies and procedures which have been the basis for our support of the RVN," they told Secretary McNamara. "We are in war in which a loss would be viewed world-wide as a US defeat. We must not permit this to happen. Consequently, it is considered prudent that immediate steps be taken to remove all administrative and procedural impediments that hamper us in the prosecution of this war."

They informed the Secretary that "substantial adjustments" in present policies and procedures were required, and

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23. (TS-GP 3) CM-488-65 to DJS, 16 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Mar 65).
24. (S) JCS 2343/540-1, 24 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Mar 65).

in a series of appendices to their memorandum recapitulated for him these necessary adjustments.[25]

Funding the War

With respect to funding the war, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reminded the Secretary that money to support operations in Southeast Asia came through several funding channels and was restricted as to its use and controlled by various administrative procedures. The FY 1965 MAP and related fiscal support had been developed for a noncombat military situation. The combat operations now taking place were being supported by the individual Services, which had to reprogram their respective peacetime budgets and the Military Assistance Program (MAP) in order to provide this support. Each Service, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted, thus had to expend considerable administrative effort and cut back on its other priority programs. The Army, for example, could not build up reserve supplies and, indeed, could barely maintain its existing levels. Added to the diversion of operating funds for supporting combat activities, combat losses were causing attrition of equipment and supplies at a rate far exceeding the planned peacetime rate. To accomplish even the limited reprogramming of funds within their authority, the Services had to cut back previously prepared programs in order to meet the more urgent needs of Southeast Asia on a stopgap basis.[26]

Under normal procedures, military construction for Southeast Asia required about two years from the first determination of a requirement until construction of a facility was approved. Even though Congress had granted authority to approve and program emergency construction projects, this authority was limited to approximately $41 million during the remainder of FY 65. Current construction requirements were in excess of this amount.

In their memorandum of 2 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that these conditions could not be continued during "war type" actions. The present system entailed delay, and denied flexibility to commanders.

25. (TS) JCSM-238-65 to SecDef, 2 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Mar 65).
26. (TS) App A to JCSM-238-65 to SecDef, 2 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Mar 65).

Further, the system required that details be forwarded through several echelons of command to the national level for decision. "Limitations and restrictions which hinder the prosecution of the war must be removed," the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary.[27]

The Secretary of Defense already possessed, however, certain authorities that he could use in emergencies. For example, Congress had granted him authority to transfer up to $200 million between appropriations. He could also provide funds on a deficiency basis to pay for an increase in military personnel beyond those provided in annual appropriations if the President decided to support the increase. Further, the President could suspend the apportionment process which apportioned funds on a time-phased basis. He could also direct the Secretary of Defense to submit supplemental appropriation requests to Congress. Finally, deficiencies could be incurred as required for necessities for any current fiscal year without dollar limit for fuel, subsistence, transportation, clothing, and medical supplies for US forces beyond the amount of appropriations available.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff specified for Secretary McNamara those actions which he could take without delay to augment Service accounts.[28]

The MAP

The MAP had undergone major reprogramming because of the threat in Southeast Asia. Normally military assistance was supplied on a peacetime basis, but some exceptions had been made in the case of Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Secretary McNamara that MAP administrative and legal procedures were cumbersome. The MAP was a cyclic system involving long lead time for planning and implementation. Moreover, it had a highly centralized management which was not susceptible to rapid changes in requirements. In RVN, Laos, and Thailand requirements for money and materiel were changing rapidly, not only in kind but in magnitude. Approved levels for materiel planning, programming, and management in RVN were exceeded by immediate demands, yet the complicated,

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.

relatively unresponsive system remained unchanged. A change in the system which would free it of its close fiscal control and administrative overhead requirements and which would reduce lead times and make it more flexible was definitely indicated, particularly in RVN but also in Thailand and Laos.

The MAP system for supply and funding required programming major end items on a line-item basis. Each line item was funded separately. This assisted in expediting supply but caused burdensome procedures for the Services, the unified commands, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

MAP deviation procedures were very complicated since they were designed to maintain an "audit trail" of obligation and expenditure of funds as well as "what happened and why" when program requirements changed. All changes to the RVN program were eventually recorded in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Both Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland considered these deviation procedures an undesirable administrative burden.

The Services could not respond readily to wartime MAP demands because, with few exceptions, they had not been authorized to procure and stock materiel in anticipation of MAP requirements. This had caused losses from Service stocks or extraordinary procurement actions. Adding to the cumbersome nature of the MAP was a restriction imposed by the Foreign Assistance Act that prevented any grant-aid MAP item costing more than $100,000 from being furnished to any country unless the Chief of the MAAG certified in writing within six months to 30 days prior to delivery that the country had the capability to use the item effectively.

Since the war in RVN had become a major factor in US funding policy, the United States had reprogrammed within the world-wide MAP to support the war. The Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the FY 1965 MAP, for example, had not been adequate to fund requirements for Vietnam without a serious impact on the programs of other countries. The FY 1965 program for Vietnam had grown from an original $205.8 million established in July 1964 to $278.8 million by 16 February 1965. CINCPAC estimated that actual FY 1965 requirements for Vietnam as of 2 April 1965 stood at $327.5 million. Requirements for MAP programs in other countries such as Korea, China, Greece, and Turkey had lessened somewhat but these countries were important to the collective defense arrangements of the United States and any cuts in their already reduced programs

could have serious political repercussions. Such cuts might also create uncertainty in the minds of other US allies as to US sincerity and true intentions.

Several steps had been taken in the past to simplify the MAP system. Authority had been delegated to unified commands and the military departments to make changes to the MAP without the Office of the Secretary of Defense approval for high-volume, low-value transactions without policy significance. Also, the changes in line-item records were made by the military departments after implementation. Another technique, the "shopping list," had been employed infrequently to obtain early high-level decision to provide some unprogrammed items which were, in effect, unforeseen requirements. These expedients did not alter the basic MAP system, which required a high level of detailed planning and centralized management. The Military Construction Program (MCP) under the MAP was more inflexible than other MAP procedures because of stringent legislative barriers which imposed peacetime restrictions on military construction appropriations that unduly lengthened lead time for approval and funding of vital construction projects in RVN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he immediately increase the availability of funds for both the MAP and Service programs to support Southeast Asia actions through use of his appropriation transfer authority. They also recommended that he develop supplemental appropriation requests for submission to Congress at an early date.[29]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the situation in RVN, Thailand, and Laos was beyond the scope of the MAP as presently set up. The MAP system required a level of detailed planning and centralized management warranted only under peacetime conditions. This system, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with its requirement for close fiscal control and resultant delays, denied responsible commanders the flexibility needed in a wartime situation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that "MAP procedures for the RVN, Thailand, and Laos, and all other MAP supported International Military Assistance Forces which may be deployed to Southeast Asia, should be streamlined and separated from the world-wide MAP."[30]

29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

Communications for Command Control

The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed for the Secretary the progress that had been made since the United States had started building up and improving communications/electronics systems for command and control in Southeast Asia in 1961 and 1962. The United States had, for example, built a BACK PORCH tropospheric scatter system, a US tactical operations-intelligence radio network, a Tactical Air Control system, a commercial microwave communications system in northeast Thailand and the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, and had set up a hamlet radio program. SYNCOM satellites were being employed operationally, and a WET WASH submarine cable had been extended into the area. However, further improvements were necessary to meet the growing demands on communications systems. As in the case of military construction the machinery employed within the Defense establishment for approving and arranging communications/electronics projects costing more than $100,000 was cumbersome and slow. As an example, one project, the "Integrated US Wideband Communications System for Southeast Asia," first called for by CINCPAC in October 1964 and approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 November 1964, was still undergoing administrative processing and no implementing directive had yet been issued. Other projects had been called for by CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were currently reviewing them. If these projects were approved, it was essential that some short-cut methods be developed so that they might be implemented much more quickly than normal procedures would allow.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary that the lack of cryptographically secure voice communications equipment was especially serious in Vietnam. The equipment in-country was almost completely occupied and in constant use. Among measures needed to solve this problem were the withdrawal of such equipment from service in other areas, particularly the CONUS, for redistribution in the PACOM area, and provision of additional funds for increasing production of a new generation of voice security equipment and ancillary devices to adapt this equipment to PACOM employment.[31]

Improvement in Transportation Capabilities

The transportation systems within the United States and from the United States to PACOM and Southeast Asia were modern,

31. Ibid.

well organized, and capable of being expanded rapidly. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that support of a greatly increased effort in Vietnam would probably require augmentation of the systems both by military reserve and civilian commercial capabilities. This would be complicated by the ceiling established by the Secretary of Defense for FY 1966 on funding of commercial contract airlift. The expansion of the war in Vietnam would require some changes in the DOD Five Year Force Structure and Financial Program so that elements of the active forces schedulted for transfer to the reserves could be kept on active status. These included C-124 and KC97 aircraft and some troopships. The delivery of some new aircraft, particularly the C-141, should be expedited through accelerated production.

The capacity to receive and discharge cargo and personnel at ports and airfields in Vietnam was marginal and prompt action would have to be taken to increase this capacity. To assist in this, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, the engineer and transportation personnel already requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 January should be accelerated. RVN port facilities were limited for the receipt and discharge of vessels. Discharge in stream and over-the-beach would be necessary. Lighterage craft were on their way to the PACOM from the United States but there were insufficient organized units in the active Army to keep these craft operating without depleting the forces for support of other missions.

Balance of Payments

On 1 October 1964 the Secretary of Defense had, in a memorandum to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, set forth the policy on balance of payments. He had stated at that time "In view of the uncertainties involved in Southeast Asia at this time, it is my intention that balance of payments considerations should not adversely affect the combat effectiveness of our forces directly or imminently engaged in Southeast Asia." Keeping this in mind, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their memorandum of 2 April recommended that the Secretary adjust the balance of payments goals for contractual services in such a manner as to separate costs of operations in Southeast Asia from the achievement of totals established for other areas. "Balance of payments restrictions," they

said, "should not limit the expenditure of funds in the RVN or in those areas in direct support of the war in that area."[32]

In a detailed annex to their memorandum the Joint Chiefs of Staff made additional specific recommendations on each of the major areas, i.e., funding, personnel, communications, that they had considered pertinent.[33]

These recommendations were being made almost simultaneously with Presidential decisions that were to change the course of the war and that cast the United States into the role of a primary participant in the fight against the VC and their sponsor, North Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense had already indicated that he stood ready to support many of the adjustments, all of which had fiscal implications, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were now proposing be made.

In a memorandum dated 1 March 1965, the Secretary of Defense had told the Secretaries of the Services, the Military Chiefs of the Services, and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, that he wanted it clearly understood that there was an unlimited appropriation available for the financing of aid to Vietnam. "Under no circumstances," he said, "is lack of money to stand in the way of aid to that nation." Such assistance would be provided wherever it was needed, either through MAP or through the "application of U.S. forces and their associated equipment."[34]

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. (S) Memo, SecDef to SecNav et al., 1 Mar 65, Att to JCS 2343/535, JMF 9155.3 (1 Mar 65).

Chapter 21

PLANNING FOR DEPLOYMENT - MARCH-JUNE 1965

Important decisions had been made and significant actions taken by the President in the first quarter of 1965. In these months he had ordered the bombing of NVN and had removed the restrictions on the use of US planes and pilots in combat against the VC in the RVN. It had become increasingly apparent that, unless there were sudden and drastic improvements in the military situation, the growing national resolve, symbolic in these actions, could logically culminate in sending US ground forces to fight alongside the RVNAF. The planning and recommendations for deployment of US forces that had taken place during March, while predicated on the need for protecting US forces and installations, had strongly reflected such a realization.

When the President, responding to the advice of his military advisors, authorized in early April the commitment of US ground troops to combat against the enemy, deployment took on a new significance and urgency.

In the first weeks following this decision, specific authorities to deploy US forces were evolutionary and slower in coming than the JCS believed advisable. The authority to send units, especially major units, met resistance within government councils. Exact statements of authority were difficult to pin down since these were sometimes expressed in very broad terms as approvals "for planning purposes" and "in principle", developed over a period of time in discussions of various officials without a definite decision being identified. This procedure led occasionally to moments of misunderstanding concerning just what units, or how many men, had actually been approved for shipment as of a specific date. The need for forces was not always clearly understood nor was there, apparently, enough appreciation of the timing problem. In some cases the JCS had either to assume that authority had been granted, or that it would soon be granted, in order to get under way the very complicated and time-consuming arrangements necessary to take a unit from garrison, ready it for shipment, and place it in RVN, when it was needed, in combat ready condition. Of course, no movements were actually directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff until the authority had been clearly established, but had they waited for the final

word before directing preliminary preparations, delays in arrival would have been considerably greater than they were.

During the spring of 1965 the decisions concerning deployments were affected by a number of inhibiting considerations. First was the possible adverse effect on the attitudes of the South Vietnamese and their government of a too large and rapid influx of troops. Such an influx might also stimulate the communist bloc to undesirable action. The drain on strategic reserves in CONUS and the possible effects on US commitments to NATO and on certain contingency plans had to be considered. Important too was the concern for logistics--that deployments should not outrun support capabilities. Finally, there was the fear that too-swift deployment would place US forces in exposed and dangerous positions and lead to increased casualty rates.

In later months other factors would become important. The effect of large deployments on the RVN economy would be particularly troublesome. Call-up of reserves, extension of active duty tours, and the general questions of force levels and the national military posture would all be considered in connection with deployments to SVN. However, by mid-1965 much had been accomplished in creating a wider understanding of the need for deployments and in smoothing out the detailed processes of planning, recommendations, and actions.

The Decision to Commit US Forces to Combat

At a NSC meeting at the White House on the night of 1 April, the question of the scale of deployment of US combat forces and the role to be played by those forces came to a head. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had assumed that the President's approval of General Johnson's 21 recommendations two weeks earlier had opened the way for more direct and effective actions in RVN but this assumption was not shared by all Presidential advisors. The discussions centered around a paper prepared within the Department of State and revised by members of the White House staff, setting forth proposed courses of action. This paper rejected deployment of the three-division force, assigned the Marines an "offensive enclave-quick reaction mission," and in other respects failed to reflect the expressed views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, objected, recalling for the President that on 15 March, it had been agreed that the United States was losing in the RVN and had to do something about it. What had to be done

was to establish military control of selected critic in the country and the only way to do it was to go a introduce three divisions. The consensus of other pa at this meeting opposed immediate introduction of the divisions. Nevertheless, the President did approve mo the mission of the Marines to permit their more active under conditions to be established and approved by the tary of Defense and the Secretary of State. The Chairm Joint Chiefs of Staff interpreted this to mean their em ment in "counterinsurgency combat operations." To suppo Marines already ashore the President approved sending to Da Nang and Phu Bai two additional BLTs, one Marine F-4 squadron and command and control elements.[1]

The President also approved sending the logistic and support units and personnel requested by CINCPAC, totalling 18,000-20,000 men and officers, to support US forces alread in RVN, to prepare a logistics base, and to support the possible deployment of up to three US/Allied division forces Although the President did not approve the deployment of thi three-division force, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 2 April instructed the Joint Staff to draw up plans for such deployment on the basis that approval would probably be given for deployment of a full MEF, an Army division, and a ROK division.

At this same time the President directed that delivery of aircraft and helicopter reinforcements be expedited. In extension of his earlier efforts to stimulate other nations to send forces to RVN, President Johnson instructed the Secretary of State to see what could be done to induce the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand to deploy rapidly "significant combat elements" to RVN "in parallel" with the deployment of US Marines. These decisions were made on the evening of 1 April, although a proforma NSC meeting on the next morning covered the same ground.

On 5 April, the Secretary of Defense asked the JCS for a schedule setting forth in detail the actions necessary to

1. (TS) Msg, Wheeler to Westmoreland and Sharp, unnumbered, 3 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, April 65. (TS) NSAM 328 to SecState et al., 6 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (6 Apr 65) sec 1. Other instructions and approvals by the President contained in this NSAM will be covered in appropriate sections.

ree-division force into RVN "at the date."[2]

mbers of men, the Joint Chiefs of Staff mmended the deployment to the RVN, "when 00 Marines to increase the MEB to an MEF; ie division of 26,000; and a Korean division 0. They had also "concurred" in the intro- e Australian infantry battalion with supporting ew Zealand artillery battery; one New Zealand and other New Zealand supporting units. The Joint Staff had also recommended deployment of a brigade 25th Infantry Division to Thailand.[3]

yond these, the cumulative recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff, made within the last two months, for ment of Air Force units to Southeast Asia and WESTPAC ited 5 TFS to Ubon, Kadena, Kung Kuan, and Takhli; Clark and Kadena; 2 RTF to Clark/Tan Son Nhut and 5 EC-121 to Taiwan; 1 TFS to Itazuke and 2 TFS to [4]

PAC Deployment Conference - 9 April

Underlying all of their considerations for deployment of mbat troops was the recognition by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, eightened by General Meyer's and General Johnson's reports, of the logistic weaknesses in the RVN. Reflected in their planning and in their recommendations on deployment of forces in the next weeks and months was the determination of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that combat forces would not be sent in at a rate that would exceed the capability of the logistics base. It was first necessary therefore to determine just what this base must be. At the same time, in coordination with field commanders and Services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to work out the priorities for troop deployment and the optimum employment plans.

2. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 5 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 1.
3. (TS) Terms of Reference for Honolulu Conference, 7 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 65.
4. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8528 to CINCPAC, 6 Apr 65.

In order to develop answers to these matters, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that a deployment conference be held at CINCPAC's headquarters starting on 9 April. Officers from the Joint Staff, the Services, the major commands, and the Defense Transportation Agency attended.

The Director, Joint Staff, General Burchinal, sent a message to Admiral Sharp on 6 April communicating the sense of urgency that the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt about deployments and over the need for sound but swift planning to accomplish them. "There is real concern," he said, "that the situation in I and II Corps may fall apart faster than we have taken cognizance of in our current preliminary planning." Citing the Secretary of Defense's call for a detailed plan to get US forces into RVN "at the earliest practicable date," Burchinal told CINCPAC, "We want to ram these log units in as rapidly as MACV wants them and we can send them. All here recognize the distinct possibility that we may have to send in the Marine and US Army division forces plus the balance of the air to meet a suddenly developing situation in SVN whether or not what we would like to have as a prepared logistic base has been established."[5] The terms of reference furnished by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the deployment conference stipulated that plans be developed under two alternative movement schedules; 1) maximum feasible use of resources within present DOD authorities and; 2) the National Emergency level of transport capability. They also stated that priority attention should be given to the plans and movement schedules for the logistical and supporting units required by CINCPAC for; 1) support of personnel and forces already in or approved for deployment to RVN; 2) receipt and support in RVN of a three-division force; and 3) receipt and support of other US forces.[6]

CINCPAC had been told just before the conference that the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted the "expedited preparation" of a feasible time-phased deployment schedule for the 2,100-man Army Logistic Command, the 2,400-man Engineer Construction Group and other supporting logistic units amounting to between 13,500-15,500 men--all of which would support the current operations, three division forces, and the remaining Army and Air Force deployments approved or under consideration. Deployment of logistic forces, CINCPAC was assured, was not

5. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8507 to CINCPAC, 6 Apr 65.
6. (TS) Terms of Reference for Honolulu Conference, 7 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 65.

contingent upon approval to deploy combat forces but the planning for combat forces must go on concurrently with the planning for logistic force deployments. These deployments might be concurrent and CINCPAC was therefore enjoined to maintain maximum flexibility in the availability of airlift.[7]

The conference at Honolulu from 8-10 April 1965 resulted in a CINCPAC deployment plan for logistic and combat forces to Southeast Asia, which was forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 April. Pointing to the capabilities of the VC, the NVN, and Communist China to seize all or parts of the RVN, the plan presented a deployment concept to meet the threat, to improve US posture to deter overt aggression, and to provide a capability for countering aggression should it occur. Generally the current situation required the stationing of US and allied ground forces in critically threatened areas of RVN and a small combatant ground force in Thailand, as well as additional air units in RVN, Thailand, and WESTPAC. With respect to US ground forces, the plan proposed that they be assigned initially to base security missions, and, once bases were secure, phase into counterinsurgency missions in coordination with the RVNAF. Operations would be mounted from secure, logistically supportable bases in a campaign of increasing strength against the VC. Deployments would be made in progressive increments which could be so controlled that if certain forces were obviously not needed they could be cancelled. The progressive deployments would fall into four phases: Phase I - Increase security of vital US installations and secure US enclaves in coastal areas. Occupy and improve coastal enclaves and support RVNAF operations from them; Phase 2 - Conduct operations from enclaves; Phase 3 - Secure US inland bases and areas; Phase 4 - Occupy and improve US inland bases and conduct operations from them.[8]

Initial deployments would take place through the coastal enclaves. Major units and supporting forces and the enclaves through which they would be introduced were listed. The plan was given to the Director, J-4, for consideration in

7. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8528 to CINCPAC, 6 Apr 65.
8. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Deployment Plan for Logistic and Combat Forces to Southeast Asia--Deployment Planning Conference, HQ PACOM, 8-10 Apr 65, 10 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 64) sec 1.

connection with the overall deployment planning study desired by the Secretary of Defense.

The 173d Airborne Brigade

General Westmoreland doubted that deployment of division sized forces was "in the immediate offing," even though preparations for their deployment were being pressed with some urgency. He recommended on 11 April, therefore, that the 173d Airborne Brigade be deployed from Okinawa into Bien Hoa/Vung Tau. He said that its deployment was as much a military necessity as the deployment of the Marines to Da Nang/Phu Bai. He cited the threat from strong VC main force units in the eastern III CTZ, which could attack the eastern flank of the Hop Tac area and major US and GVN installations in the area. The Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area contained two major US bases essential for current operations and for the safety of US personnel in the Saigon area. Bien Hoa, for example, was the major USAF and VNAF fighter base. All A-1Es were based there. The B-57s at Bien Hoa carried out over 75 percent of the in-country jet support of the RVNAF. An Army brigade stationed in the area would not only strengthen its security but could be flown quickly to the highlands area in event of a VC attack there.[9]

CINCPAC agreed with COMUSMACV, and recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the 173d Airborne Brigade be sent at once. However, he asked that action also be taken at the same time to replace the brigade in RVN as soon as possible with a US Army brigade from the CONUS so that the 173d might be sent back to Okinawa as PACOM reserve.[10]

The JCS Deployment Plan

Meeting on 12 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed themselves to the preliminary recommendations of the J-4 on the deployment study and directed certain changes and gave some specific guidance. They directed that the deployment

9. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MACJ 11682 to CINCPAC, 11 Apr 65, JCS IN 11366.

10. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 132235Z Apr 65, JCS IN 14207.

concept, based on that of the CINCPAC plan, be expanded into a three division/nine squadron deployment plan and time schedule. The plan should consider creating some kind of combined tactical headquarters in northern RVN to coordinate counterinsurgency operations near the I and II Corps enclaves. It should counter major attacks by NVN forces, either from across the DMZ or from in-country assembly areas. General Westmoreland's bid for the early deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade to Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area should be given special attention. The J-4 should plan on deploying the Air Mobile division, recommended by the Chief of Staff, Army, and should plan on having the first RCT of the ROK division in RVN in 180 days. The deployment plan should also provide for the deployment of the 18,000-20,000-man logistic force approved by the President to establish the base for the three-division forces--which would be landed in enclaves in the Hue/Phu Bai-Da Nang area, the Chu Lai/Qui Nhon/Nha Trang area, and the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area.[11]

On 13 April the Secretary of Defense approved, subject to country clearance, the deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade to the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area from Okinawa.[12]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff assigned responsibility for deployment of CONUS Army and Air Force units to CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMEAFSA on 14 April. After the troop lists had been finalized and authority granted for deployment, and after the Chief of Staff, Army, and/or Chief of Staff, Air Force, had determined units to be combat ready, they would transfer operational command of these units to CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMEAFSA.[13]

On 17 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to Secretary McNamara the plan for deployment about which he had inquired on 5 April. The concept, based essentially on that developed in the CINCPAC plan and earlier advocated by the Commandant, Marine Corps, called for the establishment of secure bases along the coast of RVN into which US forces

11. (TS) Note to Control Div, "J-4 5-65/J-3 TP 19-65," 12 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 2.
12. (TS-GP 4) JCS 2343/564-4, 14 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 2.
13. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9375 to CSA et al., 19 Apr 65.

would be introduced and from which they would conduct "combat counterinsurgency operations" against the VC. It would be necessary, in order to improve the logistic base needed to support combat elements, to send in some logistic forces first. Other US ground forces, with their support elements, would be needed in Thailand to "add deterrent strength," and to have forces in the area in the event of an attack by NVN or Communist China. Air Force units would be needed in forward areas of the Western Pacific to deter aggression, to strengthen operational forces engaged in Laos, NVN, and in RVN, and to improve reconnaissance and airlift capabilities.[14]

The concept of operations given the Secretary of Defense paralleled that of the CINCPAC plan and provided for the same four phases. Initial locations for the first units would be: 1) III MEF - Hue/Da Nang/Chu Lai; 2) US Airmobile Division - Qui Nhon/Nha Trang; 3) ROK Division Force - Quang Ngai/Chu Lai; 4) 173d Airborne Brigade - Bien Hoa/Vung Tau.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff foresaw that in order to deploy the logistical forces into the enclaves, combat forces would have to provide security for the initial and subsequent deployments, and for construction and maintenance operations. The III MEF would secure airfields, conduct combat counterinsurgency operations, and be prepared to repel any overt NVN/CHICOM attacks in the area of its responsibility. The Army Airmobile Division, from its bases in the coastal area, would also conduct operations against the VC "as directed by COMUSMACV in the highlands or elsewhere as required by the situation," but only when "logistically feasible." The division would stay ready to defend in the central highlands in case of a NVN/CHICOM attack, and would help keep friendly control of coastal communications. The ROK division would be deployed into the Quang Ngai/Chu Lai area only after the Marines had secured the area initially; once ashore, it would expand to the Tam Ky area. It would conduct base security and counterinsurgency operations. The 173d Airborne Brigade, scheduled to provide security and to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area, would be replaced by another brigade from the CONUS as soon as practicable in order to return to Okinawa. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, anticipating

14. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-288-65 to SecDef, 17 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/564-5), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.

the possible need for a higher echelon field command, also informed the Secretary of Defense that a tailored-down US Army Corps headquarters and minimal corps troops would be sent to RVN when and if required.

The deployments that the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended supported the deployment troop list proposed by CINCPAC. Movement schedules could not be put into final form until the Secretary had made final decisions, and the priority of movement and method of travel would depend on CINCPAC's requests. The initial proposed deployments included 17,100 men from the logistic forces authorized, as well as 14,000 Marines for the MEF and the 4,000-man Airborne Brigade. If necessary decisions and country clearances were forthcoming, the United States would have more than 35,000 men in RVN by 15 July. In addition a brigade of the 25th Infantry Division would be deployed to Thailand where it would be charged with providing security and stability in northeast Thailand.

Forty percent of MATS capability would be reserved to insure movement of essential resupply, channel, and special mission traffic, and to provide a reasonable degree of flexibility to meet emergency situations which might arise. Air and sealift requirements for movement of resupply and replacements would increase proportionately in Southeast Asia as these deployments took place. Of necessity only the most urgently needed personnel and items of supply would be airlifted. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary of Defense approve their plan as a basis for further planning.[15]

Ambassador Taylor's Objections

During the development of the 17 April deployment plan, Ambassador Taylor had raised objections to further deployment. While they did not share the Ambassador's views, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were nevertheless obliged to take them into consideration as an important factor that could inhibit deployment if not satisfactorily answered.

Ambassador Taylor had taken an active part in NSC discussions at which the President had decided to send more US

15. Ibid.

troops and to commit some US forces to combat. In some respects he supported this change in policy, but in other respects he was less than enthusiastic. As Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in 1964, General Taylor had opposed the introduction of US combat forces into RVN and had repeated this opposition in February 1965. Although now convinced by the worsening situation that some modification of this stand was necessary, he still doubted that the situation called for the introduction of large numbers of US fighting men and counseled a moderate approach.

Ambassador Taylor agreed that the 18,000-20,000-man logistic buildup was needed and he urged its rapid implementation. He believed that ". . . engineers can be very useful in SVN whether or not we ever introduce additional divisions."[16]

Ambassador Taylor did not believe that US divisions were needed urgently. He did not fear, for example, that I and II Corps areas were "about to fall apart." And in any event, if a debacle were going to occur in the next few months the United States could not possibly prepare logistically in time. That Taylor was not privy to the planning taking place in Washington was evident from his "understanding" that ". . . if the Marines demonstrate effectiveness in operating out of Da Nang in an offensive counterinsurgency role, other offensive enclaves may be established along the coast and garrisoned with brigade-size contingents for employment similar to the Marines." He recommended that logistic preparations be started at once to establish support at Bien Hoa/Vung Tau and at Qui Nhon for US brigades. This would allow later introduction of larger forces if necessary. He wanted this done rapidly enough to make a contribution "to the situation which is now unfolding."[17]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC on 14 April that at the "earliest feasible" time after receipt of country clearance, he should deploy the 173d Airborne Brigade and necessary supporting elements to the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area and expand its mission to include counterinsurgency combat operations.[18]

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16. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3332 to State, 12 Apr 65, JCS IN 11893.
17. Ibid.
18. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9012 to CINCPAC et al., 14 Apr 65.

When Ambassador Taylor saw the JCS instructions to CINCPAC he was apparently puzzled. He cabled Washington, also on 14 April, saying, "This comes as a complete surprise in view of the understanding reached in Washington that we would experiment with the Marines in a counterinsurgency role before bringing in other U.S. contingents." He recommended that the deployment of the 173d be held up "until we can sort out all matters relating to it."[19]

Ambassador Taylor was even more surprised and displeased by the landing of Marine Forces at Da Nang with 155mm and 8" howitzers and with tanks. He cabled Secretary Rusk that "This action is highly embarrassing to me and contravenes the decisions bearing on the Marine deployments taken in Washington during my recent visit as I understand them." He pointed out that the inclusion of heavy weapons in the Marine armament was inappropriate to counterinsurgency operations and would encourage critics of US policy who charged that the United States was more interested in fighting Red China than the VC. Ambassador Taylor was particularly concerned about Prime Minister Quat's possible reaction. He did not feel it would be wise now to take the weapons out, however, since that would only compound the mistake by drawing attention to it. "I shall try to explain this affair to Quat in such a way as not to encourage the suspicion that we are slipping units into SVN without his knowledge."[20]

The Ambassador was disturbed by the pace of recent actions to introduce US ground forces into RVN. He charged that this created an impression of eagerness in some quarters that he found difficult to understand. "I should think," he said, "that for both military and political reasons we should be most reluctant to tie down Army/Marine units in this country and would do so only after the presentation of the most convincing evidence of the necessity."

Before the introduction of the initial Marine units into the Da Nang area, there had been, Ambassador Taylor asserted, four reasons for so doing. One of these, the need to convince the GVN of US determination to stand by them, had already been

19. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3373 to State, 14 Apr 65, JCS IN 14875.
20. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3374 to State, 14 Apr 65, JCS IN 14792.

accomplished by the original deployment. Three other possible reasons remained: 1) the need to take care of military tasks which the RVNAF could not handle; 2) the need to take care of military tasks faster than the RVNAF could do without assistance; 3) the desirability of providing forces to meet possible future crises and contingencies.[21]

Ambassador Taylor pointed out that these three arguments could be used to justify almost unlimited deployments of US ground forces. He also warned that the mounting number of US troops could sap RVN initiative and turn the counterinsurgency into a US war against the VC. The Chinese could use these deployments as an excuse for pressing military reinforcements on Hanoi. Frictions would grow between the GVN and its allies and it would become increasingly difficult to keep GVN and US policies on parallel lines.

> A consideration of the disadvantages convinces me that, while logistic preparations should be made now to be able to receive additional forces, the forces themselves should be held outside of SVN just as long as possible and until their need is uncontrovertible. From a purely military point of view, it is essentially wasteful of the specialized mobility of Marines and airborne troops to commit them prematurely to restricted land areas. Politically, it is undesirable to seek authority for their introduction until a clear and specific need exists which assures them an unreserved welcome from their GVN hosts.[22]

Prompted by Ambassador Taylor's objections, the Joint Chiefs of Staff clarified further their position on deployment to the Secretary of Defense. In effect, their views, forwarded to Secretary McNamara in a memorandum on 15 April, constituted a rationale for actions already taken and those planned. With respect to the Ambassador's recommendation that the deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade be delayed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the security of major US air operational and logistic installations in the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area was judged to be in a precarious state. ARVN forces could not be counted on to protect these facilities without overstretching their own counterinsurgency

21. (S) Msg, Saigon 3384 to State, 14 Apr 65, JCS IN 14992.
22. Ibid.

capabilities. The deployment of the Airborne Brigade, recommended and desired both by General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp, was in keeping with approved contingency plans. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore supported the earliest possible deployment of this unit both for a security mission and to take part in counterinsurgency combat operations when ready.[23]

Ambassador Taylor's strong objection to bringing in combat forces additional to the Marines already ashore was answered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the grounds that the situation in SVN clearly required the deployment of more Marine and Army troops. There were not sufficient troops to provide security for the approved base developments at Chu Lai and to provide at the same time the maneuver units for the approved counter-insurgency operations against the VC. The planned expansion of the logistics base in the Qui Nhon/Nha Trang area called for combat troops to protect the base areas, and this deployment, a brigade of two battalions, should be completed during April and May. The Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that they were confident the Ambassador could induce Prime Minister Quat to approve acceptance of these forces.[24]

The surprise and embarrassment caused the Ambassador by the landing of armor and artillery with the Marines was outweighed by the military necessity. The equipment with which the Marines had landed was standard equipment. "At no time had the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed that these units be landed in South Vietnam in any configuration other than fully combat-equipped and combat-ready . . ." the Joint Chiefs of Staff said.[25]

Ambassador Taylor's objections to accelerated deployment elicited a strong response from another quarter when Mr. McGeorge Bundy, the President's Assistant, informed him on the same day that the President was all in favor of further troop deployments. The President believed that additional US troops "are important if not decisive reinforcement." The President had not seen any negative results from the deployments to date. He did not, the Ambassador was informed, "wish to wait any longer than is essential for genuine GVN agreement." The

23. (TS GP 3) JCSM-281-65 to SecDef, 15 Apr 65, (derived from JCS 2343/575), JMF 9155.3 (14 Apr 65).
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.

President had always intended, however, that before any deployment would be made, Ambassador Taylor would review it with Prime Minister Quat first, Bundy stated, adding, "we regret any contrary impression given by our messages in recent days."[26]

Deployment of Additional Forces

Prompted possibly by the differing views that were being expressed on deployments by various responsible officials and by the necessity to examine the JCS deployment plan in face-to-face meeting with the commanders responsible in the RVN, Secretary McNamara called for a deployment planning conference to be held in Honolulu on 19-20 April. In addition to himself, those attending the conference were Ambassador Taylor, General Wheeler, Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland, Mr. William Bundy, and Mr. McNaughton. Just prior to this conference the Joint Chiefs of Staff had, on 17 April, sent to CINCPAC a message informing him that the deployment of about 5,000 Marines had been approved for planning purposes "at the highest level." General Wheeler learned of this message at a preconference briefing in Honolulu. He immediately cabled General Goodpaster in Washington stating that he was unaware of any such approval for sending additional Marines to the RVN and asking for an explanation.[27]

On the next day General Goodpaster replied to the Chairman, saying that the assumption that approval had been granted for 5,000 additional Marines had arisen out of a meeting with the President. Subsequent to this meeting the Joint Chiefs of Staff had, in the absence of the Chairman, "compared their recollections of discussion of additional Marines with the President." The consensus was that the Commandant, Marine Corps, had advised the President that more than the 9,000 Marines then in RVN would be needed if Marines were to conduct counterinsurgency combat operations. The present MEB would be unable to do much beyond local security. He had suggested putting in the remainder of the Marine Division (MEF), amounting to about 22,000 men. The President had stated that this was

26. (TS) Msg, State 2332 to Saigon, 15 Apr 65, JCS IN 08968.

27. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9310 to CINCPAC, 17 Apr 65; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 192319Z Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 65; (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 21 Apr 65, OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.

beyond what he could do. But he had said, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed (although their discussion of the matter had been "diffuse"), that he "would agree to go up to 5,000." This discussion at the White House had been coupled with a discussion of having US and ARVN battalions operate as teams in combined operations.[28]

"Although not all of these points were recalled with the same clarity by all of the Chiefs," General Goodpaster told General Wheeler, "they did put this together as their understanding of the matter." General Greene now suggested that the matter of the composition and concept for employment of the additional Marines be discussed at the Honolulu conference. Presidential advisor Bundy, who had been present during the meeting with the President, did not recall any particular size of Marine force as having received any specific endorsement and believed that the matter should be resolved at Honolulu.[29]

The deployment of additional Marines to Chu Lai came under discussion at the Honolulu Conference, but as part of the broader question of overall deployments. The Secretary of Defense apparently believed that the "three division" deployment plan proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 17 April called for too many forces. After considerable discussion the conferees decided to reduce considerably the scale of deployment from that recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at least initially. On 21 April the Secretary of Defense, in a memorandum to the President, reported, "all recommend" that, in addition to the 2,000 ROK and 33,500 US troops already in-country, forces be deployed to RVN on the following schedule: 1 US Army brigade space (4,000) at Bien Hoa/Vung Tau, closing 1 May; 3 US Marine air squadrons and 3 Marine battalions (6,200) at Chu Lai, closing 5 May; 1 Australian battalion (1,250) at Vung Tau, closing 21 May; 1 US Army brigade (4,000) at Qui Nhon/Nha Trang, closing 15 June; 1 Korean RCT (4,000) at Quang Ngai, closing 15 June. Adding to these forces those augmentation and logistic troops already approved and the logistics troops not yet approved, the Secretary derived a total force in RVN of 82,000 US and 7,250 third country troops.

28. (TS) Msg, Exec to CJCS 201641Z to CJCS, Apr 65. OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.
29. Ibid.

"Possible later deployments, not recommended now," the Secretary of Defense informed the President, "include a US Airmobile division (9 bns-15,800) to Pleiku/Kontum, and I Corps Hq (1,200) to Nha Trang; and even later, the remainder of the Korean division (6 bns-14,500) to Quang Ngai, and the remainder of the Marine Expeditionary Force (3 bns-24,800) to DaNang."[30]

The Secretary of Defense also recommended to the President that he inform the "Congressional leadership" of the contemplated deployments and of the changed mission for US forces in RVN.[31]

Upon returning from Honolulu, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with the President, the Secretary of State and others at the White House on the morning of 22 April to discuss the deployment recommendations developed at Honolulu. No decisions on deployments were forthcoming at this meeting. General Wheeler pointed out that the adverse developments some had feared if US troops were introduced and other actions taken (such as increased use of US planes in the RVN) had not come about. The VNAF had increased its own efforts and the people had not risen in revolt against entry of US troops. Also discussed at the meeting were the role of Australian forces and command arrangements.

On the basis of the deployment recommendations made at the Honolulu meeting, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a memorandum on 30 April, provided the Secretary of Defense with a "program including a concept and force composition for deployment" of the forces that the President had been advised should be deployed.[32]

The JCS Plan, 30 April

Based generally on the same concept the Joint Chiefs of Staff had presented to the Secretary of Defense on 17 April,

30. (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 21 Apr 65, OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.
31. Ibid.
32 (TS-GP 1) JCSM-321-65 to SecDef, 30 Apr 65, (derived from JCS 2343/564-7), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.

this latest deployment plan provided for the deployment of the two US Army brigades, a MEB, a ROK RCT, an ANZAC battalion force, and logistic and augmentation forces of about 32,000 men and officers. Although forces had been reduced from the original plan, Marine, Army, and ROK units were still to enter and secure the enclaves as originally proposed. The ANZAC battalion would deploy to the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area with the US Airborne Brigade.[33]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also listed the possible later deployments to RVN that might be required, giving desired closing dates. These would entail deploying the Army air mobile division and the Army Corps Headquarters, to RVN by 1 August, with the remainder of a ROK division and the MEF deploying by 1 October.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that Secretary McNamara approve for implementation the deployments proposed and that he authorize the deployments of the I MEF from the west coast of the United States to constitute a reserve force for the Marines in WESTPAC, replacing the III MEF as it was deployed into RVN.

The Secretary of Defense did not approve the JCS plan until two weeks later. But in the interim, part of the deployment recommended in the plan were carried out.

At a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 28 April, during discussions leading to a decision on the deployment plan forwarded two days later, the Chairman had instructed the Joint Staff to draft a message to CINCPAC authorizing a "go ahead" on the introduction of the 173d Airborne Brigade into the Bien Hao/Vung Tau area and 3 Marine battalions and 3 air squadrons into Chu Lai in early May. This message would be "surfaced" only after the Secretary of Defense approved these deployments. The GVN had already granted clearance for entry of these forces.[34]

33. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-321-65 to SecDef, 30 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/564-7), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.
34. (TS) Note to Control Div "Deployment of Forces to South Vietnam (U)," 20 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 4. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3511 to State, 27 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 65.

The President approved this cable on the morning of 30 April. The Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the movements carried out, sending the execute message to CINCPAC on the same day it was approved.[35]

With the deployment of the second MEB, the III MEF would have ashore seven of its nine battalions. Upon completion of an airstrip seven squadrons of Marine aircraft would be deployed in RVN. The Marine Corps therefore asked to deploy to Da Nang a reduced strength Force/Division/Wing headquarters to include two Major Generals, one commanding the division and the other commanding the wing. General Westmoreland had no objections to this arrangement, but he wanted to be sure, since the press would undoubtedly report that a Marine division had been deployed, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff fully understood and approved such a deployment.[36]

On 5 May COMUSMACV informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, at a meeting of the US Mission Council, concern had been expressed over the use of the term Marine Expeditionary Force. The sensitive word was "Expeditionary" which was reminiscent to the Vietnamese of the French Expeditionary Force (Corps Expeditionaire Francais en Extreme Orient), an organization infamous in Vietnamese history. Westmoreland therefore suggested that the name of the III MEF be changed.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on the same day that they had no objection to the deployment of the Division/Wing headquarters to include the general officers. This deployment would not be identified as the III MEF, but as the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF). Other Marine organizations deploying to RVN in the future would have their titles modified to replace "expeditionary" with "amphibious" when appropriate.[37]

The III MAF was established at Da Nang on 6 May. Additional Marines landed at Chu Lai on the next day. The 173d Airborne Brigade arrived in the RVN at the same date.[38]

35. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1141 to CINCPAC, 30 Apr 65.
36. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 14432 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 2 May 65, JCS IN 40071.
37. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1510 to CINCPAC, 5 May 65.
38. (U) Marine Corps, Commandant's Vietnam Chronology, 1965, p. 174.

The Secretary of Defense, on 15 May, approved for planning purposes the deployments that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended on 30 April. In addition, he authorized the "continuation of the preparation cycle" for the deployment of the Army brigade to Qui Nhon, and the deployment of individual personnel augmentations. These two actions would bring the total manpower authorization for US forces in RVN to over 69,000. He also approved deployment of elements of the I MEF from the CONUS to WESTPAC to replace elements of the III MEF sent to RVN. He informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that approval for the deployment of the ANZAC battalion force and the ROK RCT already existed.39

"The other deployments described," the Secretary of Defense concluded, "will be considered in conjunction with continuing high-level deliberations on the Southeast Asian situation and as further requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff."40

Experimental Programs

During the Conference at Honolulu, the problems associated with an experimental program, part of which had been based on ideas originating with the President, were examined and discussed by Secretary McNamara and the other top officials. This program of specific and unusual actions had been sent to Ambassador Taylor, Admiral Sharp, and General Westmoreland in a joint State-Defense message approved by the President on 15 April. According to the cable, the President believed the situation in RVN to be deteriorating to the extent that not only actions against NVN but an entirely new approach in the South must be added to achieve victory. The Ambassador and the field commanders were told that "we believe" that experimental steps must be taken to that end. The first such step would be the "experimental encadrement" of RVNAF units with US forces. General Westmoreland was told to develop two plans, one to integrate about 50 US soldiers into each of several ARVN battalions, the other involving the combined operations of about three US battalions with three or more RVN combat battalions. More orthodox, and already part of the concept developed in Washington, was the instruction to plan for

39. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to JCS, 15 May 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 4.
40. Ibid.

stationing a "brigade force" in the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area and for introducing a battalion or multi-battalion force in such coastal locations as Qui Nhon ". . . to experiment further with US forces in a counter-insurgency role. . . ." A total of nine US battalions would be involved.[41]

At the same time COMUSMACV was directed to work with GVN officials to make detailed plans for a substantial expansion of the Vietnamese recruiting campaign, making full use of US experts and methods. Further, the Surgeon General of the US Army had been instructed to work with General Westmoreland in developing an experimental program for providing expanded medical services to the countryside, using mobile dispensaries. COMUSMACV was also to set up a plan for introducing US Army Civil Affairs personnel into the structure of provincial governments in one or two provinces, hopefully to help create stable government in these provinces and to start and maintain much-needed political, economic, and security programs. A further experiment called for the provision and direct distribution of food to regular and paramilitary personnel of the RVN and their families.

The Ambassador was instructed to discuss all these experimental programs urgently with Prime Minister Quat. General Westmoreland was to be prepared to discuss his plans for the military programs with General Wheeler at the conferences in Honolulu during the next week.[42]

On the same day Mr. McGeorge Bundy informed Ambassador Taylor that the President himself had been the inspiration for the encadrement idea and for the use of US Civil Affairs teams.[43]

During the Honolulu discussions of these proposals, General Westmoreland came out strongly against individual encadrement of ARVN units. He stated, however, that he did plan to assign ARVN liaison personnel to each independent US platoon and to "brigade" US forces with ARVN troops in counterinsurgency actions. Furthermore, he proposed to set

41. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, DEF 9164 to Saigon et al., 15 Apr 65.
42. Ibid.
43. (~~TS~~) Msg, State 2332 to Saigon, 15 Apr 65, JCS IN 08968.

up an International Mobile Security Task Force which would contain third-country as well as ARVN and US forces.[44]

In the matter of recruiting, both Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland stated that no additional US recruiting "expertise" was needed in RVN. The bottlenecks were not techniques to get recruits, but in such areas as training facilities, trainers, and leadership. These problems, they said, were being surmounted, and they expected an increase of 127,000 men in the RVNAF, paramilitary forces and police in the next 12 months.[45]

The expansion of medical services in the countryside, with the assistance of the Surgeon General, US Army, was welcomed by Ambassador Taylor. It was decided that a representative of the Surgeon General would come to the RVN at once to work with COMUSMACV and USOM in developing a detailed program.[46]

It was also agreed that an experimental program would be begun in three provinces, introducing US Army civil affairs personnel or similarly qualified personnel into the provincial government structure. The experimental food program that had been proposed was not considered necessary by the Ambassador or COMUSMACV. Both agreed that there was no evidence of any food shortage among the families of the RVNAF or paramilitary personnel. They would, however, begin a study to improve the "fringe benefits" for the forces and their families.[47]

The Secretary of Defense reported these views on the experimental program to the President in his memorandum of 21 April.

Expansion of the Logistics Base

In mid-April the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended other logistic actions beyond the deployment of the logistic forces. They considered that the ports of Quang Ngai, Qui Nhon,

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44. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 21 Apr 65, OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.

Da Nang and Nha Trang should be developed to support the expected input of men and supplies. They recommended "minimum essential base development" in the enclave areas, and the improvement of airfield facilities, including those at Tam Ky, for light aviation. They recommended also the development of Chu Lai with emphasis on the immediate installation of a Short Expeditionary Landing Field (SELF). The prepositioning of US Army lighterage at selected ports had already been approved and was being implemented.[48]

POL facilities that would have to be constructed comprised unloading and storage facilities at Da Nang, Quang Ngai, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Vung Tau, and storage facilities at Saigon, Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut and Pleiku. The Army Engineer Construction Group would commence work on high priority projects for COMUSMACV. Expansion of the construction capability would take place as the follow-on construction units were approved for deployment. Navy Mobile Construction units attached to the III MEF would accomplish the SELF installation. Additional airfield construction requirements might mean that as many as two or more construction battalions would be needed in RVN.

To increase the logistic capability of the United States in the Southeast Asia area, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended broader actions outside RVN. Among these were: 1) expediting country-to-country agreements for the acquisition of real estate; 2) increasing POL and ammo storage capacity at Subic Bay, Philippine Islands; 3) preparing and improving LST ramps at Iwakuni, Japan; 4) improving pier and beach-outload facilities at Okinawa; 5) providing facilities for aerial port detachment at King Kuan; 6) suspending gold flow restrictions in the PACOM area in order that necessary supplies and services might be procured offshore to facilitate preparation for receipt of additional forces in RVN; 7) increasing the capability of Okinawa and the Philippine Islands as offshore supporting bases.

Also in April, Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland had been deeply involved in determining how and to what extent the US logistic base in RVN should be expanded to support the commitment of US and third-country troops and how to coordinate such an expansion with the RVNAF. The

48. Ibid. (T[illegible]-GP 1) JCSM-288-65 to SecDef, 17 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/564-5), JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 3.

central problem was to choose the best of the several options in current logistic procedures and the possible combined use of physical logistic facilities already in existence. In this connection, the Army had expressed "considerable doubt" as to the feasibility or desirability of combined use of logistic facilities.[49]

In order to make easier the stockage of common-user consumable items of Classes II, III, IV and V supply, the Joint Chiefs of Staff undertook consideration of a procedure in which the United States would retain title to such stores until "convenient point of issue of item in country to recipient." This would, of course, raise problems in relationships between the RVNAF and US logistic personnel.

On 7 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out to CINCPAC that the United States might share RVNAF depot or supply facilities. They also suggested that the title to stocks might even revert to the United States. "US personnel could take over management and essentially, if not actually, combined command or coordination of mutually occupied logistic facilities if major stockages were of common user consumables," the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted. This course would have the advantage of allowing rapid availability to the United States of existing facilities, although some might not be capable of expansion. It would simplify programming for the Services for all consumables and would allow establishment of in-country stock levels on the basis of gross consumption forecasts, for the combined totals for all forces. On the other hand substantial opposition from the RVNAF High Command could certainly be expected. Admiral Sharp was asked to comment on these procedures.[50]

In reply, CINCPAC informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that his current planning counted on the optimum use of those facilities already existing and in operation. However, just how much the United States could control these facilities would have to be determined at the time of need and on a case-by-case basis. He seriously doubted that the RVNAF would agree to turning over their logistic support facilities to the United States any more than the United States would agree to turning over command of its combat forces to the GVN. Moreover, RVNAF facilities were already overcrowded or

49. (S-NOFORN) Msg, JCS 8654 to CINCPAC, 7 Apr 65.
50. Ibid.

too small, and many of them were wrongly located for support of US forces as envisioned under current deployment plans. He also pointed out that access to the base depot area near Saigon was "less than fully secure."[51]

CINCPAC believed that the best way to expand the US logistic system in RVN would be to establish as rapidly as possible a framework so conceived that it could be expanded to support any US effort. This would require a base complex at a deep-water port easily accessible from the sea, centrally located and under US control. He stated that the only feasible location for such a facility would be at Cam Ranh Bay. When the base depot became operational, a central control point for all supplies would be set up and all supplies coming into RVN would be controlled by a central stock record office and transceiver point. The office would control the flow of all critical MAP equipment and the common user consumables for all deployed forces. "Issue to the RVNAF of these items could be managed in such a manner as to best serve US interests and apply the required logistical leverage," CINCPAC stated. If a high degree of common user commodities, such as ammunition, were involved, selected supply lines could be completely integrated and the system expanded as necessary so that key items might be controlled without physically sending all supply through the base depot.

By leaving the present RVNAF depot system intact, but collocating US facilities at these installations, when such action were feasible and in the best interests of the United States, the RVNAF objections to US take-over of the logistic system could be overcome. CINCPAC pointed out that development of a base at Cam Ranh Bay would be expensive and would call for "significant construction effort" because of the lack of even minimum essential facilities there at the present time. The Services would have to fund pipelining, and control MAP equipment, including common user consumables and depot stocks. Sizeable combat forces would be tied down in providing security for the complex. Distribution from the depot to field depots would mainly be done by coastal shipping in LSTs.

51. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 152046Z May 65, JCS IN 62873.

"In summary," he said, "I believe it is essential to begin establishment of a base depot complex at a deep-water port (Cam Ranh Bay) to support US forces initially. The depot activity and control would be capable of expansion."52

Development of Cam Ranh Bay

In April and May, as more and more troops began arriving in RVN and as the tonnage of supplies and equipments mushroomed, it became apparent that Saigon logistic facilities would very soon be inadequate. With the prospect of an even greater flow of men and supplies, in the months just ahead, the need for an additional deep-water port, more centrally located with respect to the forces and contemplated operations, grew to near-crisis proportions. The most suitable location for such a port was at Cam Ranh Bay. Cam Ranh Bay was an ideal location with all the necessary attributes for a major military port. US officials had been considering construction of such a port at Cam Ranh since 1964, even before the present urgency had arisen.

On 19 May 1965 the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) asked that the Joint Staff evaluate the requirement for a logistic base at Cam Ranh Bay on two assumptions: 1) that the additional deployments then being considered would be authorized and; 2) that no further major deployment would be made. On 21 May, General Wheeler informed Secretary McNamara that "a requirement for a US installation at Cam Ranh Bay exists under either of the assumptions . . . ." Under the first assumption the base would be expanded to accommodate the additional troops being deployed, including those for OPLAN 32-64, and under the second assumption a requirement for base facilities on a reduced scale would still exist. A supplemental appropriation already contained provision for $7 million for ammunition and port facilities at Cam Ranh Bay. CINCPAC was planning to consolidate some of the logistic facilities programmed for Qui Nhon and Nha Trang at Cam Ranh Bay. This was being done because General Westmoreland had determined recently that Cam Ranh Bay could be secured against the VC by the forces then being planned for the Qui Nhon and Nha Trang enclaves. Admiral Sharp was in the process of preparing an outline base development plan for Cam Ranh Bay. "Under these circumstances," General Wheeler told the Secretary of

52. Ibid.

Defense, "it is believed appropriate for the Ambassador to initiate discussions with the Prime Minister to advise him of the US intent to establish a deep water port and ammunition storage facilities at Cam Ranh Bay; as well as the possibility of the expansion of these facilities to provide other logistic services to the United States, Republic of Vietnam, and third country forces."[53]

Secretary McNamara had suggested the building of a logistic and combat airfield in connection with Cam Rahn Bay development. CINCPAC was also conducting therefore a preliminary engineer survey for such an airfield in the northern end of the Cam Ranh Peninsula.[54]

On 30 May CINCPAC submitted a detailed statement and review of the need for Cam Ranh Bay development with recommendations for a logistics complex, a jet-capable combat/logistics airfield, and deployment of the additional forces that would be needed or that could be stationed there. The logistic objective would be to establish a US base with central control of common-user items for all deployed forces, including key items for the RVNAF. Through this deep-water port, shipments could be received directly from the CONUS, Okinawa and other Pacific bases. Supplies would be moved from Cam Ranh Bay by coastal shipping and by air and land LOCs throughout the year. The United States, using MAP funds, had already constructed a large deep-water pier for its own use. Because of the natural contour of the beach, dry ramp beaching of LSTs was also possible.[55]

The estimated cost for all development except the airfield was $19 million, of which $7 million had already been programmed and $9.6 million, originally programmed in the Army MCP, was being shifted from the logistic and support facilities initially scheduled at Vung Tau. Additional funds to meet the cost of development, CINCPAC anticipated, could be taken from other facilities currently programmed for other locations but which "more appropriately should be constructed at Cam Ranh Bay."

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53. (S) CM-634-65 to SecDef, 21 May 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 65.
54. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2627 to CINCPAC, 21 May 65.
55. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 300520Z May 65, JCS IN 83302.

Admiral Sharp then recommended: 1) approval of planning to develop the Cam Ranh Bay area as the major US port and logistics complex to support the war in RVN; 2) construction and development on an emergency basis of a jet-capable combat and logistics airfield at Cam Ranh Bay; 3) authorization to divert to Cam Ranh Bay some of the logistics forces previously approved for Qui Nhon/Nha Trang and other areas as required; 4) immediate diversion to Cam Ranh Bay of one infantry battalion to provide security; 5) requesting the GVN for approval of the logistics complex and for clearance of the necessary US combat forces.[56]

On 8 June 1965 the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that the Secretary of Defense had approved all of the recommendations he had made with reference to development of Cam Ranh Bay. The necessary clearances had been obtained from the GVN. They did not believe that any additional authorizations were needed to move approved units from one location in RVN to another. However, they did need a revised troop list as soon as possible. They asked that the base development outline plan for Cam Ranh Bay be furnished them not later than 15 June in order to make maximum use of FY 1965 fiscal resources.[57]

The Secretary of Defense informed General Wheeler on 9 June that he was anxious to proceed as rapidly as possible with the development of the base at Cam Ranh Bay. And on the same day two battalions of combat engineers landed at Cam Ranh Bay and construction began. Within approximately 90 days, Cam Ranh Bay would be transformed from an area of sand dunes and sparse vegetation to a major port/logistical complex with a continued high rate of construction planned for 1966.[58]

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56. Ibid.
57. (~~S~~-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3545 to CINCPAC, 8 Jun 65.
58. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, no subj, 9 Jun 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 65. (S) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 108; (~~TS NOFORN~~-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, p. 533.

Chapter 22

GROWTH OF FORCES IN RVN TO END OF 1965

The US buildup and concurrent expansion of operations in Vietnam did not cause NVN to scale down support of the insurgency. On the contrary, NVN responded to US actions by increasing its infiltration of forces and supplies into the RVN, and it soon became apparent that further US force increases would be required.

On 7 June, General Westmoreland notified Washington that regular NVN Army (PAVN) forces had entered the RVN and he believed more were on the way. Intelligence reports had located elements of the 325th PAVN division in the northern zone of II CTZ and it appeared that the major portion, if not all, of the division was in the vicinity of Kontum and Pleiku. General Westmoreland reported that the VC had begun determined and large-scale demonstrations of strength in the same general area, suggesting the beginning of a summer campaign to destroy GVN forces and isolate towns. General Westmoreland also stated that the main VC force units had shown improved training and discipline and a much improved firepower, resulting from a new family of weapons. He warned that the enemy was capable of launching regimental sized attacks in all four CTZs with little or no warning, and of being reinforced swiftly from NVN.[1]

While the VC strength had increased, said COMUSMACV, the readiness of the ARVN had deteriorated. Desertion rates and battle losses were up and morale was down. General Westmoreland thought that the ARVN troops were beginning to show "signs of reluctance" to assume the offensive and in some cases their steadfastness under fire was questionable. The ARVN force buildup in the II CTZ had not materialized, and he saw no hope of the force ratio changing in ARVN favor.[2]

The only remedy to this deteriorating situation, said General Westmoreland, was the rapid movement of additional US or third country forces to South Vietnam. He called for specific

1. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and JCS, 070335Z Jun 65, JCS IN 92244.
2. Ibid.

deployments, including the remainder of the III MAF, a US Army airmobile division, a ROK RCT to be followed by the balance of a ROK division, additional tactical fighter squadrons, and appropriate logistic support units for these forces. COMUSMACV also recommended preparation of studies and plans for even larger deployments "if and when required."[3]

Admiral Sharp, Ambassador Taylor, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff all agreed with COMUSMACV on the need for a further substantial buildup of US and allied forces in the RVN. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 11 June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a program for additional deployments. Secretary McNamara approved the program, with some modifications, on 17 June. The approved program raised US forces from the previously authorized 69,593 to approximately 117,000 with the majority of the troops scheduled to arrive in South Vietnam in the next several months. This program would add seven US maneuver battalions, bringing the total to 22. The program also provided for an increase of 1,250 men in allied forces, bringing the total to 19,750 by 1 November 1965.[4]

Neither the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington nor COMUSMACV and CINCPAC in the field believed that the newly approved deployment program would be sufficient. General Westmoreland advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the latter part of June that his recommendations of 7 June were measures needed merely to stabilize the situation and that to carry the war to the enemy a substantial increase in ground and air forces would be required. He pointed out that the struggle had become a war of attrition. Short of a decision to introduce nuclear weapons, General Westmoreland saw no likelihood of achieving "a quick, favorable end to the war." He believed it was time for the United States to face up to the fact that it was in for a long war and one that would involve increasing numbers of US troops.[5]

Admiral Sharp supported COMUSMACV's call for additional forces. He stated that a total of 34 US and nine third country maneuver battalions was required.[6]

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3. Ibid.

4. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 072325Z Jun 65, JCS IN 93177. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-457-65 to SecDef, 11 Jun 65 (derived from JCS 2343/602); (TS-GP 4) JCS 2343/602-1, 17 Jun 65; JMF 9155.3 (7 Jun 65).

5. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV 3240 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 24 Jun 65; COMUSMACV 3237 to CINCPAC, 24 Jun 65; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 65.

6. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 250542Z Jun 65, same file.

After studying the detailed force requirement recommendations of COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 2 July 1965 to approve an additional deployment program "to insure that the VC/DRV cannot win in South Vietnam at their present level of commitment." The program called for the deployment of the Air Mobile Division, the remainder of the 1st Infantry Division (one brigade of the division was already approved for Qui Nhon), one MAB, a Marine Fighter Attack Squadron, and necessary support forces numbering 8,000 men. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also recommended additional movements to the RVN: three artillery battalions, three HAWK battalions, four additional attack squadrons, various helicopter units, a field force headquarters, and additional logistic support. In all, total US forces in the RVN would amount to approximately 175,000 men, including 34 maneuver battalions. The program repeated the requirement for 19,750 allied troops, including a ROK division of six maneuver battalions and four other third country maneuver battalions.[7]

Secretary McNamara, who was planning a trip to the RVN later in July, decided to defer action on this new program until he had a chance to discuss the situation with General Westmoreland and Ambassador Taylor. Before leaving for Saigon, he laid down a schedule and guidance "leading toward" a national decision on additional deployments. The schedule provided that, following the Secretary of Defense's return, there would be discussions with the State Department and White House during the period 22-26 July with a Presidential decision tentatively set for 26 July. The Secretary of Defense stated that the rationale for force increases remained "what it has been under three Presidents: To provide whatever support is necessary to assist South Vietnam in preserving its freedom." He directed that there would be no net reduction in personnel or equipment deployed in Europe and that the possibility of a Presidential declaration of emergency should be avoided in favor of Congressional action similar to that taken in the Berlin crisis of 1961.[8]

The Combat Picture - The CTZs

The more direct efforts made by the United States had not, by mid-July, prevented the combat situation from

7. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-515-65 to SecDef, 2 Jul 65 (derived from JCS 2343/602-3), JMF 9155.3 (7 Jun 65) sec 2.
8. (TS) Memo for Record, SecDef Meeting, 9 Jul 65, "Build-up to Meet Vietnam Situation," OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 65.

deteriorating on the ground in RVN. In all of the four Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ) the VC, now augmented by regular NVA units, held the initiative, with the most serious threat obtaining in the two northern CTZs. Even after the arrival of the first US troops, the VC continued to expand their control over rural areas and succeeded in isolating provincial and district towns from the bulk of the rural population, thus facilitating recruitment through persuasion or coercion. Their apparent willingness to accept large casualties in offensives (the 1965 rate was exceeding that of 1964) indicated an adequate reserve of manpower. Moreover, the number of organized units and the overall estimated strength of the VC had continued to increase. The gain had come in part from infiltration from NVN. Local recruitment remained the main source of VC manpower, however.

Since the first of the year, in the I CTZ the intensity and number of VC-initiated actions had risen sharply, mainly along the coastal lowlands. The enemy had cut almost all the transportation routes in the area. Even coastal Route 1, the principal north-south highway, was impassable through much of the CTZ. The railroad was operable only between Hue and Da Nang. Government control was limited to major cities. VC attacks in II CTZ against district towns in the Kontum Province had forced the GVN to abandon several districts. Even Kontum City had been mortared. The VC campaign in the highlands was obviously gaining momentum, with Pleiku and Phu Bon Provinces little better off than Kontum. All roads and rail lines within the II CTZ were either cut or under effective interdiction. All major routes leading into II CTZ had been cut, effectively isolating several major towns. The only means of resupply into the high plateau was by air lift. GVN convoys had been repeatedly ambushed throughout II CTZ. As a result, ARVN commanders had more and more gone on the defensive, leaving the initiative to the VC. The GVN controlled only a small part of the population, concentrated largely along the coast.

Further south, in III CTZ, the VC had recently launched several regimental attacks. They were active throughout the Corps area, but particularly on the edges of the Hop Tac zone around Saigon. The VC objective of destroying the ARVN was being sought by capturing important towns and then ambushing reaction forces. Again, all major routes had been cut and most of the minor ones leading from Saigon were under almost continual harrassment. The GVN currently controlled only small areas of the III CTZ and these were in the Hop Tac zone.

The only area that had remained relatively stable during the first half of the year was IV CTZ, the Mekong Delta. The VC were applying just enough pressure there to tie down three ARVN divisions. In all of the Corps areas the VC clearly retained the capability to conduct multibattalion size military operations whenever they wished.

In April, intelligence information had confirmed the presence in the RVN of a regiment of the NVA 325th Division, believed to have moved into the country during December and January. Some reports indicated that two other regiments of the division were also in RVN but this had not been confirmed by July. US officials believed that Hanoi had sent NVA units into RVN to assist the VC in increasing the tempo of its campaign and to hasten a victory. The enemy's current strategy tended to confirm this. The VC were employing widespread harrassment and terrorism, punctuated with occasional multibattalion or larger "spectaculars" when the circumstances seemed right. An appraisal of enemy strength furnished to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 14 July stated that the enemy had 10 regimental headquarters, 65 battalions (about 400 men each), 188 companies, and 144 platoons with a total strength of 48,550. The regiment of the NVA was included in this total. In addition, 17,600 personnel were believed engaged in combat support operations. US intelligence estimates showed that the enemy had increased his strength in organized combat units over 50 percent since mid-1964. There was little reason to doubt that the enemy intended to continue his buildup at the same or an even higher rate unless he was stopped.[9]

A New Ambassador Is Appointed

On 8 July 1965 President Johnson announced that he had accepted the resignation of Ambassador Taylor and nominated former Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge to replace him. In his letter of resignation, Ambassador Taylor recalled that he had originally accepted the Ambassadorship with the understanding that he would hold it only one year. Widespread reports that his resignation was due to differences over national policy were described by President Johnson as "irresponsible and untrue."[10]

9. (TS) Ad Hoc Study Group, Rpt, "Intensification of the Military Operations In Vietnam-Concept and Appraisal," 14 Jul 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 65.

10. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1966, p. 21351.

The Ambassador-designate, who was not to take over from Taylor until 20 August, accompanied the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff on their visit to the RVN in mid-July.

COMUSMACV Calls for More Troops

General Westmoreland told the visiting officials that the RVNAF had lost the initiative and that the South Vietnamese people were displaying a loss of confidence in the GVN because of the increasing inability of the RVNAF to secure and hold critical rural areas and LOCs. The only way to arrest this unfavorable trend, General Westmoreland said, was to greatly increase US and FWMAF troop strength.[11]

COMUSMACV cast his force requirements in a two-phased plan that had Ambassador Taylor's approval. Phase I included the forces needed to "stem the tide," i.e., halt the VC offensive, and would cover the remainder of 1965. Phase II represented the forces to "turn the tide" or to make sufficient viable progress in high priority areas to convince the VC that they could not win. Phase II forces would be deployed during the first half of 1966. Phase I ground force requirements included 44 maneuver battalions, 26 combat support battalions (22 artillery and four air defense), 13 engineer battalions, 20 US Army helicopter companies, seven USMC helicopter squadrons, and three US Army helicopter battalions and service units, totalling 154,662 men. Phase I requirements also included 4,000 naval personnel and 26 Air Force squadrons of various types totalling 17,500 men. Total Phase I requirements would be 176,162. Phase II would include 24 maneuver battalions, 17 combat support battalions, various helicopter units, and nine USAF squadrons, totalling an additional 94,810 men. The grand total for both Phase I and II amounted to 270,972, nearly four times the approximately 70,000 US forces in the RVN at that time.[12]

General Westmoreland warned his visitors that without these additional forces the VC would gain a more favorable strength

11. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 41-42.
12. Ibid. (TS-GP 4) "Questions by the Secretary of Defense and Replies by the US Ambassador to South Vietnam (U)," 22 Jul 65, JMF 9155.3 (22 Jul 65).

ratio, the stability of the GVN would be weakened further, and there would soon exist a requirement for even greater US resources on a more urgent basis and against greater odds.[13]

The Secretary of Defense returned to Washington convinced that a significant troop increase in the RVN was required, and later in July he recommended a force increase to the President. The program approved by the President more than met COMUSMACV's Phase I requirements. It provided for a total of approximately 186,700 US troops in the RVN by the end of 1965, including 34 maneuver battalions and 24 combat support battalions. This July Presidential program fell far short, however, in meeting COMUSMACV's Phase II requirements. It provided for an addition of only 3,000 troops during the first half of 1966, approximately 81,000 spaces short of the 270,000 figure requested by General Westmoreland.[14]

The President had already attempted to prepare the public for a substantial increase of US forces in the RVN. At a 9 July news conference, he had stated that manpower needs in the RVN were increasing and would continue to do so. He had added that whatever was required would be supplied. On 28 July he announced his decision. He explained that the large increase in US forces was necessary to meet the continuing rise in the enemy's strength. The President said that, in response to General Westmoreland's request, he had ordered to the RVN the Air Mobile Division and certain other forces, raising the US fighting force from 75,000 to 125,000 "almost immediately." While not giving figures for the remainder of the increase he did say that additional forces would be needed and would be sent at a later time. The President also stated that the Reserves would not be called into service at this time, but added that, if later developments required such action, he would make the decision only after careful thought and adequate warning.[15]

The President's July program marked another turning point in the war. The United States had decided to increase its already substantial forces in Vietnam to the extent necessary to match the buildup in enemy forces. This decision began a trend that was to require a steady expansion of US forces to balance an equally steady expansion of enemy strength.

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13. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 42.

14. For the approved July program see (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Recommended FY 1966 Southeast Asia Supplemental Appropriation (U)," 11 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2458/42-12, 16 Dec 65, JMF 7000 (24 Nov 65) sec 2.

15. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, II (1966), p. 725 and p. 795.

In the following months deployments to the RVN proceeded within the authorized figures. In view of the great work load generated by the deployments, the Secretary of Defense had already made it known to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that deployment of individual units, as long as they were within approved authorizations, would not require his approval.[16]

The story of US force deployment planning throughout the remainder of 1965 and into 1966 was one of continuous refinement and adjustment upwards to meet new and changing conditions of the war. Scarcely had the Secretary of Defense departed from Saigon when COMUSMACV found it necessary to adjust his requirements. Consequently, on 30 July 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented to the Secretary of Defense a revised deployment program adding approximately 20,000 troops to Phase I and 10,000 to Phase II, raising total figures to 195,887 for Phase I and 300,599 for Phase II. (On 4 August the Joint Chiefs of Staff reduced these figures to 195,378 and 300,090.) Since the Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated further adjustments in this program, they told the Secretary of Defense that they would comment further, including specific recommendations regarding Phase II deployments, as refinements were made.[17]

In an attempt to establish a more orderly procedure for these refinements, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed a deployment planning conference to coordinate and complete, insofar as possible, all matters relating to Phase I deployments. This conference met at Headquarters, Pacific Command, from 3 through 6 August 1965 and included representatives of the Joint Staff, the Military Services, OASD (I&L), CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and COMUSKOREA. This conference produced a refined program for Phase I deployments to RVN and other WESTPAC and Southeast Asia bases, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 23 August. This program still provided for 34 maneuver battalions for the RVN, but raised the total number of required personnel to 210,000. The program also called for approximately 41,000 US troops in other Pacific and Southeast Asia areas outside of the RVN, including three maneuver battalions in the Japan-Okinawa area.[18]

16. (~~TS~~) Memo for Record, JCS Meeting, 21 Jul 65, JMF 9155.3, 1965.

17. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-590-65 to SecDef, 30 Jul 65 (derived from JCS 2343/602-6); JCSM-729-65 to SecDef, 5 Aug 65; JMF 9155.3 (7 Jun 65) sec 2.

18. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-643-65 to SecDef, 23 Aug 65 (derived from JCS 2343/655-2), JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 2.

On 1 September, the Secretary of Defense requested the President to approve an additional increment of forces for the RVN, raising the total figure to 210,000. The Secretary of Defense subsequently explained to the President that the increase was attributable to the need for additional in-country airlift, artillery and air defense support for combat operations, strike aircraft and associated support, and air base construction. There is no evidence in the record to indicate that overall approval for the entire 210,000 program, as submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 August, was ever given, but the Secretary of Defense did authorize, on an individual basis, the movement of specific units within that program.[19]

The August planning conference and the resulting refined program did not resolve Phase I requirements, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff found it necessary in late September to convene another deployment planning conference to amend the Phase I program in the light of recommended additions and deletions. The participants of the August conference again met in Honolulu during the period 27 September through 1 October and produced another refined program for Phase I deployments. This program was merely an updating of the August program, reflecting 9,089 add-on spaces in the RVN, bringing the total Phase I figure to 219,619, and 3,445 add-on spaces for other areas in WESTPAC and Southeast Asia. Phase I deployments as now scheduled would not be completed until April 1966. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved this refined program on 22 October and directed the Services to prepare to satisfy the requirements for Phase I add-on deployments. Forwarding this refined program to the Secretary of Defense on 23 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff explained that the add-ons were needed to strengthen the Phase I force structure and to provide the essential combat and combat service support, the necessary command and control elements, and the required increase to offshore base capability to support adequately the combat operations in RVN.[20]

19. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 1 Sep 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-5, 2 Sep 65; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 22 Sep 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-1, 23 Sep 65; JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 2. For examples of SecDef approval of individual units within the 23 Aug 65 program see (TS-GP 4) Memos, DepSecDef to CJCS, 29 and 30 Sep 65, Encls to JCS 2343/655-10 and -11, 29 Sep and 1 Oct 65, same file.

20. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-779-65 to SecDef, 23 Oct 65 (derived from JCS 2343/655-17), same file, secs 3 and 4.

On 10 November 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense with their recommendations for Phase II operations and deployments. To accomplish the Phase II objective, "to start winning the war," the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented a concept of operations calling for US and allied forces to continue the establishment and expansion of secure bases and key LOCs in the coastal area and elsewhere as necessary. From these and other bases, US and allied forces would launch stepped-up offensive operations to assist the GVN in expanding its control over the militarily and economically important areas of Saigon, the Mekong Delta, the coastal plain, and the central highlands. The concept also provided for intensified air operations against NVN, including attacks on POL and electric power installation targets, and continued assistance to friendly forces in Laos.

Additional forces would be required to achieve these tasks, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a Phase II deployment of approximately 113,000 men (28 maneuver battalions and supporting units). Added to their final Phase I deployment recommendation of 219,600, total deployment requirements for the RVN now amounted to approximately 333,000. The Phase II program included two Army Infantry divisions (the 25th and the 4th), the remainder of the 1st Marine Division, and an armored cavalry regiment plus four tactical fighter squadrons. The program also included 27,000 men for use outside the RVN. In order to meet the deployment dates desired by CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the call-up of selected reserve units and individuals, the activation of new units, and the extension of terms of service.[21]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also reviewed the impact of both Phase I and II deployments on US strategic military posture world-wide. They had already warned the Secretary of Defense on 24 September that planned deployments to Southeast Asia were endangering the US strategic military posture in other parts of the world. They had also pointed out that increases in force levels were required to 1) meet the operational requirements of the Vietnam war as well as to maintain forward deployments in Europe and the Western Pacific; 2) supply an adequate training and rotation base to support US military operations and forces in Southeast Asia and world-wide; and 3) provide a military

21. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-811-65 to SecDef, 10 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2343/655-26), same file, sec 6.

capability to conduct other contingency operations. They informed the Secretary of Defense now that either completion of Phase I deployments alone or the completion of Phase I and the implementation of Phase II would reduce US strategic posture to a degree where, unless reconstituted on a timely basis, it could not support operations in Southeast Asia and other world-wide commitments. To correct this situation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested authority to acquire, equip, and support seven Army aviation units, one CVS, four tactical fighter squadrons and three tactical reconnaissance squadrons, and one Marine expeditionary brigade. If Phase II deployments were approved, they requested similar authority for two infantry divisions, 18 additional Army aviation units, four tactical fighter squadrons, and 6/9 MEF (-). They also requested authority for selective reserve call-ups to provide essential forces that could not be obtained on a timely basis through other means.[22]

The JCS submission of Phase II requirements elicited no immediate response from the Secretary of Defense. He had scheduled another trip to the RVN in late November, and planned to review force requirements with General Westmoreland at that time. Although the Secretary of Defense did not give blanket approval to either of the refined Phase I programs or the Phase II requirements, he continued to approve the movement of separate units within the Phase I program on an individual basis. As a result, by 15 November, total authorization for US forces in the RVN stood at 188,930, and by the end of 1965 it had risen to 206,220.[23]

During the Secretary of Defense's 28-29 November Saigon visit, General Westmoreland informed him that the North Vietnamese were increasing their forces in the RVN at a rate more than double that of previous estimates. To meet this expanded threat, General Westmoreland asked for 52,000 additional US forces, designating this increase Phase IIA forces. On his departure from the RVN, Mr. McNamara stated that the acceleration

22. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-721-65 to SecDef, 24 Sep 65 (derived from JCS 2343/640-1), JMF 9155.3 (23 Jul 65). (TS-GP 3) JCSM-814-65 to SecDef, 10 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2343/640-2), same file, sec 2.

23. (S-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 15 Nov 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-30, 17 Nov 65, JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 6. (S-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 24 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2343/655-44, same file.

of NVA infiltration required US and RVN counteraction. Upon his return, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were directed to convene a planning conference to develop a program of deployment schedules for Phase II and IIA forces, including appropriate support forces.[24]

In connection with a supplemental appropriation request for FY 1966 to support the expanded US military effort in Southeast Asia, the Secretary of Defense requested the President on 11 December to approve for planning purposes a program of deployments and augmentation modifying the July Presidential program. On 13 December the Deputy Secretary of Defense authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to use this program for planning purposes. The program did not break deployments down in terms of phases, but rather provided strength in six-month increments. It still called for 34 US maneuver battalions in the RVN by the end of 1965, but raised the total US force figure from the 186,700 of the July program to 194,900. The new program provided for 277,100 US troops and 46 maneuver battalions by June 1966. By December 1966 these figures would rise to 367,500 troops and 75 maneuver battalions. US combat support battalions would be increased to 38 by mid-1966 and to 59 by the end of that year. The new program projected the number of "attack capable" aircraft in RVN by the end of 1966 at 929, approximately 150 more than the July program.[25]

While deployment planning was undergoing constant revision and refinement in the latter half of 1965, actual troop movements to South Vietnam continued unabated. The 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) arrived during September and the 1st Infantry Division closed in October, completing the deployment of major combat units in 1965. This raised the total US forces in the RVN at the end of October to 153,505.

The deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division (AM) is illustrative of many of the actions involved in sending a major Army unit to Vietnam. On 15 June the Secretary of Defense authorized the Army to activate the division by reorganizing the 11th Air Assault Division and applying other assets. Additional equipment procurements in excess of $28 million were needed to completely outfit the new division. On the same day that the

24. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 44. NY Times, 29 Nov 65, 1. (TS-GP 3) Memo, ASD (M) to JCS et al., 1 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2343/724, 1 Dec 65, JMF 9155.3 (1 Dec 65).

25. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 11 Dec 65; Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS et al., 13 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2458/42-12, 16 Dec 65; JMF 7000 (24 Nov 64) sec 2.

President authorized deployment, 28 July, the 1st Cavalry Division (AM) began its overseas movement, with six passenger vessels, 11 cargo ships and four aircraft carriers being used to move men and equipment. The division disembarked over the beach at Qui Nhon, with cargo lightered ashore from two to five miles at sea. The actual debarkation of the division and the 40 mile move inland to the division's base at An Khe took only 15 days. A total of 15,000 men, 3,100 vehicles, 470 aircraft and 19,000 tons of cargo were involved in the movement. Bad weather and VC attacks on access roads near An Khe hampered the movement somewhat. On 18 September, only 95 days after the reorganization of the division had been approved, the first elements of the division were engaged in combat with the VC.

By 31 December 1965, the addition of assorted support units increased the total strength of US forces in Vietnam to 184,314. During the nine month period from March through December, the United States had deployed approximately 150,000 troops to South Vietnam. This tremendous buildup had not been achieved without cost to US military posture in other parts of the world. NATO reinforcements had been drawn down to a point where flexibility was impaired by a lack of readily deployable general purpose forces; there were substantial inadequacies in the US training and rotation base; and there were short-falls and draw-downs in supply stock, and equipment that left some forces in the RVN and elsewhere with less than the required rates of supply support.[26]

Command Arrangements

In his recommendations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff following the deployment conference of 8-10 April, Admiral Sharp had set forth his views on the optimum national command arrangements for operations in Vietnam. The organizational integrity of the Service components would be retained to the extent possible, and military command would remain in Service channels. Administrative and logistic support of all units would be in accordance with established procedures. CINCPAC was to have overall operational control of all land, sea and air forces and would exercise this through his major subordinate

26. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 44, 259. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 255-65 (Supp.), 1 Nov 65, p. 8 (TS) Talking Paper for CJCS, "Draft Memorandum for the President on Recommended FY 1966 Southeast Asia Supplemental Appropriation (U)," 9 Dec 65, JMF 7000 (24 Nov 65) sec 2. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) CSA Report, 1968, pp. 27-28.

commanders, CINCUSARPAC, CINCPACFLT, CINCPACAF and COMUSMACV. COMUSMACV was designated the operational joint commander for operations in the RVN. As the senior US Army commander in the area, he would also have responsibility for US Army component functions. He could exercise this responsibility, if he wished, through appropriate subordinate Army commanders.[27]

USAF functions in RVN would be controlled by the Commander, 2d Air Division, who would report in this capacity to COMUSMACV. For operations against NVN, operational control of US Air Forces in Southeast Asia would be exercised by CINCPACAF through the Commander 13th Air Force and the Commander 2d Air Division, when directed by CINCPAC. CINCPACAF would operate in support of COMUSMACV when so directed.

CG III MEF would assume command functions over the naval component command in RVN and would, in this capacity, report to COMUSMACV. Other offensive naval operations would be conducted under operational control of CINCPACFLT who would operate forces in support of COMUSMACV when directed.[28]

Following clearance for entry of the MEB into RVN, General Westmoreland furnished CINCPAC his concept of the command relationships for Marines and the concept for their employment in counterinsurgency operations. COMUSMACV had secured the agreement of the RVNAF High Command to an enlarged mission for the Marines and for command relationships with the RVNAF commander in the Da Nang Area, CG I Corps. In his letter of instructions to the CG 9th MEB, COMUSMACV had instructed him, in coordination with the CG I Corps, to "continue to occupy defensive positions and key terrain at Da Nang to secure the airfield, communications facilities, US supporting installations, port facilities and landing beaches against attack. Undertake offensive action as necessary to support I Corps RVNAF in the conduct of the defense of the area of Da Nang and critical contiguous areas against VC or PAVN units."[29]

27. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Deployment Plan for Logistic and Combat Forces to Southeast Asia--Deployment Planning Conference, Hq, PACOM, 8-10 April 1965, 10 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 1.

28. Ibid.

29. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 11535 to CINCPAC, 13 Apr 65, JCS IN 11504.

General Westmoreland set no time for the beginning of Phase II "offensive action as a mobile reaction force" within a 50 mile radius of Da Nang. The same was true of Phase III, in which the Marines would take offensive action, if necessary, in the whole of the I CTZ.

Admiral Sharp, on seeing General Westmoreland's letter of instructions, advised him that he had placed too much emphasis on the defensive aspects of the Marine mission. "As I understand the JCS directive," he said, "the Marines are to engage in offensive counterinsurgency operations earliest." Westmoreland's instructions to the Marine commander indicated to Sharp that the Marines would not start offensive operations against the VC for several weeks. "If I read the messages properly, this is not what our superiors intend. Recommend you revise your concept accordingly."[30]

Admiral Sharp apparently had interpreted the JCS directives correctly. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff agree with you that the active employment of US Marine Forces now in RVN in counter-insurgency combat operations should be accelerated in order to establish procedures and basis for similar operations," the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Sharp upon seeing his message to General Westmoreland.[31]

Command and Control-US/RVN/Allied Forces

The decision to commit US forces in a combat role, as well as the growing enemy capabilities marked by the identification of a NVA division in RVN, intensified the need to resolve the question of how operations of the US, Allied, and RVN forces would be controlled and coordinated. General Westmoreland had, on 22 March, given his views on the broad aspects of command and control. On 7 April, General Wheeler passed on to Admiral Sharp his own views on command and coordination of US/RVN/Allied forces in the northern CTZs, I and II Corps areas, and on control of US and RVNAF aircraft both in RVN and in NVN.[32]

30. ([redacted]S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 140831Z Apr 65, JCS IN 14777.
31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9063 to CINCPAC, 14 Apr 65.
32. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 1566 to CINCPAC, 22 Mar 65; JCS 1223-65 to CINCPAC, 7 Apr 65; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 65.

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, did not believe that coordination/cooperation could be handled from Saigon. COMUSMACV and his staff were already overextended trying to handle responsibilities in RVN and in NVN. He warned that, even if three divisions, US and Allied, were in position in the I and II CTZs, no adequate system existed to direct their operations effectively in the event of a major attack by the NVA in those areas. The ARVN I and II Corps headquarters were static territorial headquarters, not mobile tactical headquarters such as would be needed. As one solution General Wheeler suggested that General Westmoreland might establish in the Pleiku area a combined field force headquarters, perhaps headed by General Throckmorton, which would include both US and RVN staff officers. This headquarters would, in effect, be a corps headquarters, although not so named, and would have a broad mission, including coordination of US/Allied/ARVN operations in the north and the preparation of plans to counter any NVA attack. In this connection General Wheeler expressed concern at General Westmoreland's reports of the VC buildup in the northern provinces, at the movement of the 325th NVA Division headquarters into RVN, and at ominous signs of enemy preparations near Kontum and west of Da Nang. The Chairman informed Admiral Sharp that the Secretary of Defense shared this concern and that was one reason why he was so anxious to push ahead rapidly with creating logistic facilities to support the introduction of additional forces.33

The CINCPAC plan developed at Honolulu on 8-10 April reflected most of General Wheeler's ideas for command and control of the US/RVN/Allied forces when operating in the same areas. A US Army Corps Headquarters would be established upon deployment of the remainder of the MEF and an additional US division. The CG, US Army Corps, would report to COMUSMACV, assuming operational control of the US divisions and, if deployed, of the ROK division. (If establishment of the corps headquarters were delayed, COMUSMACV would retain direct operational control.) COMUSMACV would plan and conduct operations on a "coordinate/cooperative" basis with CINCRVNAF. During these operations he would exercise operational control of US and allied troops, while the US corps commander and the division commanders would ensure coordination with the commanders of ARVN units in and adjacent to their operating areas. COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF would form a small combined staff to correlate activities and perform liaison at their levels of command on these combat operations in which forces under COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF would participate. This staff would serve both major commanders, who

33. Ibid.

would supervise its activities and approve or disapprove its actions. Directive powers and command authority in matters acted upon by this combined staff would be vested solely in COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF respectively. Directives to their respective subordinate forces would be sent only through their national operational control channels. Subordinate commanders in the COMUSMACV chain of operational control would accomplish coordination with ARVN commanders at their levels of command in accordance with these principles and procedures.[34]

On 11 April General Westmoreland again raised the question of command and control over US/Allied/GVN forces. Addressing the problems which would be raised by the arrival of three division forces, he strongly recommended a Corps Headquarters be furnished him, suggesting that HQ III US Corps be considered for deployment to RVN concurrently with the second of the divisions. The HQ III Corps would not need to be at full TO&E strength but could be tailored to its mission, with COMUSMACV's own headquarters furnishing the manning necessary for a provisional field headquarters for a temporary period.[35]

"In order to forestall certain political and psychological problems within South Vietnam and the world at large associated with the deployment of US combat forces, the formation in due course, on a test basis of an International Military Security Task Force (IMSTAF) in the Da Nang area built around the 9th MEB is recommended," General Westmoreland said. He was not proposing that the direct chain of command of US military units be confused or complicated by intricate international machinery. Rather, he wanted third country forces, Korean, Australian, New Zealand and Filipino, along with RVN units, to be attached to the US brigade to make up a combined force. If larger deployments occurred the IMSTAF could phase into a larger international force. If the IMSTAF at Da Nang proved successful it would be possible to form a similar IMSTAF at Bien Hoa as well.

He believed that the time was ripe to form "a mechanism at the national level to control international forces." His concept involved the joint exercise of authority by CINCRVNAF and COMUSMACV, the formation of a small single combined staff headed by a US general officer, a Vietnamese Deputy Chief of the Combined Staff, and a multinational staff. This staff would, subject to the approval of the combined commanders,

34. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC Deployment Plan for Logistic and Combat Forces to Southeast Asia-Deployment Planning Conference HQ PACOM, 8-10 April 1965, 10 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (5 Apr 65) sec 1.

35. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC J3 11682 to CINCPAC, 11 Apr 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam 65.

develop strategic guidance, rules of engagement, command relations and such other matters as might be directed. Informally, RVNAF officials had indicated that they would go along with such an arrangement. "However," he concluded, "it should be introduced on a low-key basis."[36]

The wisdom of not publicizing plans for forming a joint command was confirmed later in the month when General Ky expressed publicly the view that a joint command was not necessary. On 3 May, in commenting on Ky's attitude, Ambassador Taylor warned Washington that Hanoi had called reports that the United States and the GVN were planning a joint command proof that the RVN was a "lackey" of US imperialism.[37]

One of the principal objectives of General Wheeler's visit to Honolulu on 19-20 April was to discuss and make firm arrangements for optimum command arrangements in Southeast Asia. He informed Admiral Sharp of this on 16 April and told him that he saw three military situations for which advance agreement on arrangements must be reached. The first was the present situation wherein US and allied combat forces were being sent into RVN to conduct counterinsurgency operations against the VC. The second, was a "near-term" contingency wherein troops from NVN either overtly or covertly entered the RVN on the side of the VC, perhaps in an effort to cut the country in two. The most drastic situation would, of course, be one in which Chinese Communist forces would intervene in great numbers on a broad front in RVN and perhaps in Thailand and Burma. "I desire on the first day of the conference," the Chairman informed CINCPAC, "to finalize our thoughts and establish an agreed organizational pattern toward which we can build in the coming months." He believed that sending a US Corps headquarters with signal and supporting units to RVN as a base for establishing a combined field force command in the northern war zone should be seriously considered.[38]

General Westmoreland sent to Admiral Sharp on 8 May the general concept for command and control of US/Allied ground combat forces that had developed at the Honolulu Conference on 19-20 April. The assumptions were that national forces would retain their command identity. The United States would not place its forces under the operational control of RVNAF or

36. Ibid.
37. ([illegible] Msg, Saigon 3622 to State, 3 May 65, JCS IN 41715.
38. ([illegible]-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9222 to CINCPAC, 16 Apr 65.

allied commanders (except temporarily in emergency), but the United States might in special cases assume operational control or temporary "tactical direction" over the forces of the RVNAF. The United States would assume operational control over allied forces usually at brigade or higher level.

His concepts for the IMSTAF, earlier recommended, were that allied forces would normally be brigaded with US forces under a US commander with a combined staff. The nucleus of the IMSTAF would be a US brigade with some allied representation on the staff. An IMSTAF would have complete tactical integrity and would be employed in a manner similar to a US brigade. Any ARVN unit associated with the IMSTAF would be under operational control of the US commander.[39]

On 10 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that a combined field force headquarters be organized under the Deputy COMUSMACV to exercise operational control over US, Allied, and assigned ARVN ground forces deployed in the northern combat zone. Operations in the southern part of RVN would continue under existing arrangements. They also noted that the small combined coordinating staff, to be headed jointly by COMUSMACV and CINCRVNAF, would suffice for the present. However, a larger, more formal combined command authority should be established when more US forces arrived. Secretary McNamara approved their recommendations and expressed agreement with their views on the same day.[40]

On 14 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC of the approval of their recommendations. The Secretary, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved a US deputy field force commander, authorized to take over from the field force commander in case the latter was required to move up to the position of COMUSMACV in the event General Westmoreland assumed command of United States Forces, Southeast Asia (USFSEASIA), or of the Central Region, SEATO Field Forces (COMCRSFF). The Field Force headquarters would be established under the present Deputy COMUSMACV, General Throckmorton, at such a time as the US IX Corps Headquarters was deployed to RVN. There would be no requirement

39. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 080700Z May 65, JCS IN 50558.

40. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-345-65 to SecDef, 10 May 65 (derived from JCS 2343/550-2); (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 May 65; JCS 2343/550-3; JMF 9155.3 (24 Mar 65).

for an additional officer to be assigned as Deputy COMUSMACV when and if, as was contemplated, General Throckmorton assumed command of Headquarters, Field Forces, South Vietnam.[41]

Secretary McNamara had also approved upgrading the "two-hatted" position of Deputy COMUSMACV for Air Operations and Commander, 2d Air Division, to Lieutenant General. A USAF Major General would be named Deputy Commander, 2d Air Division, with additional Air Force general officers as appropriate. "Recognizing the supervisory problems generated by the geographic separation of air units functioning under the operational control and/or coordinating authority of the Commander, 2d Air Division, an appropriate number of wing organizations should be established under his cognizance." The Deputy Chief of Staff, Headquarters, MACV, would be a USAF Brigadier General. "In view of the heavily increased air activity in Southeast Asia," the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued, "and the probability of additional commitment of US air forces, additional key staff billets should be identified and subsequently filled by air officers."

CINCPAC was told to plan for this and additionally to plan for a combined field force headquarters in the I CTZ.[42]

Admiral Sharp asked General Westmoreland on 22 May to submit to him plans for: 1) the establishment of a small, combined coordinating staff under COMUSMACV/CINCRVNAF; 2) a more formal combined authority; and 3) activation of a field force headquarters in the northern combat zone in either a combined or unilateral US situation.[43]

General Westmoreland had earlier discussed with top RVNAF officials the matter of setting up a combined command authority of some type and had found them receptive because of the obvious military advantages. Subsequently, however, RVN military leaders had gradually cooled toward the idea of a "combined" headquarters. On 24 May, COMUSMACV cited to CINCPAC the several statements by Ky and General Thieu on the undesirability of joint command. "In the light of these attitudes," he told Admiral Sharp, "it is clearly premature at this time to propose the establishment of a combined coordinating staff to the GVN."[44]

41. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2159 to CINCPAC, 14 May 65.
42. Ibid.
43. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 220400Z May 65, JCS IN 72070.
44. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 17292 to CINCPAC, 24 May 65, JCS IN 73940.

As a stop-gap measure, General Westmoreland had appointed and accredited one of his general officers as a representative on the RVNAF Joint General Staff to "coordinate the overall MACV advisory effort vis-a-vis the Joint General Staff, in critical cases affecting several functional areas." Because of General Westmoreland's statement that a combined command authority would not be feasible politically at this time, Admiral Sharp recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the activation of a combined US/GVN coordinating staff be deferred indefinitely.[45]

Subsequently, on 28 May, CINCPAC was directed, in a joint State/Defense message, to plan for the combined Field Force headquarters "on a unilateral basis." He had already instructed COMUSMACV to plan in detail for the activation of a Field Force Headquarters in the northern combat zone in either a US unilateral or a combined basis. Admiral Sharp's view had been that a US Field Force should be built around the nucleus of a tailored US Army Corps Headquarters, to be activated when two or more US divisions had been deployed to South Vietnam. The headquarters would assume command of US Army and US Marine Corps forces in the northern combat zone. The headquarters cadre would be filled out from in-country resources as much as possible. In view of the joint nature of the ground operations and the need for close air support, Admiral Sharp had counted on not only US Army, but Marine Corps and US Air Force representation on the staff. On 16 June he informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he had learned that they had directed the Chief of Staff, Army, to plan for the organization, activation and deployment of a US Army Field Force headquarters. He immediately asked for clarification as to the relationship between what he had been directed to do on 14 May and what, apparently, the Chief of Staff, Army, had now been directed to do. "If the proposed Field Forces command is to embrace both Army and Marine Corps ground forces," CINCPAC told the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "there is a concomitant need to tailor the headquarters in such a manner as to include adequate Marine Corps representation and to provide necessary air expertise. In this case the title of the Field Force should reflect its joint composition."[46]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that they would take his views into consideration when they addressed the subject of the Field Force Headquarters definitively. They pointed

45. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 260332Z May 65, JCS IN 76889.

46. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160250Z Jun 65, JCS IN 14248.

out that they had recommended to the Secretary of Defense that one US Army Corps headquarters be deployed to RVN. Subsequently "higher authority" had directed that the Corps Headquarters be referred to as a US Army Field Force Headquarters to avoid using the term "corps headquarters". While it was true that they had asked the Department of Army to plan the organization of the US Army Field Force Headquarters, Vietnam, because of the issues now raised by CINCPAC, they believed that a joint US Field Force Headquarters in the RVN would provide for better operational control of US forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff thereupon rescinded their instructions to the Chief of Staff, Army, and instructed Admiral Sharp to plan for a joint US Field Force Headquarters, RVN. They directed him also to continue his planning in preparation for activation of a combined field force headquarters.[47]

Command Arrangements - SE Asia

The top US commander in Vietnam served not only as COMUSMACV but also as COMUSMACTHAI, commander of US forces in Thailand, an arrangement made in 1962 at the time of the temporary deployment of US forces to that country. The Thai Government had not been consulted on establishment of COMUSMACTHAI. With the withdrawal of US forces the United States did not disestablish USMACTHAI and the Thai Government did not force the issue. However, Thai officials expressed resentment over the fact that the dual command tended to make Thailand an appendage of the US command in Vietnam, bringing propaganda charges from communist nations that Thailand was a puppet of the United States.[48]

In addition to these commands, General Westmoreland, senior US officer in Southeast Asia was, in emergency, to be designated Commander, US Forces Southeast Asia (COMUSSEASIA), and Commander, Central Region, SEATO Field Forces (COMCRSFF).

At the Manila Conference in late 1964 the Thai Foreign Minister had asked Secretary of State Rusk to have US command arrangements in Southeast Asia modified. The visit of a GVN delegation to Thailand in late 1964 had given rise to Chinese Communist charges that the Vietnamese were conveying to the Thai Government demands of their joint US overlords. This increased Thai irritability over US command arrangements which, in their eyes, associated Thailand directly with US military actions in RVN.

47. (TS) Msg, JCS 4561 to CINCPAC, 24 Jun 65.
48. (S) Msg, Bangkok 120 to State, 2 Aug 64. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 30 Apr 65, JMF 9150 (28 Apr 65).

The Prime Minister of Thailand informed US Ambassador Martin that he realized that in event of a major escalation General Westmoreland would have to assume overall command in Southeast Asia. But he pointed out that things had not yet reached that stage and he was unable to understand why the United States persisted in keeping Westmoreland as COMUSMACTHAI since his duties obviously required his presence in Saigon. If the United States wished to continue maintaining USMACTHAI, his government was amenable, but definitely wanted the command separated from the Vietnam command.[49]

CINCPAC had anticipated these objections in mid-1964 and had suggested that a separate COMUSMACTHAI, resident in Bangkok, be established with a Lieutenant General holding the post. At that time General Westmoreland had concurred in this recommendation. But with the upsurge in enemy activity in RVN and the consequent intensification of US actions in the entire Southeast Asian area, General Westmoreland changed his view. Because he felt that any major reorganization of the US command structure would be disruptive at this time, COMUSMACV recommended on 31 March 1965 that there be no change in command arrangements that would divide responsibility for operations in Southeast Asia. He wanted no action taken to establish a separate COMUSMACTHAI. He recommended also that the post of CHJUSMAG Thailand be retained in status quo with a USAF or USA Major General holding that post, assisted by a Brigadier General of the "opposite service" as his deputy.[50]

In anticipation of Secretary Rusk's attendance at the May 1965 meeting of SEATO, Secretary McNamara asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to furnish him their views on the existing command relationships in the Southeast Asian area.[51]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 28 April that because of the long-standing sensitivity of the Thai Government to the "double-hat COMUSMACV/COMUSMACTHAI arrangement", and in order to promote efficiency by letting COMUSMACV concentrate on his immediate task of defeating the VC, they believed it was now time to separate MACV and MACTHAI into two separate commands. As for COMUSMACV's planning responsibilities as COMUSSEASIA (designate) and as

49. Ibid.
50. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 10021 to CINCPAC, 31 May 65, JCS IN 84276.
51. (S) CM-565-65 to the JCS, 26 Apr 65; (TS) JCSM-319-65 to SecDef, 28 Apr 65; JMF 9150 (28 Apr 65).

COMCRSFF (designate), the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that he should be in a position to exercise direct policy control over the SEASIA and SEATO planning activities of COMUSMACTHAI. Therefore a direct US channel should be kept open between COMUSMACTHAI and General Westmoreland in his roles as COMUSSEASIA and COMCRSFF. Staff support to accomplish this would require augmentation of the small COMUSMACTHAI planning group in Bangkok and development of a communications/operations facility in Korat to permit later expansion into a headquarters for COMUSSEASIA and COMCRSFF.[52]

Third Country Forces - 1965

At the 1 April 1965 NSC meeting, where the President approved the first US combat deployments, he also directed the "urgent exploration" with the Governments of the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand of the possibility of rapid deployments of significant combat elements. In implementation of the President's directive, the United States invited Australia and New Zealand to participate in military staff talks with CINCPAC. During the talks, in early April 1965, the Australians indicated that they were prepared to send a combat battalion to Vietnam. New Zealand, on the other hand, was less receptive to US overtures for combat forces. The New Zealand representative thought that his Government might furnish a 105mm howitzer battery and, possibly, a tank troop, but he added that such a deployment would require considerable political ground work with the New Zealand public.[53]

True to its word, Australia committed a combat battalion to the RVN. After the requisite formalities of a GVN request had been accomplished, a joint GVN-Australian communique of 29 April 1965 announced that Australia would deploy an infantry battalion to the RVN, marking the first formal commitment of a combat unit by a third country.[54]

52. Ibid.
53. (TS-GP 1) NSAM 328, 6 Apr 65, Encl to JCS 2343/566, 7 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (6 Apr 65). (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 130011Z Apr 65, JCS IN 15890.
54. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 300325Z Apr 65, JCS IN 37045.

In anticipation of the arrival of the Australian troops in the RVN, the United States and Australia signed on 5 May 1965 a Military Working Arrangement. This Arrangement provided for the overall command of the Australian forces to be vested in the Commander, Australian Army Force, Republic of Vietnam (COMAAFV), who would in turn be under the operational control of COMUSMACV. The Arrangement specified that the Australian battalion would be "brigaded" with "an appropriate US brigade echelon" and stated that COMUSMACV would supply all administrative and logistical support for the Australian forces. Subsequently, in a financial working arrangement, Australia agreed to reimburse the United States for this support.[55]

The advance party of the Australian battalion arrived in the RVN on 26 May 1965. The remainder of the battalion together with a logistic support company closed between 29 May and 11 June and was attached to the US 173d Airborne Brigade at Bien Hoa. (This was in accordance with a "Concept of Command and Operations" that the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, had given the Australian Military Attache in Washington, as well as the US-Australian Military Working Arrangement.) In late September, Australia augmented its force with a 105mm howitzer battery, a field engineer troop, an APC troop, a signal unit, and filler personnel. At year-end, Australian strength in the RVN stood at 1,557.[56]

The US sent Ambassador-at-Large Henry Cabot Lodge to New Zealand in early May to solicit a definite commitment, and late in the month Prime Minister Holyoake announced that New Zealand would send a 105mm battery to the RVN. This deployment would be executed concurrent with the withdrawal of the New Zealand engineer team sent to the RVN in 1964.[57]

Despite some unfavorable reaction to the deployment by the New Zealand public, the battery arrived in the RVN on 21 July 1965. It was placed under the operational control of the 173d Airborne Brigade with a primary mission of support for the

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55. (C NOFORN-GP 4) Mil Working Arrangement between COMAAFV & COMUSMACV, 5 May 65; (C NOFORN) Financial Working Arrangement between MACV & AFV, 7 Sep 65; JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 65).

56. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 71, 359-361. (TS) Ltr, CJCS to MGEN Charles E. Long, 10 May 65, OCJCS File 091 091 Vietnam May 1965.

57. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 362. (S) Memo, COL Gibbons to Dir, J-3, "Trip Report," 6 May 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 1965.

Australian battalion. This was in accordance with a Military Working Arrangement signed on 9 June 1965 by New Zealand and the United States, placing command of the New Zealand troops under the Commander, New Zealand Army Force, Republic of Vietnam (COMNZAFV), who would be under the operational control of COMUSMACV. Again, the US agreed to furnish logistical and administrative support for the New Zealand troops, and although it was never set forth in a formal agreement, New Zealand reimbursed the United States for this support.[58]

The Free World nation, outside of the United States, that furnished the largest amount of military assistance to the RVN in 1965 was the Republic of Korea. In March 1965, the ROK sent to the RVN a task force composed of an army engineer battalion with associated support and self-defense troops. This task force, called the "Dove unit," totalled 1,927 men.[59]

Through the early summer of 1965, the United States conducted diplomatic discussions with the ROK concerning the provision of combat elements in the RVN. These discussions culminated on 12 August when the ROK agreed to contribute a combat division composed of a headquarters, one marine regiment, two infantry regiments, and a field support command.[60]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, optimistic that the ROK would approve the deployment of this division, had already included it in the force figures given to the Secretary of Defense with their deployment recommendations of 2 July 1965.

As had been the case with both Australia and New Zealand, the United States negotiated a Military Working Arrangement with the ROK. This arrangement, signed on 6 September 1965, provided for US logistical and administrative support of the ROK troops and vested command of the ROK forces in the Commander, Republic of Korea Forces, Vietnam (COMROKFV). Unlike the arrangements with Australia and New Zealand, the US-ROK Arrangement made no provision for the operational control of COMUSMACV over the Korean commander. Throughout the fall, COMUSMACV attempted, without success, to reach a formal agreement with COMROKFV on command and control. He reported to CINCPAC in early December that a formal arrangement could be politically embarrassing to the ROKs, since it might

58. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 72, 362. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 4) Military Working Agreement between COMNZAFFE & COMUSMACV, 9 Jun 65, JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 65).
59. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 363.
60. Ibid, p. 364.

connote that they were subordinate to, and acting as mercenaries for, the United States. General Westmoreland felt a formal arrangement was no longer necessary since COMROKFV had agreed verbally to de facto operational control by US commanders.[61]

The advance party of the ROK division arrived in Saigon on 15 September 1965. The main body of the division landed on 8 October and the deployment was completed on 8 November, bringing the total ROK forces in the RVN to 20,620. The ROK division was stationed in II CTZ, the Marine regiment at Cam Ranh Bay and the rest of the division at Qui Nhon, with a mission of protecting logistic bases and keeping vital Route 19 open to traffic.[62]

Two other Free World nations, the Philippines and the Republic of China, increased their military assistance to the RVN, but this aid continued to be in the form of noncombatant personnel. The United States attempted to persuade the Philippines to supplement its representation in South Vietnam with a civic action group of about 2,000 men. Both President Macapagal and President-elect Marcos favored this proposal, but the Philippine Congress refused to approve it in 1965, and it was not unil mid-1966 that the deployment of the civic action group was finally authorized. The United States also considered approaching the Philippine Government with a request for combat troops for South Vietnam. CHUSMAGPHIL; however, advised against such a move, stating that the Filipino armed forces were in no condition to supply any combat troops, and the United States dropped the matter. The Filipinos did augment their medical and civic action teams that had been sent to Vietnam in 1964, raising the number of Filipinos in Vietnam from 32 to 72 men by the end of 1965.[63]

[redacted]

61. (C [redacted]N-GP 4) Military Working Arrangement between COMROKFV and COMUSMACV, 6 Sep 65, JMF 9155.3 (12 Nov 65). (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 070531Z Dec 65, JCS IN 84558.

62. ([redacted]GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 73, 365-366.

63. Ibid., p. 369. (S-GP 3) JCS 2343/515-7, 11 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (14 Jan 65).

Thailand, the only other Free World nation that had military forces in the RVN at the beginning of 1965, made no additions to its small force during the year. Late in 1965, however, the United States received feelers indicative that Thailand was disposed to provide cargo aircraft and shallow draft shipping to the RVN, but nothing had come of this by the year's end.[65]

The year 1965 saw the introduction of the first third-country combat forces into the RVN and the increase of third-country strength from 388 at the beginning of the year to 22,404 by the end of December. 1966 was to bring a further expansion of the war and a doubling of US forces in Vietnam. Accompanying this vast increase would be a requirement for larger numbers of third-country combat troops to assist and support US forces. US military planning in late 1965 was already calling for the deployment of 23,500 additional third-country personnel to the RVN in 1966.[66]

The RVNAF

A basic principle of US policy in Vietnam was support of the indigenous military forces, with the objective of strengthening these forces so that they could take over successfully the defense of their own country. In 1963, the Secretary of Defense had directed acceleration of a buildup of the RVNAF in the hope that the GVN would, within a reasonable time, be able to carry on counterinsurgency operations without the advice and assistance of substantial numbers of US military personnel. Preparations had been made to withdraw US advisors and units, but owing to the serious deterioration in the political and military situations in late 1963 and in 1964, the United States had chosen to increase rather than decrease its own military involvement.

64. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 370-371.
65. Ibid., p. 73.
66. Ibid., p. 273. (TS) Hqs. CINCPAC, Reprogrammed Phased Force Requirements for CY 66, 16 Dec 65, JMF 9155.3 (1 Dec 65) sec 1A.

In late 1964 and during 1965 the United States took measures to strengthen both the regular and paramilitary forces of the RVN. Improvement of these forces was greatly complicated by abnormally high desertion rates and inadequate enlistment and recruitment.

The Joint Survey Requirements

In late autumn of 1964, General Westmoreland, working with the RVNAF High Command, had conducted a survey of the structures of the RVNAF, the RF, and the PF. The survey was intended to determine what additional strength was needed in these forces so that they could simultaneously maintain search and destroy operations, protect key installations and cities, and support national and provincial pacification plans. This survey resulted in recommendations for additional forces which General Westmoreland sent to CINCPAC on 24 November 1964.[67]

General Westmoreland set forth two alternatives for these force increases. Under Alternative One, the RVNAF would be increased by 30,000 men (mostly for the ARVN). Paramilitary forces would receive 110,000 additional men, raising the number of RF companies by 105 immediately and by 234 at the end of 1965. The PF would be increased by 64,000 men as soon as possible, with a total increase, at the end of 1965, of 79,000. These increases would, it was hoped, provide for progress in the Priority One Hop Tac area, arrest VC gains in certain other critical areas, and provide enough impetus to keep pacification machinery operating in the remaining areas of the RVN.

Under Alternative Two, paramilitary forces would not increase beyond Alternative One strength, but regular forces would be increased by 17,000 above Alternative One. Under this Alternative Two more progress would be achieved in pacification.

General Westmoreland pointed out that to support Alternative One increases the RVNAF must take into its ranks an average of 7,000 recruits per month. Alternative Two would require 8,000 per month. "It is not certain at this time," General Westmoreland told Admiral Sharp, "whether either of these figures can be supported. However, the lower figure is more reasonable estimate of manpower availability." Alternative One could, in view of training and equipment lead time requirements, be achieved

67. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 14864 to CINCPAC, 24 Nov 64.

by the end of 1965, while Alternative Two would take until about mid-1966. From the standpoint of the inflationary impact upon the nation's economy the lower costs of Alternative One would be less damaging.

General Westmoreland believed that sufficient men could be acquired to support Alternative One and that all of the new units, except for armored units, could be trained by the end of 1965. Training of all personnel, except for NCOs, would also be accomplished by that time. The requirement for critical items of supply and equipment could be met by priority supply and shipment from the United States or by diversion from US Army stocks.

To support increased force levels, 446 additional US advisors would be needed under Alternative One, 606 under Alternative Two.

General Westmoreland stated that he intended to tell GVN military officials that, as a condition to US support of any strength increases, the GVN must agree to enforce its draft laws, actively carry out its population and resources control programs, and adopt certain improved personnel policies for the RVNAF. Some of its elite, but expensive, military units must also be disbanded.

COMUSMACV recommended that Alternative One be adopted. Ambassador Taylor concurred in this recommendation.[68]

CINCPAC forwarded General Westmoreland's recommendation to the Joint Chiefs of Staff with his approval, during the important policy meetings that took place in late November and early December.[69]

68. Ibid. (-GP 3) Encls A and B to JCS 2343/500-1, 11 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64) sec 2.
69. (GP 3) Encls A and B to JCS 2343/500-1, 11 Dec 64, JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64) sec 2.

RVNAF FORCES

11 December 1964

Regular	Authorized	New Totals Alt 1	New Totals Alt 2
Army	217,300	240,953	258,200
Navy	8,162	14,476	14,476
Marines	6,555	6,555	6,555
Air Force	11,582	11,924	11,924
Total	243,599	273,908	291,155

Paramilitary	Authorized	New Total End 65
Regional Force	97,615	133,002
Popular Force	109,991	189,185
Coastal Force	4,640	no change
Total	212,246	322,189

Information derived from App to Encl A to JCS 2343/500-1, 11 Dec 64.

On 17 December 1964, in line with the other important actions being taken and considered to improve the situation in the RVN, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he approve Alternative One, as a basis for discussion with the GVN, and the detailed MAP programming actions required. They asked also that he approve the US advisors for the new units, and that action be taken to obtain the additional funds in the FY 1965 and FY 1966 MAP to support the Alternative One program.[70]

On 13 January 1965, in a memorandum to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense approved "in principle" the Alternative One increase and the associated US advisor increases. In the matter of funding he directed that $35.9 million be funded from FY 1965 MAP and the remainder from FY 1966 MAP. "I shall coordinate with the Department of State on the matter of final approval . . . " the Secretary said.[71]

On 15 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that the US advisors had been finally approved. In the meantime the Services had already taken preliminary actions to move these advisors to the RVN.[72]

In the face of the worsening military situation in the RVN, General Westmoreland, on 20 March, asked that he be authorized to accelerate the activation of 16 ARVN infantry battalions authorized under Alternative One. He asked also that, upon completion of Alternative One, he be given authority to put Alternative Two into effect. The 17,000 additional spaces under this latter alternative would allow the formation of 15 additional infantry battalions, four engineer battalions, one 155mm artillery battalion, and three M-113 troops long with additional administrative and logistic forces. He would be able to complete the training of the total 31 battalions provided in both alternatives by March 1966, as opposed to July 1966, but to do so certain conditions would have to be met. These included: 1) the GVN must be strong and take interest in conscription and recruiting to achieve a sustained 8,000 man per month input; 2) construction funds must be

70. (TS GP 3) JCSM-1074-64 to SecDef, 17 Dec 64 (derived from JCS 2343/500-1, 17 Dec 64), JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64), sec 2.
71. (TS GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Jan 65, Att to JCS 2343/500-2, 14 Jan 65, same file.
72. (TS GP 3) Encl B to JCS 2343/500-4, 2 Apr 65, same file.

provided speedily; 3) the GVN must agree to an increase in training facilities; 4) the GVN must agree to redistribution of equipment temporarily; 5) Washington authorities must take extraordinary MAP programming and supply actions; 6) approval of Alternative Two must be received by 1 April 1965.[73] General Westmoreland recognized that the GVN might not be able to support the manpower requirement and that there might be some slippage in the quality of training and equipment.[74]

In spite of some concern that the Alternative One increases might not be achieved as readily as COMUSMACV was predicting, Admiral Sharp considered the need for a stronger RVNAF overriding. He recommended approval of General Westmoreland's latest recommendations.[75]

In forwarding their recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on 8 April 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that they considered it "essential at this critical period to take maximum advantage of GVN capabilities to recruit and field the necessary military forces to support pacification operations." They believed that higher strength goals would act as an incentive to the GVN to set up an adequate recruiting program. Consequently they recommended that the Secretary authorize the Alternative Two program and the necessary advisor spaces, that he approve acceleration of the total force increase, subject to CINCPAC review of FY 1965 funding requirements, and that funds for the force increase be obtained from sources outside the world-wide MAP.[76]

On 12 April the Secretary of Defense approved the additional RVNAF force increase.[77]

On 5 May, COMUSMACV proposed that a tenth ARVN division be formed from three existing separate regiments. In order to do this he would need 2,369 additional spaces to form two

73. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 86874 to CINCPAC, 20 Mar 65, JCS IN 71332.
74. Ibid.
75. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 250102Z Mar 65, JCS IN 77121.
76. (S-GP 3) JCSM-265-65 to SecDef, 8 Apr 65 (derived from JCS 2343/500-4, 2 Apr 65), JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64), sec 2.
77. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 65, Att to JCS 2343/500-5, 14 Apr 65, same file.

artillery battalions and some support units. He felt that this new division would be valuable in shoring up the weak east flank of the Hop Tac zone.[78] CINCPAC recommended approval of this request. On 27 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he approve the necessary actions to form the new division. Secretary McNamara approved the request on 4 June, thus raising the authorized strength of the ARVN to 261,155.[79]

As US forces became increasingly engaged in the RVN, General Westmoreland, in June, carried out another review of the force requirements of the RVNAF. The intensification of the fighting had caused battle losses of the RVNAF higher than had been anticipated. Equally serious, from the manpower standpoint, RVNAF desertion rates were soaring to inordinate heights. These factors had caused a shrinking in ARVN battlefield strength. General Westmoreland had decided, therefore, that he should concentrate on keeping existing units filled rather than on creating the new units authorized. He proposed a temporary moratorium on activation of new battalions and the diversion of fillers to units already in being. Admiral Sharp agreed. On 15 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed COMUSMACV temporarily to defer activation of 11 battalions scheduled for the next several months.[80]

By 27 October, with US forces assuming a greater role in the combat, prospects for the RVNAF improved. General Westmoreland reported on that date that the buildup of the RVNAF was making better progress than had been anticipated. The desertion rate, for example, was declining and as a result the fighting strength of ARVN battalions had been raised to combat-effective levels. Fifteen new battalions were being trained. He had also been able to form the tenth ARVN division which was now operational. General Westmoreland said that he believed the manpower available in the RVN could support an input of 10,000 men monthly into the RVNAF for the remainder of FY 1966. On 2 November, COMUSMACV asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to approve a new strength level for the RVNAF, raising it to

78. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 14734, 5 May 65, JCS IN 47391.
79. (S-GP 4) JCSM-417-65 to SecDef(derived from JCS 2343/500-6, 25 May 65); JMF 9155.3 (23 Nov 64) sec 2. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 4 Jun 65, Att to JCS 2343/500-7, same file.
80. (S-GP 4) Encl C to JCS 2343/801, 28 Mar 66, JMF 9155.3 (9 Nov 65).

311,500. Such an increase would avoid a forced reduction in current levels of conscription and recruiting and prevent a loss of momentum in the buildup which would take months to regain.[81]

General Westmoreland, in these recommendations, proposed to organize a Coastal Military Command. During JCS consideration of his overall recommendations, the Commandant, Marine Corps, stated that such a command would duplicate the functions of the Vietnamese Marine Corps and refused to concur in its establishment. When the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 April 1966 sent a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense asking that he approve continuance of recruiting and conscription for the RVNAF during FY 1966 and that he approve an end-FY 1966 RVNAF force level of 311,458 men, the Commandant, Marine Corps, concurred in the provisions of the memorandum except that calling for creation of the Coastal Force Command.[82]

The Secretary of Defense approved the JCS recommendations, including that for establishment of the Coastal Military Command, on 25 April 1966.[83]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 27 April 1966, authorized CINCPAC to continue procurement of manpower for the RVNAF for the remainder of FY 1966 to attain the following strengths: ARVN - 274, 769, VNN - 15,491, VNAF - 14,658, VNMC - 6,540, RF - 133,002, and PF - 189,195. With respect to the paramilitary forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the buildup of the RVNAF would affect the RF and the PF. "In view of the critical role of Regional Forces and Popular Forces in the Rural Construction Program," they said, "request you give an appropriate priority to the recruiting, training and equipping of such forces."[84]

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81. (S-GP 4) JCS 2343/801, 28 Mar 66, JMF 9155.3 (9 Nov 65). (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 39875 to CINCPAC, 9 Nov 65, JCS IN 47121; CINCPAC to JCS, 112213Z Nov 65, JCS IN 47482.

82. (S-GP 4) JCSM-227-66 to SecDef, 13 Apr 66 (derived from JCS 2343/801, 13 Apr 66), JMF 9155.3 (9 Nov 65).

83. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 25 Apr 66, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2343/801, 13 Apr 66, same file.

84. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9439 to CINCPAC, 27 Apr 66.

Chapter 23

GROUND COMBAT OPERATIONS - RVN
JULY - DECEMBER 1965

The initial deployments of US combat troops were made before final decisions had been reached on exactly how US Marines and soldiers would be employed against the enemy. The concepts for their employment underwent close scrutiny during the ensuing months, as more and more US troops arrived in RVN, particularly with regard to whether or not the United States would assume the lion's share of the fighting and leave the pacification and security missions to the RVNAF.

The war could not wait for final resolution of this and other matters, and, in the natural course of events, hard and fast adherence to predetermined concepts was not always the case. Commanders in the field did what they had to do, insofar as their resources would allow, reacting to enemy initiatives and ARVN weaknesses with whatever tactics seemed most effective at the time.

As early as 22 April a small patrol of US Marines and RVN troops engaged in a fire fight with the VC near Da Nang. This marked the first combat encounter with the enemy by a US unit.[1]

During May and June as US forces arrived and deployed, Marine forces engaged in aggressive patrolling around their bases at Da Nang, Chu Lai, and Hue/Phu Bai. By 7 June there were more than 50,000 US military personnel in RVN. By late June US airborne troops were engaging in search-and-destroy missions around Bien Hoa.[2] On 27 June a combined US/ARVN search-and-destroy operation took place in War Zone D, involving two battalions from the 173d Airborne Brigade and two ARVN battalions, with an Australian battalion and a US battalion in reserve. On 1 July the VC attacked Da Nang air base under cover of darkness, severely damaging six USAF planes. Evidence was captured showing that the attack might have been made by a force from the NVA 325th division rather

1. (TS NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 93-65, 22 Apr 65.
2. (TS NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 147-65, 25 June 65.

than the VC. By this time contacts between US and enemy units had increased and the trend continued into July and August. The first major battle between US and VC forces took place in mid-August at Chu Lai. Intelligence reports had indicated a force of 2,000 VC building up for an attack on the Marine base. Elements of the 4th Marine Regiment were lifted by helicopter to designated landing zones while other units landed amphibiously near Chu Lai in a maneuver designed to link up with blocking forces and cut off enemy escape routes. The operation was highly successful, with the Marines killing approximately 700 VC, confirmed by body count.[3]

Concept of Employment - US/FWMA/RVNAF

During visits by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Hawaii and Saigon in July, General Westmoreland's Phase I deployment program for US forces had been presented to them along with some idea of how these forces were to be employed. The JGS, RVNAF had also briefed them on their version, prepared independently, of future operations in RVN. The gist of this briefing was that the GVN wanted to turn the highlands area over to US forces and move its own forces to the seacoast area, since GVN officials believed that their forces should be the ones to establish contact with the populace and handle the main security and pacification duties. The GVN officials wanted US Marine forces committed to search-and-destroy operations in I CTZ and the Army airmobile division sent to the Kontum, Pleiku and Phu Bon area as soon as possible. They also asked that another US infantry division be moved to RVN to operate in the Tay Ninh/Phuoc Long area, pointing out that the VC in III CTZ were defeating ARVN forces there. The whole briefing implied strongly that the US forces would have a more active role than the ARVN in fighting the enemy.[4]

General Westmoreland subsequently developed his concept for employing Phase I forces and the strategy, concept, and forces required for Phase II. Steps were taken to associate

3. (TS) Marine Corps Commandant's Vietnam Chronology, 1965, pp. 198-199.

4. (S) Briefing, JGS RVNAF to SecDef et al., 17 Jul 65, Att to JCS 2343/636, 22 Jul 65, JMF 9155.3 (17 Jul 65).

the JGS with these planning efforts to develop a campaign plan for the phased employment of US/FWMAF and RVNAF forces during the latter stages of Phase I.[5]

On 27 August, in connection with their planning for deployments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared and forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a comprehensive set of recommendations covering US strategy in Southeast Asia, together with a statement of correlated military actions necessary to carry out this strategy. With specific reference to the war within RVN, they addressed the situation facing COMUSMACV and the RVNAF and the broad outlines of the strategies that would have to be employed. Specific major problems included the continued existence of a major VC infrastructure, both political and military; the greater growth rate of VC strength as compared to that of the ARVN; and the continued loss of LOCs, food-producing areas, and population to VC control. Insofar as the war within RVN was concerned, the basic military tasks were to cause NVN to cease directing and supporting the VC, to defeat the VC, and to extend GVN control over all of the RVN.[6]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the "US basic strategy for winning the war should include, within RVN . . . to improve the combat effectiveness of the RVNAF; build and protect bases; reduce enemy reinforcements; defeat the Viet Cong, in concert with the RVN and third country forces . . . ."[7]

Analyzing the enemy's current strategy in RVN, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that the VC, directed and controlled by NVN, attempted to persuade the population to join them, using propaganda, intimidation and terror. Whenever possible, using armed assault and coercion, the VC destroyed the capability of GVN authority to govern an area, progressively reducing the GVN's ability to rally and exploit the support of the population. Once they had control of an area, the VC set up their own political organization and infrastructure.

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5. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 32361 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 17 Sep 65, JCS IN 52156.
6. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-652-65 to SecDef, 27 Aug 65, (derived from JCS 2343/646-1), JMF 9155.3 (30 Jul 65).
7. Ibid.

Making use of local people and local logistic support, the VC organized and trained military units to attack the GVN. Usually, said the JCS, the VC sought to avoid large-scale sustained battles with the GVN and the newly arrived US forces, preferring to strike at weak spots with superior force, then "fading away" when the combat ratio turned unfavorable. The current major objective of the VC appeared to be the destruction of the RVNAF.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also stated that to counter, successfully, the guerrilla warfare being waged by the enemy, control of the population and resources of the RVN must be seized. In RVN, the areas of greatest military significance were the Saigon area, the Mekong Delta, the coastal plain and the central highlands. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that US military action should be directed at eliminating the VC from these areas in order to provide security for the people there. The United States must build up and secure a series of bases and supporting LOCs at key localities along the coast from which offensive operations could be launched and sustained.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the principal effort of US and third country forces be to participate with the RVNAF in search-and-destroy operations while assisting the RVNAF in clearing and securing operations in support of the Rural Reconstruction effort. US/FWMAF air and ground operations should be conducted on a sustained basis, with attack and destruction of VC base areas directed at applying continuous pressure on the enemy.[8]

General Westmoreland issued his own concept for operations for the employment of US forces in RVN on 30 August 1965. He visualized operations by US forces in coordination with third country and the RVNAF in three phases: Phase I - commitment of US/FWMA forces necessary to halt the losing trend by the end of 1965; Phase II - resumption of the offensive by US/FWMAF during the first half of 1966 in high priority areas to destroy enemy forces and reestablish rural construction activities; Phase III - should the enemy persist, a period of a year to a year and a half following Phase II would be required for the defeat and destruction of the remaining enemy forces and base areas.[9]

8. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 9143 to CINCPAC, 25 Aug 65.
9. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, Annex A, MACV, pp. 141-153.

Specific military tasks to be accomplished in Phase I included: securing of major military bases, airfields and communications centers; defense of major political and population centers; offensive operations against major VC base areas to divert and destroy VC main forces; providing reserve reaction forces to prevent the loss of secure and defended areas; strengthening and preserving the RVNAF; providing adequate combat and logistic air support; maintaining an anti-infiltration screen along the coast and support forces ashore with naval gunfire and amphibious lift; providing air and sealifts as necessary to transport the minimum supplies and services to the civil population; opening necessary LOCs for essential military and civil purposes; defending, as possible, areas under effective governmental control.

During Phase II, pacification operations, which had come to a standstill, would be resumed and expanded. Those in the HOP TAC area around Saigon would receive priority. Other priority areas were the provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Tri, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh and Phu Yen. In support of these actions COMUSMACV's forces would carry out offensive and clear-and-secure operations and provide reaction reserves. Detailed concepts and tasks to be performed in each CTZ for each phase were set forth.[10]

In mid-September, COMUSMACV reported that his planning had culminated in a schedule of operations, part of which were even then taking place. These had been approved jointly by himself and by the Chief, JGS, RVNAF. In view of the deployment planning conference scheduled to take place in Hawaii at the last of September, General Westmoreland proposed to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and to CINCPAC that he have presented there the strategy and concept for employment of Phase I and Phase II forces along with salient features of the campaign plan. Depending on how many additional forces were approved at the planning conference, he would then, in concert with the Chief, JGS, project the campaign plan forward.[11]

10. Ibid.

11. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 32361 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 17 Sep 65, JCS IN 52156.

Also in mid-September, General Westmoreland urged his commanders to work as closely as possible with the RVNAF, to encourage them, and by example and other means, to attempt to instill in them a professional approach and competence. He admitted the difficulties of working closely in operations depending on surprise. Because of widespread subversion, safeguarding operational plans was difficult, complicating the close coordination needed when combined US/RVNAF operations were being launched. "With a minimum of coordination at the lower level," he said, "but a full and frank exchange of information with senior ARVN commanders, it will be possible on certain occasions for US troops to make the initial assault with surprise and speed. ARVN troops can be held initially in reserve until the battle begins to develop and then they may be committed under more profitable circumstances and in such a way that victory for them is more likely." He instructed his commanders to establish whenever possible a combined command post with US and ARVN personnel collocated and in some respects integrated. This would allow the US commander and his staff to have a "heavy influence" on the tactical direction of the operation in question. These combined command posts were fully justified in view of the increasing dependence of the ARVN upon US helicopter and airlift support, and more recently, artillery and naval gunfire support. General Westmoreland urged extensive exchange of liaison officers, and the placing of US forward observers and forward air controllers with the ARVN to enhance US influence and control over ARVN operations. He also suggested close tactical cooperation between the US units and the RF and PF units, pointing out that close working relationships with these paramilitary forces could produce useful intelligence, and at the same time embolden and encourage the RVN forces to face the VC more resolutely.[12]

On 7 October CINCPAC, replying to a JCS request of 25 August, defined the role of the US forces in Phase II operations. In his view the mission of these forces was to defeat the VC and to extend GVN control over all of RVN. If the VC operated in large formations, US forces would conduct operations with the RVNAF to find, fix, and destroy them. If the VC reverted to small operations, US forces, in cooperation with the RVNAF, would clear, secure, and pacify areas as fast

12. (S-GP 4) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 17 Sep 65, Att to JCS 2343/688, 27 Sep 65, JMF 9155.3 (15 Sep 65).

as practicable. Periodic offensive operations would be conducted in VC-controlled areas by US and third country forces to destroy VC main force units and bases. All US activity would be closely coordinated with the GVN to stimulate an improved performance by the RVNAF. The US forces would help the RVNAF to defend major population centers, assist the RVNAF to regain the initiative, strengthen it, and aid the RVN in rural construction. The GVN would conduct rural construction operations with and without US military participation.[13]

The Secretary of State, his principal assistants, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Maxwell Taylor, now returned to private life, were briefed on COMUSMACV's Phase II program on 21 October by General DePuy, MACV J-3.

During the ensuing discussions, attention was focused upon the concept for employment of US forces as compared with the role of the RVNAF. With the exception of certain elite ARVN units, airborne Marines and some Rangers, the ARVN would be mainly employed in pacification activities behind a "fighting screen" of US forces. The US troops would carry the battle to the enemy in the war zones and other areas where VC main force units were to be found.[14]

Among the salient points of General DePuy's briefing on employment concepts were that US troops would be deployed to defend bases and would conduct search-and-destroy operations generally in "penny packets." US commanders would visit RF and PF units and would have troops accompany and support RF companies on operations in areas that they normally avoided. COMUSMACV campaign plans specified areas where US forces would operate each month, opening roads, conducting clearing operations, and protecting the rice harvest. DePuy noted that this technique had already served to put the ARVN back in the war. Employment of 1st Cavalry Division units on the high plateau had already freed four or five ARVN battalions to work in the populated areas of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen. These ARVN forces, operating behind a screen of US units, would set the stage for pacification. US and ROK units would assist the GVN in defending all the province. An air cavalry brigade would periodically reinforce the RVNAF

13. (TS-GP 3) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, 7 Oct 65, w/App A, "Concept for Vietnam," JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 2A.
14. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4827 to CINCPAC, 22 Oct 65.

in operations against the VC in the Can Tho area. The GVN favored the concept of using their forces among the people while US forces screened against main VC units and operated on the edges of the populated areas and against the VC strongholds.[15]

General Taylor was particularly concerned that the GVN might be prepared to stand back and let the United States do the fighting. After hearing the briefing given by General DePuy on employment of Phase II forces, he observed that while the original concept seemed to have been for the US forces to assist the GVN, that concept seemed to have dropped out and the US ground forces were being saddled with the role of "primary doer." He questioned whether the United States was prepared to assume this preponderant ground role, while the ARVN fell back behind US units on pacification duty.[16]

General Wheeler asked Admiral Sharp on 22 October to clarify this, saying ". . . there is a need for us to have a clearer understanding of just what we can expect in the future from the ARVN . . . ."[17]

This need for a "clearer understanding" was becoming apparent in other quarters as well. The US press and other news media were devoting considerably more attention to the operations of US forces in Vietnam than to those of the RVNAF. Ambassador Lodge, in early November, expressed concern over this and recommended firm guidance from State and Defense officials to all appropriate subordinates emphasizing that the United States was not taking over the war, that the GVN had the basic and essential role, and that the US role remained that of combat support to the GVN. Secretary McNamara, agreeing with the Ambassador, informed the Services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, "Critical as our own operations may be it is an inescapable fact that final attainment of our goals in South Vietnam will depend to an even greater extent on effective operations by the RVNAF, which must continue to

15. (TS) Memo, CJCS to LTG Goodpaster, 16 Nov 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 65.
16. (TS) Memo, GEN Taylor to SecState et al., 26 Oct. 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 65.
17. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4827 to CINCPAC, 22 Oct 65.

conduct the bulk of all actions against the VC, and on the stability and morale of the GVN as a whole." He instructed them to consider this statement as guidance within their respective areas of responsibility.[18]

On 2 November Admiral Sharp replied to the Chairman's query of 22 October regarding the role of the ARVN. He pointed out that there were four main types of operations in which ARVN and RF units would normally engage. These were search and destroy, clear and secure, reserve reaction, and defense of government centers. Defining these operations, CINCPAC stated:

> Search and Destroy . . . are offensive operations undertaken against known or suspected VC base areas or force concentrations. These operations, often dependent on self-generated intelligence, are expected to locate and destroy VC forces or their base areas, destroying supplies, communications systems and training installations, thereby keeping the VC on the move and forcing him to reestablish in more remote areas, taking the pressure off the populated areas. . . . Clearing operations are Search and Destroy operations conducted in a well defined zone directed at destroying or permanently eliminating VC forces from that zone. They are sustained in nature and will only be undertaken when it is intended that securing forces will be assigned to the zone and the full range of pacification measures initiated. . . . Securing operations are those which provide long term security for the people in the hamlets, villages and districts, which have already been cleared of larger VC units and in which the Government is reestablishing effective control. . . . Reserve Reaction operations are designed to relieve province and district towns and units under attack. . . . Defense of government centers includes the protection of province capitals and district towns, key governmental facilities and installations. . . .[19]

18. (C) Memo, SecDef to SecA et al., 3 Nov 65, Att to JCS 2343/713, 10 Nov 65, JMF 9155.3 (3 Nov 65).

19. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 022214Z Nov 65, JCS IN 34023.

Wherever possible, CINCPAC continued, RVN forces would be used to defend GVN installations and bases and in "Securing" operations. US forces would not engage in such operations except in areas around their own bases. While some ARVN battalions would be earmarked for "Reserve Reaction" and "Search and Destroy" operations, the bulk of the operations against VC forces and bases would be undertaken by the US/FWMA forces and the ARVN General Reserve (six airborne and six marine battalions).[20]

General Wheeler considered the concept provided by CINCPAC to be "at considerable variance" with that set forth by General DePuy in his briefing on 22 October.[21]

On 10 November, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented to the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum a concept of operations in extension and support of the earlier concept they had given him on 27 August. US and allied forces would continue to establish and expand a series of secure bases and key LOCs in localities along the seacoast and elsewhere as necessary, and would step up offensive operations launched from these and other bases to disrupt and destroy VC main force units and bases in order to assist the GVN to expand its control over the militarily and economically significant areas of Saigon, the Mekong Delta, the coastal plain, and the central highlands. This would deny principal recruiting and food-producing areas to the Viet Cong and would secure these resources to friendly control. It would increase the security of the people and obtain their increased support for the GVN. When the VC operated in large formations, US/third country and RVNAF forces would conduct operations to find, fix, and destroy them. When the VC dispersed and reverted to small-scale actions or guerrilla warfare, additional emphasis would be shifted to clearing, securing, and civic action operations. US/third country forces would conduct combat operations with primary emphasis on security of their own operating bases and LOCs, and, in conjunction with air and naval forces, would provide heavy assault strength against VC forces and bases. They would launch offensive operations to assist the RVNAF in the defense of major population centers. They would advise and assist the ARVN, conduct psychological operations, and assist in the rural construction program.

20. Ibid.

21. (TS) Memo, CJCS to LTG Goodpaster, 16 Nov 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 65.

The bulk of operations against VC and bases outside secure areas would be handled by US/third country and ARVN general reserve forces. The bulk of the ARVN forces would be committed to defending GVN installations and to securing operations.[22]

General Taylor informed Secretary McNamara and the Chairman in a memorandum on 19 November that in their "paper" the Joint Chiefs of Staff seemed to be accepting the concept of the JGS, RVNAF, that US forces should have the "primary combat role" in RVN. He pointed out that he considered this a mistake from the points of view of "GVN psychology and US domestic opinion . . . ."[23]

The Village Burning Incident

The tactics developed by US forces in the first months of their operations against the VC were designed to carry the fight to the enemy in the environment and under the peculiar conditions that they faced in Vietnam. Because the fighting took place in populated areas, and because the enemy took full advantage of the presence of the civilian population and the native villages and hamlets, the danger to the civilian populace was great. This was particularly true in the vicinity of Da Nang where the US Marines, in company with RVN troops, conducted operations designed to seize control of an ever-expanding area around the city and US bases there. The VC had been extremely active and controlled many of the villages there before the Marines arrived on the scene.

On 10 July 1965, the CG of the III MAF, General Walt, had issued a directive pointing out that the number of non-combatant casualties resulting from US combat operations was of growing concern throughout Vietnam and ordering great care in the use of artillery, aviation, and other weapons capable of inflicting mass casualties. Their use in populated areas would be restricted to close support missions against clearly identifiable targets. "In short," he told his troops, "the utmost discretion, judgment, and restraint must be used in the application of all fire power." "It is

22. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-811-65 to SecDef, 10 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2343/655-26), JMF 9155.3 (3 Aug 65) sec 5.
23. (S) Memo, GEN Taylor to SecDef and CJCS, 19 Nov 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 65.

not the intent of this message to infringe upon the inherent right of an individual to defend himself from hostile attack," General Walt added.[24]

On 3 August, a company of Marines conducted a search-and-destroy operation through the village of Cam Ne 4, south of Da Nang. They were accompanied by a Popular Force platoon of 22 men and a CBS-TV news team headed by an American. During the course of the operations, selective film was made by the TV cameramen, featuring the burning of a native dwelling and showing frightened RVN civilians. When shown on national television in the United States on 5 August, along with a highly biased commentary charging wanton destruction of native dwellings and the wounding and killing of harmless civilians, this film created adverse public reaction and brought outcries of protest against the Marines' tactics. The facts of the case were quite different from those shown by the TV report.

The village in question, Cam Ne 4, had been swept by the Marines on 12 July, at which time the place had been full of VC. Three Marines had been killed and four wounded. The village was full of caves, tunnels, and trench lines. Between houses were impenetrable hedgerows. Most of the houses in the village had access to underground tunnels far more elaborate than needed to protect the inhabitants. Many of the dwellings were not lived in. The overall nature of the place was that of a military fortification rather than a peaceful village.

When the Marines began their sweep on 3 August, they had come under heavy rifle and automatic weapons fire from the hedgerows--with three Marines being wounded. Of the 90 houses in the village, a total of 51 were burned from the effects of tracers, grenades, and 3.5 rockets. In only one case was a house deliberately burned, set afire with a cigarette lighter at the order of the company commander on the advice of the RVN district chief. It was this incident that was recorded by the TV camera. This particular house covered a concrete basement with a concrete tunnel outlet leading to a tunnel complex; and was unquestionably a tactical installation--not a peaceful dwelling. In the same operation a ten-year-old RVN boy was killed when a VC ran into the house in which the boy was hiding and was fired upon by an M-79 grenade launcher.[25]

24. (S) Msg, CG FMFPAC to CMC, 070857Z Aug 65.
25. (U) Msg, COMUSMACV Telecon to NMCC, 050640Z Aug 65.

As the Marines withdrew from the village at about 1500 hours, they again drew heavy fire from the same area from which they had originally been fired upon.

Operation SILVER BAYONET

With the arrival in the autumn of major US Army units, including the 1st Cavalry Division (AM) and the 1st Infantry Division, General Westmoreland expanded his attacks in the II CTZ, securing coastal areas and pushing forward along formerly VC-controlled LOCs into the highlands plateau area as earlier envisioned by General Johnson. These tactics brought increasingly strong reaction from the enemy, underscoring their effectiveness.

One of the earliest large-scale operations by the US Army forces was Operation GIBRALTAR, conducted by a brigade of the 101st Airborne Division in Binh Dinh province from 17 to 21 September. This search-and-destroy operation killed 226 VC with very light casualties to US forces.[26]

An attack by the VC against a Special Forces camp at Plei Me, 25 miles southwest of Pleiku, on 19 October touched off a month-long campaign involving US, ARVN, and VC/NVA troops in the fiercest fighting to date in RVN. Following the attack, troops of the 1st Cavalry Division (AM) were ordered to provide security and artillery support to the ARVN forces around Plei Me. A reinforced brigade of the division launched search-and-destroy mission between Plei Me and the Cambodian border, killing or capturing 300 VC. On 14 November, in the Ia Drang Valley, the most significant phase of the operation began when the 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, attacked VC/NVA forces, of more than division strength and fighting from well-entrenched positions. US troops fought against the numerically superior enemy, in many cases hand-to-hand, in a series of fierce small engagements which frequently found the US units cut off. Repeated enemy attempts to overrun US positions using human-wave tactics were thwarted by the skillful use of air, artillery, and armed helicopter support. B-52s were used in a tactical role and caused heavy enemy casualties. This engagement was

26. ~~(S NOFORN~~-GP 1) Rpt by CSA, Challenge: Compendium of Army Accomplishment, July 1964-April 1968, (1968), p. 6, JCS Hist Div Files. (Hereafter cited as CSA Rpt.)

evidently a carefully planned communist move to test the behavior and reaction time of US forces. The enemy appeared willing to sacrifice his men in order to inflict an impressive loss on US forces. The enemy lost 1,286 men in the Ia Drang Valley, the US had 217 killed and 232 wounded. In its final phase which began on 18 November, ARVN airborne troops conducted a search and destroy operation west of Pleiku, killing another 265 of the enemy.[27]

As SILVER BAYONET was taking place in the North, the US 1st Infantry Division was also engaged in successful operations in Bien Hoa province. Operation HUMP, a search-and-destroy mission by the Division between 5-9 November, killed 403 enemy with US losses of 50 killed.[28]

The Enemy Threat Increases

These military successes by US forces encouraged and heartened the RVNAF. At the same time, however, they apparently caused the enemy to build up more rapidly in order to offset the growing US capability.

During General Wheeler's visit to RVN in late November 1965, General Westmoreland emphasized the seriousness with which he viewed the VC/PAVN build-up which had taken place and which was continuing, apparently at an accelerated rate.[29]

US intelligence now accepted the presence in RVN of three regiments of the 325th NVA Division plus four other separate nondivisional regiments, the latest of which had arrived in mid-September. Evidence captured during the Plei Me battle in November pointed to the enemy's having formed another 325th NVA Division with cadres left by the parent unit. COMUSMACV's intelligence officer believed that one regiment of this newly constituted division was now in RVN. The two other regiments of this new division were either already in or were shortly to arrive in RVN.[30]

27. (TS NOFORN GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, Annex A, MACV, pp. 168-169.
28. (S NOFORN GP 1) CSA Rpt, p. 7.
29. (TS) Msg, MAC 6020 (CJCS) to CSA, 29 Nov 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 65.
30. (S NOFORN) Msg, MAC 6016 to DIA, 28 Nov 66, CJCS 091 Vietnam Nov 65.

A regiment of the 304th NVA Division had been encountered at Plei Me. Reportedly, it had brought 120mm mortars into RVN, the first occasion on which these effective weapons had been introduced. All this evidence, if true, meant that NVN had nine regiments in RVN. Most disturbing to the US command was the increasing rate of NVA infiltration. There was growing evidence that as many as 12 battalions were now entering RVN each month. At the same time the infiltration of NVN cadre personnel for political, economic, and military organizations was continuing, supporting the formation of new VC units in RVN. US intelligence now accepted 83 VC battalions plus 27 NVA battalions for a total of 110 enemy battalions in the RVN. The VC controlled a manpower pool of 526,000 physically fit males between the ages of 16 and 45. They could form at least two new battalions each month and train at least 2,500 replacements, equating to five battalions. Taking into consideration training and infiltration capabilities and losses, the MACV J-2 believed that the enemy could have a force equivalent to 155 battalions in RVN by the end of 1966.

The enemy's ability to supply and maintain his forces in RVN was also examined by the MACV J-2 at this time. He estimated that NVN could move 300 tons per day from NVN through Laos into RVN during dry weather; this figure dropping to about 50 tons a day in the normal five months rainy season. The net result was an average daily year-round figure of 195 tons per day through Laos. Substantial support was also moved into RVN by way of Cambodia, believed to amount to a minimum of 25 tons per day. The total LOC capacity through Laos and Cambodia and by sea was given as a minimum 234 tons per day. Enemy forces then in RVN would, under light combat conditions, require only 84 tons per day.

Analyzing the enemy's strategy, the US intelligence officials believed that the enemy counted on a long war during which they would exact the maximum attrition on allied and, especially, US forces. They would avoid combat unless they could expect victory. They would try to keep a force ratio in their favor by conducting holding attacks against US bases as well as diversionary attacks to disperse US/FWMA/RVNAF forces and would attack simultaneously at widespread locations. They would attack US base areas in order to tie down security forces and to destroy aircraft, equipment, and supplies. They would mount attacks designed to cause the commitment of US general reserves. They would attack isolated units to inflict heavy losses. They would continue trying to dominate the highlands to secure their own base areas at the end of the Laos

infiltration routes. They would keep continuing pressure on LOCs to terrorize areas under GVN control and to weaken the will of their population. The enemy would defend his own major bases because in order to fight a protracted war he would need the stockpiles of supplies he had built up in these bases over the years.

"Although the enemy has great capabilities he also has significant vulnerabilities," the MACV J-2 stated. "He must defend his logistic base areas, and his long logistical LOC is susceptible to interdiction. He is especially vulnerable to air and artillery attack, sustained combat operations, and aggressive pursuit. Additionally, he is dependent upon the support of the local population."

The DIA agreed in most part with the evaluation of the enemy by the MACV J-2. The tactics attributed to the enemy were considered by the DIA to be a "logical acceleration" of guerrilla warfare and represented tactics that had been employed by the VC, for example, in such recent engagements as Plei Me and the Ia Drang Valley. The concept, which the MACV J-2 termed "Strategic Mobility," had the objective of amassing sufficient numbers of maneuver battalions to pose a threat in widely separated areas, thus tying down large numbers of the friendly forces in static, defensive missions and allowing the enemy to destroy selected targets at times and places of his own choosing. DIA pointed out that the Viet Minh had followed these tactics successfully against the French. The only areas in which DIA did not completely agree with the MACV estimate were in enemy logistic requirements, which DIA set at 125 tons daily as opposed to the MACV figure of 84 tons, and the enemy capability to move into RVN at 214 tons a day as opposed to the MACV estimate of 234 tons per day.[31]

US intelligence officials estimated in December that VC strength had risen to 215,000--75,000 regular forces and regional troops, 100,000 guerrillas, and 40,000 support troops and political workers. This represented, despite heavy casualties, a net gain of approximately 50,000 since March 1965. Intelligence estimates placed the number of NVN regulars in RVN in December at 26,000.[32]

31. (S-GP 1) Memo, Dir, DIA to D/JS, S-3589 AP-2F, 17 Dec 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 65.

32. (S-GP 1) DIA SIS-141-66, Jan 66, p. v, 9. NY Times 5 Dec 65, IV, 1; 27 Jan 66, 2.

US military operations against the VC in late 1965 continued to be effective despite the enemy's increasing numbers. A highly successful search-and-destroy operation, BUSHMASTER II, was carried out by four battalions of the 1st Infantry Division between 28 November and 9 December in Binh Duong province. This operation, which destroyed enemy units and facilities in a VC base area, killed almost 300 VC and resulted in the destruction of a weapons factory and ammunition. US losses were 37 killed and 116 wounded.[33]

33. (S NOFORN-GP 1) CSA Rpt, p. 7.

Chapter 24

AIR, NAVAL, AND SUBSIDIARY OPERATIONS

In support of the ground forces in RVN the United States put into effect during 1965 programs based primarily on US air and naval power. These programs involved the use of B-52 bombers and other US planes in RVN, employment of US naval craft to halt sea infiltration from NVN, and the use of US planes against NVN infiltration through Laos. Because of these and other programs, it also became necessary for the United States to reconsider the restraints placed, primarily for political reasons, upon operation of its forces. As a result, some modification of the rules for engagement for Southeast Asia took place.

ARC LIGHT Operations

One of the most noteworthy US programs developed to defeat the insurgency was the ARC LIGHT program in which B-52s of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) were employed in RVN. On 11 February, in anticipation of continuing air operations following the reprisals against NVN, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed CINCSAC to deploy as soon as possible 30 conventionally modified B-52 aircraft to Anderson AFB, Guam, and 30 KC-135 jet tankers to Kadena AFB, Okinawa. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also had authorized additional tanker aircraft to support this movement and ordered CINCSAC to ready the B-52s for operations immediately upon arrival.[1]

Just how these SAC planes would be used remained under active discussion during the first half of 1965. Military planners generally favored their use in bombing NVN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had proposed this measure as early as November 1964 and, again in February 1965 in the first ROLLING THUNDER (RT) program. State Department officials, however, had opposed the employment of B-52s against NVN on the basis that the use of strategic bombers would represent a much higher level of military action against NVN than use of tactical aircraft and might cause a more drastic reaction

1. (JCS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5000 to CINCSAC, 11 Feb 65.

by Communist China and the Soviet Union. Other factors that militated against using them in RT were: B-52 bombing techniques required offset aiming points; some of the President's advisors were not convinced that B-52s could bomb as accurately as claimed; and all recognized the serious consequences that might result from the loss of a B-52 to enemy fire over NVN. The B-52s were therefore eliminated from the ROLLING THUNDER program.[2]

Because of the adverse impact on the overall readiness posture of his forces of keeping 30 B-52s on Guam and 30 KC-135 tankers on Okinawa in a conventional alert posture, CINCSAC informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 29 March that he proposed to remove one-third of both types of these planes. In view of recent events in Southeast Asia and of the other actions then in progress to increase the conventional capabilities in PACOM, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered CINCSAC to take no action to redeploy any forces from that area. Meanwhile, other developments were taking place that would eventually lead to the commitment of these heavy, long-range bombers to what amounted to a tactical role in RVN.[3]

The VC had built elaborate headquarters complexes and set up troop assembly areas over widely separated jungle areas in RVN. These included VC military region headquarters and entire enemy battalions spread over large areas, as well as groups of buildings, foxholes and trenches, tunnels, and underground storage depots connected by trails. Rough terrain and thick jungle cover hid them from air observation. Bombing these targets with fighter/bombers was generally unprofitable since the targets were widely spread and difficult to pinpoint. Even when located on maps or aerial photos, the targets were difficult to hit because the solid jungle canopy provided few aiming points for the attack aircraft. Nevertheless, because effective attacks on these targets would deal a serious blow to the enemy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff began considering the use of B-52s against area targets in the RVN early in March 1965. They recognized that among the

2. The technical aspects, including the formidable problem of guidance, control and refueling of the B-52s on their strikes, are well covered in the History of the Strategic Air Command, Study No. 101, 1965; and 107, 1966. Hereafter cited as SAC History, [year].

3. (TS) Msg, CINCSAC 02583 to JCS, 29 Mar 65; (TS-GP 4) JCS 009079 to CINCSAC, 14 Apr 65.

advantages of using B-52s were greater payload, ability to bomb accurately from high altitudes, invulnerability to AAA fire, and all-weather capability.[4]

In April, massed tactical aircraft struck against a VC area target at substantial cost but with poor results, thus making it clear that tactical bombers were unsuited for such missions. General Westmoreland urged the use of B-52s in similar future missions when he met with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, at Honolulu on 19 April.[5]

Ten days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC and CINCSAC that in light of the current situation, they considered that the B-52s could be used for area saturation attacks against target areas known to include VC-occupied installations and facilities but for which precise target data to permit pinpoint bombing attacks was not available. They requested CINCSAC to develop a capability to use ARC LIGHT B-52s in area saturation attacks against this type of target. They further requested CINCSAC and CINCPAC to coordinate and provide plans for the use of B-52s in RVN.[6]

On 6 May CINCSAC and CINCPAC representatives met in Hawaii and agreed on the responsibilities for targeting and coordination procedures. SAC would prepare operations plans for the strikes.[7]

General Westmoreland pointed out to CINCPAC on 14 May that it was essential that the United States keep VC headquarters and units under attack. His intelligence people were even then developing information on the headquarters of the 325th PAVN division and on two VC Military Region headquarters, which included a large number of troops. The enemy was known to fear air attacks. The best way to keep him off balance and to prevent an unexpected large-scale VC attack would be to keep constant pressure on VC base areas. General Westmoreland stated that "for attacks on VC base areas, we must provide a capability which will permit us to deliver a

4. (TS) SAC History, 1965, vol I, p. 199.
5. Ibid. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 16006 to JCS, 14 May 65, JCS IN 59699.
6. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1047 to CINCPAC/CINCSAC, 29 Apr 65.
7. (TS-NOFORN) SAC History 1965, vol I, p. 201.

well planned pattern of bombs over large areas and preferably within a short period of time."[8]

He had already discussed this problem with SAC representatives at Honolulu and believed that SAC conventional bombing tactics based on pattern bombing would be ideal for this requirement. "I strongly recommend, therefore, that as a matter of urgency, we be authorized to employ SAC B-52 aircraft against selected targets in RVN." General Westmoreland specifically recommended strikes against area targets in Kontum Province and War Zone D.

Ambassador Taylor concurred in the use of B-52s in strikes in RVN and foresaw no problem in getting GVN approval. He pointed out, however, that the use of B-52 forces would have some international political implications and that the State Department would want to look at the proposal carefully. The main problem might arise from Japanese objections against Okinawa being used as a launching base for strikes. Admiral Sharp strongly backed General Westmoreland's recommendation and asked authority to have SAC conduct the necessary radar photography over the target areas to assist in the strike planning.[9]

On 17 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved a single reconnaissance sortie, SHORT SPRINT, over the Kontum area. But shortly thereafter the targets in the Kontum area dispersed, and as a result, the sortie was cancelled. On 10 June, however, COMUSMACV informed CINCPAC of several new and significant targets, and asked that preliminary actions be taken so that ARC LIGHT forces could strike one of these as soon as it appeared sufficiently lucrative. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had coincidentally, that very day, approved in principle the use of B-52s in RVN provided suitable targets could be located. They asked CINCPAC for full operational details on these latest targets. The most promising target appeared to be a densely wooded area, two by four kilometers in size, in Ben Cat Special Zone northwest of Saigon. General Westmoreland believed that the area, which could be a launching point for VC attacks on Route 13, contained the headquarters of the Saigon-Cholon VC Military Committee, which directed operations

8. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 16006 to CINCPAC, 14 May 65, JCS IN 59699.
9. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 150214Z May 65, JCS IN 62112.

in that part of RVN, and that three battalions of enemy troops were in the area. On 15 June he asked that the ARC LIGHT forces strike this area "to blunt a monsoon offensive in the area north of Saigon."[10]

After approval by higher authority, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the strike, ARC LIGHT I, executed on the morning of 18 June. On schedule, 30 bombers left Guam on the mission. Two of the aircraft collided in mid-air during flight to the target and one aborted. Twenty-seven reached the target and dropped a total of 1,530 bombs, mainly 750-lbs but with a few 1,000-lbs mixed in.[11]

Ground teams, penetrating the area within hours after the bombing attack, found relatively few craters and no evidence that the raid had caused any VC casualties or damaged their installations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that a spate of prestrike message traffic and telephone calls might very well have tipped off the enemy that the operation was to be mounted. Despite this lack of success the President approved the next strike proposed, ARC LIGHT II, on 23 June, and added his hope that the results on this second strike would be better than the first.

On 14 July the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued general planning instructions for the conduct of ARC LIGHT operations, and assigned specific responsibilities to CINCPAC and to CINCSAC. And eight days later they authorized the conduct of routine B-52 reconnaissance flights over the RVN.[12]

Five ARC LIGHT missions were flown against targets developed by COMUSMACV in July. By 17 August nine missions had been flown. During the last five months of 1965 this rate increased sharply, raising the total number of missions flown by December to 130.[13]

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10. ([redacted]-NOFORN-GP 3) SAC History, 1965, pp. 204-205.
11. Ibid., pp. 205-208.
12. ([redacted]-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 5774 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 14 Jul 65; (S-GP 3) JCS 6477, 22 Jul 65.
13. ([redacted]-NOFORN-GP 3) SAC History, 1965, vol I, p. 224.

Approval Authority

After the first few weeks of ARC LIGHT operations the program had assumed a fairly routine aspect in the eyes of Washington policymakers. Although the President had been involved in the first strike approvals, the Secretary of Defense approved subsequent strikes. General Westmoreland developed his proposals on the basis of intelligence from various sources--which included GVN officials, agents, photography, and other means that indicated the existence of enemy forces or installations in a particular area. COMUSMACV forwarded his proposed targets to CINCPAC, who, in turn, examined the proposed targets, and sent the targets, along with his views, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The next step called for a decision by the Joint Chiefs of Staff who, if they approved, recommended the targets to the Secretary of Defense. The Secretary of Defense consulted with the White House staff and the Department of State and, based upon their views and his own judgment, either approved or disapproved the strikes in question.[14]

There were flaws in the procedure from several viewpoints. First, it was time-consuming and cumbersome, and if a target was of a transitory nature, as in the case of troop concentrations, the full value of the strike might not be realized. Disconcerting to the Joint Chiefs of Staff was the lack of adequate intelligence information on some of the targets proposed by COMUSMACV. Air Force officials were not convinced that the ARC LIGHT strikes were in all cases justified. They were particularly disturbed by the fact that only occasionally were ground forces employed to determine results or to take advantage of damage done the enemy. Unfortunately, COMUSMACV did not have sufficient forces available to exploit more than a fraction of the strikes in 1965, nor could the ARVN generate adequate forces for this purpose. Nevertheless, having established the principle of approving targets largely on the recommendation of the field commander, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found themselves in the position of either breaking this precedent, or going along with the recommendation. On occasion they did ask for further intelligence support of recommendations. There was some concern among the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that in passing on these targets they were performing a function which in a normal situation would have been handled within the theater.[15]

14. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Sep 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).

15. (TS) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2343/663," 16 Aug 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).

The Okinawa Problem

The political problem that Ambassador Taylor had earlier noted might arise in connection with ARC LIGHT operations surfaced in late July, when, because of bad weather, B-52s were moved temporarily to Okinawa and launched a strike from there. Because of concern expressed by the Japanese Prime Minister that use of Okinawa for B-52 operations against RVN might cause on outcry from opponents of his government and serve to acerbate US/Japanese relations, State Department officials urged that the United States discuss its position with the Government of Japan. Under Secretary of State Ball advised Secretary McNamara that an aroused Japanese public might pressure its government to demand changes in US rights in Okinawa, a matter under continuing review. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had consistently held that unrestricted use of US bases in the Ryukyus was essential to the security position of the United States in Asia. Nor did they believe that the United States should make any concessions on this for political reasons at this stage. They urged in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 3 August that the unlimited right to all necessary use of the bases on Okinawa be upheld as a matter of national policy and that the United States not agree to consult with or notify the Japanese Government regarding their use. No formal reply was received although the matter was taken under consideration by higher authorities.[16]

Although the United States continued to use Okinawa for its tanker support, it did not normally fly the B-52s from there. On one other occasion in 1965, owing to weather conditions, the B-52s were moved to Okinawa and launched from there. The Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to believe that the United States should have unrestricted use of Okinawa, but realized that the Department of State would probably oppose any large-scale use of the island by the B-52s. They did not press the issue during the remainder of the year.[17]

16. (TS NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 174-65, 28 Jul 65, and 175-65, 29 Jul 65. (S-GP 3) Msg, Tokyo 361 to State, 30 Jul 65, JCS IN 72962. (S) Ltr USecState to SecDef, 31 Jul 65; (TS-GP 4) Memo, J-3 to JCS, "Use of Okinawa Bases for Strikes in Vietnam," Encl to JCS 2343/648-2; (S-GP 1) JCSM-600-65 to SecDef, 3 Aug 65, (derived from JCS 2343/648-2), JMF 9155.3 (31 Jul 65).

17. (TS-GP 3) SAC History 1965, vol I, p. 220. (TS-GP 1) App B to Encl B, JCS 2343/903-1, 22 Sep 66, JMF 9155 (12 Aug 66).

Free Bomb Zones

In an effort to increase the flexibility he felt was needed in ARC LIGHT, General Westmoreland proposed on 16 August that five areas in RVN, known to be VC strongholds, free of friendly forces, and not close to RVN's borders, be designated as Free Bomb Zones (FBZs). These areas had been developed and approved by the JGS, RVNAF and the GVN. Ambassador Lodge, too, agreed with COMUSMACV's proposal.[18]

In essence General Westmoreland proposed that planned programs of strikes against worthwhile targets in the FBZs be approved in advance for execution when appropriate. The execution of these strikes would be handled directly between COMUSMACV and CINCSAC, and interested authorities would be kept informed. In order to get the program underway, General Westmoreland proposed five FBZs, delineating them geographically, and asked to strike seven target areas within these FBZs which were designated phonetically ALFA through ECHO.[19]

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that General Westmoreland's proposal had merit, they did not feel that decisions on ARC LIGHT should be taken out of their hands entirely. Consequently they asked the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 2 August to vest in them the execution authority for the seven specific targets nominated by COMUSMACV for strike during the last week of August. Further, they proposed that he delegate to them execution authority for future strikes in the FBZs delineated. Requests for B-52 strikes outside the FBZs would continue to be processed as in the past.[20]

The seven strikes were approved and executed late in August. But the Secretary of Defense did not approve the proposed procedure for FBZs until 29 September. He directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to keep the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed of proposed strikes in the FBZs. "With respect to proposed strikes against targets outside the Free Bomb Zones," he added, "the ASD/ISA will continue to transmit

18. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 16 Aug 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).
19. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-642-65 to SecDef, 21 Aug 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65). (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 28722 to CINCPAC, 16 Aug 65, JCS IN 95307.
20. Ibid.

my decisions after considering White House Staff and Department of State views on the proposed strikes."[21]

Until the middle of August all ARC LIGHT strikes had been maximum effort, involving 30 B-52 bombers. With the approval of the FBZs, a provision for smaller, more frequent strikes went into effect.[22]

A sixth FBZ area, approved by RVN officials and the US Ambassador, was recommended to the Secretary of Defense by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 October. This area lay in Tay Ninh province and was long known to have contained well-established VC base areas. At the same time the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary for authority to execute ARC LIGHT strikes within additional FBZs as they might be approved in the future by the GVN and the Ambassaor. They received no immediate reply.[23]

ARC LIGHT in Ground Support Role

One of the most successful applications of the ARC LIGHT fire power took place late in the year when B-52s from Guam flew close support missions for US troops fighting in the highlands along the Cambodian border. In this series of battles, the urgency of the situation underscored the need for a quicker reaction to calls for B-52 support. In an effort to achieve this, COMUSMACV, on 16 November, during operation SILVER BAYONET, asked to be allowed to deal directly with the SAC Commander on Guam, CG 3d Air Division, as well as for "blanket approval . . . for the conduct of the bombing effort" during SILVER BAYONET. Admiral Sharp concurred in this request. The Joint Chiefs of Staff thereupon authorized CINCPAC and CINCSAC to delegate to COMUSMACV and CG 3d Air

21. (TS-GP 3) Ltr, DepASD(ISA) (Far East and Latin American Affairs) to AsstSecState for Far Eastern Affairs, 26 Aug 65, Att to JCS 2343/663-2, 31 Aug 65; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Sep 65, Att to JCS 2343/663-2, 1 Oct 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).

22. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) SAC History, 1965, vol I, pp. 225-226.

23. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-775-65 to SecDef, 23 Oct 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).

Division respectively the authority to establish direct liaison channels during the current operations in the highlands.[24]

CINCSAC, however, declined to delegate this authority. As a result, on 17 November CINCPAC instructed COMUSMACV to continue to submit proposed targets in SILVER BAYONET operations to him for approval.[25]

When, on the same day, General Westmoreland requested approval of a number of ARC LIGHT strikes in support of SILVER BAYONET, Admiral Sharp turned some of the strikes down because they were either on, or too near, the Cambodian border.[26]

By 19 November, General Westmoreland was convinced his troops were facing an enemy force of at least division size. The enemy gave no sign of breaking contact. It was possible that a larger force was being assembled in Cambodia to join those already engaged. Since strikes in Cambodia were not permitted, COMUSMACV requested authority to direct B-52 strikes "up to, but not across" the Cambodian border in hopes of destroying enemy supplies in the border region.[27]

CINCPAC responded immediately and authorized COMUSMACV to request ARC LIGHT strikes within any target boxes lying completely in SVN or target boxes lying partially within SVN, "stating an axis of attack which will provide reasonable assurance bomb pattern will fall within SVN."[28]

Special approval authority to decrease B-52 reaction time was sought for the second time in December when the enemy attacked US/ARVN forces engaged in Operation BUSHMASTER II

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24. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 40636 to CINCPAC 16 Nov 65, JCS IN 59258. (~~TS NOFORN~~-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, p. 429. (~~TS~~-GP 3) CINCPAC to JCS, 161152Z Nov 65, JCS IN 53089. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6459 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 16 Nov 65.

25. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 170011Z Nov 65, JCS IN 54209.

26. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 170248Z Nov 65, JCS IN 54306.

27. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 40994 to CINCPAC, 19 Nov 65.

28. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 192304Z Nov 65, JCS IN 56907.

in the Michelin Plantation area. COMUSMACV called for B-52 strikes against the enemy. He asked that ARC LIGHT "coordination and approval channels be decentralized" as had been done during SILVER BAYONET. This was approved on 3 December.[29]

Attempts to Decentralize Control

These operations proved the value of ARC LIGHT in close support but pointed up the need for decentralized control of the B-52s. Of 149 targets that had been hit by mid-January 1966, for example, 139 had been processed for individual approval at the Washington level. The amount of time that had elapsed before approval had been received varied from 24 to 72 hours. In the several cases where a desired TOT was 24-30 hours after the initial request, only extraordinary efforts had made compliance possible.[30]

The establishment of the FBZs had been a step in the right direction but had not gone far enough in the views of the field commanders. Even though the ad hoc measures to relax control in emergency situations had been approved in November and December, General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp pressed for a more comprehensive solution to the problem.[31]

Both commanders believed the system inadequate. CINCPAC recommended on 6 November that the Joint Chiefs of Staff issue instructions to CINCPAC and CINCSAC setting out basic guidelines; also CINCSAC should be directed to provide a fixed number of B-52 sorties per month in support of CINCPAC. CINCPAC would then instruct COMUSMACV to request strikes at least 48 hours in advance of desired TOT, at the same time sending the action to the CG, 3d Air Division or CINCSAC with information copies to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Approval would be indicated automatically if the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC or CINCSAC did not object. Twenty-four hours prior to the strike the CG, 3d Air Division would issue an order of intent to strike. Direct liaison would be authorized between COMUSMACV and the CG, 3d Air Division, for minor deviations

29. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 011645Z Dec 65, JCS IN 76588. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7795 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 3 Dec 65.

30. (TS) JCS 2343/663-6, 19 Jan 66, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).

31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 060140Z Nov 65, JCS IN 39525.

from the plan. Any special requests--waiver of restriction, increase in monthly sorties, etc.--would be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval. Although he stated that he must retain demurral authority on strike requests, CINCSAC generally agreed with CINCPAC.[32]

Apparently, the Secretary of Defense had been thinking along the same lines. Although on 18 December he approved, with a minor adjustment, the sixth FBZ that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had proposed on 23 October, he did not give the Joint Chiefs of Staff carte blanche to create further FBZs based on GVN and US Ambassador approval. He wanted less emphasis on creation of FBZs and greater emphasis on analyzing current procedures. He instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to conduct a full review of current ARC LIGHT procedures "with the objective of establishing a firm basis for providing the highest attainable level of effectiveness, flexibility and responsiveness in the employment of ARC LIGHT forces generally."

Secretary McNamara noted that this was particularly important because it was very likely that the situation now developing in RVN would require a "substantial increase" in the scope of ARC LIGHT in the months ahead. He warned that any changes in current procedures must allow quick cancellation or recall if political reasons required, that noncombatant casualties must be avoided, that neutral borders must not be violated and that the program must not be allowed to lapse into routine operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Joint Staff to begin the survey of ARC LIGHT immediately.[33]

Other Air Operations in RVN

At the beginning of 1965, air operations against the VC were hampered by restrictions. First, COMUSMACV was not authorized to use US jet aircraft flown by US pilots against targets in RVN and, secondly, he was required to have a VNAF

32. Ibid. (TS) Encl C to JCS 2343/663-6, 19 Jan 66, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).

33. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Employment of ARC LIGHT Forces," 18 Dec 65, Att to JCS 2343/663-4, 20 Dec 65, JMF 9155.3 (16 Aug 65).

observer or pilot in all FARM GATE or air commando aircraft operated by US pilots. General Westmoreland cited these in mid-January as two of the major constraints affecting his operations.[34]

On 27 January the Joint Chiefs of Staff had authorized COMUSMACV to use US jet aircraft in a strike role in RVN in emergency situations, but subject to certain conditions. Three weeks later the Joint Chiefs of Staff specifically authorized the use of US jet aircraft to reinforce the VNAF in concentrated and discriminate attacks against the VC in eastern Phuoc Tuy province, using conventional weapons and making sure that the civilian population suffered as little injury as possible.[35]

Use of US Jets

Admiral Sharp advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 February that the greatest single action the United States could take to improve the security situation in RVN would be to make full use of its air power. He believed that continuous use of US air power in RVN could harass the VC and destroy their supplies to the point that they would spend all their time and energy trying to hide from air attacks.[36]

General Westmoreland reported on 27 February that the few US jet strikes that had taken place in RVN had had a salutary morale effect on RVN forces. He cited the many advantages of employing jet aircraft, including the speed of reaction time, increased number of strikes and increased ordnance delivery capabilities, improvement in the night air strike capability, and greater accuracy in strikes resulting from the inherent stability of the jet plane as a gun platform. Disadvantages noted were that such use violated the Geneva Accords of 1954 and that it might encourage the RVNAF to rely too greatly on US forces.[37]

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34. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 155 to JCS, 13 Jan 65.
35. (TS) Msg, JCS 5316 to CINCPAC, 16 Feb 65.
36. (TS-GP 4) JCS 2343/530-6, 3 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (21 Jan 65).
37. Ibid.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred with the views of the field commanders on the use of US aircraft in RVN and so informed the Secretary of Defense on 6 March. They recommended sending a message to CINCPAC authorizing him to use his aircraft to reinforce the VNAF and/or to support RVNAF operations when he judged it prudent to do so.[38]

Secretary McNamara approved this recommendation and on 9 March the Joint Chiefs of Staff granted authority for use of US aircraft in RVN as CINCPAC judged prudent, stipulating, however, that strikes in RVN would not originate directly from bases in Thailand.[39]

Use of FARM GATE Aircraft

Fifty FARM GATE aircraft, AlEs, were flying daily air strikes in the RVN against the VC. Although flown by US pilots, these planes carried VNAF insignia. There was also a requirement that VNAF observers be present on all combat flights as additional crew members. General Westmoreland pointed out on 27 February that air operations were being complicated, reaction time frequently slowed, and sortie effort lost because of the requirement that these aircraft operate only with a combined US/VNAF crew. VNAF observers contributed to the mission mainly by relieving the USAF of the "stigma" of unilateral offensive action against the VC. In some cases these observers were helpful in spanning the language barrier but this was not always true since some of them spoke no English and only a few spoke it fluently enough to be completely reliable in this regard. There were, on the other hand, very definite difficulties in using these observers. They were not well disciplined or motivated in many cases. Most of them resisted flying two sorties daily and several had refused to do so.[40]

Emergency requirements for increased numbers of FARM GATE sorties were continually arising. In the case of close air support for forces being ambushed, these requirements

38. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-161-65 to SecDef, 6 Mar 65 (derived from JCS 2343/530-6), JMF 9155.3 (21 Jan 65).
39. (TS) Msg, JCS 6692 to CINCPAC, 9 Mar 65.
40. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-160-65 to SecDef, 6 Mar 65 (derived from JCS 2343/530-7), JMF 9155.3 (21 Jan 65).

arose most frequently in the late afternoon when most of the normal sortie effort had already taken place. Support of downed aircraft could and did require immediate reaction and prolonged air cover, which required sorties at a greater rate than planned. Combination of heavy ground action and development of lucrative air targets required diversion of immediate effort into the areas of action and frequently required additional sorties to replace those diverted from other tasks and/or additional sorties in support of the ground action.[41]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Secretary McNamara on 6 March that they believed the ground rules for employment of FARM GATE aircraft had now been overtaken by events.

The mission of the air commando squadrons clearly had changed. Out of operational necessity these squadrons were now devoting 80 percent of their effort to combat rather than to training functions. Their mission, like that of other US air elements in RVN, had become one of close support of the RVNAF. The GVN sought this support, and since the VC had long been claiming that the entire air war was being conducted by the United States, a formal change of mission would bring no greater propaganda value to the enemy. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the air commando squadrons be specifically charged with combat operations in support of the RVNAF as well as with their training functions. They recommended that the US planes, AlEs, be permanently marked with USAF insignia for both in- and out-of-country operations, and that the air commando planes be authorized to conduct operations without VNAF personnel aboard. The Secretary of Defense approved these recommendations on 9 March 1965.[42]

Establishment of STEEL TIGER

One of the actions that had been agreed upon in the Washington Conference in November-December 1964 had been air strikes against PL/NVN infiltration and operating forces in Laos. These strikes, nicknamed BARREL ROLL and designed

41. Ibid.
42. Ibid. (C) Memo, OSD to Secy, JCS, "FARM GATE Restrictions in the Republic of Viet-Nam (C)," 12 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (21 Jan 65).

primarily to support the RLG, had begun on 14 December. General Johnson, on his return from RVN in mid-March, had proposed that the strikes be redesigned and reoriented so as to cut off the infiltration routes used by the NVN/VC to move men and supplies through Laos. The President had approved this recommendation.

To this end Laos was divided into two sectors for US air operations, the northern one known as BARREL ROLL, and the sector to the south, through which ran enemy infiltration routes, designated STEEL TIGER. STEEL TIGER was established as a separate air program on 3 April 1965.[43]

MARKET TIME Background

US officials had long suspected, without much proof, that the communists were smuggling weapons and other supplies from NVN to the VC by sea. Such measures as the GVN had taken against sea infiltration had been largely ineffective, owing mainly to the inadequate strength and apathetic performance of the VNN.

At the beginning of 1965, the VNN had available for employment in coastal surveillance about 16 Sea Force ships and 200 Coastal Force junks. A US Navy survey showed, however, that fewer than ten percent of the craft which could have been at sea on anti-infiltration duties were actually at sea at any one time. Weaknesses in command structure and general administration and personnel inadequacies abounded in the VNN, hampering its operations. The Coastal Force junks, for instance, were controlled by province chiefs, who did not always assign them delineated zones of surveillance. Political considerations often influenced assignment of patrol areas. As a result there was a maldistribution of the junks of the Coastal Forces.[44]

US assistance and advice to the VNN was charged to the Chief, Naval Advisory Group (CHNAVGP), under COMUSMACV. He reported to COMUSMACV in early 1965 many weaknesses in the VNN, including inadequate communications and poor leadership and command procedures. His reconnaissance planes had verified specific instances in which the VNN was failing to perform the counter sea-infiltration mission. The Coastal Forces in particular were singled out for criticism. These forces, operating with limited resources, were not being

43. (TS NOFORN GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, pp. 390, 402. (TS NOFORN GP 1) JCS 7624 to CINCPAC, 23 Mar 65.
44. (TS NOFORN GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 87-89.

used properly and merely gathered and reported information on infiltration rather than taking direct action against it.[45]

In short, the VNN did not possess the leadership, the resources, or the organization to conduct an effective counter-infiltration program. If the enemy were indeed infiltrating substantial amounts of supplies and if this infiltration were to be curbed, the United States would obviously have to take a more direct hand in the operations. But, until discovery of a major act of sea infiltration by the enemy, US authorities were not inclined to press the matter of a greater US involvement against sea infiltration.

The capture of an armed, steel hulled vessel in Vung Ro Bay in Phu Yen Province on 16 February 1965, however, alarmed US officials and led to a drastic change in policy. The vessel carried large quantities of modern weapons and ammunition, including recoilless rifles, submachine guns, and grenades, most of Chinese Communist origin. Some of the munitions captured had manufacturing dates of October and November 1964 stamped on them. Further search of the bay area revealed much more contraband on shore, pointing to other landings of supplies in the area. At high levels in the Department of State this capture was viewed as proof of a rise in the tempo of the war.[46]

On 26 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the matter and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked Admiral Sharp for his recommendations on steps that could be taken to arrest sea infiltration. CINCPAC immediately recommended that the US Seventh Fleet "sanitize" the water boundaries of RVN from the 17th Parallel to the Cambodian border, in coordination with the VNN, and with CHNAVGP acting as liaison between the two forces. He also recommended US Navy surface patrols off the 17th Parallel, Vung Tau, and in the vicinity of the RVN/Cambodian border in the Gulf of Thailand. In addition US carrier-based planes would conduct dawn-to-dusk patrols, going north of the 17th Parallel as necessary to spot approaching traffic. The GVN would be asked to declare a 40-mile-wide restricted area around its coastline; suspicious craft within this area would be stopped and searched by the VNN, or possibly US patrols.

On 11 March 1965, without awaiting formal approval, US naval forces established a patrol of the RVN seacoast, but confined their activities to detecting and tracking suspicious vessels and reporting them to the VNN. The VNN

45. Ibid., p. 173. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, p. 435.

46. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 40-65, 18 Feb 65, p. 1. (C) Msg, Saigon 2710 to State, 23 Feb 65, JCS IN 37579; (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 12. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, p. 436.

stopped and searched the vessels to determine if they were carrying arms or other supplies for support of the VC. If found to be carrying prohibited items, the VNN seized or destroyed these vessels as appropriate.[47]

Admiral Sharp, on 15 March, pointed out to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a new family of weapons being received by the VC would require even greater logistical support. He suspected this would mean increased efforts to infiltrate supplies by sea. He reiterated his recommendation that the RVN coast be "sanitized" by setting up a barrier of US and VNN ships. Random surface patrols, round-the-clock air patrols, and photo reconnaissance of suspected landing areas would be employed. US ships and planes would concentrate on locating ocean shipping headed for RVN or discharging cargo along the coast. CINCPAC listed the numbers and types of ships that would be needed for this increased effort. He also recommended amphibious raids against the VC, as well as naval bombardment of VC targets. He reminded the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the current rules of engagement for Southeast Asia did not authorize US forces to board, search, or seize suspicious ships on the high seas, but limited them to surveillance operations of the coastal area. CINCPAC recommended that the GVN be approached to see if it were willing to ask for US assistance so that the US role might be revised.[48] On 18 March, in line with the President's action, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved CINCPAC's concept for the sanitization of the RVN coast, but instructed him to adhere to the current rules of engagement for Southeast Asia.[49]

On the same day General Johnson, on his return from RVN, and as a part of his important recommendations to the President, had also called for increased air and naval reconnaissance and harassing operations against the VC-controlled coastal areas associated with infiltration. He proposed that elements of the Seventh Fleet set up patrols by sea and air. He also proposed a program of cash awards for the capture of NVN junks. These recommendations by the Chief of Staff, Army, were approved by the President on 15 March.[50]

47. (TS-GP 3) CNOM-113-65 to JCS, 1 Apr 65, Att to JCS 2343/560, JMF 9155.3 (1 Apr 65).
48. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC to JCS, 152206Z Mar 65, JCS IN 64176.
49. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7307 to CINCPAC, 18 Mar 65.
50. (TS) Msg, JCS 7484 to CINCPAC, 20 Mar 65, JMF 9155.3 (17 Mar 65).

On 31 March, Ambassador Taylor, who was visiting in Washington, cabled his Deputy in Saigon, U. Alexis Johnson, telling him to suggest to Premier Quat the possibility of a change in the USN role in sea surveillance operations. The new role would authorize US personnel to stop, board, and search RVN vessels as agents of the GVN. RVN military personnel could be aboard US vessels to do the actual boarding and searching if the Premier found it more acceptable.[51]

Subsequently, however, the State Department decided that it required more from the GVN than had been requested by Ambassador Taylor. On 2 April, the State Department cabled Ambassador Johnson that the GVN should be asked to: 1) Request the US assist in maintaining the integrity of her territorial waters. 2) Grant authority for US naval ships to stop and search any RVN vessel in international waters and to seize or, if necessary, destroy those found to be carrying arms or other supplies for the support of VC insurgency in RVN. 3) Grant authority for US naval ships to stop and search any RVN, DRV, or private vessels of other nations within the territorial waters of the RVN and to seize, or, if necessary, destroy those found to be carrying arms or other supplies for the support of VC insurgency in RVN. 4) Provide RVN personnel to be assigned to each US Naval ship engaged in the Counter Infiltration Patrol for liaison and interrogation purposes.[52]

Ambassador Johnson replied that same evening indicating that the GVN viewed the proposals favorably. As instructed, the Ambassador had stressed the need for an official GVN request for US assistance. It was agreed that Ambassador Johnson would draw up a draft copy of a GVN request for assistance and a similar draft of a US Government reply to such a request.[53]

Meanwhile on 1 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense had pointed out the advantages of acquiring GVN authority to stop and search all RVN vessels in international waters; to stop and search RVN,

51. (TS-GP 3) Msg, State 2141 to Saigon, 31 Mar 65, JCS IN 86479.
52. (S-GP 3) Msg, State 2171 to Saigon, 2 Apr 65, JCS IN 90310.
53. (S) Msg, Saigon 3190 to State, 2 Apr 65, JCS IN 88860.

DRV, or private vessels of other nations within the territorial waters of the RVN; and to seize or, if necessary, to destroy vessels carrying arms or other supplies to the VC. They said that VNN personnel should be placed on the US ships for liaison and interrogation purposes. They recommended that Secretary McNamara support such actions by asking the Secretary of State to seek GVN approval of them, stipulating that, if it were deemed advisable, the United States would agree to having VNN personnel embarked on its ships to conduct the visit, search, and seizure of suspected vessels.[54]

On 8 April, in a joint State-Defense message, Ambassador Taylor was instructed to modify the request to the GVN to insure compliance with accepted international legal principles and to increase operational flexibility. This would involve announcement by the GVN of compliance with the Geneva Conventions on the seas and customary international law. The GVN would also announce that it had asked the United States for help in countering sea infiltration. The GVN would further declare its territorial waters up to the three-mile limit a "Defensive Sea Area" wherein it would, with US help, stop and search any vessel of any nation and size suspected of supporting the VC. If necessary it would destroy any vessel carrying arms or other supplies to the VC. Other suggestions to be made to the GVN called for it to declare its intentions to enforce its customs, fiscal, and immigration laws within a 12-mile contiguous zone along its coast, setting forth the specific actions to be taken in this regard, and to specify other actions that would be taken beyond the 12-mile zone to prevent any infringement of its laws by vessels flying the flag of the RVN or reasonably believed to be disguised RVN vessels. RVN representation would be present wherever US assistance was provided in any of these cases.[55]

The GVN submitted a formal request for US assistance on 23 April. Within 24 hours, Ambassador Taylor informed the GVN that the request had been approved by the United States and that the assistance would be forthcoming.[56]

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54. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-241-65 to SecDef, 1 Apr 65, Encl to JCS 2343/560, 1 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (1 Apr 65).
55. (S-GP 1) Msg, DEF 8710 to Saigon, 8 Apr 65.
56. (TS-GP 4) Memo, OCNO to SecNav, 29 Apr 65, JMF 9155.3 (14 Apr 65).

On 27 April, the GVN announced its intent to enforce Decree No. 81/NG to insure the security and defense of the territorial waters of RVN. This decree encompassed all of the provisions that the United States had proposed be included.57

Command and Control Arrangements - MARKET TIME

The US operations that had begun on a limited scale in March, were now expanded into a full-scale program of air and sea activities in coordination with the GVN, known as MARKET TIME. These operations were under the overall command and control of CINCPAC with the chain of command running downward through CINCPACFLT to CTF-71, who had the immediate responsibility for anti sea-infiltration operations in the early part of the year. However, in order to take advantage of the location of NAVGP in RVN and of its experience in dealing with the VNN as well as to give COMUSMACV greater control of MARKET TIME, the Secretary of Defense decided to transfer operational responsibility for MARKET TIME to COMUSMACV.58

General Wheeler informed Admiral Sharp on 30 April that Secretary McNamara wanted steps taken so that COMUSMACV could assume responsibility for MARKET TIME by 1 August. He realized that General Westmoreland did not have the capability to assume control immediately and that CTF-71 would retain that responsibility during the transition period.59

During this period General Westmoreland should take necessary actions to: improve the capabilities of the VNN to participate effectively in MARKET TIME, establish a communications net which would enable communications with appropriate shore stations and stations afloat, establish an operations center, and establish an intelligence net.60

57. (~~TS~~) Msg, Saigon 3550 to State, 27 Apr 65, JCS IN 31995.
58. (~~TS~~ NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 173.
59. (~~S~~ GP 4) Msg, JCS 1149 to CINCPAC, 30 Apr 65.
60. Ibid.

An augmentation of the NAVGP was authorized by the Secretary of Defense to meet the increased requirements.[61]

The Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, during their July visit to Saigon, talked with General Westmoreland about MARKET TIME. Secretary McNamara was not convinced that the enemy was bringing in any significant amounts of supply by sea. He had not seen any real proof other than the capture of the single enemy supply vessel in February. Nevertheless, on his return, he indicated a desire to build up MARKET TIME forces and "saturate" the coastal areas to cut off any infiltration that might be going on. He took back to Washington a "shopping list" given him by General Westmoreland, which included, among other things, a sizeable package for buildup of MARKET TIME.

Among the MARKET TIME items that General Westmoreland had asked for were 60 modern, motorized junks for the Junk Force, expedited delivery of 20 Swift patrol craft with US crews, expedited procurement of 34 additional Swift patrol craft and certain communications equipment. The 60 motorized junks were needed to replace a like number of sail-only junks which were old and in poor condition. COMUSMACV wanted delivery of these started on 30 November and completed by 31 March 1966. The Swift patrol craft, which had been used in OPLAN 34A operations were excellent for patrolling and investigating inshore areas. Twenty Swifts already on order would be used to seal off coastal lanes around the 17th Parallel and in the Gulf of Thailand, but the 34 additional craft would be needed on the central coast. The Swifts would be manned by US personnel until the VNN was capable of taking them over, probably in late 1966. The Swifts could do some surveillance and intercept jobs as well as destroyers and at considerably less cost.[62]

COMUSMACV assumed control of MARKET TIME forces on 30 July 1965. CHNAVGP, Rear Admiral N.G. Ward, was given

61. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 9 Aug 65, JMF 1040.1 (2 Jun 65).

62. (TS) Memo, COMUSMACV to SecDef, 20 Jul 65, w/Encl, "MACV Shopping List for Secretary of Defense," items 74, 75A, 75B, 75C, JMF 9155.3 (20 Jul 65).

command of TF-115, integrating sea, air, and shore-based units for MARKET TIME operations.[63] The initial force assigned to TF-115 included: seven radar picket escort ships (DERs); two ocean mine sweepers (MSOs); 17 82-foot cutters (WPBs); and SP-2H aircraft. In addition to these, TF-115 received two divisions from the United States Coast Guard Division #12. Combat Tactical Group (CTG) 115.3 was sent to Da Nang. CTG 115.4 was assigned to Phu Quoc Island to patrol the Gulf of Thailand.[64]

COMUSMACV divided the RVN coastal area into nine patrol zones, extending from the 17th Parallel to the RVN/Cambodian border and 30-40 miles out to sea. DERs, or MSOs when the former were not available, patrolled each zone. Aircraft based at Tan Son Nhut were given surveillance missions along the coast and the sea area between Vung Tau and the Brevie line. Aircraft stationed at Sangley Point, Philippines, patrolled the coastal region between Vung Tau and the 17th Parallel. Barrier operations at the 17th Parallel and Cambodian/RVN border were assigned to the Coast Guard.[65]

NAVGP operations were also improved. An intelligence disseminating organization, centered around the Surface Operations Center (SOC) in Saigon, was established. SOC examined all information dealing with MARKET TIME operations and directed operations to intercept, capture, or destroy hostile vessels. The SOC received its information from five Combined Coastal Surveillance Centers located along the SVN coast. In turn, the CSCs gathered reports from all USN and VNN surface and air units, sending their findings to the SOC for a more complete and detailed examination.[66]

By late 1965, MARKET TIME operations were sufficiently established to deny enemy shipping freedom of movement along the coast. The VC were still transporting personnel and equipment by sea but the extent of their success was still

63. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 100.

64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, vol II, p. 443. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 100.

65. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, pp. 433-434.

66. (C-GP 4) MACV Directive 525-4, "Tactics and Techniques for Employment of US Forces in the Republic of Vietnam, (U)," 17 Sep 65, JMF 9155.3 (17 Sep 65). (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, p. 440.

unknown. While VNN units had improved, their performance was still not up to par. They had performed their missions with greater aggressiveness and added three vessels to the ships already involved in MARKET TIME operations; but these limited improvements had not met the standards established by CHNAVGP. The Coastal Force was still having many of the same difficulties it had experienced at the beginning of 1965. It suffered from a general lack of routine maintenance, untrained personnel, and inadequate leadership. Because of these conditions, CHNAVGP rated it as "satisfactory" in his year-end evaluation.[67]

COMUSMACV submitted an evaluation of MARKET TIME during the Secretary of Defense's visit to RVN in November. He considered MARKET TIME operational concepts and efforts to be satisfactory considering available resources. Fifty-four Swifts were to be delivered in the Spring of 1966 and he felt they would satisfy requirements for the present. He was not satisfied with the VNN performance. Its aggressiveness and accuracy of reporting left much to be desired but he felt the situation could only be improved through increased advisory efforts. COMUSMACV concluded that no major changes were necessary and none was anticipated. He believed progress in MARKET TIME operations could continue so long as programmed forces materialized.[68]

Cross-Border Operations into Laos--SHINING BRASS

Sea infiltration of South Vietnam was but one means that NVN used to aid the VC. The major source of NVN assistance to the VC had long been the overland infiltration of men and supplies through the Laos panhandle. To interdict this infiltration, the United States had initiated several aerial reconnaissance and bombing programs in Laos beginning in May 1964.

Another method of controlling the panhandle infiltration was cross-border ground operations into Laos to identify and

67. (TS NOFORN-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, pp. 443, 446. (TS NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, p. 89.

68. (TS NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1965, pp. 174-175.

destroy infiltration targets. Such operations had been under consideration since the spring of 1964, but the fragile condition of the Royal Laotian Government and the US policy of maintaining the facade of Laotian neutrality had prevented Washington approval of any cross-border operations into Laos.[69]

In March 1965, COMUSMACV submitted to CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff a concept for cross-border operations into Laos developed by his Studies and Observation Group (MACSOG). The concept was designed to gain better intelligence on the infiltration routes and to interdict them more effectively. The concept provided for an expansion of operations in three phases, beginning with "short-stay," tactical intelligence missions, progressing to "longer-stay" intelligence/sabotage missions, and culminating in long-duration missions to develop resistance cadres, utilizing secure base areas in Laos and SVN. These operations would be carried out by RVNAF teams advised and supported by US personnel as feasible. A Southeast Asia Coordinating Committee (SEACOORD) meeting in Saigon in April agreed that Phase I (the "short-stay," tactical intelligence missions) could be initiated subject to certain limitations recommended by the US Ambassador in Vientiane. Ambassador Sullivan desired that the missions accompanied by US advisors be restricted to the two southernmost operational areas, with penetrations limited to 20 km and to periods of not longer than ten days. Finally, the Ambassador would agree to US advisors accompanying the RVNAF teams only if infiltrated overland rather than by air.[70]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded COMUSMACV's concept to the Secretary of Defense on 18 June 1965, recommending its approval, in principle, for further planning, training, and discussion with the RVNAF. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also recommended approval of Phase I for implementation subject to the time and geographical restrictions on the use of US advisors as proposed by Ambassador Sullivan. They found Ambassador Sullivan's limitation of the air introduction of

69. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/601, 7 Jun 65, JMF 9155 (27 Mar 65).
70. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 27 Mar 65, JCS IN 90676; (TS-GP 2) Msg, Vientiane to COMUSMACV, 23 May 65, JCS IN 27033; JMF 9155 (27 Mar 65).

US advisors unacceptable, and they recommended that unless this limitation was removed, there be no further consideration of the program. If the concept was adopted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested appropriate funding from DOD contingency funds. The Joint Chiefs of Staff discounted the political risks of these cross-border operations, stating that the current period of increased overt US involvement in SVN and Laos had largely eliminated the need for maintaining "the facade of compliance" with the Geneva Accords.71

After submission of the concept to the Secretary of Defense, Ambassador Sullivan visited Washington. He met with representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) on 23 July 1965 and clarified his position on cross-border operations. He still requested that the initial introduction of teams with US advisors be by ground infiltration, but he agreed that subsequent resupply, reinforcement, or evacuation could be by air. He also accepted elimination of the ten-day restriction on length of stay, and agreed that air strikes on possible targets be flown as approved and conducted through the BANGO alert system (US aircraft on strip alert in Thailand) so long as they did not include strike aircraft from SVN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff found these modified restrictions acceptable, and on 7 August they requested Secretary of Defense approval and funding of the concept of Laotian cross-border operations subject to Ambassador Sullivan's revised restrictions.72

Action was not immediately forthcoming, and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed the Secretary of Defense on 8 September that he was "increasingly concerned" over the long delay. General Wheeler stated that the military needed better intelligence on the infiltration routes in Laos and more effective interdiction of them. He felt that COMUSMACV's concept as supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff could make "an important contribution" to the effort in Vietnam. He requested the Secretary of Defense to support action for "a clear-cut decision" on the entire issue, adding that, in the event of a negative from State, he was inclined "to go further up the chain."73

71. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-475-65 to SecDef, 18 Jun 65 (derived from JCS 2343/601), same file.
72. (S-GP 1) JCSM-611-65 to SecDef, 7 Aug 65 (derived from JCS 2343/601-1), same file.
73. (S-GP 1) CM-831-65 to SecDef, 8 Sep 65, Encl to JCS 2343/601-2, 10 Sep 65, same file.

On 18 September, six weeks after the Joint Chiefs of Staff request, the Secretary of Defense approved in principle the overall concept for cross-border operations into Laos, and authorized implementation of Phase I, subject to the limitations of Ambassador Sullivan and to the restriction of operations to the two southernmost areas (Dak To and Dak Prou) with penetrations limited to 20 km. The Secretary of Defense requested that he be informed 48 hours in advance of the intention to launch operations and be furnished appropriate progress and final reports. He also made provision for the necessary funding. The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed this authorization for cross-border operations into Laos on to CINCPAC, assigning the operations the name SHINING BRASS. The Joint Chiefs of Staff told CINCPAC that, based on favorable operational experience with Phase I operations and on his future recommendations, they would seek authority for expansion of SHINING BRASS consistent with the original COMUSMACV concept.[74]

Rules of Engagement - Southeast Asia

At the beginning of 1965, the general rules of engagement in effect for US forces operating in Southeast Asia dated from August and September 1964. These rules authorized US forces to attack and destroy any hostile vessel or aircraft which attacked or gave positive indication of intent to attack US forces in RVN, Thailand, and Laos, their territorial seas and internal waters as well as adjacent international waters. Hot pursuit was authorized into NVN, Cambodia, RVN and Thailand, although no such authority existed with regard to Communist China. The US military commander was armed with an omnibus authority for emergency which allowed him to defend against unprovoked armed attack with immediate aggressive action, using any means at his command.[75]

Additional rules were applied for Laos and for most special operations and projects such as YANKEE TEAM and destroyer operations in the Tonkin Gulf.

74. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 Sep 65, Encl to JCS 2343/601-3, 20 Sep 65; (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS and SecN, 14 Oct 65, Encl to JCS 2343/601, 18 Oct 65; same file.

75. (TS) J-3, TP-4-65, on JCS 2339/171, JMF 9150 (16 Feb 65).

As it became apparent that US military involvement in southeast Asia would grow, possibly leading to situations where US forces might need more leeway to operate, the Joint Chiefs of Staff took steps to revise these rules of engagement. The first initiative came from CINCPAC who, on 6 January, warned that a recent incident in the South China Sea, in which unidentified craft had been detected approaching the Hue/Da Nang area, heightened the need to make these rules clearer and more precise. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that substantive changes to existing rules were needed to protect friendly forces in international waters and to provide for stronger action by US forces if attacked by Communist Chinese planes.[76]

On 16 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted to the Secretary of Defense proposed revised rules of engagement for Southeast Asia. These were actually a clarification and consolidation of existing rules, with the addition of certain provisions necessary to protect friendly forces in international waters and to allow "immediate pursuit" into Communist China. They had replaced the term "hot pursuit", used earlier, with the term "immediate pursuit" to standardize terms among approved plans for various theaters and because "immediate pursuit" differed in certain key aspects from "hot pursuit" as defined in international law. Immediate pursuit must be continuous and uninterrupted and could be extended as far as necessary and feasible in the areas described. The operative wording, insofar as pursuit into Chinese territory was concerned, stated that no pursuit was authorized ". . . into territorial seas or air space of Communist China except in response to attack upon US forces by forces which can reasonably be established as CHICOM." The Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary that they wanted this new feature introduced because it was essential to prevent the creation of a sanctuary for "forces making such an attack"; it was also essential to an effective military presence in Southeast Asia as well as to US national dignity.

With regard to the special rules of engagement for operations such as BARRELL ROLL, there was no intent to modify either the procedure for setting up special rules for such missions on a case-by-case basis or to modify existing special rules.[77]

76. Ibid.
77. (~~TS~~ GP 3) JCSM-118-65 to SecDef, 16 Feb 65 (derived from JCS 2339/171), JMF 9150 (16 Feb 65).

In its other aspects the proposed new set of rules made a real effort to define more exactly geographic areas and such terms as "hostile" and "friendly" in order to remove some of the confusion that, because of omissions and imprecision, marked the current rules.

Before the Secretary of Defense acted on this proposal, ROLLING THUNDER had been underway for a month, the first SAM site had been discovered in NVN, and the President had approved commitment of US forces to ground combat in RVN.

In the end the Secretary refused to go along with the "immediate pursuit" (which he equated with "hot" pursuit) into Communist China. On 12 April he notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he believed hot pursuit should be allowed if significant, clearly intentional Chinese intervention took place. "However," he said, "since the implications of hot pursuit are likely to be so major, I believe that there should be no revision of present rules in this connection at this time." He told them he was ready to discuss it with the President later if circumstances dictated.

Whereas the earlier rules had stated a three-mile limit for territorial waters, the Secretary changed this limit to 12 miles. "I recognize your concern over the apparent recognition of a twelve-mile territorial limit but, solely for the purpose of these rules, I believe it is not desirable to bring these claims to issue with State now," the Secretary stated. He believed that the 12-mile rule would restrict only the area in which US ships might be operationally deployed, not immediate pursuit.

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff had designated Cambodian aircraft as "hostile" if found over RVN or Laos, the Secretary pointed out that the United States had traditionally treated Cambodian forces less severely than communist bloc forces. Consequently, the Secretary deleted Cambodian aircraft from the definition of "hostile aircraft." With these exceptions he approved the rules of engagement proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[78]

78. ([redacted]-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 65, Att to JCS 2339/171-1, 14 Apr 65, JMF 9150 (16 Feb 65).

Upon receipt of Mr. McNamara's memorandum, J-3 was quick to point out to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the claim that the 12-mile figure would not restrict hot pursuit was not entirely correct. Since territorial air space was defined with respect to territorial waters and immediate pursuit was not authorized either into CHICOM air or territorial waters, it could well impose significant restrictions on US operations under current circumstances, particularly in the area of Hainan Island. The Secretary was actually reflecting a de facto recognition of a claimed 12-mile territorial sea which the United States had not legally recognized. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, to preclude delay, did not reclama the Secretary's amendments but sent the revised rules of engagement to CINCPAC on 17 April. They informed him that they were seeking "further consideration" of the decision with respect to immediate pursuit into Communist China.79

The new rules defined "hostile aircraft" in the air space of RVN or Thailand or over international waters. In order to include NVN as an area in which the definition of "hostile aircraft" would apply, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 May amended the geographical definition to cover all of Southeast Asia except Cambodia and Laos. Laos was covered by separate provisions.80

The Cambodian Border Problem

Increasingly in the early months of 1965 the VC had made use of Cambodia as a base of operations for forays into RVN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that this sanctuary should be denied the enemy to the extent possible and had recommended in April that the prohibitions on hot pursuit by the RVNAF of VC into Cambodia be modified to allow "appropriate response" under certain conditions. Although the Secretary of Defense agreed "in principle" the State Department was opposed to this relaxation of the rules because of the political situation at the time. As a result, in the second week of May the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was disapproved.81

79. (TS-GP 3) J-3 TP-20-65, on JCS 2339/171-1, 14 Apr 65; JMF 9150 (16 Feb 65). (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9294 to CINCPAC, 17 Apr 65; 17 Apr 65; (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9295 to CINCPAC, 17 Apr 65.
80. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2838 to CINCPAC, 26 May 65.
81. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1941 to CINCPAC, 12 May 65.

In the latter part of 1965, US military authorities, both in Washington and in the field, grew increasingly dissatisfied with the restrictions on actions against the VC operating in Cambodian territory. The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense on 12 November 1965 that there was "strong evidence" indicating that the VC were using Cambodia as a logistics and communications base, a sanctuary, and a staging and transit area for operations in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that, despite the political risk of antagonizing Prince Sihanouk, forceful action must be taken to stop this abuse, and they proposed a series of military actions to this end. They recommended expanded and intensified overall intelligence collection in Cambodia, low-altitude aerial reconnaissance over Cambodia, increased surveillance of sea LOCs between RVN and Cambodia, and increased patrols on the Mekong and Bassac waterways. They also proposed paramilitary operations into Cambodia to reduce VC infiltration into SVN, and authorization for GVN/US operations into Cambodia in immediate pursuit of VC forces. In the political sphere, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested action to persuade the Government of Cambodia to cease support of the VC and the enlistment of third country pressure on Sihanouk to halt this support. For future consideration, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended military operations to prevent maritime shipping carrying contraband goods into Cambodia and overt air and/or ground cross-border operations into Cambodia against confirmed LOCs and facilities supporting the VC.[82]

On 18 November, as operations in the Ia Drang valley, SILVER BAYONET, were drawing toward a close, CINCPAC pointed out to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that US ground forces were heavily engaged with the NVA near the Cambodian border. Since it was likely that the enemy would break contact and flee into sanctuary in Cambodia, CINCPAC requested authority to conduct "immediate pursuit" of the enemy on the ground across the border. In CINCPAC's view, Cambodia had forfeited her neutral status by providing a haven for the enemy and the United States was entitled to protect its own security by pursuing and destroying its enemies there. If actual pursuit was turned down by higher authority, CINCPAC asked that, "as a lesser pressure," US artillery be allowed to fire into Cambodia at maximum range, pursuing the enemy by fire.[83]

82. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-812-65 to SecDef, 12 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2366/7-1), JMF 9155.1 (14 Oct 65).
83. (~~TS~~-GP 3) CINCPAC to JCS, 182315Z Nov 65, JCS IN 58241.

On 21 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized US forces engaged in SILVER BAYONET to take the necessary counteractions to defend themselves against enemy attacks directed from Cambodia. These would include returning fire and maneuvering as necessary into Cambodia while actually engaged and in contact with the VC/NVA. The use of supporting artillery and close air support was included in this authorization. The Joint Chiefs of Staff specified that no air or artillery strikes would be made against populated areas, nor would base areas of the NVA/VC be attacked "other than in circumstances justified by self-defense in terms of continuing engagement and direct threat to US/RVNAF forces."[84]

On 9 December COMUSMACV informed CINCPAC that it was perfectly clear the enemy was building in Cambodia a base of operations against the RVN in the same manner as had been done earlier in Laos. He called for firm rules of engagement to include authority for: US forces to strike with air and artillery against enemy weapons firing from the Cambodian border against US troops to a distance not to exceed 10 km into Cambodia; ground troops, when engaged with an enemy on or near the border, to maneuver into Cambodia for at least 2 km; US planes to fly observation and fire direction missions within a ten-mile strip of the border; and ground reconnaissance elements to operate to a depth of 5 km on the Cambodia side. Ambassador Lodge concurred with General Westmoreland's recommendations.[85]

Washington concurred with COMUSMACV's evaluation of the situation and promised that, in cases similar to SILVER BAYONET, "similar authorization will be extended promptly from Washington," but State and Defense officials did not judge it wise to extend advance approval for the type of action that General Westmoreland wished to take against the enemy in Cambodia. Consequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized US forces, in emergency situations only, to take necessary counteractions in self-defense against VC/NVA attacks from Cambodian territory, but retained approval authority in Washington for nonemergency manuever operations and return of fire into Cambodia. An emergency situation

84. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6900 to CINCPAC, 21 Nov 65.
85. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 43199 to CINCPAC, 9 Dec 65, JCS IN 89195.

was considered to exist when, in the judgment of the Commander, the urgency for timely counteractions in self-defense precluded obtaining prior approval.[86]

After discussions with the Department of State on the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommendations of 12 November for military actions against the VC in Cambodia, the Secretary of Defense informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 29 December that there had been "substantial agreement" that US policy toward Cambodia should seek to deny Cambodian territory for the support of the VC, but would continue to recognize Cambodian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Therefore the Secretary of Defense did not intend to seek a policy decision for the conduct of paramilitary or low-level aerial reconnaissance operations in or over Cambodia, or for authority for immediate pursuit beyond that already granted. With regard to the expansion and intensification of overall intelligence collection, the Secretary of Defense had proposed that the Secretary of State join with him in requesting the Director of Central Intelligence to develop and plan for a more effective intelligence effort in Cambodia. The Secretary of Defense did authorize the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with the Department of State, to take the necessary action to improve surveillance of the sea LOCs between RVN and Cambodia and to strengthen controls on the Mekong and Bassac waterways, but without violating the Cambodian border, territorial waters, or legitimate rights of navigation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff subsequently drew up and the Secretary of Defense approved an appropriate plan to accomplish these actions.[87]

OPLAN 34A

The covert operations under OPLAN 34A that had been mounted against NVN since 1964 continued during 1965. The approval for the last four increments, Package One, that had been granted in February was followed by other actions aimed at expanding these operations. On 2 April the Joint Chiefs

86. (TS-GP 3) Jt State-Def Msg to Saigon, et al., 112319Z Dec 65, JCS IN 92758. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8706 to CINCPAC, 15 Dec 65, JMF 9155.1 (15 Dec 65).

87. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Dec 65, Encl to JCS 2366/7-2, 10 Jan 66; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-141-66 to SecDef, 3 Mar 66 (derived from JCS 2366/7-4); (TS-GP 4) Jt State-Def Msg, DEF 6606 to Saigon et al., 22 Mar 66; JMF 9155.1 (14 Oct 65).

of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that a request by CINCPAC to use US submarines and US-manned C-130s in OPLAN 34A operations be approved. However, the proposed actions were disapproved by the Secretary of State.[88]

As a follow-on to increments 1 through 8, Package One, COMUSMACV submitted in April proposed additional increments 9 through 12, all involving maritime actions against NVN. These covered a wide range of actions from bombardment by PTFs to psychological operations, including an amphibious raid on Ile du Tigre.

CINCPAC, however, recommended that bombardment missions by PTFs not be carried out. He wanted these craft to concentrate on interdiction of sea infiltration and to continue to execute limited missions, less bombardments, north of the 17th Parallel. As a result, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense increments 9 through 11 only, calling for reconnaissance and infiltration actions, an amphibious raid, and coastal harassment missions. These were approved on 21 June.[89]

Later in the year CINCPAC recommended and the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved an extension of these maritime operations up to the 20th Parallel.[90]

Earlier on 16 May, CINCPAC had recommended that the OPLAN 34A PTFs be used to stop, search, and harrass NVN shipping north of the 17th Parallel. This was in effect an extension of the program of junk capture missions on which the PTFs had been used. Admiral Sharp proposed that US Navy advisors be aboard the PTFs and that air forces provide close support if the PTFs came under hostile attack beyond their capability to repel. The US advisors would wear civilian clothing but carry US identification. Because the original guidance for OPLAN 34A required that the actions be covert and plausibly

88. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-231-65 to SecDef, 2 Apr 65, (derived from JCS 2343/555); (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 5 Jun 65; 1st N/H of JCS 2343/555, JMF 9155.3 (20 Mar 65).

89. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/516-1, 2 Jun 65, JMF 9155.3 (15 Jan 65). (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4303 to CINCPAC, 21 Jun 65.

90. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-791-65, 1 Nov 65 (derived from JCS 2343/702); (TS) Memo, DecSecDef to CJCS, 29 Nov 65.

deniable by the US Government, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ruled against placing the US Navy advisors aboard the PTFs. In other respects they agreed with CINCPAC and in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 3 July recommended approval of the employment of the PTF craft as CINCPAC had proposed between the 17th and 19th Parallels but excluding US Navy advisors. Approval was granted by Deputy Secretary Vance on 28 July.91

Psychological operations against NVN under OPLAN 34A had long included the dissemination of propaganda materials such as leaflets, radios, and gift kits by air. These had been dropped from C-123 aircraft which, because of their vulnerability to NVN AAA, had been restricted to sparsely populated, lightly defended areas of NVN. By relying on wind-drift, leaflets could be spread over a wide area. The technique did not allow "tactical leaflets" to be dropped on specifically selected targets. Nor could radios and gift kits be widely disseminated. Consequently COMUSMACV and CINCPAC proposed using the faster and less vulnerable A1G aircraft for these operations, thus achieving greater accuracy directly on specific population centers. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 12 October that this employment be approved. On 25 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff were informed that Deputy Secretary of Defense Vance had approved additional OPLAN 34A missions employing the A1G.92

[redacted]. Under existing directives CINCPAC was required to submit his proposed air missions as a package periodically to be approved at the Washington level. Once carried out an individual mission could not be repeated

91. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2343/611, 25 Jun 65 and JCSM-525-65, 3 Jul 65, derived therefrom. JMF 9155.3 (15 May 65). ([redacted]) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 28 Jul 65, Att to JCS 2343/611-1, JMF 9155.3 (15 May 65).

92. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-746-65 to SecDef, 12 Oct 65 (derived from JCS 2343/691); ([redacted]-GP 1) Memo, CDR C.A.H. Trost, Mil Asst to DepSecDef, to SACSA, 25 Oct 65, JMG 9155.3 (26 Aug 65).

without reapproval in Washington. CINCPAC believed that it would improve his operations significantly if he could be delegated authority to approve in the theater OPLAN 34A operations "in support of mission concepts and objectives that have been approved at the Washington level." The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 20 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that CINCPAC be granted the authority he sought, although the approval of new concepts and/or mission objectives would continue to rest with them or with higher authority. Deputy Secretary Vance granted his approval of this recommendation on 15 February 1966.93

93. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-893-65 to SecDef, 20 Dec 65 (derived from JCS 2343/730); (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 15 Feb 65, Att to JCS 2343/730-1; JMF 9155.3 (9 Nov 65).

Chapter 25

ROLLING THUNDER CONTINUES

The closely controlled program of air strikes against NVN, begun on 2 March, continued throughout 1965. The intensity of this program, ROLLING THUNDER, entailing US carrier-based and land-based aircraft with some participation by the VNAF, rose much more slowly than the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders wished or believed necessary. In terms of targets struck, areas brought under armed reconnaissance, methods of attack, and weight of effort, reality lagged far behind the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under the damping influence of other Presidential advisors who urged a more cautious, and in the JCS view, less productive, approach. Because during the year the enemy acquired from the Soviet Union sophisticated air defense systems, the threat to US forces operating over RVN soon became an integral part of the ROLLING THUNDER planning and a matter of continuing concern to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Procedures for Development of ROLLING THUNDER Package

Each numbered ROLLING THUNDER package, eventually sent to CINCPAC as an execute order, set forth in detail the targets to be struck, set limits on the timing and weight of effort, delineated the areas in which specified operations could take place, and in other respects precisely delimited operational aspects. The general procedure for development of these numbered packages involved initial guidance to the Joint Staff (J-3), by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in terms of what the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt should be included.

In addition, the recommendations by CINCPAC for each package were carefully considered. The DIA furnished target information and evaluations to further assist the J-3.

After the initial draft planning message had been developed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were briefed by action officers and appropriate revisions were made. Revisions made at this juncture usually reflected JCS judgment on what

higher authority would or would not accept. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, then discussed, usually on Saturday, the revised draft planning message with the Secretary of Defense, whose own staff had meanwhile been made aware of the features embodied in the draft message. It was at this stage, in coordination between the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) and counterpart officials in the State Department, that the views and influence of these agencies were brought to bear. Substantive changes to the original JCS proposals were the rule rather than the exception, with both State and DOD officials, and on occasion the President's personal staff, prompting changes in targets, areas, timing, and procedures. Invariably such changes were in the direction of softening the impact of the bombing program on NVN. The final step in approval of the numbered package involved its presentation to the President by the Secretary of Defense, usually at luncheon on Tuesday, and in the presence of such highly placed Presidential advisors as Mr. Bundy, Mr. Rostow, and the Secretary of State. The President approved each ROLLING THUNDER package before the execute message was sent by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to CINCPAC. CINCPAC was responsible for recommending to the Joint Chiefs of Staff optimum targets for all ROLLING THUNDER packages. For this purpose he maintained in his headquarters a Target Planning Group composed of intelligence and operations personnel from his staff and from the staffs of his component commanders. The group produced a target list and armed reconnaissance proposals which were then considered by CINCPAC's ROLLING THUNDER Planning Group, chaired by his Chief of Staff. CINCPAC's final recommendations were submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff eleven days prior to the effective execution date of each ROLLING THUNDER package. Within the information developed for fixed targets were estimates of civilian casualties that would be caused by particular strikes.[1]

Any of the individual members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who wished could have an observer present with the Joint Staff group which developed the weekly package. On 10 May the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, instructed the Joint Staff to flag for his attention any proposed target or proposed usage of forces that had not previously been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This was "to provide opportunity for the Joint Chiefs of

1. (TS-GP 3) Armed Reconnaissance Study, Nov 65, Ann D, OCJCS Bulky File, 091 Vietnam Nov 66.

Staff to exercise judgment in the targeting and the manner of employing our forces for the strikes against North Viet-Nam ..."[2]

In spite of the inhibitions placed upon ROLLING THUNDER, the areas authorized for attack in NVN were gradually expanded northward and westward, the number of sorties in a given period was raised, and the value of targets struck rose at year's end. There was a perceptible increase in both the scope and effectiveness of ROLLING THUNDER as compared to the first efforts made in the Spring of 1965.

RT 9 - RT 12 - Interdiction of LOCs

In approving NSAM 328 on 1-2 April the President decreed that the United States should continue roughly the present slowly ascending tempo of ROLLING THUNDER operations, being prepared to add strikes in response to a higher rate of VC operations, or conceivably, to slow the pace in the unlikely event VC activity slacked off sharply for more than a brief period. The United States would, in other words, react to any enemy initiative as appropriate.[3]

The President also forecast at least part of the shape ROLLING THUNDER would take, saying, "We should continue to vary the types of targets, stepping up attack on lines of communications in the near future, and possibly moving in a few weeks to attacks on the rail lines north and northeast of Hanoi."[4]

Starting with RT 9 on 2 April and continuing through RT 12, which ended on 29 April, operations against NVN were specifically directed at interdicting NVN LOCs into Laos and RVN. The general objective of this campaign was to increase the difficulty and cost to the enemy of sustaining his infiltration to the south and to degrade his capabilities of overt aggression. It was to be achieved by preplanned strikes against bridges and ferries and by armed reconnaissance against railroad rolling stock, trucks, and NVN shipping. During this campaign CINCPAC was authorized to attack either by day or night, in contrast to an earlier restriction to attack only by day. The number

2. (S-GP 3) CM-604-65 to D/JS, 10 May 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 65.
3. (S-GP 1) NSAM No. 328, to Sec State, Sec Def, and DCI, 6 Apr 65, Encl to JCS 2343/566, 7 Apr 65 JMF 9155.3 (6 Apr 65).
4. Ibid.

of strike sorties authorized was fixed at 24 per calendar day. Attacks on the Ile du Tigre were authorized in this period.[5]

In RT 12 CINCPAC was authorized six sorties in excess of the 24 sortie limit when necessary to destroy trucks or railroad rolling stock. The State Department had been reluctant to grant this relatively small expansion of authority. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked Admiral Sharp to send him, each time that he invoked "this permissive commitment of additional air resources," an evaluation for the Secretary of Defense of the actual worth of the target as demonstrated by results achieved.[6]

In RT 9 through RT 12, 26 bridges and seven ferries were struck.[7]

During the Honolulu Conference on 19-20 April, Secretary McNamara, General Wheeler, Ambassador Taylor, Admiral Sharp, General Westmoreland, Mr. William Bundy, and Mr. McNaughton discussed the ROLLING THUNDER program. On 20 April Secretary McNamara reported to the President that all had agreed that the present tempo was about right and that sufficient increasing pressure was being provided by "repetition and continuation." He stated that all of them envisioned a strike program continuing at least six months and perhaps a year or more, with the Hanoi-Haiphong-Phuc Yen areas being avoided during that period. "There might be fewer fixed strikes, or more restrikes, or more armed reconnaissance missions," he informed the President. Ambassador Taylor had observed that it was important not to "kill the hostage" by bombing inside the "Hanoi do-nut." All the conferees, Secretary McNamara advised the President, considered ROLLING THUNDER essential to the US campaign, both psychologically and physically, but did not believe that it could "do the job alone."[8]

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5. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 8134 to CINCPAC, 31 Mar 65; JCS 8554, 7 Apr 65; JCS 9006, 13 Apr 65; JCS 9451, 20 Apr 65.

6. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1433-65 to CINCPAC, 22 Apr 65.

7. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) Institute for Defense Analyses Study, "The Effects of U.S. Bombing on North Vietnam's Ability to Support Military Operations in South Vietnam and Laos: Retrospect and Prospect," 29 Aug 66 [hereafter cited as JASON SUMMER STUDY], OCJCS Bulky File, 091 Vietnam Aug 66.

8. (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 21 Apr 65, OCJCS File 337, Honolulu Conference, Apr 65.

By the end of April, 60 of the JCS-designated targets in NVN had been struck, 43 by US planes and 17 by planes of the VNAF. Eighty-six armed reconnaissance missions had been flown against LOCs, targets of opportunity, and coastal shipping. The CJCS, addressing himself to the LOC interdiction campaign, informed the Secretary of Defense that the NVN problems in providing logistic support to the southern portion of NVN had been magnified and that the enemy's ability to support any major offensive beyond his own borders in Laos or RVN had been "degraded."9

RT 13 - RT 14

In the ensuing several months emphasis shifted to attacks on fixed targets having military value. In addition to the bridges, barracks, and ammunition depots, the President authorized strikes against power plants, supply depots, ammunition factories, locks, and POL installations and facilities, specifying clearly, however, that strikes on population centers would be avoided. At the same time, armed reconnaissance areas were expanded and stepped up attacks made against radar sites, land and water vehicular traffic, bivouac areas, and maintenance facilities. LOCs were cratered, and chokepoints seeded. In this same period a gradual, but slight modification of restrictions and of operational methods and procedures became apparent and the limits on sorties were raised.

Before RT 13, which began on 30 April, armed reconnaissance had been limited to specific segments of designated routes. But beginning with RT 13 armed reconnaissance was authorized by a more broadly defined geographical area, in this instance the area of NVN south of the 20° N latitude. In addition the sortie limit was raised to 40 per calendar day with a maximum of 200 for the seven day period.10

Secretary McNamara, during a conference with General Wheeler on RT 13, stated that he believed that CINCPAC had consistently exceeded the number of sorties authorized since the beginning of ROLLING THUNDER. General Wheeler pointed out that newspaper accounts of the bombings made no distinction between actual strike sorties and other sorties carried out in

9. (TS) CM-616-65 to SecDef, 17 May 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 65.
10. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9990 to CINCPAC, 29 Apr 65.

support of the strikes, for example, Combat Air Patrol (CAP), Search and Rescue (SAR), and flak suppression. The Secretary agreed but insisted he was talking about strike sorties. Actually, the number of sorties specified in the RT orders were considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be "advisory" only. CINCPAC and his component commanders established the actual strike magnitude, which was monitored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in order to insure an adequate weight of effort. Nevertheless, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked the Director, Joint Staff to assemble data comparing the authorized figures with those reported from the field for the last two RT programs. When compiled these data showed that of 474 sorties authorized on fixed targets, CINCPAC's forces had flown 316, and of 264 authorized on armed reconnaissance they had flown 249.[11]

Temporary Suspension

On 10 May 1965 President Johnson informed Ambassador Taylor that he had decided to suspend ROLLING THUNDER operations for about a week as a means of swinging world opinion in favor of the United States and "to begin to clear a path either toward restoration of peace or toward increased military action, depending upon the reaction of the Communists."[12]

Various efforts were made to contact officials of the NVN in order to apprise them that the United States would watch very closely to see if the bombing pause were accompanied by any significant reductions in NVN support of the VC, but these efforts appear to have been unsuccessful. At any rate, although ROLLING THUNDER operations were suspended effective 2400 hours, 12 May, Saigon time, and an intensive reconnaissance conducted, no reduction in NVN support of the VC was detected. Consequently, the President authorized resumption of ROLLING THUNDER at 0600 on 18 May, ending a five day suspension. Secretary of State Rusk announced, "In view of the complete absence of any constructive response, we have decided the bombing must be resumed."[13]

11. (S) CM-568-65 to D/JS, 26 Apr 65; (S) Summary, ROLLING THUNDER 11 and 12 (To Date), 26 Apr 65, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) sec 2, ROLLING THUNDER 13, 30 Apr-6 May 65.

12. (TS) Msg, State 2553 to Saigon, 10 May 65. No evidence has been found in available records to indicate that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were consulted prior to this Presidential decision.

13. (TS) Msg, State 3103 to Moscow, 11 May 65; (S-NODIS) Msg, State 2425 to New Delhi et al., 18 May 65.

CINCPAC Proposes Changes

In mid-May Admiral Sharp warned against underestimating the cumulative effects of ROLLING THUNDER, and at the same time challenged the view that few worthwhile targets remained south of the 20th Parallel. He pointed out that of the four major barrack complexes attacked, about two-thirds of the buildings remained undamaged. Three major ammunition depots had been struck but only 40 percent of the ammunition storage and 56 percent of the depot support buildings had been destroyed or damaged. 46 percent of the known buildings in the two major support depot complexes attacked had not been hit. The surface had barely been scratched in strikes against NVN shipping and port facilities and a significant part of the enemy's bridge and ferry system was still intact. New staging areas, and refueling areas had not yet been attacked.[14]

CINCPAC proposed an around-the-clock program of strikes to be conducted in increments by small numbers of planes making repeated strikes. These missions would include armed reconnaissance of land and waterway routes, route interdiction, restrikes on still lucrative military targets, destruction of dispersed supplies, equipment, and military personnel, and attacks on ports and recognized NVN shipping. He recommended also that the regularly programmed large-scale attacks be continued to inflict damage on an incremental basis rather than attempting to inflict maximum damage in one day. Initially, strikes would be limited to the area south of 20° N, but subsequent strikes would be made against major military supply and ammunition depots and barracks northwestward from the 20th Parallel.[15]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff generally agreed with the concept sent them by CINCPAC. But they felt that in order to put his ideas into effect, changes in the current concept of operations would have to be made. These would involve giving CINCPAC greater authority to plan strikes and restrikes as the situation dictated. On 22 May 1965 they proposed in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense that CINCPAC be given such authority. In a draft message that they proposed be sent to CINCPAC they embodied instructions that would have had him prepare a weekly plan of operations for submission to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

14. ([redacted]-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 120314Z May 65, JCS IN 55813.
15. Ibid.

The draft set the weekly sortie rate at 400, and in general gave him a freer hand.[16]

The Secretary of Defense took a whole month to disapprove the CINCPAC views and the JCS recommendations. On 22 June he told the Chairman:

> I am aware of no serious defects in the present method of planning ROLLING THUNDER operations. The proposed programs are worked out with close coordination between COMUSMACV, CINCPAC and the JCS. The operations are militarily effective and are managed in such a way as to permit political considerations to be taken into account on a timely basis. Accordingly, I doubt that, at this time, a change in our method of planning ROLLING THUNDER operations would be desirable.[17]

Ambassador Taylor's Proposed ROLLING THUNDER Tactics

At about the same time that CINCPAC was giving the Joint Chiefs of Staff his concept for future ROLLING THUNDER operations, General Taylor also proposed a change in strike tactics over NVN. On 13 May, he suggested to Secretary Rusk that consideration be given to varying the ROLLING THUNDER apparent standard pattern of "virtually daily strikes." The Ambassador believed that a more random pattern would have a greater psychological effect on the DRV. He suggested a period of a few days during which there would be no attacks, followed by a day of concentrated strikes over a wide area, and then small attacks. It seemed to him and to the Embassy Staff that this tactic would accentuate for Hanoi the "tensions, stresses and strains" of the entire bombing program.

Admiral Sharp quickly went on record as opposed to Ambassador Taylor's suggestion. In a cable to the Joint Chiefs of Staff he explained that there already were sufficient variables in operating methods. Moreover, he believed that the

16. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-404-65 to SecDef, 22 May 65, Encl A to JCS 2343/597-1, 22 May 65, JMF 9155.3 (12 May 65).
17. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 22 Jun 65, Att to JCS 2343/597-2, 22 Jun 65, JMF 9155.3 (12 May 65).

concept he had just submitted, if approved, would result in maximum psychological impact on NVN. The Ambassador's proposal was not adopted.[18]

ROLLING THUNDER Moves North - RT 15 - RT 28/29

ROLLING THUNDER strikes were moved north of 20° N for the first time in RT 15. On 17 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC to strike the Quang Suoi Barracks near Ninh Binh but not to do so prior to 19 May. The target was hit on 22 May.[19]

When General Wheeler cleared the planning message for RT 16 with the Secretary of Defense on 16 May he tried to increase the number of armed reconnaissance sorties but was unsuccessful, the Secretary specifying 285 sorties over the ten day period. The Secretary told the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff that CINCPAC had not yet equaled or exceeded the number of armed reconnaissance sorties during a given ROLLING THUNDER period. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, told CINCPAC that "if you approach the specified upper limit, he will seek to have your authorization for armed recce sorties increased."[20]

During RT 16, which took place between 25 May and 3 June, and covered ten strike days as opposed to the usual seven, CINCPAC was authorized to attack with relatively small strike elements in a series of attacks spread over the period until the desired damage levels to fixed targets had been achieved. This was done to reduce the risk involved in going against targets believed to be heavily defended. While MIG CAP and screening aircraft were authorized to protect the strike force, they were enjoined not to attack air bases supporting hostile aircraft. They could, however, engage in air to air combat.[21]

18. (TS) Msg, Saigon 3753 to State, 131033Z May 65, JCS IN 48675; (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 140351Z May 65, JCS IN 59404.

19. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2230 to CINCPAC, 17 May 65. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM, 22 May 65.

20. (TS) Msg, JCS 1836-65 to CINCPAC, 19 May 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 65.

21. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2672 to CINCPAC, 22 May 65.

In RT 17 emphasis was placed on armed reconnaissance of routes emanating from Vinh with sufficient repetitive attacks to insure proper interdiction of the LOCs. SAM sites were explicitly excluded as targets. A new feature was added in RT 18 when CINCPAC, at his request, was authorized to conduct armed reconnaissance; small and precise attacks during daytime against prebriefed military targets not in the Joint Chiefs of Staff target list; and, thereafter, armed route reconnaissance with residual ordnance.[22]

US air strikes moved north of 21° N on 15 June in RT 19 when a military complex and an ammo depot above that line were taken under attack. RT 19, RT 20, and RT 21 listed a total of 24 fixed targets, including seven to be restruck. Among these latter were the airfields at Dong Hoi and Vinh which were being reconstructed by the enemy. The number of weekly sorties was raised in RT 21 from 200 per week to 250 per week with the weight of effort and timing to be at the discretion of CINCPAC. In all of these periods CINCPAC's request for additional armed reconnaissance sorties were granted when it appeared necessary to higher authority.[23]

Each of these programs authorized a slightly larger armed reconnaissance area until, in RT 21, the area was extended to the Laotian border in the northwest. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had on several occasions proposed the use of naval forces to harass the Ile du Tigre within the framework of the ROLLING THUNDER program. They again proposed this action in their planning message for RT 21 but it was turned down since some higher authorities considered it would represent an escalation of the war.[24]

Although its participation was an important element of ROLLING THUNDER, in view of the need for the program to be a combined effort, the VNAF was hard pressed to mount the few strikes assigned to it in southern NVN. Increasing need for its services in RVN in response to growing VC activity severely reduced VNAF resources available for ROLLING THUNDER. By June CINCPAC believed some measure was necessary to assure

22. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 3263 to CINCPAC, 2 Jun 65; JCS 3552, 8 Jun 65. See Ch 26 for details of the SAM threat and its effect on ROLLING THUNDER.

23. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 3944 to CINCPAC, 15 Jun 65; JCS 4494, 24 Jun 65; JCS 4801, 29 Jun 65.

24. Ibid.

continued VNAF participation in air actions against the north, and by arrangement with COMUSMACV and the RVNAF high command it was agreed that the VNAF would provide a modest three strike/ reconnaissance missions (24 sorties) for each of the ROLLING THUNDER periods.[25]

On 11 June, in connection with important recommendations for deployment of forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned the Secretary of Defense that there were significant indications that the Communists might be on the verge of moving the war in Southeast Asia to a new level of intensity. The Soviet deployment of more jet fighters, some light bombers, and SA-2s to NVN showed a Communist decision to "add a new dimension to the situation in Southeast Asia." They proposed therefore, among other actions, that the air war against NVN be intensified to include increased armed reconnaissance sorties against the LOCs and strikes against militarily important targets. This was necessary, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to reduce NVN capabilities to support the insurgencies in Laos and RVN, to punish NVN still further, and to establish more clearly the US intent to prevent a Communist seizure of RVN.[26]

Fairly typical of the evolutionary development of a ROLLING THUNDER Program was RT 20. In their original draft planning message the Joint Staff included 11 fixed targets to be struck by the US planes and three targets to be struck by the VNAF. Of these 14 targets, one had been recommended by CINCPAC and the Secretary of Defense jointly, three by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, two by CINCPAC, one by CINCPAC and J-3 jointly, and the remaining seven by J-3. Of those recommended by J-3 only two had not been previously approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. At a meeting on 18 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to recommend approval of the two new targets.

In the ensuing consultation between the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense, five US fixed targets and one RVNAF fixed target were removed from the draft proposal, leaving five US targets and two VNAF targets. While it is not clear at whose initiative these were excised it is

25. ([redacted]-GP 3) CINCPAC Command History, 1965, Vol II, pp. 337-338.
26. ([redacted]-GP 3) JCSM-457-65 to SecDef, 11 Jun 65, (derived from JCS 2343/602), JMF 9155.3 (7 Jun 65).

probable that the Secretary of Defense was responsible. At this point a draft planning message containing the targets and instructions approved by the Secretary of Defense for RT 20 was sent to CINCPAC to alert him. By this time the draft planning message had been shown to the State Department by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA).[27] Upon seeing the list of fixed targets proposed by the Secretary of Defense, the State Department objected to hitting a thermal power plant and a POL installation at Nam Dinh. These were listed as one target because of their proximity. State Department authorities felt that they were "too close" to Haiphong, to SAM Site #1, and to Phuc Yen airfield. (The targets were actually 27 miles from the SAM site and 51 miles from the airfield.) They also believed that the installations were too close to civilian population areas, thus leading to the possibility of "high" casualties.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), Mr. McNaughton, explained to the Secretary of Defense on 22 June that these targets were indeed the closest to Hanoi and Haiphong of any that had been recommended. With respect to the second State Department objection, the estimate of civilian casualties based on a relevant adjacent area population of 1,300 and assuming daylight alert conditions, had been placed at 30 casualties. Mr. McNaughton recommended that Mr. McNamara press for these targets, which represent 4 percent of NVN's thermal power capacity and 6.5 percent of its POL storage capacity. "If you must come up with an alternate target as a replacement." he said, "I suggest that you recommend Target 43, which was one of those recommended by the Chiefs for ROLLING THUNDER." Target 43 was an ammunition depot at Qui Hau. In the end, as a compromise solution, Secretary of State Rusk agreed to Target 43, and it replaced the Nam Dinh target on the list of approved fixed targets.

The final execute message for ROLLING THUNDER 20, sent on 24 June, contained five fixed US targets and two VNAF targets. Subsequently two airfields, Vinh and Dong Hoi, were added to

27. (TS GP 3) Msg, JCS 0438 to CINCPAC 21 Jun 65; (TS) Briefing for JCS, 18 Jun, J-3, ROLLING THUNDER Twenty; (TS) Memo, J-3 for CJCS, 17 Jun 65; (S) Note to Control Div, "Briefing on ROLLING THUNDER 20," 18 Jun 65; JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) sec 3, ROLLING THUNDER 20.

RT 20 as reconnaissance revealed that these fields, previously struck, had been restored to operational status by the enemy.[28]

General Wheeler, on 28 June, informed Admiral Sharp that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were "considering urgently expanded military actions" both in RVN and NVN, with the objective of proving to the VC and to the NVN that they could not win in South Vietnam. "In North Vietnam," he said, "our objective is further to curtail by air strikes their capability and will to continue support to the VC."[29]

An ad hoc study group appointed by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, following a conversation with the Secretary of Defense on 2 July, reported on 14 July that ROLLING THUNDER results through June showed that the program had not achieved the purpose intended. Although 10,000 sorties had been flown and 122 targets in NVN (the original JCS 94 targets had increased to 240) had been damaged or destroyed, the economic effects on NVN had been minor. "From a military standpoint," the report maintained, "the flow of material and manpower from NVN in support of VC/DRV operations in the south is still considerable. Direct attacks against military installations, while doubtless creating a disruptive effect on troops and upon their training, have not discernibly weakened the fiber of the DRV military structure. In short, the DRV still seems ready and able to endure air strikes at the current level."[30]

Secretary of State Rusk, during an interview on 11 July, asserted that the United States had never "suspected" that air strikes against North Vietnam would be a "decisive element" but that the NVN had discovered that it was not going to be permitted to send tens of thousands of people into the RVN to attack it and still be permitted to live in safety and comfort "there in the North." There was to be no sanctuary for those committing aggression against the RVN and he warned that this was a fact that "others who may be supporting Hanoi must take fully into account."[31]

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28. (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to SecDef, "ROLLING THUNDER XX," 22 Jun 65, w/pencilled notation, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) sec 3, ROLLING THUNDER 20.

29. (TS) Msg, JCS 2400-65 to CINCPAC, 28 Jun 65, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 65.

30. (TS) CM-745-65 to SecDef, 14 Jul 65, OCJCS File, 091 Vietnam Jul 65.

31. Interv, Secretary Rusk, 11 Jul 65, Dept of State Bulletin, 2 Aug 65.

During the Summer of 1965 the nature of the strike program against fixed targets did not, in spite of the urgings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the findings of the ad hoc group, change materially. ROLLING THUNDER programs between July and September authorized strikes on 59 fixed targets (27 of them restrikes) which included 26 barracks, 11 ammunition depots, two port facilities, seven bridges, two explosive plants, two thermal power plants, six supply depots, one hydroelectric power plant, one lock and one POL installation.[32] Beginning with ROLLING THUNDER 22/23 on 9 July two packages were combined, designed to cover a two week period with the weight of effort to be approximately equal for each week. It was felt that this procedure, which he had suggested, would give CINCPAC more flexibility in his planning and conduct of the operations.[33]

In this package the Joint Staff proposed strikes against bridges on the main rail line leading from China into NVN, one of the bridges only 17 miles from the China border. They also proposed moving the armed reconnaissance area north and northwestward to within 11.5 miles of the Chinese border in order to include the area of this rail line.[34]

Even though the President's statement of early April seemed to support attacks against rail lines from China, higher authority disallowed the attacks on the bridges and did not move the armed reconnaissance area as far to the north as the Joint Staff had recommended. 22° N was made the northern limit of the area. Restrikes by armed reconnaissance planes were authorized against previously struck airfields and JCS numbered LOC targets if necessary to keep them out of commission.[35]

During the twelve week period of RT 22/23 through 32/33 the tempo of the armed reconnaissance program, in contrast to the fixed target strikes, increased substantially. In RT 26/27 the limit on armed reconnaissance sorties was raised from 500 to 600 for the two week period, to 1,000 for ROLLING THUNDER 28/29,

32. (TS-NOFORN GP 1) JASON Summer Study, p. 88, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 66.
33. (TS) Note to Control Div "ROLLING THUNDER," 2 Jul 65, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) sec 3, ROLLING THUNDER 22/23.
34. (TS) Briefing for the JCS on ROLLING THUNDER 22/23, 2 Jul 65; (TS) Memo for the CJCS, J-3, 1 Jul 65; same file.
35. (TS-GP 3) JCS 5226 to CINCPAC, 6 Jul 65.

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THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM

1960-1968

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Chapter 40

ACTION ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT

Notwithstanding the failure of the "peace offensive" of January-February 1966, the United States never relaxed its efforts to negotiate a settlement of the Vietnamese war. At posts throughout the world, US diplomats were constantly alert to detect the slightest sign that the other side was prepared to talk seriously about peace. They examined every lead in the expectation that increasing US military successes achieved during 1966 and corresponding dwindling enemy hopes for a straight-out military victory would eventually lead to fruitful negotiations.[1]

In mid-November 1966, one of these listening posts flashed a signal that the enemy might be shifting his position in favor of negotiations, touching off a concerted effort by the United States, lasting until the end of February 1967, to get peace talks started. During this period US diplomats were in direct contact with North Vietnamese in Moscow, and attempted to achieve another such contact in Warsaw. They also sought to enlist the support of Soviet Premier Kosygin, Prime Minister Wilson of Great Britain, and UN Secretary General U Thant. Eventually, all their efforts ended in failure. They were followed by another lull in significant diplomatic activity, which ended finally in April of 1968 when the North Vietnamese Government responded to President Johnson's curtailment of the bombing by announcing willingness to enter into preliminary talks.

Operation MARIGOLD

Action in the new diplomatic offensive began in Saigon in mid-November 1966 when the Polish Representative on the

1. (TS) Memo, W.W. Rostow to Vance, Helms and Bundy, 22 May 67, JMF 911/300 (19 May 67). (S) Rpt, Taylor to Pres, 30 Jan 67, Encl to JCS 2472/6, JMF 911/080 (30 Jan 67).

International Control Commission, Mr. Janus Lewandowski, offered to present the US position to the North Vietnamese Government--which, he claimed, was prepared to negotiate a definitive political settlement of the Vietnam war.' Lewandowski had first suggested to Lodge that Hanoi was prepared to negotiate in June, but nothing further developed during the summer. In September, Lewandowski, in consultation with Italian Ambassador d'Orlandi and with occasional conversations with Lodge, attempted to formulate a statement of the US position that might be put to the North Vietnamese Government. But this was still largely an academic exercise until Lewandowski announced in November that he was about to go to Hanoi where he would be willing to state the US position to the North Vietnamese and to see whether negotiations could be arranged.[2]

Acting on instructions, Lodge spelled out for Lewandowski the US position in several mid-November meetings. Primarily, the US Government was interested in the reaction of Hanoi to a formula designed to overcome North Vietnamese objections to granting military concessions in return for a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam. The formula consisted of two phases: first, a halt to the bombing without a specific simultaneous compensating deescalation, but on the clear understanding that both sides would later take reciprocal but unspecified deescalatory steps; second, the actual implementation of these reciprocal steps. Hanoi's actions in the second phase would appear to be in response to actions taken by the United States subsequent to the bombing halt rather than as a response to the bombing halt itself. If, as a part of the second phase, Hanoi agreed to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam, the United States would not insist that the North Vietnamese acknowledge that they had been there in the first place.

Other points Lewandowski was asked to make included the following: 1) the United States was serious in expressing in the Manila Conference communique a willingness to remove its troops from South Vietnam and dismantle its military bases there; 2) the United States was prepared to accept a genuinely neutral and nonaligned South Vietnam; 3) the United States was prepared to abide by the results of genuinely free elections in South Vietnam; 4) the United States would accept a reunification of Vietnam freely negotiated by the two Vietnamese states once the restoration of peace and order had

2. Unless cited otherwise, this account of MARIGOLD is based on a Dept of State Summary in (S) Msg, State 112886 to Rome, 9 Jan 67.

placed South Vietnam in a position to meet with North Vietnam on an equal footing; and finally, 5) the United States believed that the Geneva accords of 1954 and 1962 were an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia, but that truly effective neutral machinery for supervision and control would be required.[3]

Lewandowski, upon his return from Hanoi, informed Lodge that if the views of the United States were as he had explained them to North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong, it would be advisable to confirm them directly by conversation with the North Vietnamese Ambassador in Warsaw. Lewandowski alleged that his presentation of US views in Hanoi were identical to those in a 10-point paper he had prepared on the basis of information given him by Lodge. Lewandowski's ten points were as follows:

1. The United States was interested in a peaceful solution through negotiations.

2. Negotiations should not be interpreted as a way to negotiated surrender by those opposing the United States in Vietnam. A political negotiation would be aimed at finding an acceptable solution to all problems, having in mind that the present status quo in South Vietnam must be changed in order to take into account the interests of the parties presently opposing the policy of the United States in South Vietnam.

3. The United States was not interested in a long-term military presence in South Vietnam. The Manila statement on withdrawal should be considered in all seriousness.

4. The United States was ready, should other parties show a constructive interest in a negotiated settlement, to work out and discuss with them proposals of such a settlement covering all important problems involved from a cease-fire to a final solution and withdrawal of US troops.

5. The United States, within a general solution, would not oppose formation of a South Vietnamese government based

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3. (TS) Msgs, State 83786 to Saigon, 13 Nov 66; State 84238 to Saigon, 14 Nov 66.

on the true will of the Vietnamese people, with participation by all through free democratic elections. The United States was prepared to accept necessary control machinery to assure that elections were free and democratic.

6. The United States believed unification of Vietnam must be decided by the Vietnamese themselves, for which restoration of peace and formation of proper representative organs of the people in South Vietnam was a necessary condition.

7. The United States was ready to accept and respect a true and complete neutrality of South Vietnam.

8. The United States was "prepared to stop the bombing of the territory of North Vietnam if this will facilitate such a peaceful solution. In doing so, the United States are ready to avoid any appearance that North Vietnam is forced to negotiate by bombings or that North Vietnam have negotiated in exchange for cessation of bombing. Stopping of bombing would not involve recognition or confirmation by North Vietnam that its armed forces are or were infiltrating into South Vietnam."

9. The United States, while not excluding unification of Vietnam, would not agree to unification under military pressure.

10. While the United States was seeking a peaceful solution, it would be unrealistic to expect it to accept North Vietnam's four points.

Asked by Lewandowski whether this paper correctly stated the US position, Lodge replied that on a matter of such importance he would have to refer to his government for a definitive reply, but much of the paper appeared to be in keeping with the spirit of US policy. In reporting this conversation to Rusk, Lodge expressed the view that two of the ten points required clarification. "Personally," he said to Rusk, "I would like to have a closer definition of the language of . . . paragraph 2 stating that 'the present status quo in [South] Vietnam must be changed in order to take into account the interested parties opposing the policy of the United States in South Vietnam.' . . . Another point which might need some clarification would be the first sentence in paragraph 8, which stated: 'The United States are prepared to stop the bombing of the

territory of North Vietnam if this will facilitate a peaceful solution.'"[4]

Lodge's exposition of the points requiring clarification by no means expressed the wide divergence that actually existed between the US policy on bombing that the US Government had asked Lewandowski to express to the North Vietnamese and the statement on the subject Lewandowski claimed to have made. Conspicuously missing from his eighth point was any description of the US two-phase formula he had been asked to present. To the contrary, by implication, the statement he claimed to have delivered seemed to convey the message that the United States would stop bombing merely to obtain negotiations and without compensating military deescalation--a position the US Government had consistently refused to take.

On receiving Lodge's report of Lewandowski's mission, the US Government concluded that Lewandowski's 10 points, while generally consistent with the US position, failed to spell out precisely the two-phase plan for ending the bombing. Accordingly, Lodge, on instructions, informed Lewandowski on 3 December that the US Ambassador in Warsaw would meet the North Vietnamese Ambassador on 6 December to confirm that the Lewandowski summary broadly reflected the position of the United States, but that several points were subject to important differences of interpretation. The points at issue were not specified, however, so the North Vietnamese may not have known at this date that the United States still insisted upon a military deescalation in return for stopping the bombing of North Vietnam.

On 5 December, Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki received the US Ambassador John Gronouski in Warsaw and complained that it was improper for the United States to insist upon interpretation of the 10 points. The Pole complained further of US bombing attacks in the vicinity of Hanoi on 2 and 4 December, alleging that the attacks were a deliberate escalation in contrast to the earlier deescalation the North Vietnamese had asserted they had detected and favorably noted during Lewandowski's visit to Hanoi.[5]

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4. (TS) Msg, Saigon 12247 to State, 1 Dec 66.
5. (TS) Msg, State 102960 to Saigon, 14 Dec 66.

The bombing operation in progress as of early December was ROLLING THUNDER 52, which when approved on 11 November had authorized air attacks on 12 targets within ten miles of Hanoi and Haiphong. Adverse weather conditions, however, which had prevented attacks in the Hanoi-Haiphong area since October, continued to interfere with scheduled strikes in the area until 22 November, when 17 aircraft struck a SAM support facility within 6 miles of the center of Haiphong. The next raid, on 2 December, was one of the ones to which Rapacki objected and in which the Van Dien Vehicle Depot, located 4.5 miles from the center of Hanoi, was hit by 27 aircraft. Two days later 18 aircraft attacked the Yen Vien Railroad Yard 5 miles from the center of Hanoi.[6] Thus, adverse flying conditions had in fact created the operational pattern that Rapacki claimed the North Vietnamese had noticed and attributed to political motivation.

The bombing pattern was, however, affected to some degree by political factors. While the strikes on the targets actually attacked were determined solely by operational factors, authorization for attacks on other targets on the original ROLLING THUNDER 52 had been temporarily withdrawn on 11 November so as not to "rock the boat" during British Foreign Secretary Brown's visit to Moscow. This suspension was still in effect on 5 December when Rapacki made his objection to the bombing attacks of 2 and 4 December.

Following Rapacki's objections, President Johnson continued to withhold authority to attack the withdrawn targets. On 9 December, following a discussion of the matter with Vice President Humphrey, Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary Vance, Under Secretary Katzenbach and General Wheeler, the President rejected CINCPAC requests of 3 and 8 December that the withheld targets be struck. His decision, according to General Wheeler, was "heavily influenced by the sensitive activities now in train." The President did not, however, curtail the bombing of North Vietnam further at this time.[7]

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6. See Ch. 36 for an account of RT 52. Air attack data is derived from (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMS 265-66, 12 Nov 66 - 283-66, 5 Dec 66.

7. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 030650Z Dec 66, JCS IN 64742, and 080940Z Dec 66, JCS IN 73338. (S) CM-1994-66 to CNO, CSA, CSAF, CMC, 10 Dec 66, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 66.

Bad weather, however, prevented any air attacks on North Vietnam during the period 5-12 December. During this period, Ambassador Gronouski was unable to arrange a meeting with the North Vietnamese Ambassador in Warsaw. In his meetings with Rapacki on 6, 7 and 9 December, the Polish Foreign Minister continued to haggle over the interpretation question and to contend that the US bombing attacks had raised a new issue which was not involved in the original arrangements for talks in Warsaw.[8]

This was where matters stood on 13 December when clearing weather permitted a resumption of air operations over Hanoi. Again, 20 aircraft hit Yen Vien Railroad Yard and 9 planes attacked the Van Dien Vehicle Depot. The same day, Rapacki called in Gronouski and told him that the North Vietnamese were now unwilling to hold talks in Warsaw and they would have to be postponed. In the light of this development the Department of State, on 14 December, sent new instructions to Gronouski, explaining that the United States sincerely wanted substantive talks and intended to keep the door open as long as possible, and directing him to tell the Polish Government that Washington was now willing to negotiate just on the US proposal for a two-phase deescalation either directly with North Vietnam or through the Poles.[9]

The same day US planes struck again in the Hanoi area in even greater strength than previously. A total of 84 aircraft hit the same two targets that had been struck on the 13th. On 15 December, Rapacki informed Gronouski that the North Vietnamese wished to terminate all conversations on the possibility of direct talks.

At a further meeting with Rapacki on 19 December, Gronouski reviewed the whole history of discussions to that point and stressed that, while the opening of talks must be without preconditions as to the conduct of military operations, this topic could be a first order of business, but the discussion proved fruitless. At this juncture President Johnson decided to reverse policy and offer a military concession in order to get talks started. He directed Gronouski to inform Rapacki that the United States was now prepared "to state there will be no bombing within 10 nautical miles of

8. (TS) Msg, State 102960 to Saigon, 14 Dec 66.
9. Ibid.

the center of Hanoi for an indefinite period if talks with North Vietnam can be gotten under way shortly."[10]

When Rapacki objected to this proposed linkage, President Johnson decided to halt the bombing within 10 nautical miles of Hanoi without a prior commitment to negotiate from North Vietnam. On 23 December the JCS issued appropriate instructions to CINCPAC, and the next day Gronouski informed Rapacki of the action that had been taken. However, this concession failed to produce the desired results. On 30 December Rapacki told Gronouski that the North Vietnamese had decided not to enter into talks with the US at Warsaw.[11]

Operation MARIGOLD thus ended in failure. The question remains--indeed it was raised in the press by critics of Administration policy--whether different tactics by the United States might have led to direct meetings between US and North Vietnamese representatives. The critics claimed that the bombing attacks in December, coming at a critical juncture, gave evidence of bad faith on the part of the United States, with the result that the North Vietnamese withdrew their offer to talk. Another and equally valid speculation is that Hanoi only agreed to talk in the first place on the basis of a false and misleading presentation by Lewandowski that the United States was prepared to stop the bombing without military conditions. Once the North Vietnamese leaders discovered that the United States still demanded compensating military deescalation in return for a bombing halt, they employed the early December bombings as an excuse to reject direct negotiations.

Appeal to U Thant

On 19 December, when it was becoming apparent that the Polish Government would be unable to arrange direct secret negotiations between US and North Vietnamese representatives, the US Government turned to another channel in its continuing effort to end the Vietnamese war by negotiation. Ambassador to the UN Arthur Goldberg, on that date, wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the UN, U Thant, asking him to take

10. (TS) Msg, State 106358 to Warsaw, 21 Dec 66.
11. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 2135 to CINCPAC, 232114Z Dec 66, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) sec 13.

whatever steps he considered necessary "to bring about the necessary discussions which could lead to . . . a ceasefire." The Ambassador also reaffirmed the explicit statement in the US Government's Fourteen Points that "a cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions."[12]

U Thant replied on 30 December by stressing that "a powerful nation like the United States should take the initiative in the quest for peace and show an enlightened and humanitarian spirit" by accepting the Secretary General's oft-repeated three-point program. The three points, of which the first was the most essential, were to stop the bombing of North Vietnam, to scale down the fighting in South Vietnam by all sides, and to be willing to enter into negotiations with those actually fighting. As an additional manifestation of the "humanitarian spirit," U Thant proposed that the United States accompany the cessation of bombing by joining with the other parties in an extended holiday truce. The following day Goldberg replied that his Government reaffirmed its offer to "order a prior end to all bombing of North Vietnam the moment there is an assurance, private or otherwise, that there would be a reciprocal response toward peace from North Vietnam." He asked the Secretary General to "use every means at . . . [his] . . . disposal to determine what tangible response there would be from North Vietnam in the wake of such a prior step toward peace" on the part of the United States. Goldberg pointed out, however, that an end to all hostilities could not be attained by "either appeals for or the exercise of restraint by only one side . . . ." The Secretary General's proposal for an extended ceasefire was therefore welcomed by the US Government, which regretted that the other parties had so far shown no interest in it.[13]

Even before writing his letter of 30 December to Goldberg, U Thant had begun intensive secret diplomacy with Hanoi. By 3 January, he was reported by the New York Times to be hopeful of a "positive response from North Vietnam once the United States unconditionally ended the bombing."[14]

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12. The text of Goldberg's letter is in Dept of State Bulletin, LVI (9 Jan 67), pp. 63-64. See Ch. 29 for a discussion of the Fourteen Points.
13. Dept of State Bulletin, LVI (23 Jan 67), pp. 137-139.
14. NY Times, 4 Jan 67, 1.

This finding obviously did not meet the oft-repeated condition of the United States that cessation of bombing be accompanied by some reciprocal military deescalation by the North Vietnamese. In the end U Thant proved unable to extract any satisfactory answer from Hanoi. The United States, meanwhile, initiated diplomatic action through other channels.

Operation SUNFLOWER

In spite of the collapse of MARIGOLD, the US Government remained determined to enter into secret negotiations with North Vietnam. To this end, it sought to establish a direct channel of communication with Hanoi through diplomatic missions of the two countries in Moscow. This new effort began on 10 January with the passing of a message by John Guthrie, Deputy Chief of the US Mission, to Le Chang, the North Vietnamese Chargé: "The United States Government," the message read, "places the highest priority in finding a mutually agreeable, completely secure arrangement for exchanging communications with the government of the DRV about the possibilities of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese dispute."[15]

A subsequent message, passed through the same channel on 20 January, elaborated the US view of the matters that might be discussed. These included, in addition to any subject proposed by Hanoi, the following: arrangements for reduction or cessation of hostilities; essential elements of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, including the withdrawal from South Vietnam of forces coming from the outside; arrangements for a free determination by North and South Vietnam on the issue of reunification; recognition of the independence and territorial integrity of North and South Vietnam or of a reunified Vietnam; the international posture of South Vietnam, including its relationships with other nations; appropriate provisions relating to the internal political structure of South Vietnam, including freedom from reprisals and free political participation; and appropriate means for insuring the integrity of all the provisions agreed to.[16]

15. (TS) Msgs, State 11296 to Moscow, 5 Jan 67, and Moscow 2966 to State, 10 Jan 67.
16. (TS) Msgs, State 120335 to Moscow, 17 Jan 67, and Moscow 3126 to State, 20 Jan 67.

On 27 January Le Chang delivered Hanoi's reply to the US message of the 10th in the form of an aide memoire. After initial comments concerning the "absurd and arrogant" US conditions for peace talks and charges that United States was escalating the war and the bombing, the reply reiterated the hard Hanoi line: "unconditional cessation of bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV being materialized, the DRV could then exchange views with the United States concerning the place or date for contact between the two parties . . . ." The North Vietnamese contended that in the event such negotiations did take place, "the most current solution to the Vietnam problem" would be the four-point program of North Vietnam and the five-point programs of the National Liberation Front.[17]

The next day, the North Vietnamese Government, without referring to the diplomatic exchanges with the United States, made public its position in an interview given by Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh to the left-wing Australian jornalist Wilfred Burchett. The Hanoi regime placed particular emphasis on the text of the interview. Not only was it prominently published on the front page of all Hanoi newspapers, but it was also widely distributed to neutral governments with the request that its important character be conveyed to US diplomatic representatives.[18]

On 2 February, Guthrie handed Le Chang an interim reply to this roundabout communication from Hanoi. In its reply, the US Government agreed to discuss the four points or any other matter in secret talks. Turning to the question of attacks on North Vietnam, the US Government in its reply pointed out that bombing within 10 nautical miles of the center of Hanoi had already been stopped, and renewed the offer to deescalate further under the two-phase plan originally proposed the preceding November through the Poles. The forthcoming Tet truce, scheduled for the period 8-12 February might be a good time to begin discussions on such an approach.[19]

Before any reply to the message of 2 February had been received, action on the diplomatic front shifted to London,

17. (TS) Msg, Moscow 3218 to State, 27 Jan 67.
18. (S-GP 3) Msg, State 133736 to Paris, Wellington, Ottawa, Djakarta, Rome, Bern, 8 Feb 67. NY Times, 29 Jan 67, 6.
19. (TS) Msgs, State 128486 to Moscow, 31 Jan 67, and Moscow 3321 to State, 2 Feb 67.

where Soviet Premier Kosygin arrived on 6 February for policy talks with the British Government. In the hope that the British might be able to persuade Kosygin to bring pressure to bear on North Vietnam to negotiate, the US Government briefed the British thoroughly on the current negotiations. At two sessions on 6 February, the British presented the US two-phase deescalation plan and the list of subjects for secret discussion given to the North Vietnamese on 20 January. Kosygin made no response to this presentation but quoted the Burchett interview as evidence that the North Vietnamese were prepared to negotiate. However, when pressed by the British to urge the North Vietnamese to issue an unequivocal statement that they would negotiate if the bombing stopped, Kosygin refused. He was willing only to join Prime Minister Wilson in an endorsement of the statement given by the North Vietnamese in the Burchett interview. This Wilson refused to do.[20]

At this point, the US Government dispatched its definitive reply to the North Vietnamese statement given in the aide memoire of 27 January and the Burchett interview of the following day. This reply took the form of a letter from President Johnson to Ho Chi Minh, delivered to North Vietnamese diplomats in Moscow on 8 February so as to coincide with the Wilson-Kosygin talks still in progress in London. In his letter, Johnson offered a new deescalation package. "I am prepared", he wrote, "to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of United States forces in South Vietnam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and by sea has been stopped." The day before sending this letter, Johnson had informed Wilson of its contents, stressing the point that the United States could not "accept . . . the exchange of guarantee of safe haven for North Vietnam merely for discussions which thus far have no form or content, during which they [the North Vietnamese] could continue to expand their military operations to the limit."[21]

Subsequent discussions in London did not result in any offer of positive action by Kosygin. On the evening of the 11th, with the Soviet Premier's visit drawing to a close, President Johnson sent another personal message to Prime Minister Wilson stating the willingness of the United States

20. (TS) Msgs, London 6315 and 6316 to State, 6 Feb 67.
21. (TS) Msgs, State 132481 to London, 7 Feb 67, and Moscow 3412 to State, 8 Feb 67. The text of the Johnson ltr to Ho Chi Minh is in NY Times, 22 Mar 67, 10.

"to go the last mile" in the search for peace. He asked to make an additional effort to secure Kosygin's services by giving him the following message:

> If you can get a North Vietnamese assurance--communicated either direct to the United States or through you--before 10:00 A.M. British time tomorrow that all movement of troops and supplies into South Vietnam will stop at that time, I will get an assurance from the US that they will not resume bombing North Vietnam at that time. Of course the US buildup would then stop in a matter of days.

The deadline passed with no word from Hanoi. Shortly afterward Kosygin boarded a plane for Moscow, and orders were issued to resume operations against North Vietnam.[22]

Two days later Ho Chi Minh sent his reply directly to President Johnson. In a letter dated 15 February the North Vietnamese leader harshly accused the United States of employing "the most inhuman weapons" and the "most barbarous methods of warfare" against his people, blamed the United States for the "extremely serious situation in Vietnam," and rejected any form of negotiation until the United States stopped "unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war" against North Vietnam.[23]

The JCS Role

The US attempts to achieve negotiations in the MARIGOLD and SUNFLOWER efforts were obviously of concern to the Joint Chiefs of Staff because of their effects not only on the immediate tactical situation but also on long-term strategic interests of the United States. During the period of these two diplomatic operations, the JCS were not asked for formal

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22. (TS) Msg, State 135748 to London, 12 Feb 67. The Tet standdown had originally been scheduled to end on 12 February, but at the request of the British, it had been extended until Kosygin departed from the United Kingdom. See Ch for an account of operations against North Vietnam at this period.

23. (TS) Msg, Moscow 3503, 15 Feb 67. The text of Ho's Letter is in NY Times, 22 Mar 67, 10.

views on any aspect of the negotiations.[24] Their position on some aspects of the question was available to Secretaries McNamara and Rusk, however, as the result of views presented in May 1965. At that time, the JCS had stated the minimum conditions for halting the bombing of North Vietnam to be: cessation of infiltration into and withdrawal from South Vietnam and Laos of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces; agreement between North and South Vietnam to settle future differences peacefully; and an immediate exchange of prisoners.[25]

Acting on their own initiative, early in 1967 the JCS presented Secretary McNamara with a new formulation of views on negotiation, along with a request that they be given the opportunity to comment on any future formulation of US policy on the subject. He, in turn, passed the views to Secretary Rusk. But this new statement of views, although initiated on 1 February, was not complete until the 27th, by which time Ho Chi Minh had slammed the door on negotiation on terms acceptable to the United States.

The JCS views, developed as answers to questions asked by General Maxwell Taylor in his report to President Johnson on a trip to South Vietnam, consisted of the following. The minimum price for cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam should be verified cessation of all North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam and Laos. Because a cessation of the bombing was one of our most important negotiating assets, additional concessions should be sought. Additional concessions to be sought now were: cessation of North Vietnamese military operations in South Vietnam including support and direction of the Viet Cong; verified beginning of withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, the demilitarized zone, and the Laotian panhandle; and significant reduction of North Vietnamese/Viet Cong acts of terrorism in South Vietnam. Further concessions, not immediately needed, but ultimately necessary to restore peace in Vietnam, included: withdrawal of all North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, the demilitarized zone, and areas in Laos not occupied by

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24. Sources available to the author do not reveal whether the JCS as a group, or the CJCS separately, ever discussed these matters with the Secretary of Defense, the President or other high-level officials.

25. See Ch. 28 for a complete discussion of these views.

communists prior to the signing of the Geneva accords of 1962; cessation of all acts of terrorism in South Vietnam; and an agreement to exchange prisoners. Verification of the measures should be by unilateral inspection and policing by the belligerents themselves rather than by the demonstrably inadequate method of international supervision and inspection. If, however, the United States should accept control by an international commission, it should be an entirely new body, free of the serious deficiencies of the present commission, and should be in place and functioning effectively before any US forces were withdrawn. To avoid a stalemate at the conference table, a fixed agenda should be established. Communist stalling or intransigence on agenda items should call for resumption of bombing of North Vietnam. Military operations elsewhere should be pressed vigorously during negotiations.[26]

Ho Chi Minh's letter of 15 February spelled failure for the MARIGOLD-SUNFLOWER diplomatic offensive. After three months of intensive diplomatic activity the Vietnam conflict was no closer to a resolution than it had been before. In spite of the various formulae advanced and the one significant bombing restriction put into effect by the United States, the North Vietnamese position on negotiation remained unchanged. The communist leaders in Hanoi were evidently still convinced they could win a military victory, in spite of the successes scored by US, South Vietnamese, and Free World military forces during 1966. Redoubled efforts on the battlefield were therefore in order, and as fighting resumed at the end of the Tet stand-down, the US military leaders hoped to win approval for intensified operations against the enemy war-making potential centered in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

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26. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-107-67 to SecDef, 27 Feb 67 (derived from JCS 2472/6-3); (S-GP 1) JCS 2472/6-4, 3 Apr 67; JMF 911/080 (30 Jan 67) sec 1.

Chapter 41

ROLLING THUNDER GAINS MOMENTUM - FEBRUARY-JUNE 1967

The Bombing Resumes

Military operations against North Vietnam resumed on 13 February 1967, when the Tet standdown came to an end. During the months that followed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, supported by CINCPAC, won approval for successive ROLLING THUNDER programs that had the effect of gradually intensifying operations against targets in the vital northeast quadrant of North Vietnam.

At the time operations resumed, however, prospects for an intensified campaign against the North did not appear bright. The restrictive RT 53 was still in effect, an operation which Admiral Sharp had characterized on 2 February as an effort which fell "considerably short of what could have been an initial step in bringing more positive pressure to bear on Hanoi in 1967." He had emphasized the need for a long-range program covering all of what he considered to be key target systems.[1] This was an approach CINCPAC had long advocated and which he had gradually developed and refined. The most recent step in this evolution had been submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 18 January. This was a proposal for applying steady pressure, avoiding peaks and depressions, against six key target systems in Route Package (RP) VI as a means to destroy the "war making potential" of the enemy. The six target systems were: 1) electric power; 2) war supporting industry; 3) transportation support facilities; 4) military complexes; 5) petroleum; and 6) Haiphong and other ports. Complete destruction of these systems was not necessary, according to CINCPAC, but "general disruption" would make them ineffective. Some targets would require periodic restrike.[2]

1. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 022246Z Feb 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 67.
2. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 182210Z Jan 67, JCS IN 53524.

CINCPAC's disappointment at the continued bombing limitations had been sharpened by the weather. The northeast monsoon, a decisive factor in the effectiveness of the bombing program, had not yet ebbed. The rainy winter months with their heavy cloud cover caused many delays and cancellations of strikes. Nevertheless, the bombing programs continued.

Within a few days of the resumption of operations against the North, however, the prospect for a more effective bombing program brightened. On 17 February General Wheeler emphasized to the President the importance of striking against the electric power net, even to the point of destroying the entire system, to bring graduated pressure against Hanoi. The Chairman came away from this meeting with the feeling that there was a "new sense of urgency in the atmosphere" that could lead to new strike authorizations. These, he believed, would initially be limited to a slight broadening of the target base but would soon result in approval of actions that would bring increased pressure to bear on the enemy.[3]

RT 54

The approval of RT 54 on 23 February, just ten days after the resumption of the bombing, confirmed General Wheeler's optimism and marked the beginning of what developed into an intensified campaign against the northeast quadrant. The President authorized five new targets plus the RT 53 targets that had not been previously struck because of poor weather (six of the nine authorized under RT 53 had not been struck). At the same time the number of sorties per month was raised from 13,200 to 14,500. The new targets included four thermal power plants, Hon Gai, Thai Nguyen, Viet Tri, and Bac Giang; and the Thai Nguyen steel plant; all within or near the Hanoi/Haiphong complex. Thus, targets from two of the six target systems CINCPAC had recommended for attack - electric power and war supporting industry - were authorized, and the number of sorties increased. These were encouraging changes.[4]

3. (S) Msg, JCS 1337-67 to CINCPAC, 18 Feb 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 54, sec 15.

4. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6955 to CINCPAC, 230308Z Feb 67. (TS) Memo, J-3 to CJCS, ROLLING THUNDER with draft execute message, 21 Feb 67, same file.

In their recommendations on RT 54 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had also recommended as targets three additional thermal power plants located in Hanoi and Haiphong, a Hanoi transformer station, and the Haiphong cement plant, but these were not approved until later.

Attacks against the two target systems, both important in NVN industrial production, would not have a great effect on the total war effort, however, since the bulk of supplies and equipment was imported and could be effectively controlled only by hitting the ports and transportation systems. Nevertheless, the program brought an increase in pressure upon North Vietnam.

When the President approved RT 54 he also approved the extension of SEA DRAGON operations to 20° N latitude and authorized the selective mining of inland waterways in the same area, along with naval gunfire against military shore targets. This added over 75 miles of coastline area for operations calculated to interdict waterborne logistics craft in coordination with ROLLING THUNDER operations. The President also authorized artillery fire north of the DMZ.

CINCPAC and the commanders in the field were greatly pleased with the authority contained in RT 54. This authorization was closer to CINCPAC's own concept of striking against interrelated target systems. He thanked the Chairman for his efforts in expanding the program and promised that the effect would be "anything but salubrious for Hanoi."[5]

Unfortunately, the weather again had an adverse affect on the bombing program. The month of February produced fewer sorties than any of the previous nine months. The low total was due, of course, not only to the weather, but to the shortness of the month and the Tet standdown. The bad weather continued for most of the month of March.[6]

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5. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 250312Z Feb 67, OCJCS 091 File Vietnam, Feb 67.
6. (S-GP 1) CINCPAC, ROLLING THUNDER Digest, Jan-Mar 67, JMF 912/323 (10 Feb 67) sec 1A.

Political considerations continued to inhibit the ROLLING THUNDER program. Although the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, had emphasized to CINCPAC that there was no sense of urgency or political requirement that the new targets be attacked by any deadline, two of them, the Bac Giang and Hon Gai thermal power plants, were struck almost immediately and for two straight days. These attacks occasioned concern at the highest levels of the government that closely-spaced repetitive attacks against high-value targets might be construed as an escalation of the war. The Chairman urged CINCPAC to see that the strikes were made only during breaks in the weather or, that failing, only after an interval of three to five days. He feared that, if the State Department had to face domestic and foreign charges of escalation, there might be delay in securing authority for attacks against "other high-value targets such as the two thermal power plants and the cement plant in Haiphong and the Hanoi thermal power plant and transformer station." The granting of that authority, said the Chairman, appeared imminent.[7]

The Chairman counseled CINCPAC and COMUSMACV again on 6 March to take the necessary steps to avoid jeopardizing the possibility of gaining expanded authority. He felt that the situation was ripe and could only be upset by an obstacle "created by us."[8]

Although hampered by the weather, ROLLING THUNDER forces within three weeks after the authorization had struck every RT 54 target at least once. This performance, coupled with increased military resupply activity in the Haiphong area, encouraged the Chairman to continue to press for new authority. He was successful. On 22 March, with Presidential approval, the Joint Chiefs of Staff added to the RT 54 target list the two Haiphong thermal power plants, but with the admonition to minimize civilian casualties and to prevent damage to foreign shipping. Because of the weather and political considerations,

7. (TS) Msg, JCS 1422-67 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 22 Feb 67; (S) Msg, JCS 1497-67 to CINCPAC, 25 Feb 67; JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 54, sec 15.

8. (S) Msg, JCS 1691-67 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 6 Mar 67, same file.

however, the two targets were not struck until 20 April. Strikes against ROLLING THUNDER targets continued through March and the first three weeks of April.[9]

RT 55 and the MIG Threat

On 22 April the President approved RT 55, a program designed to initiate an integrated campaign against the land, rail, and water lines of communication in the northeast. Such a program had been much desired and long sought by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC. The objective of the program was ultimately to isolate the Hanoi/Haiphong logistics base. The President authorized attacks on ten fixed targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong complex, representing all of the six target systems devised by CINCPAC. (By this time air defense as a primary target system had replaced ports, a system which was consolidated with the transportation targets.) Among the targets authorized were the Hanoi transformer station, the Haiphong cement plant, the Hanoi railroad/highway bridge (canal), one of the Hanoi railroad repair shops, the Haiphong ammunition depot, the Dan Phuong highway causeway, and the Xuan Mai highway bridge SW, plus a restrike of the Haiphong POL. The other two targets were Hoa Lac and Kep airfields. Attacks against the airfields were to be limited to "small and random harassment strikes designed to attrite aircraft and disrupt support facilities." Only one JCS target, the Hanoi thermal power plant, was deleted from those requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The other general guidelines remained unchanged, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff had requested a reduction of the restrictions for armed reconnaissance.[10]

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9. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 46-67 through 65-67, 25 Feb through 20 Mar 67. (TS) Telecon, NMCC to CINCPAC, 171840Z Mar 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 54, sec 15. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9614 to CINCPAC, 222314Z Mar 67. (TS) Msg, JCS 2601-67 to CINCPAC, 10 Apr 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 54, sec 15. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 66-67 through 95-67, 21 Mar through 24 Apr 67.

10. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3451 to CINCPAC, 222239Z Apr 67.

The airfields were added to the target list in order to weaken the enemy's air defense, which had been stiffened as a result of intensified attacks in the northeast quadrant in recent weeks. SAMs, antiaircraft, and MIGs were the principal weapons employed by the North Vietnamese in this effort. By far the greatest concentration of air defense weapons was in RP VI. The threat of MIG encounters had been prevalent and growing for some time. The Joint Staff had warned in January that unless additional steps were taken, the threat would probably grow, and suggested that strikes should be made on NVN airfields. At about the same time, CINCPAC had outlined six actions to counter the threat, including attacks on MIG bases. From January through March, however, the MIG harassment was ineffective. Not a single US plane was lost in 24 engagements. (There were eight US losses from SAMs during the period, and 43 from antiaircraft artillery and automatic weapons.)[11]

On 23 March CINCPAC had appealed for authority to conduct spoiling attacks on Hoa Lac and Kep airfields before MIGs from these airfields could seriously interfere with ROLLING THUNDER. Hoa Lac airfield was just nearing completion and Kep had been recently improved. Attacks against them, said CINCPAC, would counter the "growing MIG threat." These two targets were included in the proposal for RT 55 that was then being readied for presentation. But no authority came during the month of March and for most of April.[12]

In April, however, the MIG threat increased, with a large jump in the number of aerial engagements. On 13 April CINCPAC, in a cable to the Chairman, JCS, requested approval for strikes against all NVN airfields. He believed that an effective program of strikes against these airfields could drive the MIGs from North Vietnamese bases and force their relocation in China. Such a relocation of MIG aircraft might even be beneficial to the United States, since it could provide an interception point along the buffer zone that not only would impede and disrupt inbound

11. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 040334Z Jan 67, JCS IN 27052. (S-GP 1) CINCPAC, ROLLING THUNDER DIGEST, Jan-Mar 67, JMF 912/323 (10 Feb 67) sec 1A.

12. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 230037Z Mar 67, JCS IN 83893. (TS) Telecon, NMCC to CINCPAC, 231816Z Mar 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 54, sec 15.

MIG attacks against US strike aircraft, but also would permit US aircraft to engage the MIGs on their return leg to sanctuary in China. CINCPAC recognized that the problem of hot pursuit would be heightened, but that authority for hot pursuit into China would not be given.[13]

Upon receiving the RT 55 authority, US forces promptly launched a strike against each airfield, losing 3 of the 16 attacking aircraft. The Secretary of Defense became concerned that the field commanders were attempting to achieve more than the stipulated harassment and attrition of NVN Air Force. The Chairman reassured the Secretary that proper guidance had been given to the field commanders, but he, too, had reason for concern. He feared that such vigorous action might jeopardize efforts to gain authority to attack all NVN airfields. The Chairman suggested to CINCPAC that he exert a restraining influence on his subordinates. But CINCPAC had anticipated reaction from Washington and had already warned his field commanders to restrain their pilots.[14]

Despite the attacks on the two airfields, the number of sightings and encounters continued to grow. The United States lost seven planes to North Vietnamese MIGs during April, leading Admiral Sharp to appeal again but without success for authority to attack the remaining jet-capable airfields at Kien An and Cat Bi. Failure to obtain the desired authority, however, did not prevent effective action against other North Vietnamese airfields. On 1 May, US pilots restruck Kep and Hoa Lac airfields and destroyed 16 MIGs. Thereafter, for several months, enemy air activity was minimal.[15]

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13. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 130432Z Apr 67, same file, sec 16.

14. (S) Msg, JCS 3011-67 to CINCPAC, 24 Apr 67; (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 250402Z Apr 67; same file.

15. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 95-67 through 100-67, 24 through 29 Apr 67. (S-GP 1) CINCPAC, ROLLING THUNDER DIGEST, Apr-Jun 67, JMF 912/323 (10 Feb 67) sec 1D. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 300055Z Apr 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 55, Sec 16. (TS) Msg, JCS 3223-67 to CINCPAC, 2 May 67, same file, sec 17.

Attacks on other targets on the RT 55 list continued meanwhile and, with the arrival of better weather conditions in April, strikes grew more numerous in the northeast quadrant. In an eight-day period ROLLING THUNDER strike forces flew 183 sorties with good success against nine of the ten authorized targets, plus numerous armed reconnaissance strikes throughout RP VI. The only RT 55 target not struck during the eight days was the Xuan Mai highway bridge.[16]

RT 56

Planning for a new authorization was initiated almost immediately after the approval of RT 55. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, had instructed the Joint Staff to include as fixed targets Phuc Yen and one other MIG-capable airfield--perhaps Kien An--but excluding Gia Lam, the international airport near Hanoi.[17]

Authority to execute RT 56 was dispatched to CINCPAC on 2 May and included authorization for strikes against ten targets in the northeast quadrant, four of which were restrikes against the two Haiphong thermal power plants (until they were destroyed), the Van Dien vehicle depot, and the Yen Vien railroad classification yard. The latter two targets, near Hanoi, had been struck in 1966, but in December of that year attacks against the two targets had been suspended because of political reasons. The Haiphong thermal power plants had been authorized briefly the previous November, but had not been destroyed. Since three of the new targets, Vinh Yen, Kep, and Ha Dong, were military barracks in areas of concentrated population, the execute message carried a caution to avoid civilian casualties by striking during good weather for positive identification. The Van Dien Supply/SAM Depot and the Nguyen Khe Storage facility were also approved. The last target was the Kien An Airfield, which was to be struck, along with those airfields authorized for attack under RT 55, for the purpose of maximum destruction of MIG aircraft at a minimum

16. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 96-67 through 103-67, 25 Apr through 3 May 67.
17. (TS) Memo, CJCS to Joint Staff, with pencilled notation, 25 Apr 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56, sec 17.

cost in US aircraft and pilots. Strikes were authorized against all previously approved ROLLING THUNDER targets. Seven additional important targets recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not approved: the Hanoi thermal power plant, the Hanoi supply depot N, the Hanoi railroad/highway bridge on the Red River, the Haiphong railroad yards W, Haiphong port areas C and D, the Hon Gai Port, and Phuc Yen Airfield. All of the general guidelines for the new program were carried over from the previous one.[18]

The Hanoi Thermal Power Plant

The most important deletion from the Joint Staff proposal for RT 56 was that of the Hanoi thermal power plant. Destruction of this plant, in Admiral Sharp's opinion, would eliminate available power in the northeast area except for portable generators; in effect it would turn out the lights of Hanoi and Haiphong. A major problem in attacking the target, however, was the danger of civilian casualties. US officials feared that such casualties might increase public opposition to the bombing of North Vietnam. In late April the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff had suggested that WALLEYE, a sophisticated new weapon, be used against the power plant. Fired from a fighter plane, WALLEYE could lock on a target electronically and home in with precision, thereby reducing the risk of civilian casualties. But CINCPAC was not convinced that the missile was completely reliable and did not concur in its use at that time. In the meantime the Secretary of Defense advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff that if the two Haiphong thermal power plants were destroyed first, it would be easier to secure approval for attack of the Hanoi plant. He recognized, however, that bad weather might prevent striking the Haiphong plants before the President could consider the prime target.[19]

18. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4255 to CINCPAC, 022248Z May 67. (TS-GP 3) Draft Execute Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, Tab 2A, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56, sec 17.

19. (S) Msg, JCS 3168-67 to CINCPAC, 29 Apr 67; (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 022202Z May 67; (TS) Msg, JCS 3223-67 to CINCPAC, 2 May 67; same file.

Restrikes against the Haiphong thermal power plants were carried out on 10 May, thus setting the stage for approval of attack against the Hanoi power plant. Within a week CINCPAC received the requisite authority. Despite CINCPAC's reservations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff specified that the strike would be made by only two aircraft equipped with the WALLEYE weapon. They urged caution to minimize civilian casualties by insuring positive identification of the target. They also urged that a strike be completed before 20 May, in view of the forthcoming visit to Moscow of British Foreign Minister Brown, and of Buddha's birthday.[20]

On 19 May two US aircraft carried out the carefully planned strike against the plant; one bomb fell short and the other struck one end of the complex. A restrike the following day was more successful, and on a still later restrike the pilot actually observed and photographed the WALLEYE weapon entering through a window of the generator hall.[21]

The Bombing is Restricted

ROLLING THUNDER strike forces increased their efforts through the spring. Targets destroyed or damaged during March numbered 1,781; in April, the figure was 2,722; and during May, it was 4,325. Other statistics also illustrate this increase in activity. Of all sorties flown during March only eight percent had been against targets in RPs VI A and VI B, the areas where the pressure would be felt greatest by NVN leaders. That percentage climbed to 15 percent for the month of April. By the end of May it would be 16 percent. These increases resulted from the new

20. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 110-67, 11 May 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5404 to CINCPAC, 162108Z May 67. The United States observed a 24-hour standdown of military operations on Buddha's birthday, 23 May, but authorized naval gunfire and air operations against observed substantial military resupply activity in North Vietnam south of 20°. (TS) Fact Sheet, "Operation Hickory (U)," 16 May 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 67.

21. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 118-67 and 119-67, 20 and 22 Nov 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CTG 77.7 to CINCPACFLT, 100846Z Jun 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56, sec 17.

target opportunities in the northeast quadrant opened up by RT 55 and 56. These programs had authorized 20 targets in RP VI, all of which were struck in a five week period. During that period the damage level in RP VI was greater than all previous ROLLING THUNDER strikes combined. Only 22 targets had been struck in that area during all of 1966. From 19 through 21 May, bombing close to and within the 10 nm "prohibited" area was particularly intense. These statistics indicate just how far the bombing program had developed, and they gave good reason to believe that the North Vietnamese were feeling the pressure.[22]

DISTRIBUTION OF ATTACK SORTIES
BY ROUTE PACKAGE

Month	Sorties	Route Packages						
		I	II	III	IV	V	VIA	VIB
January	6,633	43%	6%	16%	22%	4%	7%	2%
February	5,588	64%	6%	10%	12%	2%	3%	3%
March	8,493	60%	9%	11%	8%	4%	3%	5%
April	8,919	49%	11%	13%	6%	5%	7%	8%
May	11,426	39%	13%	19%	11%	3%	10%	6%
June	11,526	36%	13%	17%	11%	4%	14%	5% [23]

Then, quite suddenly, on 22 May the Secretary of Defense withdrew all authorizations for strikes against fixed targets within the 10 nm circle of Hanoi. The contrast between the intense bombing of the previous few days in the Hanoi area and the period that followed the announcement was striking. US pilots flew 254 sorties against RT 56 targets during the first 22 days of May. By 22 May, with the exception of the Giap Nhat vehicle repair facility, which had been authorized on 16 May, every authorized target had been struck at least once; many had been severely damaged or destroyed. After the 22nd of the month, only 32 sorties were flown, and until RT 57 was approved in

22. (S-GP 1) CINCPAC, ROLLING THUNDER DIGEST, Jan-Mar 67 and Apr-Jun 67; JMF 912/323 (10 Feb 67) secs 1A and 1D. (TS) Briefing for SecDef and CJCS, "Air Campaign in North Vietnam," 8 Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 67.

23. (S-GP 1) CINCPAC, ROLLING THUNDER DIGEST, Apr-Jun 67, JMF 912/323 (10 Feb 67) sec 1D.

mid-July the intensity of the bombing subsided around Hanoi, with the striking forces concentrating mainly on the northeast rail line.[24]

MAY SUMMARY OF STRIKES AGAINST
ROLLING THUNDER 56 TARGETS

Target	Sorties (date of strike in parenthesis)		Total for May
Yen Vien RR Classification Yard	9 (5th)	12 (13th)	21
Ha Dong Barracks	12 (5th), 8 (13th)	10 (12th), 12 (22nd)	42
Haiphong TPP E	10 (10th)		10
Haiphong TPP W	10 (10th), 10 (26th)	12 (20th)	32
Kien An Airfield	10 (10th), 12 (24th)	1 (13th)	24
Nguyen Khe Storage Area	12 (12th), 12 (22nd)	12 (13th)	36
Vinh Yen Barracks	12 (13th), 16 (25th)	16 (24th)	44
Van Dien Vehicle Depot	2 (19th)	11 (22nd)	13
Van Dien Supply/SAM Depot	20 (19th)		20
Kep Army Barracks	12 (19th)	16 (31st)	28
Hanoi TPP (authorized 16 May)	2 (19th)	4 (20th)	6
Kinh No Vehicle Repair (authorized 16 May)	10 (20th)		10
Total			286 [25]

Admiral Sharp deplored the curtailment. In a cable to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, he stated his conviction that the increased activity was beginning to hurt the enemy. "If we want to get this war over with we ought to keep the pressure on Hanoi and move in on Haiphong as JCS have recommended," he said. In his reply General

24. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 22 May 67, JMF 9155/55 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56, sec 17. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 103-67 through 127-67, 3 May through 1 Jun 67.

25. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 103-67 through 127-67, 3 May through 1 Jun 67.

Wheeler agreed with CINCPAC on the effectiveness of the bombing and indicated that foreign observers in Hanoi, who sent their reports to European superiors, confirmed this opinion.[26]

General Wheeler remained optimistic that authority could be obtained to strike worthwhile targets within the 10 nm Hanoi prohibited zone. On 25 May, he urged CINCPAC to submit such a list. Admiral Sharp's recommendations were received on 29 May but were not acted upon.[27]

CINCPAC nevertheless continued to press for authority to strike new targets and to restrike the more significant ones already hit. Some of the requests were for strikes against targets the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered to be not of great value. For example, on 17 June the Chairman turned down a request to strike five fertilizer plants because he believed they were not the type of non-military targets that warranted attack. Moreover, they had presumably been rendered inoperable for lack of power as the result of strikes against the power system. The Chairman also rejected certain power facilities as targets because either they did not tie into the Hanoi grid system or they were not of significant importance. Other targets recommended by CINCPAC were considered significant by General Wheeler, but these were already planned for inclusion in RT 57, then under preparation by the Joint Staff.[28]

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26. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 22 May 67. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 240120Z May 67. (TS) Msg, JCS 3903-67 to CINCPAC, 25 May 67; JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56, sec 17.

27. (TS) Msg, JCS 3903-67 to CINCPAC, 25 May 67, same file. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 290506Z May 67, JCS IN 40905 and 030424Z Jun 67; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 67.

28. (TS-GP 3) Telecon, JCS 4561 to CINCPAC, 171550Z Jun 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56 sec 17. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8177 to CINCPAC, 162237Z Jun 67. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 280439Z Jun 67, JCS IN 17531. (TS-GP 3) Memo, J-3 to CJCS, "ROLLING THUNDER (U)," n.d. (C. 3 Jul 67), JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56 sec 17. (TS-GP 3) Telecon, NMCC to CINCPAC, 101810Z Jul 67, same file.

Strikes in the Hanoi-Haiphong area were even further restricted as the result of the accidental bombing of a Soviet ship in Haiphong harbor, on 29 June, by Navy planes attacking an automatic weapons site in the port area. President Johnson was particularly alarmed over the incident because it came at a time when US-Soviet relations were strained over the crisis in the Middle East resulting from the Arab-Israeli war.

The President did not desire any change in the pattern of air operations against North Vietnam, but did want action taken to preclude any additional incidents at that sensitive time. The next day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff created a circle of 4 nm radius around Haiphong, in which no air strikes would be permitted without new authorization. For insurance CINCPAC added a further restriction by requiring his approval on all strikes in the doughnut area between 4 nm and 10 nm from Haiphong.[29]

The restrictions on operations against North Vietnam came at a time when US military leaders believed they were beginning to obtain substantial results. Admiral Sharp reported to General Wheeler on 29 May that the stepped-up bombing operations of April and May had destroyed most of the major power resources, had brought several key war supporting industries to a virtual standstill, and had increased harassment and disruption of external assistance entering NVN through Haiphong and on the northeast rail line. The air campaign, said CINCPAC, was the one way of carrying the war home to the enemy. It would be unfortunate to "back off" just when repeated attempts to secure authority for a systematic air campaign were showing results, the pressure was increasing because of this campaign, and the weather was "optimum" over North Vietnam.[30]

29. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, JCS 4027 to CINCPAC, 291323Z Apr 67, JCS 8177, 162237Z Jun 67, JCS 9143, 291737Z Jun 67. (S) Msg, JCS 4880 to CINCPAC, 291929Z Jun 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56 sec 17. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9315 to CINCPAC, 302108Z Jun 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT and CINCPACAF, 010430Z Jul 67, JCS IN 24937.

30. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 290506Z May 67, JCS IN 40905. (FOUO) COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 49.

A few weeks later, CINCPAC's opinion was unchanged. He believed that the United States had achieved a position, "albeit late in the game, from which a precisely executed and incisive air campaign of depth and sustaining persistence against all the target systems" would bring significant results. He believed that the enemy was "hurting". The successful operations of the previous period should be continued with the widest latitude in planning and execution during the remaining good weather.[31]

The ROLLING THUNDER program was in even greater danger than Admiral Sharp realized. The restrictions to which he was objecting were related to current high-level talks in Washington over a far more drastic bombing curtailment--a limitation of the bombing to the area south of 20° N latitude. Some high government officials felt that the recent strikes around Hanoi had raised the temperature of the war and might elicit additional Soviet assistance to North Vietnam; also, that the US losses sustained were not commensurate with the results attained. Some desired to "let the dust settle" while watching Soviet/CHICOM reactions, or expressed doubts that air strikes in the northeast quadrant actually obstructed and reduced the flow of men and materials to the south. Others questioned the effectiveness of the bombing program and advocated that it be cut back. Various alternative programs were suggested along these general lines, but this momentous question awaited the decision of the President himself.[32]

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31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 210430Z Jun 67, JCS IN 93233. (TS) Briefing for SecDef and CJCS, "Air Campaign in North Vietnam," 8 Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

32. (TS) Msg, JCS 3903-67 to CINCPAC, 25 May 67, JMF 9155 (18 Feb 65) ROLLING THUNDER 56 sec 17.

Chapter 42

LAUNCHING THE GENERAL OFFENSIVE: OPERATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, JANUARY-MAY 1967

General Westmoreland's Concept of Operations for 1967

Late in 1966 General Westmoreland predicted that the year 1967 would usher in a new phase of combat operations in South Vietnam--allied forces would go over to the offensive. In 1966, US/FWMAF and the RVNAF had successfully engaged in a holding action which had prevented a communist conquest of South Vietnam and, indeed, had made it impossible. This success, combined with the buildup of US/FWMAF, had set the stage for a general offensive.[1]

The "Combined Campaign Plan 1967," promulgated by COMUSMACV and the Chief of the JGS on 7 November 1966, provided the basic guidance to US/FWMAF and the RVNAF. The plan was not, however, a blueprint for final victory. It envisioned neither total defeat of all enemy forces nor control by the GVN over all the territory of South Vietnam. The objective of the plan was to "extend" the area controlled by the South Vietnamese Government and to win victories over VC/NVA units.

The military operations called for by the plan were all predicated on the basic assumption that "the people are the greatest asset to the enemy and control of the people is the enemy's goal." Military operations were designed, therefore, to deny the enemy access to the people and to food-producing areas. The plan designated National Priority Areas and Areas for Priority of Military Operations, within whose boundaries were included most of the population, food-producing areas, and lines of communication. The National Priority Areas were expansions of those in the 1966 Plan. Four in number and centered on the cities of Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Saigon, and the provinces of An Giang and Vinh Long in the Delta, they were concentrations of population singled out for intensive revolutionary development efforts. The Areas for Priority of Military Operations, which included

1. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 13 Oct 66, JCS IN 63249. Unless otherwise cited, this chapter is based on (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, Vol. I, pp. 349-558.

most of the remaining populated areas, were those areas where RVNAF and US/FWMAF would "focus" their operations to "destroy or drive the enemy into sparsely populated and food-scarce areas." These operations would also "insure the protection of the population, /and/ control of resources and . . . major lines of communications, all of which will facilitate follow-on revolutionary development."

The Combined Campaign Plan called for a general separation of areas of responsibility between the US/FWMAF and the RVNAF. The former were assigned the mission of attacking the enemy main forces, base areas, and supply systems and of separating the enemy main forces from the civilian population. The latter was assigned the task of supporting the revolutionary development program, defending government centers, and protecting national resources, particularly rice and salt. However, these assignments were primary and not exclusive ones. US and FWMA forces would be available to reinforce the RVNAF; the RVNAF General Reserve and Corps Reserve units would participate in operations against the enemy main force.[2]

The Antagonists

In planning operations for 1967, the MACV staff estimated that, while the enemy was no longer able to win a military victory, he still possessed a formidable force. MACV J-2 estimated that the total enemy strength in South Vietnam at the beginning of January was about 280,575. His reinforcement rate was 8,400 men per month by infiltration from North Vietnam and 3,500 by recruitment in South Vietnam. The enemy was able to sustain in South Vietnam a combat force of about 152 maneuver battalions. An additional two divisions and one regiment were deployed just over the northern border. These forces, according to MACV J-2, gave the enemy the following attack capabilities: in the DMZ area of I CTZ, with two divisions and one separate regiment; elsewhere in I CTZ, with a force roughly the equivalent of a division; in the border areas of II CTZ, with two divisions, and in the coastal areas, with forces roughly the equivalent of another division;

2. (S) Combined Campaign Plan, 1967 (AB 142), 7 Nov 66, cited in (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History 1967, Vol I, pp. 317-322.

in the III CTZ, with three divisions and one separate regiment; and in IV CTZ, in regimental strength.

To achieve his objective of gaining control over the population of South Vietnam, the enemy, according to the MACV J-2, would seek to wear down the will to resist of the free world forces and their governments by means of an "offensive-defensive" strategy credited to North Vietnamese Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap. This strategy called first for developing strong, multi-division forces, in dispersed regions and with access to supplies and to secure areas. Then RVNAF and US/FWMAF would be enticed into places where dug-in communist forces could inflict heavy casualties upon them; at the same time the enemy would conduct guerrilla and harassment operations throughout the country in order to tie down friendly forces.[3]

To oppose these enemy forces, Generals Westmoreland and Cao Van Vien, the Chief of the JGS, had at their disposal forces totalling 1,171,800--735,900 South Vietnamese forces of all types, 383,300 US forces, and 52,600 forces of other nations. The cutting edge of these forces consisted of 258 maneuver battalions, of which 153 were South Vietnamese, 82 were US, and 23 were from other countries. The relative strength of the opposing forces thus favored the free world side by about 4 to 1 in numbers and 3 to 1 in equivalent maneuver battalions. The latter ratio had been calculated according to the CINCPAC formula which rated one US/FWMAF battalion as equivalent to three SVN or NVA/VC battalions.[4]

This comparison of the relative combat strength of the antagonists on the basis of maneuver battalions did not, of course, take into account the very marked superiority of the friendly forces in air power. As of 1 January 1967, their several air forces deployed some 1,150 tactical strike aircraft on bases in South Vietnam and Thailand and on aircraft carriers in the Tonkin Gulf. Although there were many demands for missions by these aircraft--such as

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3. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 2 Jan 67, JCS IN 24930.

4. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) DIA/JCS Southeast Asia Military Fact Book, Jul 68, p. A-62; (S-GP 4) CINCPAC, Evaluation of Progress in Southeast Asia, Jan 67, pp. 1-2, JCS, RAIR Br.

ROLLING THUNDER, BARREL ROLL and STEEL TIGER--free world air forces early in 1967 were flying about 10,000 attack sorties per month in South Vietnam in support of ground troops.[5]

ARC LIGHT

In addition to the tactical aircraft, there were about 50 USAF B-52 strategic bombers stationed on Guam that were available to support General Westmoreland's operations under the ARC LIGHT program. At the beginning of 1967 the B-52 sortie rate in effect was 725 per month.[6]

During the early months of 1967, several steps were taken to improve the efficiency of ARC LIGHT operations. On 1 February, the sortie rate was raised to 800 per month. On 22 February President Johnson approved a JCS recommendation of 8 December 1966 to seek approval of the Thai Government to base B-52s at U Tapao, where the B-52s would be within 400 miles of their targets as compared to the 2,600 mile distance from Guam. When the Thai Government gave its approval on 2 March, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, on the same day, approved the start of the necessary construction to base 15 B-52s at U Tapao using currently available funds.[7]

Secretary McNamara, also on 2 March, expanded the authority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to approve ARC LIGHT strikes to include Laos and the DMZ south of the demarcation line. As in the case of the original authorization, which applied only to strikes in South Vietnam, the delegated authority was subject to certain conditions: strikes against targets in the DMZ required prior concurrence from the US Embassy in Saigon and the RVN; strikes in Laos required prior concurrence from the US Embassy in Vientiane and the Laotian Government; Washington authorities had to be informed of targets 24 hours in advance of strikes to

5. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) DIA/JCS, Southeast Asia Military Fact Book, Jan 67, pp. A-24, A-39, A-47.
6. See above, Ch. 34.
7. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, Vol II, pp. 685-694. (S-GP 3) Msg, Bangkok 11165 to State, 2 Mar 68, JCS IN 41885. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7903 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 2 Mar 67, JMF 9158 (24 May 66) sec 5.

permit deferral or cancellation if necessary. On 3 March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff delegated this newly acquired authority to CINCPAC and CINCSAC.[8]

CEDAR FALLS and JUNCTION CITY

Operations designed to destroy enemy base areas began in January and consisted primarily of two large-scale operations in III CTZ for the purpose of destroying two base complexes which the enemy had occupied for years and which he used to rest, resupply, and train his troops.

CEDAR FALLS, the first of these operations, was aimed at the "Iron Triangle," an area of some 60 square miles immediately northwest of Saigon. Intelligence reports indicated that elements of the 165th VC Regiment, the 9th VC Division, and the 1st NVA Division were in this area. More important, the Headquarters of VC Military Region 4, which controlled political, labor, and propaganda activities, as well as guerrilla operations in the Saigon/Cholon area, was reported to be located there. Destruction of this Headquarters became the primary objective of CEDAR FALLS.

As a preliminary to military operations, the entire civilian population was evacuated from the area of operations, which then became a specified strike zone in which field commanders were authorized to direct air strikes and artillery fires without clearance by higher authority.

The military phase of the operation began on 4 January, when B-52s began softening up the objective area preliminary to the assault of ground units. After four days of intensive bombardment, a multi-division force of 23 battalions, under operational control of the Commanding General, II FFORCEV, jumped off in the attack. Elements of the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions and the 11th Cavalry Regiment sealed off the objective area, while one reinforced battalion of the 1st Infantry Division launched an airmobile assault to seal and secure the village of Ben Suc, long considered to be a VC stronghold. There followed 17 days of methodical advance through the objective area.

8. (S-GP 3) Msgs, SecDef 7668 to JCS, 2 Mar 67; JCS 7757 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 3 Mar 67.

When CEDAR FALLS ended on 26 January, a total of 720 enemy had been reported killed, but of far greater significance was the discovery of a vast enemy underground city carved beneath the jungle floor. Behind narrow, well-camouflaged entrances, tunnels extended several hundred yards to rooms that had been used by the enemy for hospitals, mess halls, munitions factories, and living quarters. About 3,700 tons of rice--enough to feed 13,000 troops for a year--had also been destroyed.

JUNCTION CITY, an even larger assault on an enemy base area, began within a month of the conclusion of CEDAR FALLS. On 22 February a combined US/ARVN multi-division force of 36 battalions attacked War Zone C, a 150-square mile jungle-clad plateau 70 miles northwest of Saigon close to the border of Cambodia. According to intelligence reports, War Zone C sheltered not only enemy troops and base areas but also the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the North Vietnamese agency in command of operations in the south.

In the first of three planned phases of JUNCTION CITY, the US 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions, the US 173d Airborne Brigade, and two South Vietnamese Marine Battalions sealed off War Zone C on all sides. Extensive airmobile operations and a battalion-size airborne operation were employed in this phase. After the area had been sealed off, three battalions attacked northwest in search and destroy operations through the center of the zone. In spite of the magnitude of the friendly forces committed, only two major actions occurred during the first phase of JUNCTION CITY: a 12-hour fire fight between a US infantry battalion and an estimated enemy battalion on 28 February, and a coordinated mortar and ground assault by an unknown number of enemy on another US infantry battalion on the night of 10 March.

In the second phase of JUNCTION CITY, which began on 18 March, search and destroy operations were executed in the eastern portion of War Zone C. Enemy reaction in this phase was more severe than in the first phase. The enemy launched three separate regimental-size attacks on US formations of battalion size, but all were repulsed with heavy losses. The second phase drew to a close on 1 April, and was followed by a third phase in which a brigade-size force continued search and destroy missions.

JUNCTION CITY ended on 14 May. During the operation friendly forces counted a total of 2,728 enemy bodies, at

a cost of 282 killed and 1,576 wounded. In the course of the operation they discovered and destroyed 164 enemy base camps, one of which was capable of supporting a division. COSVN was not discovered.

Operations in II CTZ

In the coastal regions of II CTZ, meanwhile, the US 1st Cavalry Division and the ROK forces in the early months of 1967 scored notable successes in their mission of driving enemy main force units away from population centers. Operating in Binh Dinh Province in the northern part of the II CTZ, the 1st Cavalry Division conducted Operations THAYER II and PERSHING against elements of an NVA division. After a series of defeats, the enemy withdrew the bulk of his main force units into the mountains.

ROK forces at the same time had enjoyed comparable success. In Operation OH JAC KYO, the two ROK divisions linked up their separate TAORs and took over responsibility for the entire coastal region from Than Rang to a point 40 km north of Qui Nhon. Measuring about 60 km from north to south and 25 km from east to west, this area contained about 126,000 people. Following the linkup of their two divisions, the ROKs pushed ahead with operations designed to destroy enemy forces within the area of operations, to open Highway 1, and to deny the area to the enemy as a source of manpower and supplies.

The US 4th Infantry Division, meanwhile, was carrying the fight to enemy main force units in the Central Plateau area of II CTZ near the Cambodian border. On 1 January, the division jumped off in Operation SAM HOUSTON, a search and destroy and border surveillance operation aimed at two NVA divisions with an estimated combined strength of 9,300. During January, the US division did not encounter major enemy forces, but opposition stiffened during February and March. The major engagement of the operation occurred on 22 March, when one US battalion engaged an estimated enemy battalion near the Cambodian border. SAM HOUSTON ended on 5 April. Friendly casualties totaled 172 killed and 767 wounded; 733 enemy bodies were counted. In support of friendly ground troops, USAF pilots had flown 2,184 tactical and 213 ARC LIGHT sorties.9

9. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 80-67, 6 Apr 67, p. 1.

The Enemy Counterblows

Under the pressure of General Westmoreland's general offensive, the enemy reacted by taking actions apparently designed to relieve the pressure on his units throughout South Vietnam by compelling the redeployment of US and FWMA forces. Whether by accident or design, the enemy achieved precisely this result by massing forces along the DMZ and launching attacks against positions of the III MAF. Since the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces back across the DMZ in September 1966 following the heavy defeat inflicted upon them by the Marines in Operation HASTINGS, the area had become relatively quiet. Marine troop dispositions, however, remained oriented northward, in preparation for a renewal of the attack by the North Vietnamese forces massed north of the border. No fewer than 6 of the III MAF's 19 maneuver battalions remained deployed just south of the DMZ. The Marines also manned four artillery bases in the same area -- Camp Carroll, Cam Lo, Con Thien, and Gio Linh. As a result, Marine strength elsewhere in I CTZ became spread dangerously thin, for sizable enemy forces possessed the capability to attack not only across the DMZ but by flanking actions from Laos to Khe Sanh, or through the A Shau and Ba Long Valleys, and in the southern part of I CTZ. Enemy guerrillas were also a constant threat to poorly defended South Vietnamese villages and hamlets in the zone.

During January and February, the enemy stepped up guerrilla activity in the coastal plain, while the regular North Vietnamese forces built up supply points in North Vietnam, Laos, and the DMZ and generally improved their readiness to support offensive operations in South Vietnam.

In late February, large-scale combat erupted once again along the DMZ. It was the Marines, however, who fired the first rounds. On 22 February, President Johnson, at the same meeting at which he approved RT 54, authorized employment of land artillery and naval gunfire against NVN weapons firing on friendly forces from positions north of the demarcation line when necessary to insure preservation of US lives and equipment.[10]

10. (TS) Msgs, JCS 1422-67 and JCS 6957 to CINCPAC, 22 and 23 Feb 67.

Acting under the newly granted authorization, COMUSMACV, on 25 February, authorized CG, III MAF, to fire on military targets in the north of the DMZ. The purpose was to augment air strikes during periods of reduced visibility, to disrupt enemy lines of communication in the DMZ, and to protect long-range aerial reconnaissance by attacking suspected anti-aircraft positions. Beginning on 25 February and continuing for four days, Marine artillerists fired 2,171 rounds north of the demarcation line.

The enemy reacted sharply. On nine occasions during March, he attacked Marine artillery positions with rockets and mortars. The enemy also launched a two-battalion infantry assault against these positions, but the attack was intercepted by the Marines and thrown back with heavy losses. A total of 541 enemy bodies were counted in the area around Camp Carroll, Cam Lo, Con Thien and Gio Linh.[11]

Reinforcement of I CTZ

Intelligence reports, meanwhile, began to reveal a major enemy buildup in southern North Vietnam and areas of Laos bordering on the northwest corner of South Vietnam. Marine intelligence officers estimated enemy troop strength in and around the DMZ at 20,560, an increase since June 1966 of 3,780. Of particular concern was a major buildup in the A Shau Valley leading across the border from Laos toward Hue. General Westmoreland viewed these activities as preliminary to a major enemy offensive aimed at seizing the northern provinces of South Vietnam.

By 7 April, General Westmoreland was convinced that this enemy offensive was imminent. Accordingly, he put into effect Contingency Plan NORTH CAROLINA. This plan provided for creation of a division-size provisional organization, Task Force OREGON, to take over the Chu Lai area of I CTZ, thereby relieving Marine units for deployment to the threatened areas.

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11. (S-GP 2) FMF-PAC, Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, April 67, pp. 17-21, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 67. This monograph contains a summary of Marine operations during the period of July 1966-April 1967.

In planning the reinforcement of I CTZ by Task Force OREGON, Westmoreland took pains to disturb operations elsewhere as little as possible. He recognized, however, that there would be some lessening of the tempo of combat operations in II, III and IV CTZs. The most severe impact of the deployment was felt in II CTZ, where I FFORCEV was deprived of its reserve, a brigade of the 101st Airborne Division.[12]

Within a week, COMUSMACV concluded that additional reinforcement of I CTZ was necessary. On 12 April, he informed CINCPAC that he doubted whether the redeployments already set in motion would be "enough to decisively reverse the present trend," but that further redeployments of forces under his command were not feasible. He recommended, therefore, that the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade, based on Okinawa and constituting part of the PACOM reserve, reinforce III MAF as soon as possible, and that plans be made to keep it in the RVN at least until September.[13]

On 13 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after consulting CINCPAC, recommended to Secretary McNamara that he approve General Westmoreland's request. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended specifically that the two BLTs of the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade be positioned off the South Vietnamese coast, to be committed when and as required by General Westmoreland. The third BLT was to remain on Okinawa in a "readiness status of 15 days for embarkation" at his request. Mr. McNamara approved the JCS request on 15 April.[14]

The enemy attempted to launch his long-awaited assault in the area of the DMZ in late April. As later reconstructed by the Marines, the immediate enemy objective appeared to be the Khe Sanh combat base located near the western end of the DMZ. The enemy plan apparently called first for isolating the battlefield by launching mortar attacks on Marine artillery bases at Dong Ha, Gio Linh, Con Thien and Camp Carroll and by using demolitions to cut Route 9. By

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12. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 7 Apr 67, JCS IN 53337.

13. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 3474 to CINCPAC, 12 Apr 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 67.

14. (S-GP 4) JCSM-208-67 to SecDef, 14 Apr 67 (derived from JCS 2472/45); (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2843 to CINCPAC, 15 Apr 67; JMF 911/377 (14 Apr 67).

cutting Route 9, the enemy would deny Khe Sanh overland assistance A diversionary attack would then be launched at Lang Vei Special Forces Camp four miles west of Khe Sanh, to be followed by the main assault on Khe Sanh.

On 27 and 28 April, the enemy carried out the fire support and diversionary phases of the plan apparently on schedule. The main assault, however, had been triggered prematurely when a Marine patrol encountered enemy forces northwest of Khe Sanh on 24 April. It had soon become apparent that this was no skirmish between patrols but that large hostile forces were nearby. The Marines quickly airlifted three battalions into the area and assaulted the enemy on Hills 881, 881S, and 881N. After much hard fighting, the Marines gained the heights of the three hills by 3 May. The hills were fortified by the Marines and became key defensive positions when the enemy launched a much larger and more determined assault at Khe Sanh the following year.[15] Undeterred by the defeat at Khe Sanh, the enemy assaulted Con Thien with two battalions on 8 May but was again repulsed with heavy losses. Marine casualties in the Khe Sanh and Con Thien actions totaled 199 KIA and 535 WIA. The enemy left 1,137 bodies on the field.

The enemy, meanwhile, had been building up his artillery force in and north of the DMZ, and had intensified his fire on friendly forces. On 5 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to conduct military operations in the DMZ south of the demarcation line.[16]

With this authority, General Westmoreland directed the III MAF to invade the DMZ south of the demarcation line for the purpose of destroying enemy troops, equipment, and positions and to evacuate some 10,000 civilians living in the buffer zone. The III MAF, together with units of the ARVN, conducted these operations between 18 and 28 May, under the nicknames HICKORY, BEAU CHARGER, BELT TIGHT and LAMSON 54. Five Marine and five ARVN battalions took part. The attacking troops defeated dug-in enemy forces in a series of engagements, resulting in the temporary disruption of the enemy command organizations in the DMZ area, the destruction of many well-developed bunker complexes and

15. See Ch. 48 below.
16. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4549 to CINCPAC, 5 May 67.

artillery positions, the capture or destruction of large quantities of explosives and supplies, and the death of 787 enemy troops. Casualties suffered by friendly forces totaled 163 KIA and 1,012 WIA.[17]

General Westmoreland Requests Additional Forces

By the end of May, enemy efforts to invade the northern provinces of South Vietnam had been repulsed, at least for the time being. But the enemy, although thwarted in the north, had contributed to the disruption of offensive operations of free world forces elsewhere in South Vietnam. The redeployments made to reinforce positions on the DMZ had deprived commanders of troops urgently needed to fulfill their missions. Actually, even before this diversion of forces had taken place, the general offensive had bogged down. Forces available were simply not adequate to the task at hand. Major operations such as CEDAR FALLS and JUNCTION CITY had required the massing of from 25 to 30 battalions, which could not be spared from other tasks such as providing security for populated areas and LOCs. The result was that combat operations against enemy main forces and bases could not be sustained. The forces available were not even sufficient to maintain the neutralization of the Iron Triangle and War Zone C. Under the circumstances, the projected penetration of additional major enemy base areas such as War Zone D and the Do Xa was out of the question.[18]

To bring the capabilities of his forces into balance with their missions, General Westmoreland on 18 March submitted a request to Admiral Sharp for a reinforcement during FY 1968 of 2-1/3 divisions, two river assault squadrons, four tactical fighter squadrons, and one C-130 squadron. The minimum manpower required by such a reinforcement would be 80,576. These additional troops, General Westmoreland explained, constituted the "minimum essential force" necessary to exploit the successes of the current offensive and retain effective control of the areas being cleared of enemy main forces.

17. (S-GP 2) FMF-PAC, Operations of U.S. Marine Forces, Vietnam, May 1967, pp. 11-20, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 67.
18. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 4 May 67, JCS IN 79155.

In making this request, COMUSMACV pointed out that he had originally estimated the US force requirements for CY 1967 at a total personnel strength of 555,741 and 124 maneuver battalions. Under Program Four, however, the personnel figure had been reduced to 470,366 and the number of maneuver battalions to 87. He had not entered a reclama for his original program, General Westmoreland explained, because of the "adverse piaster impact and the realities of Service capabilities." A subsequent reassessment, however, had "indicated clearly that the Program Four Force, although enabling us to gain the initiative, will not permit sustained operations of the scope and intensity required to avoid an unreasonably protracted war." He was now, in effect, asking for approximately the level of forces he had originally requested for CY 1967.

The "minimum essential force," said COMUSMACV, might not satisfy all future requirements. "Looking ahead, it is entirely possible that /a need for/ additional forces, over and above the immediate requirements for 2 1/3 divisions will materialize." Current planning suggested an "optimum" reinforcement of 4-2/3 divisions, 10 tactical fighter squadrons and the full mobile riverine force. Personnel requirements for the optimum reinforcement would be 199,017. Added to the 470,366 personnel authorized under Program Four, the total US force would be 678,248.[19]

19. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 180403Z Mar 67, JCS IN 75713, JMF 907/372 (18 Mar 67) sec 1. The strength for the minimum essential and optimum forces stated in this message were 78,433 and 201,250. The figures given in the text were adjustments submitted in (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 28 Mar 67, JCS IN 93855. Supplemental Authorization had caused the Program 4 force level to rise to 479,231 by this date.

Chapter 43

THE DEBATE OVER ESCALATION

General Westmoreland's request for additional forces reached Washington at a time when dissatisfaction with the course of the war was growing in some quarters in the government -- dissatisfaction extending to the strategies governing operations in both North and South Vietnam. Introduced into this atmosphere, the request stirred the opponents of existing policy into positions of opposition not only to the specific manpower request but also to the current pattern of air operations against NVN. The result was a policy debate which was not resolved until July, when President Johnson finally decided both questions.

The JCS Views on Westmoreland's Request

The opening round in this policy debate was fired by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They began their consideration of COMUSMACV's request on 22 March, when General Wheeler directed the Joint Staff, with the assistance of the Services, to make a thorough analysis of it. The Joint Staff was to develop two separate cases, one assuming a Reserve call-up and the other assuming that Reserves would not be called. In an implementing directive issued three days later, the Vice Director, Joint Staff, added a new element to the study by calling for an updated "concept for the conduct of the war," if needed to validate the varied force requirements.[1]

1. (TS-GP 3) CM-2192-67 to D/JS, 22 Mar 67; (TS-GP 3) DJSM-374-67 to OpsDeps, 25 Mar 67; JMF 907/372 (18 Mar 67) sec 1. In this case, the CJCS initiated JCS action on the basis of an information copy of COMUSMACV's request to CINCPAC. CINCPAC recommended to the JCS approval of COMUSMACV's request on 31 March 1967. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 310825Z Mar 67, JCS IN 10326.

The J-3 in its report submitted on 13 April recommended approval not only of General Westmoreland's immediate request for reinforcements in FY 1968, but also recommended that preparation be made to provide the optimum force. Provision of forces of this magnitude, J-3 maintained, was necessary to "hasten the successful conclusion of the war in Southeast Asia." At the present levels, there were inadequate forces to accomplish the two basic military objectives; defeat of the enemy main force units, and provision of the security necessary for successful revolutionary development -- which, in turn, would permit the GVN to extend the area under its control. To achieve these objectives, "significantly greater military pressure, which is beyond the enemy's capability to accommodate or counter, must be imposed on the enemy in NVN and SVN in as short a time as possible."

To meet both immediate and ultimate force goals, the J-3 recommended a Reserve call-up and involuntary extension of terms of service as the only practical procedure. Without these actions, the deployment of the minimum essential force could not be completed until November 1969; the buildup of the optimum force could not be completed until July 1972. With the recommended personnel actions, the minimum essential force would be in place by the end of FY 1968; the optimum force would be deployed by July 1969.

Air Force planners did not concur in the J-3 report on the ground that, in its present form, it would "generate resistance and nonacceptance in those quarters from which acceptance is being sought." The two basic weaknesses in the J-3 report, the Air Force planners maintained, were: the inadequacy of the data resulting from the speed with which they had been assembled; and the undue emphasis on justification of the optimum force, rather than the minimum essential force specifically requested by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC.[2]

When the Joint Chiefs of Staff took up the J-3 report on 14 April, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, tabled a flimsy in which he objected to the report on more fundamental grounds. He challenged the basic premise that major force increases were needed.

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2. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2339/255-2, 13 Apr 67, JMF 907/372 (18 Mar 67) sec 3.

> I note with much concern that the paper . . . recommends that we prepare to add approximately 200,000 men to our strength in South Vietnam . . . . Since the decision was made to expand the role of the United States in South Vietnam beyond that of advisors, our troop strength has built to a size far in excess of that which was originally considered to be necessary. There is nothing in the current request for forces or in the paper under discussion that convinces me that the addition of the forces requested will bring about the desired result.

The preferable strategy, General McConnell maintained, was to make "effective application of our superior air and sea power against North Vietnam's vulnerabilities," and thereby "cripple his capabilities to continue to support the war and . . . destroy his resolution to continue." This strategy would also "reduce the need to match . . . /the enemy/ in manpower, . . . a condition most favorable to him." In view of the deteriorating situation in I Corps, however, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, gave his approval to provision of the minimum essential force and agreed to support any Reserve call-up needed to provide it. His support for this action, General McConnell emphasized, was "conditioned on the recommendation for an immediate expanded air and naval campaign against North Vietnam . . . ."[3]

General McConnell's views were favorably received by his colleagues, and resulted on 19 April in agreement to revise JCS views generally in accord with his position. These views went forward to the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum on 20 April. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended deployment of the minimum essential force, plus certain other air and naval units requested by CINCPAC, during FY 1968. The additional forces consisted of three USAF tactical fighter squadrons to be stationed in Thailand and an eight-inch gun cruiser and five destroyers for use in naval operations in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin. The units and approximate personnel strength recommended were as follows.

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3. (TS-GP 3) CSAFM-M-57-67 to JCS, 14 Apr 67, same file.

Unit	Approx. Strength	
Army		
1 division force	34,800	
1 armored cavalry regiment	4,100	
Support and augmentation	2,623	41,523
Marine Corps		
Augmentation III MAF	110	
1 div/wing team	43,723	43,833
Navy		
Mobile Riverine Afloat forces	2,074	
Surface forces (1 CA, 5DD)	2,564	
Support and augmentation	7,475	12,113
Air Force		
8 Tactical fighter squadrons	3,400	
1 CE squadron	600	
Support and augmentation	4,375	8,375
		105,844
Less PRACTICE NINE Force approved by SecDef 8 Apr 67		7,822
		98,022 [4]

4. The JCS recommended deployment of the Marine division/wing team in lieu of an Army division requested by CINCPAC. Deployment of the Army division rather than the Marine division/wing team would give a total force of 92,721. The JCS noted that the 7,822 spaces approved by SecDef on 9 April for PRACTICE NINE would apply against the forces recommended for FY 68. See Ch. 45 for discussion of PRACTICE NINE.

These additional forces were needed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff explained, because the existing force level in South Vietnam was not sufficient "to bring that degree of pressure to bear on the enemy through SVN which would be beyond his ability to accommodate and which would provide the secure environment, essential to sustained progress in Revolutionary Development." Primarily, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, reinforcements were needed to "offset the enemy's increased posture in the vicinity of the DMZ and to improve the environment for Revolutionary Development in I and IV CTZs."

To complete this buildup by the end of FY 1968, the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out, would be impossible under present military personnel policies and in the light of current worldwide commitments. They accordingly recommended a call-up of Reserves for a minimum of 24 months and involuntary extension of terms of service for 12 months. They also recommended that logistic support for the additional forces be provided by granting authority to reopen inactive installations in the CONUS and to draw the necessary equipment from sources in the following priority: CONUS depot assets and programmed production deliveries not committed to higher priority requirements; operational project stocks; Reserve components not scheduled for call-up; prepositioned equipment in Europe; nondeploying active units in the CONUS. An early decision on both the funding in addition to the FY 1968 budget and increases in end-year strength to support all aspects of the deployment of FY 1968 forces was also recommended. According to approximate calculations by the Services, the additional cost in FY 1968 for the Army, Navy and Marine Corps would be $2,207,000,000.[5]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also stated that, while the added forces "should provide an increased level of effort in both SVN and NVN, action must also be taken to reduce and obstruct the enemy capability to import the material support required to sustain his war effort."

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5. The Air Force did not submit a cost figure. The required end FY 1968 strength increase, estimated by the Navy and Marine Corps was 133,303. The Air Force estimated it would not require a force increase; the Army did not submit a figure.

By way of further justification for the stepped-up operations and the force increases recommended, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted an updated "Military Strategy for the Conduct of the War in Southeast Asia," which they recommended that the Secretary of Defense "approve in principle." This strategy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff explained, was designed to provide for military action in pursuit of the national objective with respect to Vietnam: "to attain a stable and noncommunist government in South Vietnam." The "military contribution" to the attainment of this objective should be in the form of operations: 1) "against the VC/NVA forces in SVN while concurrently assisting the South Vietnamese government in their nation-building efforts"; 2) to "obstruct the flow of men and materials from NVN to SVN"; and 3) to "obstruct and reduce imports of war sustaining materials into North Vietnam."

The appropriate "military contribution" would be complete with the attainment of the following "military objectives":

a. To make it as difficult and costly as possible for NVN to continue effective support of the VC and to cause NVN to cease direction of the VC insurgency.

b. To defeat the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Armed Forces in SVN and force the withdrawal of NVA forces.

c. To extend Government of South Vietnam dominion, direction, and control over South Vietnam.

d. To deter the Chinese Communists from direct intervention in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the Western Pacific and to be prepared to defeat such intervention if it occurs.

To achieve "a," an integrated air and naval campaign should be conducted against military and war-sustaining target systems in all areas of North Vietnam and should include intensive interdiction and mining of ports and inland and coastal waters in order to disrupt military operations and obstruct the movement of men and materiel from North Vietnam into South Vietnam and Laos. To achieve "b," ground and supporting air operations should be conducted to destroy enemy main force units, base areas and safe havens, to deny him access to the population and food resources, and to block enemy invasion or infiltration

from cross-border sanctuary areas. To achieve "c," military operations should be conducted to destroy enemy guerrillas and infrastructure, to open lines of communication, to advise and train friendly military and paramilitary forces, and to protect those engaged in the Revolutionary Development Program. To achieve "d," US forces and bases in the Western Pacific and Thailand should be maintained and improved, and the capability to employ nuclear weapons should be maintained.

By including these recommendations on "strategy" and on "increased level of effort," the Joint Chiefs of Staff introduced into the debate over force levels at the outset not only the narrow question concerning operations over North Vietnam but also the broad question of the appropriate military policy and strategy to be pursued in the conduct of the war as a whole.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also explained to Mr. McNamara that both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC had indicated that there might later be a requirement for an additional 2-1/3 division equivalents and 5 more tactical fighter squadrons. An evaluation of these additions, together with an examination of the "ultimate requirement for forces needed to achieve a satisfactory conclusion of the war," would be supplied later.[6]

On 19 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to broaden the study to include all forces needed to deal successfully with foreseeable contingencies throughout the world. Approval of a Reserve call-up to provide COMUSMACV's minimum FY 1968 force would invite whatever popular displeasure a mobilization of Reserves would arouse. Having paid the political price, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reasoned, they might as well request a call-up large enough to provide all reasonable worldwide force requirements.

The following day, General Wheeler directed the Joint Staff to begin the necessary studies. In preparing them, the Chairman directed, the Joint Staff should not plan total mobilization of the World War II type, but should provide for the establishment of a training and production base which would ensure the capability to generate expeditiously the forces needed for expanded operations in Southeast Asia and at the same time to honor commitments to NATO. General Wheeler listed the following as

6. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-218-67 to SecDef, 20 Apr 67 (derived from JCS 2339/255-3, JMF 907/372 (18 Mar 67) sec 4.

contingencies that might call for additional commitments of US forces: 1) provision of Soviet or other "volunteer" military units to North Vietnam; 2) an increase of tensions or even low-level military action between North and South Korea; 3) an increase in tensions in central Europe, perhaps centering around Berlin, to a degree that would force the United States to reinforce NATO; 4) overt military intervention by Communist China in the conflict in South Vietnam.[7]

From the outset disagreements among the Services and between the Services and the Joint Staff plagued the preparation of recommendations on force levels to meet worldwide contingencies. The initial effort, submitted by J-5 on 1 May, contained a calculation that the total force requirements to meet the goals established by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, would be 29 Army division force equivalents (DFE), 146 Air Force tactical fighter squadrons (TFS), 17 Navy attack carriers, and 5/4 Marine division/wing teams. Air Force planners entered a nonconcurrence to these force requirements. Repeating the arguments advanced during the debate over COMUSMACV's request for a minimum essential force, Air Force planners maintained that the tremendous costs of the proposed force increase could be avoided by removing restrictions on air and naval attacks on North Vietnam. The J-5 pointed out, however, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in their memorandum of 20 April, had recommended such intensified air and naval operations. Should such operations be carried out, the possibility of retaliatory actions around the world by Communist China and the Soviet Union would make an increase in force levels particularly necessary. On 3 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the J-5 report and the Air Force nonconcurrence and returned them to the Joint Staff and the Service planners for revision.[8]

The revised report, submitted on 11 May, adopted a different set of force goals and as a result recommended more modest force objectives than the ones contained in the initial paper. The desired military posture was now considered to be one that would provide forces with the capability to:

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7. (S-GP 3) CM-2255-67 to D/JS, 20 Apr 67, Att to JCS 2101/538-1, 22 Apr 67, JMF 372 (18 Mar 67).

8. (TS-GP 4) JCS 2101/538-3, 1 May 67; (C) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2101/538-3," 3 May 67, JMF 372 (18 Mar 67).

a. Prepare, deploy, and sustain FY 1968 forces to COMUSMACV and PACOM.

b. Restore and maintain NATO forces, NATO initial augmentation forces and pre-positioned stocks.

c. Provide a contingency/initiative force of three DFEs/10 TFSs size. This force, while available for use in any emergency, would primarily be for use in Southeast Asia.

d. Maintain a ready force of one DFE and three TFSs for minor contingencies.

Under existing tour-of-duty policies, the "contingency/initiative" force would have to be free of men who had returned from Vietnam within 25 months if the force were to be instantly available for deployment. Under this condition, attainment of the desired force posture would require 25-2/3 DFEs, 120 Air Force TFSs, and 5/4 Marine division/wing teams. To attain this force objective five Army and one Marine Reserve divisions would have to be called up.

The revised paper also called for a relaxation of restrictions on air and naval operations against North Vietnam. It did not, however, specify what specific restrictions should be removed nor what specific operations should be conducted.

These changes did not meet all the Air Force objections to the original report. Once again the Air Force entered a nonconcurrence on the same general grounds as before. It did not, however, rule out any increase in forces. At present, a buildup sufficient to achieve the capability to carry out the JSOP 69-76 strategy was justified, the Air Force maintained. If the Southeast Asia conflict became "an unduly protracted war of attrition due to continuation of constraints," then some add-ons to the JSOP levels might be required. Force levels acceptable to the Air Force were 21-2/3 DFEs, 105 TFs, 16 attack carriers, and 5/4 division/wings.

The Army also entered a nonconcurrence, objecting to the returnee-free element of the "contingency/initiative force" on the ground that it would impose unreasonable demands upon the force structure because any contingency for which it would be

required would be so grave as to justify waiving current tour policies.[9]

At a meeting on 12 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff adopted the Army view and decided not to recommend establishment of a "contingency/initiative force" free of recent returnees from Southeast Asia. As a result, the required Army force level dropped from 25-2/3 to 22-2/3 DFEs.

The Chief of Staff, Air Force, withdrew his nonconcurrence on 19 May and agreed to force levels of 22-2/3 DFEs and 120 TFSs for the Army and Air Force. General McConnell still maintained, however, that the Navy should have only 16 attack carriers rather than the 17 advocated by the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Rather than continue debate over this one ship, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to forward split views. On 20 May, they forwarded a memorandum containing these views to the Secretary of Defense. In addition to the recommended force levels, they called for a selective Reserve call-up and extension of tour of duty for 12 months, but did not specify the size of the call-up. They did, however, recommend provision of forces in the four categories proposed in the J-5 report: FY 1968 forces for PACOM and MACV; augmentation forces for NATO; a "contingency/initiative" force primarily for use in Southeast Asia; and a ready force for minor contingencies.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Mr. McNamara that the potential of the Services to equip these forces was fairly high, but, under present procedures, the required materiel posture would not be achieved by the Army until 1970 and by the Air Force until 1971. The Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly recommended the delegation of increased authority to the Services for accelerated procurement, including authority to negotiate noncompetitive, cost-reimbursable contracts and to initiate procurement of necessary long lead-time materiel items.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also pointed out that they had "reservations concerning the ability of the United States /under present policies/ to (1) prosecute the war in Southeast Asia decisively, (2) respond to likely contingencies stemming from the war in Southeast Asia, and (3) meet other world-wide military commitments and contingencies." In Southeast Asia

9. (TS-GP 4) JCS 2101/538-4, 11 May 67; (S) Note to Control Div, "JCS 2101/538-4," 12 May 67, same file, sec 2.

"application of US power . . . incrementally and with restraint, has inhibited the effective exploitation of the superiority of US military forces and allowed the enemy to accommodate to the military measures taken." As a result, NVN was now fielding a force in South Vietnam consisting of 68 North Vietnamese and 85 Viet Cong infantry-type battalions and had massed at least three, and probably four, regular divisions near the DMZ. The North Vietnamese were becoming increasingly aggressive, and enemy supply lines, both into NVN and from North to South Vietnam remained open. The Joint Chiefs of Staff maintained that as the war in Southeast Asia dragged on and as US military capabilities increasingly became committed to it, the probability of Communist aggression elsewhere would be greater. An advance by North Vietnamese forces in Laos to the Mekong River, a flare-up in Korea, increased support by Thai Communist insurgents, pressure against Berlin, or subversion in North Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America could be expected.

With its present military posture the United States could not adequately respond to most of these contingencies. In March of FY 1968, the immediate combat-ready strategic reserve would consist of 1-2/3 Army divisions, 2 Marine division/wing teams, nonforward-deployed Navy forces, and 5 Air Force TFSs -- all with little or no sustaining capability.

Turning to the measures needed to bring the war in Southeast Asia to a successful conclusion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a relaxation of the restrictions and restraints governing operations against North Vietnam. They requested authority to strike 23 additional targets: 8 ports and port approaches, 5 airfields, 1 railroad/highway bridge, and 9 military complexes. They also recommended changes in ROLLING THUNDER operating rules to: delete the 10-nm radius Prohibited Area around Hanoi; reduce the Hanoi Restricted Area from 30 to 10 nm; reduce the Haiphong Restricted Area from 10 to 4 nm; and move the southern boundary of the Special Coastal Armed Reconnaissance Area from 20° 42' N to 20° 48' N.[10]

On the same day, in a separate memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff elaborated on the need for intensified interdiction efforts in North Vietnam. In this communication, the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the

10. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-288-67 to SecDef, 20 May 67 (derived from JCS 2101/538-5), JMF 372 (18 Mar 67) sec 3.

North Vietnamese had increased imports from 800,000 metric tons in 1964 to more than 1,365,000 metric tons in 1966. There was also a real danger that the Soviet Union might introduce new weapons into the country. These weapons could include improved antiaircraft and surface-to-air missiles, guided missile patrol boats, surface-to-surface missiles, and a variety of artillery and direct fire weapons. They could be imported from the Soviet Union by rail across China, by air, or by sea. To date, the major volume of military supplies had entered by sea through the port of Haiphong, which, along with Hanoi, comprised the major logistic base area in North Vietnam.

To impede the flow of war materials into NVN, the Hanoi/Haiphong base should be neutralized, an operation which could be accomplished by direct attack or, preferably, by cutting its lines of communication, thus minimizing civilian casualties. Essential to such an interdiction would be the denial of Haiphong port to shipping. The Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed to accomplish this by "shouldering out" foreign shipping by a series of air attacks starting at the periphery of the port area and gradually moving closer to the center; these attacks would be followed by mining of the harbor and its approaches.

At the same time intensive attacks should be launched against the road, rail, air, and remaining sea routes into NVN, so that no part of the North Vietnamese LOC system would be able to function freely. Of particular importance to the success of such a campaign would be the interdiction of the northeast railroad to China, the ports of Cam Pha and Hon Gai, and the eight major operational air fields, only three of which were currently authorized for attack.

Under current authorizations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out, the pattern of attacks on Haiphong had begun with strikes on two thermal power plants, a cement plant and restrikes on petroleum and storage facilities. To continue the pattern they now proposed "sequential and continuing attacks" as follows:

a. Haiphong RR Yds W; Area C (Shipyard #1), Area D (Naval Base), Target 70, Haiphong port.

b. Haiphong RR Yd/Shops; Area A (Shipyard #1), Area F (Shipyard #2), and Area G (Shipyard North), Target 70, Haiphong port.

c. Target 70, Haiphong port (all elements) and mining of the harbor . . . .

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized that Russian ships would be endangered by these operations, but they did not expect that an "active confrontation" with the Soviet Union would result. They believed Soviet reaction would be limited to diplomatic protests and possible suspension of current diplomatic negotiations such as the ones on the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and the proposed freeze on antiballistic missile and intercontinental ballistic missile deployment.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to Secretary McNamara that "as a matter of urgency" the program they had outlined be authorized. Attacks should begin soon in order to take advantage of the favorable May-September weather season. They requested that Mr. McNamara bring their views to the attention of the President.[11]

Free World Countries as Sources of Additional Forces

In the course of examining the force level, the Joint Staff had considered but rejected third countries as sources of significant additional forces. General Wheeler presented this conclusion to Secretary McNamara on 24 May. The "present world political climate," he explained, made additional forces difficult to obtain, and such forces as were being made available would, in most cases, "supplement but not substitute" for US force deployments.[12]

At this time, there were only three firm offers of additional forces: the Australian offer of December 1966 of a light bomber squadron, a guided-missile destroyer, and a small reinforcement to ground forces already in South Vietnam; a New Zealand offer of a rifle company, made on 7 March; and a Thai offer of an RCT made on 30 December 1966. The New Zealand offer, like the one from Australia, resulted from the affirmation of public support for a policy of active participation in the Vietnamese war. The Thai offer stemmed from the

11. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-286-67 to SecDef, 20 May 67 (derived from JCS 2472/50-2), JMF 912/432 (23 Feb 67).
12. (TS-GP 3) CM-2377-67 to SecDef, 24 May 67, Att to JCS 2472/56-2, JMF 907/372 (26 Apr 67).

realization that Thailand had been marked as the next target of the Communists, and reflected the policy of the government to resist Communist aggression when it was still at a distance from Thailand.[13]

The Australian and New Zealand forces presented no major problems. Neither government expected a quid pro quo in return for the provision of forces. They expected only normal logistic support from US sources. The Thais, on the other hand, requested and received US support for their force in addition to the level of support already being provided the Thai armed forces by the United States under MAP. The Department of Defense authorized Service funding support for equipment and facilities used by the unit in South Vietnam, and for overseas allowances. Agreements were similar to those entered into to support the original Korean forces sent to South Vietnam. The size and composition of the Thai forces were worked out by US and Thai officers in Bangkok and given final approval by MACV at a conference in Saigon on 15 March. As finally agreed, the TO&E provided for a 2,207-man RCT consisting of four rifle companies, a field artillery battery, and supporting elements.[14]

Counterproposals by OSD - The DPM of 19 May

General Westmoreland's request for reinforcements, and persistent and widespread doubts among civilian officials as to value of operations against NVN, resulted in a DPM. The DPM, prepared by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), Mr. McNaughton, included a wide-ranging analysis of policy and strategy as well as the question of reinforcements.

The first rough draft of this document was completed on 19 May, the day before the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded their views on mobilization to meet worldwide dangers and on air and naval operations against North Vietnam. The JCS views recommending approval of General Westmoreland's request for a "minimum essential force," however, had been in the hands of the Office of the Secretary of Defense for nearly a month.

13. (S) Msg, Wellington 1735 to State, 7 Mar 67. (U) Msg, Bangkok 8316 to State, 4 Jan 67, quoted in (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, p. 266.

14. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 248-250, 253-255, 266-268.

Assistant Secretary McNaughton put forward two alternate courses of action, A and B, which he proceeded to evaluate according to his view of US interests and objectives in Asia. In expounding his view, Mr. McNaughton equivocated on the fundamental question of the danger of Chinese Communist expansionism.

> There is an honest difference of opinion as to whether China as a major power . . . threatens to undercut our importance and effectiveness in the world and, . . . to organize the peoples and resources of all Asia against us. US policy is based upon a belief that China or a Chinese coalition (mainly with Japan) might do this and that the potential weight of such a coalition could throw us on the defensive and threaten our security. At the same time, we must note that most US Asian experts believe that China's history, current troubles, interests and capabilities do not make her a significant military threat outside certain fairly limited geographical areas.

Mr. McNaughton also questioned whether US intervention in South Vietnam had been intended to contain China. "To the extent that our original intervention and our existing actions were motivated by the perceived need to draw the line against Chinese expansionism, our objective has already been attained . . . ." But this was not our minimum objective, or commitment in Vietnam. "Our commitment," he said, "is only to see that the peoples of South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future. This commitment ceases if the country ceases to help itself."

On the basis of this view of US interests and objectives, Mr. McNaughton proceeded to analyze the two military courses of action. Course A, which he claimed represented the military point of view, was to grant General Westmoreland's request for 200,000 additional troops and intensify military operations outside SVN, especially against NVN. The 200,000-man reinforcement would be furnished in two equal installments in FY 1968 and FY 1969. There would probably be requests for further force increases later to fulfill the "JCS ultimate requirement for Vietnam and associated world-wide contingencies." Accompanying the force buildup would be "greatly intensified military actions outside South Vietnam -- including Laos and Cambodia but particularly against the North."

Course B was to limit force increases to no more than 30,000 men, to avoid extending the conflict beyond the borders of SVN, and to limit bombing of North Vietnam to the area south of the 20th Parallel.

Turning to an analysis of the two courses of action, Mr. McNaughton opted for "B." Proponents of "A," he contended, all believed that large deployments were necessary to end the war quickly, but none of them believed they were necessary to avoid defeat and few believed they were required to "do the military job in due course." There were serious drawbacks to "A." The US buildup would lead to offsetting counter-buildup by the enemy, and even if there was no counter-buildup the added US forces were unlikely to "make a meaningful military difference," because the enemy could make pacification very difficult "without regard to the size of US forces." At home, the extended enlistments and Reserve call-ups would lead to divisive debate and, if the force buildup was carried out, to irresistible pressure for expanding the war to Cambodia and Laos and other areas outside SVN. Turning to the expanded bombing of North Vietnam provided by "A," Mr. McNaughton contended it would fail because the North Vietnamese would simply accept the punishment inflicted and relocate resources to maintain the flow of men and materiel to the South. Even if this estimate proved wrong and extended attacks were militarily effective, they should not be undertaken because of the risk of Soviet retaliation and the adverse public reaction at home and abroad.

Course "B," the Assistant Secretary maintained, was predicated on the existence of a military stalemate which could not be broken by large additional deployments. It called for continued military pressure combined with pacification efforts to improve the negotiating environment. These measures would be accompanied by intensified diplomatic efforts with "a view to finding a compromise involving, inter alia, a role in the South for members of the VC."[15]

15. (TS-GP 1) Draft Memorandum for the Pres, "Future Actions in Vietnam," 19 May 67, Encl to JCS 2472/72, 22 May 67, JMF 911/300 (19 May 67).

JCS and Service Views of the DPM and Related Issues

Secretary McNamara apparently discussed the DPM with President Johnson informally at some time prior to 22 May and received an unfavorable reaction. At any rate, Mr. McNamara evidently believed that the issues raised in the DPM required further study. On 20 May he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretaries of the Air Force and Navy, and the Director of Central Intelligence to analyze alternative programs for the bombing of North Vietnam: 1) concentrate on LOCs in the panhandle area roughly south of 20°; 2) terminate bombing of fixed targets not directly associated with LOCs in the northeast around Hanoi and Haiphong and expand armed reconnaissance by authorizing strikes on all lines of communications except within eight-mile radii of Hanoi and Haiphong.[16]

Before he received a reply to this request, on 22 May the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their views on the draft DPM. The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied to this latter request on 1 June. They stated that their views had been misrepresented in the DPM. "The combination of force levels, deployments, and military courses of action do not accurately reflect the positions or recommendations of COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff." Their views were contained in their memorandums of 20 April and 20 May.

Addressing themselves to Mr. McNaughton's preferred Course B, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found its prescription for the war in the South deficient in that it recommended a force structure that would not permit an early end to the war on acceptable terms, would provide little capability for initiative action, would downgrade the Revolutionary Development program, and would result in abandoning the Delta to the Viet Cong.

With respect to the Course B strategy for the campaign against NVN, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that it was based on the fallacious "funnel" theory that all supplies flowing from North to South Vietnam must pass through the

16. (TS-GP 1) Interv, Kenneth W. Condit with BGEN Robert N. Ginsburgh, USAF, CSG, 24 Jan 69; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al, 20 May 67, Att to JCS 2472/71, 22 May 67, JMF 912/323 (20 May 67) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2472/72, 22 May 67, JMF 911/300 (19 May 67).

narrow portion of North Vietnam south of 20° N. In fact, the communists supplied their forces in South Vietnam from all sides. To restrict bombing to the area south of 20° N would not permit effective interdiction. It would relieve North Vietnam of military pressure; it would be looked upon as a sign of weakness on the part of the United States; and it would strengthen the resolve of the enemy to continue the war.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also disagreed with the statement of objectives in the DPM. To limit US objectives merely to guaranteeing the right of self-determination to RVN, was not only inconsistent with current US policy and objectives, as expressed in NSAM 288 and numerous public statements, but failed "to appreciate the full implications for the Free World of failure to achieve a successful resolution of the conflict in Southeast Asia." Further, it would "undermine and no longer provide complete rationale for our presence in South Vietnam," and might render untenable the positions of the more than 35 nations supporting the Republic of Vietnam.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly recommended that:

a. The DPM NOT be sent.

b. The US national objective as expressed in NSAM 288 be maintained, and the national policy and objectives for Vietnam as publicly stated by US officials be reaffirmed.

c. The military objective, concept, and strategy for the conduct of the war as stated in JCSM-218-67 /JCS views of 20 April on COMUSMACV's 'minimum essential force'/ be approved by the Secretary of Defense.17

On 2 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued the exposition of their views on military strategy by forwarding to Mr. McNamara their reply to his 20 May request for an analysis of alternate strategies for air operations against North Vietnam. After examining the Secretary's two alternatives and a third one of their own, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that the strategy they had recommended in their two memorandums of 20 May represented "the most effective war to successfully prosecute the air and naval campaign against North Vietnam."

17. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-307-67 to SecDef, 1 Jun 67, Encl to JCS 2472/72-2, 29 May 67, JMF 911/300 (19 May 67).

The Joint Chiefs of Staff judged Alternative I, which would in effect restrict bombing to the area south of 20° N, to be undesirable because it 1) would not appreciably reduce the flow of men and materiel to the south, 2) would reduce the pressure on the North Vietnamese economy and logistic system, 3) would not appreciably reduce US losses, and 4) would be judged as evidence of weakening US resolve to press on with the war.

Alternative II, if executed without attacking ports, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found also to be undesirable. Although attacks on airfields and land LOCs to China could be carried out, failure to close the ports would allow the enemy to meet his import requirements by sea. Extending Alternative II to include attacks on the ports would reduce the level of enemy imports, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded, but would still be inadequate because it did not exert military pressures simultaneously on North Vietnamese military and industrial installations.

To Mr. McNamara's two alternatives, the Joint Chiefs of Staff added Alternative III, which was also different from the proposal made in their memorandums of 20 May. The new plan called for attacks everywhere in North Vietnam except within eight nm of the center of Hanoi and two nm of the center of Haiphong. Mining of deep-water approaches to ports north of 20° N or in waters contiguous to commercial wharves would also be prohibited. This plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded, would allow the desired coordinated air campaign, but it would not accomplish the essential task of restricting imports into NVN.

Comparing the alternatives, the Joint Chiefs of Staff rated them in the following order: 1) the JCS plan of 20 May; 2) Alternative II, including ports; 3) Alternative III; 4) the status quo; 5) Alternative II, excluding ports; 6) Alternative I.[18]

The Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Harold Brown, in his reply to Mr. McNamara's request for an evaluation of two alternatives, formed many of the same judgments as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but reached a different conclusion. He agreed with the

18. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-312-67 to SecDef, 2 Jun 67 (derived from JCS 2472/71-3), JMF 912/323 (20 May 67) sec 1. For the bombing program then in progress, see Ch. 41.

Joint Chiefs of Staff adverse evaluation of Alternative I and Alternative II without attacks on ports. He also agreed with their views on the military aspects of closing the ports, but he rejected such a move because of the political risks involved. He concluded that a continuation of the present program, modified to permit striking LOCs within eight nm of Hanoi and Haiphong and adding a few more targets such as the Red River Bridge at Hanoi, represented the optimum course.[19]

In his reply on 2 June, the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Paul Nitze, differed from Mr. Brown and the Joint Chiefs of Staff by concluding that Alternative I was preferable to both versions of Alternative II. Set up either to exclude or include bombing attacks on the ports (but not mining), the latter alternative was considered by Mr. Nitze to be prohibitively expensive in terms of the number of aircraft that he believed would be lost. The first alternative, on the other hand, would result in a substantially smaller loss of aircraft and would tend to "leave the enemy with fewer options for maintaining supply flow to SVN than does the concentration of bombing in areas farther removed from the area of supply consumption."[20]

The Revised DPM of 12 June

With all these views in hand, Assistant Secretary McNaughton on 12 June produced a new DPM. This document, which was limited to consideration of military actions against NVN, described three alternatives which had gained some support:

A. Intensified attack on the Hanoi-Haiphong logistic base, recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

B. Emphasis on infiltration routes south of 20° N, recommended by Secretaries McNamara, Vance, and Nitze.

C. Extension of the present program, recommended by Secretary Brown.

19. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 3 Jun 67, Att to JCS 2472/71-4, 14 Jun 67, same file, same sec.
20. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecN to SecDef, "Alternative Bombing Programs in North Vietnam," 2 Jun 67, Att to JCS 2472/85, 6 Jun 67, same file, sec 2.

In defending the recommendation to pursue course B, Mr. McNaughton analyzed the three courses in terms of the objectives of operations against North Vietnam: 1) to raise morale of the South Vietnamese and the US troops in action in South Vietnam; 2) to add to the pressure on Hanoi to end the war; and 3) to reduce the amount and increase the cost of infiltration from NVN to South Vietnam. Measuring course A by these three criteria, he stated that, although the bombing of NVN had raised morale in the South, it did not follow that a significant escalation of bombing would further improve morale. With respect to increasing pressure on Hanoi, Mr. McNaughton believed that the North Vietnamese had "written off" all assets and lives that might be destroyed by US military actions short of occupation or annihilation. So far as interdiction was concerned, Mr. McNaughton claimed that enemy forces in South Vietnam required only 25 tons of supplies per day from NVN, a figure representing less than .2 percent of North Vietnamese import capability of 14,000 tons per day and .5 percent of the approximately 5,300 tons per day actually imported.

It followed, the Assistant Secretary contended, that "neither Alternative A nor any other combination of actions against the North, short of destruction of the regime or occupation of North Vietnamese territory will . . . reduce the flow of men and material below the relatively small amount needed by enemy forces to continue the war in the South." Even if all these arguments proved wrong, the danger of Soviet or Chinese counteractions and the adverse effect on US and world opinion rendered Course A unacceptable. Alternative C, he contended, possessed the same weaknesses as Alternative A.

Turning to Alternative B, Mr. McNaughton conceded that it "probably would not effectively stop, or even substantially reduce," the infiltration of materiel from the North, and it "might cause serious psychological problems among the men, officers, and commanders on our side." Alternative B would, however, be popular in the United States and around the world. It would also result in fewer aircraft and pilot losses, assuming no shift of air defenses by the enemy. Whether there would or would not be such a shift was "not clear."

The primary argument for Alternative B, said Mr. McNaughton, was that it recognized that "the outcome of the war hinges on what happens in the South, that neither military defeat nor military victory is in the cards there no matter which alternative is chosen against the North." It was therefore "designed to

improve the negotiating environment by combining continued progress in the South . . . with a restrained program against the North."[21]

Four days later, on 16 June, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, was hastily called to the White House to brief the President on the bombing of NVN. General Wheeler spoke from a talking paper recently prepared by the Joint Staff which forcefully supported the pattern of operations recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 20 May. These operations, according to the paper, were the most effective way to prosecute the air and naval campaign against North Vietnam and could possibly be decisive. The operations would bring increasing pressure to bear on the enemy by: depriving him of critical sanctuary areas for governmental, industrial, and military support operations; creating popular unrest by forcing diversion of resources from civilian to military uses; forcing allocation of manpower to reconstruction and dispersal programs; and raising the cost of support from Communist China and the Soviet Union.

The operations recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff would also create a level of interdiction which, if not decisive, could, when combined with action in South Vietnam, cause the enemy to "recalculate his profit and loss." Whether or not interdiction could reduce North Vietnamese imports to critical levels could not be determined from the insufficient and inaccurate data available, but the strenuous efforts by the North Vietnamese to resupply during Tet suggested that the NVN supply capabilities were not greatly in excess of requirements.

With regard to the criticisms made by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) in the DPM of 12 June, the Joint Staff argued that military pressure could reduce the will of NVN to continue the war: "Anyone who says that 'pain only increases the will to fight' can only speak from ignorance of the battlefield." By way of proof, the paper cited a French source to the effect that the bombing was causing a deterioration of morale in Hanoi so serious as to constitute a definite breakdown in order. It also cited an interview with a North Vietnamese interrogatee who stated that the people were beginning to doubt seriously the Hanoi regime's claims of inevitable victory.

21. (TS) Draft Memo for Pres, "Alternative Military Actions Against North Vietnam," 12 Jun 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 67.

Citing an evaluation by the CIA, the Joint Staff maintained that there was little danger of Soviet retaliation outside Vietnam for the operations proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. If the Soviets did, in fact, apply such pressures, then Secretary Brown's proposal for a refinement of the present bombing program could be adopted. So far as the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) bombing proposal was concerned, however, it was totally lacking in military or political merit.[22]

The Presidential Decisions

The policy debate on force levels and operations against North Vietnam, which had dragged on since 18 March, moved swiftly to a conclusion following a visit by Mr. McNamara, General Wheeler, and Under Secretary of State Katzenbach to South Vietnam in early July. At a briefing in Saigon on the 11th, Mr. McNamara informed General Westmoreland there would be no Reserve call-up; however, the Administration did want to meet his requirement for additional troops but at the minimum cost in personnel spaces.

The COMUSMACV staff had worked up such an approach as an alternative to the "minimum essential force" originally requested on 18 March and now presented it. Consisting of five "packages," this plan proposed an addition of 16 maneuver battalions and various supporting units to the forces already authorized for MACV under Program 4 at a total personnel cost of 42,000 spaces. This had been achieved by a vigorous pruning of existing MACV organizations to eliminate unnecessary spaces and by counting the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade as part of the permanent MACV forces but not counting its personnel spaces against the MACV total. This unit, which was the PACOM reserve, had already been deployed to Vietnam but was still carried as part of the PACOM, rather than the MACV, force structure. When added to the forces already in Vietnam or authorized for movement under Program 4, these proposals would bring total strength of MACV to 525,000.[23]

For the benefit of the visiting dignitaries there was also a briefing on the operations against North Vietnam, given by the commanders responsible for conducting them, Admiral

22. (S) TP "Alternative Military Actions Against North Vietnam," 16 Jun 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 67.
23. (S) CM-2499-67 to JCS, 12 Jul 67, JMF 911/374 (12 Jul 67) sec 1.

Sharp, Lieutenant General William Momyer, Commanding General, Seventh Air Force, and Vice Admiral John Hyland, Commander, Seventh Fleet. All the briefers recommended strongly that air operations not only be continued but be expanded. The enemy was now beginning to feel the full effects of the air campaign and was being hurt, they contended. The United States should intensify the pressure during the next few months of good weather to bring about a change in the attitude of the enemy. General Momyer, in a briefing which subsequently assumed particular importance, pointed out in some detail how Seventh Air Force had successfully dealt with enemy air defenses and seriously disrupted traffic on the important Northeast Railroad to China.[24]

Upon returning to Washington, Secretary McNamara, General Wheeler, and Under Secretary Katzenbach were called to the White House to report on their trip. Also present were Secretary Rusk, Director of Central Intelligence Helms, General Taylor, and Mr. Rostow, Mr. Christian and Mr. Komer of the White House staff. In the discussion, it was brought out that all the field commanders favored expansion of the bombing of North Vietnam. When called upon, General Wheeler made a strong statement in favor of these operations, pointing out the damage inflicted on lines of communication. He recommended to the President that he approved a ROLLING THUNDER program which, if it did not attack the ports, at least permitted attacks everywhere else in North Vietnam except in populated areas. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, specifically wanted authority to strike targets in the 10 and 4 nm Hanoi and Haiphong prohibited zones. The meeting ended without any decision having been made. Because he had recommended an action different from the one formally recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their memoranda of 20 May, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked for and received approval from the other Chiefs for the position he had taken.

The next day, the President discussed the force buildup with his advisors, including General Westmoreland, whom he had called home for the purpose. At this meeting, the Secretary of Defense supported the MACV five-package proposal of 11 July. General Westmoreland, in reply to a question from the President,

24. (TS) Briefing, CINCPAC, CG 7th AF, and COMSEVENTHFLT for SecDef, CJCS, and USecState, "Air Campaign North Vietnam, July 1967," OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

said the proposal was acceptable to him. The President then gave his approval of the plan, except that he ordered three of five TFSs recommended be not deployed but only made ready for deployment if needed.[25]

On 14 July, Secretary McNamara requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to submit a troop list for the approved force structure, with deployment dates where possible. Subsequent discussion between Joint Staff representatives and Assistant Secretary of Defense (SA) Alain Enthoven revealed that the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade and the three TFSs to be maintained ready for deployment were to be included in the 525,000 ceiling. On the basis of this guidance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a troop list which, after necessary Service adjustments, resulted in a total strength for MACV of 537,545. To remain within the ceiling of 525,000, the Joint Chiefs of Staff planned on substituting civilian contract labor for military construction personnel, using as a basis figures supplied by MACV. The troop list, expressed in terms of major units or major categories of forces was as follows:

25. (S) CM-2506-67 to D/JS, 13 Jul 67, JMF 911/374 (12 Jul 67).

SUMMARY OF US FORCE DEPLOYMENTS - VIETNAM

UNIT/ ORGANIZATION	SVC STR	ARMY	NAVY	AF	MC
Program #4 (SVN)	484,472	323,735	30,039	56,148	74,550
9th MAB to incl 2 VMA Sqdns	6,720				6,720
MACV FY 67 Additive Requirements	9,497	7,108	200	1,386	803
Americal Division 11th Lt Inf Bde	5,610	5,610			
TAC Ftr Sqdns (Two A-1 Sqdns)	963			963	
Mobile Riverine Force, GAME WARDEN and MARKET TIME Rqmts	3,604		3,604		
101st Abn Div (-)	19,103	19,103			
I CTZ Log and Const Rqmts	3,968		3,968		
US Advisory Program Expansion	2,577	2,577			
Tac Ftr Sqdns (One A-1, one F-4 Sqdn)	1,031			1,031	
Reorganization 198th Inf Bde (No added strength)					
TOTAL	537,545	358,133	37,811	59,528	82,073
Contractor/Direct Hire	-12,545				
	525,000[26]				

26. App to (S-GP 4) JCSM-416-67, 20 Jul 67, same file.

The projected closing dates for the major combat units on this troop list were as follows:

Army

198th Bde (for Americal Div)	Oct 67
11th Lt Inf Bde (for Americal Div)	Feb 68
101st Abn Div (-)	Feb 68
Reinf for 196th and 198th Bdes (3 inf bns and 9 inf bn packets)	Mar-May 68

Air Force

Tactical Fighter Squdron	Feb 68
Tactical Fighter Squadron	May 68

On 20 July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their recommended list to Secretary McNamara. In doing so they stated they did not concur in the inclusion of the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade and the two nondeployed TFSs in the personnel ceiling for Vietnam. The Marine unit, they pointed out, was still the PACOM reserve and, as such, was subject to deployment to other areas of the Pacific Command. The two Air Force units should not be included in the personnel ceiling for Vietnam until they deployed to that area.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also pointed out to Mr. McNamara that, while the forces on the troop list would "contribute significantly to the prosecution of the war," they fell short of the numbers they had recommended in their memorandum of 20 April. Their views on worldwide military requirements, submitted in their memorandum of 20 May also remained valid.[27]

On 10 August Secretary McNamara gave his tentative approval for "planning" to the JCS recommendations. The 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade and the two TFSs, he ruled, should be counted under the 525,000 ceiling. Now designated by Mr. McNamara as Program 5, the total approved force levels for South Vietnam were as follows:

27. (S-GP 4) JCSM-416-67 to SecDef, 20 Jul 67 (derived from JCS 2472/115), same file.

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps	Total
Program 4	323,735	30,039	56,148	74,550	484,472
FY 68 Added Forces	33,297	4,234	2,242	7,523	47,296
Civilianization	-5,414	-812	-542	-	-6,768
	351,618	33,461	57,848	82,073	525,000[28]

On 15 September, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded a refined troop list to the Secretary of Defense. While the ceiling of 525,000 remained unchanged, force levels for the Services were adjusted as follows:[29]

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps	Total
Program 4 and Added Forces	358,475	37,522	59,309	82,239	537,545
Civilianization	-9,595	-2,050	-600	-300	-12,525
	348,880	35,472	58,709	81,939	525,000

Secretary McNamara approved the revised troop list on 5 October.[30]

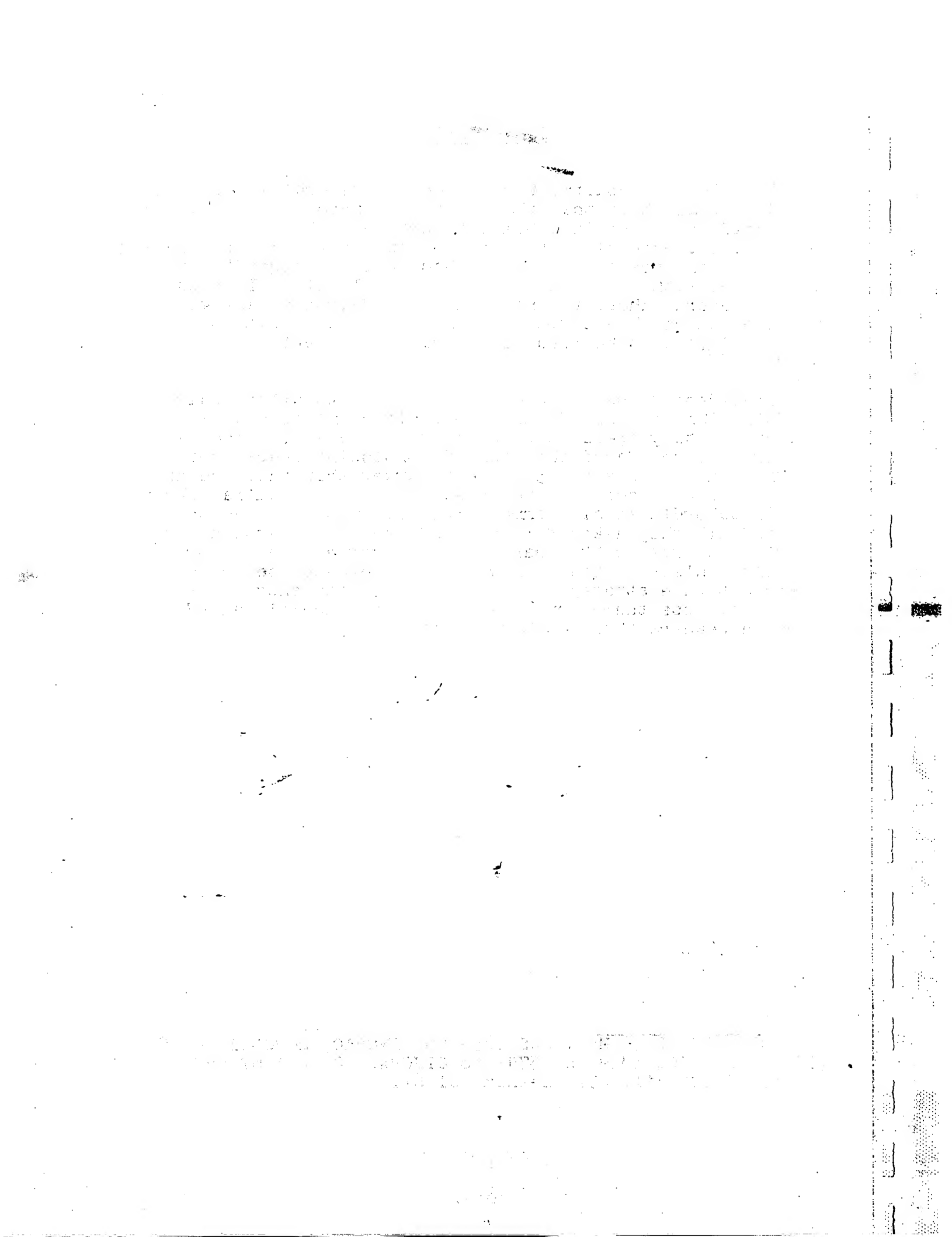
President Johnson, meanwhile, resolved the debate over operations against North Vietnam. On 20 July he approved RT 57, which was, in effect, Air Force Secretary Brown's "continuation of the present level of operations with certain targets added in the Hanoi-Haiphong area." It contained 16 new fixed targets in that area and granted authority to conduct armed reconnaissance on selected rail lines, highways, and waterways inside the 30 nm Hanoi restricted zone but not within the 10 nm prohibited zone. While not a total victory for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC points of view, the President by his action turned down the restricted operations recommended by Secretary McNamara and other high ranking

28. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "FY 68 Force Requirements for SVN (Program Number 5)," 10 Aug 67, Att to JCS 2472/115-2, 11 Aug 67, same file.
29. (TS-GP 4) JCSM 505-67 to SecDef, 15 Sep 67 (derived from JCS 2472/115-5), same file, sec 2.
30. (S) Memo, SecDef to Service Secys and CJCS, 5 Oct 67, Encl to JCS 2472/115-8, 6 Oct 67, same file.

civilians in the Department of Defense. General Wheeler informed Admiral Sharp that the "decisive factor in persuading the President to continue bombing north of 20° and to authorize the . . . extension of operating authority was his feeling that in recent weeks the bombing had achieved significant results and with relatively little noise level." In this regard, General Wheeler continued, "the Saigon briefings (texts of which /the President/ has seen) were invaluable . . . . I am told he read Spike Momyer's briefing word for word."[31]

President Johnson had now set the limits within which the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders would conduct military operations in the months ahead. General Westmoreland now faced the task of continuing operations in RVN with forces some 15 percent larger than those he had reported to be inadequate the previous March. Admiral Sharp and his subordinate air commanders, although they had not received all they asked for, now enjoyed wider latitude in carrying the war to NVN than they had ever enjoyed before. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, having been refused the forces to reconstitute strategic reserves and contingency forces, could only hope there would be no need for additional US troops elsewhere than Southeast Asia.

31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1859 to CINCPAC, 202044Z Jul 67; (TS) Msgs, CJCS 1859 and 5741 to CINCPAC, 20 Jul 67 and 22 Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.



Chapter 44

ROLLING THUNDER AT ITS ZENITH: OPERATIONS AGAINST NORTH VIETNAM, JULY 1967 - MARCH 1968

The months following President Johnson's approval of ROLLING THUNDER 57 saw the campaign against the key northeast sector of North Vietnam attain its highest level, both in the number of sorties flown and in the number of targets authorized for attack. In spite of certain continuing restrictions on operations, a concentrated effort was made to cut off the flow of war materials to enemy forces entering North Vietnam from abroad--those segments of the enemy supply lines considered most vulnerable by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC.

The Original ROLLING THUNDER 57 Package

The ROLLING THUNDER 57 package approved by President Johnson on 20 July not only included 16 new targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, but also gave authority to conduct armed reconnaissance on selected rail lines, highways, and waterways inside the 30-nm Hanoi restricted zone, though not within the 10-nm prohibited area. Of the 16 new targets, 11 were in the military support system, 4 were in the transportation system, and 1 was in the air defense system. All had been taken from a list of 129 priority targets developed by CINCPAC. This list had its origin in the realization by CINCPAC planners that many targets they considered important were not on JCS target lists. Therefore they developed and forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a comprehensive ROLLING THUNDER list, whose targets were concentrated in Route Package VI.[1]

1. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1859 to CINCPAC, 202044Z Jul 67. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Jt Staff to CJCS, "CINCPAC Priority Targets (U)," 17 Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

Once again, political considerations inhibited the ROLLING THUNDER program. The new list did not include Phuc Yen Airfield--which had again been recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff--because of "tentative and tenuous indications from a couple of North Vietnamese ambassadors" that advisors from other Communist countries were there.[2]

Even the authorized strikes were to be conducted in such a way as to avoid the appearance of escalation. No more than 3 targets were to be hit in any one day, and armed reconnaissance strikes were not to be concentrated in the 30-nm Hanoi restricted zone but were to be distributed throughout RP VI in roughly the same pattern as that of the preceding few weeks. In other respects, the general guidelines in ROLLING THUNDER 57 were the same as the ones in the preceding program.[3]

During August, President Johnson added 12 targets in the Hanoi area to the RT 57 list, including the Hanoi thermal power plant, the Doumer rail/highway bridge, and the other major Hanoi rail/highway bridge. All three were struck and rendered unusable by the end of the month.[4]

These operations were an auspicious beginning to an intensified air campaign against the vital northeast sector of North Vietnam. But the stepped-up operations had hardly

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2. (TS-GP 1) Memo, COL Robert J. Dunn, USAF, /Escort Officer/ to Distribution, "Report on Significant Areas of Interest--Vietnam Investigative Tour of Messrs. Gilleas and French (Senate Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee--Chairman Stennis)," 27 Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

3. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1859 to CINCPAC, 202044Z Jul 67; (TS) Msg, CJCS 5661-67 to CINCPAC, 20 Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

4. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3365 to CINCPAC, 090005Z Aug 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4091 to CINCPAC, 171459Z Aug 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4344 to CINCPAC, 191432Z Aug 67. (S) NMCC Memos for Record, 12 and 13 Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 195- and 196-67, 21 and 22 Aug 67.

begun when they suffered a partial curtailment. On 19 August, President Johnson issued orders to suspend air strikes within the 10-nm Hanoi prohibited area beginning 24 August and running through 4 September. The only information given at the time was that the action was taken to preclude charges of escalation. Later information, however, indicates that just at this time the President was offering to Hanoi through secret channels what later became known as the San Antonio formula for peace negotiations.[5]

CINCPAC felt that the suspension came at an unfortunate time. It began right on the heels of a stretch of bad weather, and he feared the suspension would give the impression of a deescalation of pressure aginst Hanoi. CINCPAC recommended that, if it was not possible to relax the restriction, he be given authority to strike targets in the Haiphong area and Phuc Yen Airfield, to convince Hanoi that the United States was not "vacillating."[6]

Strikes in the Buffer Zone

Ten of the 16 targets authorized by President Johnson on 9 August were within the buffer zone along the Chinese border. Requests to hit these targets stemmed from difficulties encountered in attempting to cut rail traffic between Communist China and North Vietnam over the northeast line. During the months of May, June, and July, when ROLLING THUNDER forces had concentrated on this vital artery, there had been a reduction in the movement of military supplies over the line. Nevertheless, substantial amounts still reached Hanoi. The inviolability of the buffer zone shortened the distance subject to attack, and the enemy took full advantage of the situation by holding trains in the buffer zone during the day, and moving them out under cover of darkness or inclement weather.[7]

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5. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4343 to CINCPAC, 191430Z Aug 67. (TS) Memo, AsstSecState for East Asian and Pacific Affairs to SecState, 9 Apr 68, OCJCS File, Vietnam Mission, May 68.

6. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 202231Z Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67.

7. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3365 to CINCPAC, 090005Z Aug 67. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 290105Z Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

CINCPAC had requested on 3 June that buffer zone targets be added to the target list, and on the 29th he had appealed unsuccessfully for authority to conduct specific strikes. During the early part of July, Admiral Sharp refined his concept for attacking buffer zone targets. He briefed Secretary McNamara in Saigon on the concept, which now included 24 priority targets in the buffer zone. The Secretary requested General Wheeler to analyze these 24 targets, but before the analysis could be completed, CINCPAC recommended the execution of a new plan of operations against buffer zone targets. Submitted to General Wheeler on 29 July, this plan called for an initial strike to cut the line at a point about 19 miles south of the Chinese border, followed by strikes at installations and rolling stock north of the cut up to a point within 6 miles of the border. Great care would be taken to insure accuracy and to avoid civilian casualties.[8]

General Wheeler replied to Admiral Sharp the same day, stating he had tentatively selected 13 targets from the CINCPAC list of 24 to recommend to the Secretary of Defense. Before making these recommendations, however, the Chairman requested further views from CINCPAC on the targeting concept. Specifically, General Wheeler questioned the value of bridges as targets since they were so hard to hit. He favored destroying railroad yards to force the enemy to concentrate his supplies north of the Chinese border.[9]

Replying on 3 August, CINCPAC agreed that all the targets proposed by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, with two exceptions, appeared to be currently worth striking. He agreed, also, on the value of hitting rolling stock and supplies, but stressed the importance of subsequent attacks on bridges as a means of bottling up rolling stock, thereby making it more vulnerable to attack. Along with these views,

8. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 030424Z Jun 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 290445Z Jun 67, JCS IN 19952. (TS) Msg, CJCS 5999-67 to CINCPAC, 29 Jul 67; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 290105Z Jul 67; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

9. (TS) Msg, CJCS 5999-67 to CINCPAC, 29 Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67. (TS) Msg, CJCS 6106-67 to CINCPAC, 1 Aug 67, same file, Aug 67.

Admiral Sharp submitted an expanded list of targets in the buffer zone. This list was reduced to 10 by the Joint Staff and was approved by President Johnson on 9 August.[10]

The approved buffer zone targets included four railroad bridges, five railroad yards and sidings, and the Port Wallut Naval Base. In striking these targets, ROLLING THUNDER forces were authorized to attack rolling stock located to the south of the Lang Son Railroad/Highway Bridge. Pilots were instructed to destroy locomotives, rolling stock, and supplies. They were cautioned not to cross the CHICOM border or to take undue risk in the hazardous airspace contiguous to the targets. The President authorized maximum use of the WALLEYE weapon against the bridges. Strikes were to be spaced out to avoid charges of escalation. By 5 September, the President had authorized 9 additional targets in the buffer zone, including 8 bridges and 1 railroad siding.[11]

In authorizing one target on 30 August, the President cautioned against intrusions into Communist China's air space. Earlier in the month, there had been two separate violations which had prompted Admiral Sharp to remind his subordinate commanders that the authority to strike buffer zone targets had been granted in part "as a result of our assurance that we can go where we are supposed to go and hit what we are supposed to hit." CINCPAC was concerned not only because the violations increased the risk to US pilots and planes, but also that such violations might result in the cancellation of buffer zone targets and in the denial of CINCPAC's pending request to strike additional key targets. "The excellent

10. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 031933Z Aug 67 and 030123Z Aug 67; (TS-GP 3) Memo, Jt Staff to CJCS, "CHICOM Buffer Zone Targets," 4 Aug 67; (TS) Msg, CJCS 6377-67 to CINCPAC, 8 Aug 67; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3365 to CINCPAC, 9 Aug 67.

11. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3365 to CINCPAC, 090005Z Aug 67. (TS) Msg, CJCS 6377-67 to CINCPAC, 8 Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 4091 to CINCPAC, 171459Z Aug 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5073 to CINCPAC, 301356Z Aug 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5480 to CINCPAC, 052113Z Sep 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5073 to CINCPAC, 301356Z Aug 67. (TS) Memo, CJCS to SecDef, "RT," 30 Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67.

progress we have made thus far in obtaining increased strike authorizations and outstanding results attained thus far, must not be jeopardized," said CINCPAC.[12]

Operations Against the Ports

While attacks against the buffer zone targets reduced somewhat the flow of war materiel into North Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were convinced that the movement of supplies through the port of Haiphong would have to be curtailed if the campaign to restrict imports was ever to be effective. A "shouldering out" concept to reduce the increased volume of war materials arriving through the Haiphong Port had been proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 20 May. This plan called for striking targets around the periphery of the city and gradually moving inward toward the center of the main dock area. But by August the target elements had not yet been approved.[13]

In the meantime, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, developed an alternative plan for isolating Haiphong. This plan would "place an in-depth concentrated interdiction ring around the Port of Haiphong to deny the enemy use of his lines of communication from the port and port area to the interior." The ring would be doughnut-shaped, including the area beyond a $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius from the center of Haiphong outward to a radius of 8 miles. The densely populated inner circle contained only three targets that General McConnell believed significant. Most of the targets considered essential would be within the outer doughnut area and would include bridges, ferries, vulnerable road/railroad segments, waterways, and transshipment points. These targets would be struck to provide interdiction of all current major LOCs to the maximum degree possible. Moreover, the concept would eliminate danger to foreign shipping.[14]

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12. (S) Msg, CJCS 7125 to CINCPAC, 30 Aug 67; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACAF and CINCPACFLT, 260002Z Aug 67; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67.

13. See above, Ch. 43.

14. (TS-GP 3) "CSAF Concept for Isolation of the Port of Haiphong," Att to (TS) SM-519-67 to CINCPAC, 22 Jul 67, JMF 912/432 (19 Jul 67).

General Wheeler agreed that the plan would make it possible to "apply a considerable constriction to the exits from the port area." But to bring about the actual isolation of the two cities would require the removal of the 30-nm and 10-nm restricted zones around Hanoi and Haiphong, thus permitting unrestrained attacks everywhere in NVN except in the CHICOM border buffer zone and the prohibited zones around Hanoi and Haiphong. The Chairman asked CINCPAC his views on the Air Force plan.[15]

Admiral Sharp replied on 3 August that for six weeks prior to 1 August he had been conducting strikes aimed at isolating Hanoi and Haiphong from each other and from the rest of NVN generally along the lines of the Air Force plan. The concept proposed by the Chief of Staff, Air Force, was sound, CINCPAC said, and it would pile up cargo in the Haiphong area. To be fully effective, however, it should be expanded to include many more targets, including 13 in the 4-nm Haiphong prohibited area. In order to implement the plan during good weather, Admiral Sharp requested immediate authority to conduct strikes against the targets in the prohibited zone and to conduct armed reconnaissance missions in the 10-nm restricted zone. On 6 August, he submitted a further request for the removal of bombing restraints: authority to strike 19 targets in the Hanoi restricted zone and 10 in the Haiphong restricted zone; the elimination of both restricted zones; and the reduction of the prohibited areas to a 2-mile radius around Hanoi and a small rectangle around the center of Haiphong. Meanwhile, CINCPAC, on 5 August, facilitated bombing attacks in the Haiphong area by removing his own restriction concerning strikes within the 10-nm restricted zone.[16]

President Johnson did not grant these sweeping authorizations to bomb in the restricted and prohibited zones, but

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15. (TS) Msg, CJCS 6106-67 to CINCPAC, 1 Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67.

16. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 030123Z Aug 67; (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 050244Z Aug 67; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT and CINCPACAF, 052234Z Aug 67, JCS IN 95324. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 062347Z Aug 67, JCS IN 96713.

on 30 August and 5 September he authorized strikes on a total of 8 specific targets in the Haiphong zones.[17]

The targets around Haiphong were hit heavily through September. By the 27th of that month, 177 sorties had been flown against 6 of the 8 targets authorized in the Haiphong area under ROLLING THUNDER 57. As of 13 October all 8 of the targets had been struck at least once. An analysis of the port clearing capability of Haiphong near the end of September showed that the LOCs serving Haiphong could clear 4,300 short tons per day as compared with 9,700 the previous May. The North Vietnamese were now forced to stockpile supplies and to transport them to Hanoi mainly by inland waterways. Faster movement of supplies out of Haiphong would depend upon North Vietnamese ability to restore the Haiphong and the Kien An highway bridges.[18]

Meanwhile, the campaign against North Vietnamese seaports was expanded as the result of an authorization by President Johnson on 9 August to strike the minor ports of Cam Pha and Hon Gai. They were to be struck only when ships were at least 2,000 yards from the docks. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had been opposed to attacks on Cam Pha and Hon Gai. They felt that action against the two ports should be deferred until NVN, as a result of attacks against the Haiphong port, began using them for imports and coastal traffic. ROLLING THUNDER pilots struck Cam Pha Port with 31 sorties on 10 September, inflicting severe damage. CINCPAC, however, felt the restrictions there were too stringent, since North Vietnam could easily keep a ship alongside the docks at all times, thus preventing strikes. Such was the case from 13 September for at least two weeks, when a Soviet ship was in Cam Pha. CINCPAC wanted authority to strike, with proper caution, a coal plant and a railroad yard at Cam Pha, in spite of the presence of foreign shipping. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff were concentrating their efforts on securing more important authority, notably a relaxation of the

17. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5480 to CINCPAC, 052113Z Sep 67.
18. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 204-67 through 227-67, 31 Aug through 28 Sep 67. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) DIA to CJCS et al., Fact Sheet, "Haiphong Port Clearance," 27 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 120157Z Oct 67, JCS IN 39404.

suspension on previously approved targets around Hanoi and permission to strike Phuc Yen Airfield. As a result, action to remove restrictions at Cam Pha was relegated to a lesser priority.[19]

The Recurring MIG Threat

On 23 August, Admiral Sharp renewed his request to General Wheeler for authority to strike the MIG base at Phuc Yen airfield because recent engagements had made it "apparent that the enemy has decided to use these aircraft again to counter our strikes." As of that date, no US plane had been shot down by a MIG since May. The next day, however, two planes fell victim to enemy aircraft, prompting the Chairman to support the request and urge its approval upon the Secretary of Defense. Secretary McNamara objected, however, on the grounds that the United States would lose more planes than it destroyed in an attack on Phuc Yen, and that the continuing attacks needed to keep the field closed would result in the loss of more planes than would otherwise be lost to MIGs if operations from the field continued.[20]

CINCPAC answered the objections by noting that enemy planes could be surprised on the ground and that many might be destroyed before they were airborne. The initial attack would be followed up with other attacks but these would be merely periodic attacks of harassment. He believed that the MIGs could be forced to operate from CHICOM bases, where they would be less effective. As for the risk that charges of escalation might be raised, CINCPAC felt that this was a danger no matter which targets in North Vietnam were picked for strikes.[21]

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19. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 270028Z Sep 67, JCS IN 10882. (TS) Msg, Actg CJCS 8205-67 to CINCPAC, 30 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67. (TS) Fact Sheet, "ROLLING THUNDER Actions Pending," 16 Oct 67, same file, Oct 67. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5480 to CINCPAC, 052113Z Sep 67.

20. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 231941Z Aug 67; (S) Msg, CJCS to SecDef, 240829Z Aug 67; (TS) Msg, Actg CJCS to CINCPAC, 250107Z Aug 67; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67.

21. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 250838Z Aug 67, same file.

Another US plane was downed by MIGs on 16 September. By that time the North Vietnamese had increased the number of MIG 21s at Phuc Yen from 6 to 11. This, coupled with the increased experience of MIG pilots, prompted CINCPAC to renew, on 20 September, his appeal to strike Phuc Yen and Bac Mai airfields. The following day, General Wheeler urged Secretary McNamara to approve Admiral Sharp's request.[22]

The occurrence of several MIG engagements on 25 September no doubt influenced the decision made the next day to authorize strikes and restrikes against Phuc Yen. Two strikes were scheduled for a 28 September attack on Phuc Yen. Before any strike was made, however, the authority was cancelled by the President because of certain visiting dignitaries in Hanoi. On 4 October, General Wheeler made another unsuccessful appeal for authority to strike the MIG base.[23]

The MIGs, meanwhile, continued to impede US air operations over North Vietnam. During September, 56 planes were forced to jettison over 107 tons of bombs owing to MIG interference; between 29 September and 10 October, 10 engagements with a total of 32 MIG sorties resulted in the loss of three US planes. But it was not until 23 October that President Johnson authorized attacks on Phuc Yen. The following day, US fliers mounted 64 sorties against the MIG field, and followed up with smaller efforts on the two succeeding days. Three MIGs were destroyed, three were damaged, and the runway was made unserviceable.[24]

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22. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 210028Z Sep 67, JCS IN 90642. (TS) CM-2660-67 to SecDef, 22 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67.

23. (S) Memo for Record, "NMCC Report on MIG Engagements Over NVN-25 September 67," 26 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7303 to CINCPAC, 262109Z Sep 67. (TS) Memo for Record, "Phuc Yen Strikes," 28 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67. (TS) Fact Sheet, "ROLLING THUNDER Actions Pending (U)," 16 Oct 67, same file, Oct 67. (TS-GP 3) CM-2676-67 to SecDef, 4 Oct 67, same file.

24. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080726Z Oct 67, JCS IN 32563; (TS-GP 3) CM-2684-67 to SecDef, 1 Oct 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9674 to CINCPAC, 232212Z Oct 67. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 249-, 250-, 251-67, 24, 25, and 26 Oct 67.

The Suspension is Lifted

Although the MIG attacks and other elements of the North Vietnamese air defense system impeded the air campaign against North Vietnam, President Johnson's suspension of authority to strike targets within the 10-nm Hanoi prohibited zone was an even greater handicap to effective air operations. Orginally set for the period 24 August through 4 September, the suspension had been indefinitely extended on 1 September. Alarmed at the prospect of an indefinite suspension at a time when the days of good flying weather were rapidly dwindling, CINCPAC on 20 September urgently recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the suspension be lifted. The following day, the Chairman, with the support of the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, urged Secretary McNamara to approve CINCPAC's recommendation and, further, to authorize attacks on fifteen specific targets within the 10-nm Hanoi prohibited zone. In this attempt, General Wheeler was unsuccessful.[25]

General Wheeler again appealed without avail to Secretary McNamara on 4 October for a cancellation of the suspension around Hanoi and authority to strike a total of 25 targets around Hanoi and Haiphong. Two days later, the President approved 7 new targets in the Haiphong area. All 7 targets were struck at least once by 14 October; after that date most of these targets were hit several times. Another target was authorized 17 October and struck five days later.[26]

On 23 October President Johnson lifted the suspension and authorized strikes on the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant (a one-time-only strike using the WALLEYE weapon), the 2 important Hanoi bridges, plus 9 other targets in the Hanoi prohibited area, including 5 that had not previously been struck.[27]

On 25 October CINCPAC gave the Doumer Railroad/Highway Bridge the highest strike priority. This strike was to be

25. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 202352Z Sep 67, JCS IN 90536. (TS) CM-2660-67 to SecDef, 22 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67.

26. (TS-GP 3) CM-2676-67 to SecDef, 4 Oct 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8239 to CINCPAC, 061826Z Oct 67. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9045 to CINCPAC, 170003Z Oct 67. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 236-67 through 248-67, 9 through 23 Oct 67.

27. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9674 to CINCPAC, 232212Z Oct 67.

followed by the seeding of the river at that point to disrupt ferry, barge, and boat traffic. Hopefully this disruption would create lucrative targets as the supplies backed up waiting to cross the river. It took only three days for ROLLING THUNDER pilots to hit the bridges and the power plant. Most of the other targets authorized by the President on 23 October were not struck until November; some not at all during 1967.[28]

The President authorized 17 new targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas on 8 November. The targets included certain facilities at Bac Mai Airfield near Hanoi, 3 Hanoi and 3 Haiphong shipyards, restrikes of 4 railroad yards, and 6 other new targets--1 railroad yard, 2 industrial plants, and 3 POL installations. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, suggested that the targets be struck in a measured and deliberate manner so as to minimize the "noise level" and to curtail current talk among representatives of friendly nations concerning the recently increased intensity of air operations in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas.[29]

Also on 8 November, an important new weapon was added to the arsenal being employed in the operations to isolate Haiphong. On that date, Secretary McNamara declared the MK-36 Destructor mine to be "just another weapon" rather than a mine, and authorized its use against all authorized ROLLING THUNDER targets, including those in the prohibited zones. The MK 36 had been developed at CINCPAC's request for use in inland waterways. It had become operational in April under the authorizations then in effect, which limited mining to the area south of 20° N.[30]

Following the granting of authority to strike certain targets within the prohibited areas, ROLLING THUNDER forces unleashed a tremendous striking effort against the authorized targets and LOCs. Not since the previous July had pilots been given such freedom, and never had they had more critical

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28. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACAF, et al., 252248Z Oct 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 67. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 249-67 through 1-68, 24 Oct 67 through 2 Jan 68.

29. (TS) Msg, CJCS 9610-67 to CINCPAC, 8 Nov 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 67.

30. (S-GP 4) J-3 Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "JCS 2343/751-1," 21 Dec 66, JMF 9155.3 (7 Dec 65). (S) Msg, JCS 2729 to CINCPAC, 14 Apr 67; (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2385 to CINCPAC, 082343Z Nov 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 67.

targets. In terms of high-value targets struck, the last part of October and the first half of November marked the most productive period in ROLLING THUNDER history.

This intensified effort on the part of US pilots called forth a comparable countereffort by North Vietnam's air defense system. Between 23 October and 20 November, the United States lost 48 aircraft in strikes over NVN. Thirty-nine were shot down over RP VI, clear evidence that the enemy believed the targets under attack around Hanoi and Haiphong were of such value that their defense called for a maximum effort.[31]

The Bombing Slackens

Beginning in November, the pace of the bombing operations against North Vietnam gradually slackened. From that time on a combination of bad weather and Presidential restrictions led to a scaling down of attacks on targets in North Vietnam. By far, however, bad weather had the most adverse impact. The effect on the distribution of sorties in the various route packages is illustrated clearly by the chart below covering the none-month period from July 1967 through March 1968. It is readily apparent that the number of monthly sorties declined from a high rate in the summer months to a low one during the northeast monsoon of the winter months. When the weather was clear the number of sorties rose in the northern industrial area of North Vietnam, i.e., in RP VI A and VI B, where the high-value targets requiring precision and accuracy in bombing were located. When the weather was poor and cloud cover obscured the more lucrative targets, and low ceilings made SAM evasion difficult, ROLLING THUNDER pilots struck targets closer to South Vietnam in RP I through IV. Consequently, owing to bad weather in December, both the number and percentage of sorties in RP VI A and VI B were low. This unfavorable weather continued through January, February, and even March, making these months the least productive of any quarter in the previous two years; worse by far than the same quarter in 1967.

31. (S) Memo, DepDir for Ops, NMCC to SecDef, "Aircraft Losses over North Vietnam, 17-20 November 1967," 20 Nov 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 67.

DISTRIBUTION OF ATTACK SORTIES
BY ROUTE PACKAGE

Month	Sorties	RPI %	II %	III %	IV %	V %	VIA %	VIB %	No. Sorties VI A & B
1967									
Jul	11,337	38	8	7	10	4	14	19	3,741
Aug	11,744	48	8	10	7	2	12	13	2,936
Sep	8,540	56	8	7	8	3	9	9	1,537
Oct	8,987	41	3	6	11	3	16	20	3,235
Nov	7,268	52	5	7	11	5	7	13	1,454
Dec	5,758	57	8	7	10	4	7	7	806
1968									
Jan	6,359	47	8	11	12	6	8	8	1,017
Feb	3,280	72	3	8	2	5	8	2	328
Mar	5,037	68	8	5	6	2	5	6	554[32]

On 3 January 1968, President Johnson added to the inhibiting effects of the weather by ordering a suspension of all air strikes within 5 miles of the center of Hanoi. The prohibition was to be in effect for 72 hours, but it was extended for an additional 72 hours on 6 January, and indefinitely on 9 January.[33]

An additional restriction came on 16 January as the result of an episode involving a Soviet ship in Haiphong Harbor. On 4 January, while seeding one of the approaches to Haiphong with MK-36 weapons, a US plane through a map error inadvertently released its load too soon, in the immediate vicinity of a Soviet ship. The incident led General Wheeler to anticipate the establishment of a 5 mile prohibited circle around Haiphong similar to the one in effect around Hanoi. The Chairman, Joint

32. (TS-GP 1) CINCPAC, ROLLING THUNDER Digest Oct-Dec 67, JMF 912/323 (10 Feb 67) sec 1B. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 090435Z Feb 68, JCS IN 90743. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 072330Z Apr 68, JCS IN 30389.

33. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6402 to CINCPAC, 032158Z Jan 68. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6700 to CINCPAC, 062148Z Jan 68. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 090735Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6818 to CINCPAC, 092026Z Jan 68. (S-GP 1) Telegram, USUN to State, 232344Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

Chiefs of Staff, warned CINCPAC that such a restriction might soon be forthcoming. He requested CINCPAC to instruct his operational commanders to execute strikes in that area only when the weather permitted accurate navigation and target identification, and to employ only small forces close in to Haiphong.[34]

In reply, CINCPAC expressed his concern that an additional prohibited area would negate "our reasonably successful efforts to isolate that port." His operational commanders, said CINCPAC, had just begun to get enough MK-36 weapons to accomplish this objective, and it was not "satisfactory" to start seeding 5 miles from the city. Earlier plans had been made for seeding the Red River near Hanoi, but they had been cancelled when the 5-mile prohibited circle around that city was directed. This had left the enemy free to repair the damaged bridges and to cross the river in boats. During a time when the weather limited ROLLING THUNDER opportunities, CINCPAC felt it was even more important "that we not have added restrictions." He said,

> We seem determined to ease the pressure on the enemy at a time when our long bombing campaign is having a telling effect. The history of ROLLING THUNDER has been that we always follow a period of telling effectiveness with periods when we put restrictions on that give the enemy a chance to recuperate. This, I submit, is a costly and inefficient way to use our tremendous air power and contributes to lengthening the war.[35]

On 16 January the President, although he was aware of CINCPAC's views on the subject, directed the establishment of a 5-mile prohibited area around Haiphong. He also approved 6 more targets to be added to the authorized list, but by the end of January none of them had been struck because of bad weather.[36]

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34. (TS) Memo, NMCC to SecDef, 8 Jan 68, "Alleged Bombing of Soviet Merchant Ship of 4 January 1968"; (TS) Telecon Item, JCS 010/68 to CINCPAC, 141720Z Jan 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

35. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 150705Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

36. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7402 to CINCPAC, 162247Z Jan 68. (TS) Msg, CJCS 00489-68 to CINCPAC, Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

On 30 January, the enemy launched simultaneous assaults on the major South Vietnamese cities. As a counteraction, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 3 February, recommended replacement of the Hanoi and Haiphong restricted and prohibited zones by "control areas" with radii extending 3 and 1½-nm respectively from the centers of the two cities. Control at the Washington level would be maintained over all strikes in these areas. Armed reconnaissance missions under existing procedures could then be extended to the remainder of the formerly restricted and prohibited zones. The result would be to "expose to attack critical storage areas; transhipment points; and the . . . lines of communication that support movement to and from the important logistic hubs of Hanoi and Haiphong." The President did not approve the recommendation, but on 6 February he lifted the ban on strikes within 5-nm of the centers of the two cities.37

Although other targets were added during February, and subsequently hit, and authority was given to utilize radar systems bombing techniques, little of any significance with respect to air operations in North Vietnam had occurred by the end of March. Not only were operations hampered by the weather, but operations at Khe Sanh were absorbing much of the air capability that would otherwise have been employed against NVN.38

On 30 March, President Johnson terminated military operations against North Vietnam north of 20° N thus ending the campaign to cut off or reduce North Vietnamese imports and to bring the war to the population, communications and industrial centers of NVN. Henceforth, ROLLING THUNDER and SEA DRAGON would be diverted toward the interdiction of materiel and personnel flowing from North to South Vietnam and the furnishing of fire support for friendly ground forces in the area of the DMZ.39

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37. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-78-68 to SecDef (derived from JCS 2472/222), 3 Feb 68, JMF 912/323 (31 Jan 68).

38. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1414 to CINCPAC, 172012Z Feb 68. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1742 to CINCPAC, 212233Z Feb 68. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 100345Z Mar 68, JCS IN 62353. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 072330Z Apr 68, JCS IN 30389.

39. See Ch. 50 for a discussion of the President's decision to curtail the bombing.

ROLLING THUNDER Pro and Con

At the end of March, Admiral Sharp made an assessment of the results obtained against the officially approved ROLLING THUNDER targets. According to this assessment, 331 out of the 372 authorized targets had been struck and 245 of them had been destroyed or rendered unusable. Breaking the list down into target systems, the analysis showed that of all jet-capable airfields in North Vietnam only Gia Lam remained unstruck by the end of March. An estimated 65 percent of North Vietnam's electric power capacity had been destroyed, although that figure had been higher before the rebuilding that had been accomplished during the monsoon. Of the 125 military complex targets on the list, 117 had been attacked and 106 were unusable or inactive. An estimated 65 percent of the fixed NVN POL storage capacity had been destroyed. About 50 percent of the listed transportation targets had been abandoned or rendered unserviceable, although the enemy, by employing bypass bridges and ferries, had managed to keep traffic moving on major LOCs. The two key rail lines from China into North Vietnam--the northwest line from Hanoi to Lao Cai, and the northeast line from Hanoi to Dong Dang--were considered closed or in shuttle status for the entire first 3 months of 1968. Twenty-two percent of the targeted industries were inoperable.[40]

Assuming that Admiral Sharp's damage assessments were accurate, the question remains: how effectively had the operations against North Vietnam achieved their objectives? In broad terms, these objectives were three in number: to reduce the infiltration of men and materiel from North to South Vietnam, and/or to make it more costly; to raise the morale of the South Vietnamese; and to show the North Vietnamese leaders they would pay a price for continued aggression against South Vietnam. There is a general consensus that attacks against the North raised morale in the South, but opinion on the other two points is deeply divided and is likely to remain so. This results partly from the fact that available intelligence information simply does not provide the concrete proof needed for an exact tabulation of the effects of the operations against the North. There were nevertheless a number of attempts at analysis of these operations, which led their authors to contradictory conclusions.

40. (S-GP 4) CINCPAC Rpt, "Measurement of Progress in Southeast Asia, 31 March 1968," 10 Jun 68, pp. 75-76, 78, 95, JMF 911/337 (31 Mar 68).

Among the most skeptical was the JASON study prepared by the Institute for Defense Analyses at the request of Secretary McNamara. The authors of JASON concluded that not only had the bombing had "no measurable effect on Hanoi's ability to mount and support military operations in the South," but that "no bombing campaign can reduce the flow of military supplies to the South" nor "significantly raise the cost of maintaining the flow of men and material." In reaching these conclusions, however, the authors neglected to investigate what might result from coordinated interdiction of all import routes into NVN, which was of course the major target of ROLLING THUNDER as conceived by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC. They also claimed that the bombing had not "discernibly weakened the determination of North Vietnamese leaders to continue to direct and support the insurgency in the South," although they admitted that "deficiencies in data and methodology do not allow a thorough discussion" of the question.[41]

At the opposite extreme, an Air Force study group, with representation from the other Services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and DIA, concluded that the air campaign had destroyed or damaged a significant portion of the enemy's industrial capability and had caused the diversion of a significant portion of North Vietnamese manpower to air defense and repair of the damage resulting from air attacks. As a result, the enemy capability to expand his military force in South Vietnam was drastically curtailed. Had there been no bombing, the Air Force study group estimated, it would have been possible for North Vietnam to train and infiltrate sufficient forces to attain a total in South Vietnam of 600,000 by mid-1967.[42]

SEA CABIN, a military study group established by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and consisting of representatives of the Joint Staff, DIA, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), reached a similar conclusion. This group concluded that the air and naval campaigns against NVN had inflicted heavy damage on NVN and had "limited the DRV's capability to undertake sustained large scale military operations

41. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) IDA, "JASON, The Bombing of North Vietnam, (U)," 16 Dec 67.
42. (TS) AFCSA Briefing of Special Study for JCS, "The Air Campaign Against North Vietnam," 31 Jul 67, JMF 912/323 (31 Jul 67).

in SVN. . . . A cessation of the bombing program would make it possible for the DRV to regenerate its military and economic posture and substantially increase the flow of personnel and supplies from NVN to SVN."[43]

For their part, the Joint Chiefs of Staff took a more cautious view. "The bombing of the North coninues to impose heavy and accumulating pressure on North Vietnam that is contributing significantly to the achievement of US military objectives in South Vietnam," they informed the Secretary of Defense on 31 January 1968 after reviewing the SEA CABIN study. They did not, however, attempt to predict the results that might be expected if the bombing were halted.[44]

The various analyses by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military study groups were of ROLLING THUNDER as it had actually been conducted. From the outset, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military establishment had been opposed to the inhibited and gradual application of military power forced upon them by political authorities. No doubt the results would have been different had the military view prevailed, but the nature and degree of difference are all but impossible to measure. No study has been located that attempts to estimate the results that would have been obtained from an air campaign of the type advocated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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43. (TS-GP 1) OJCS SEA CABIN Study Group, "Study of the Political-Military Implications in Southeast Asia of the Cessation of Aerial Bombardment and the Initiation of Negotiation (S)," 22 Nov 67.

44. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-62-68 to SecDef, 31 Jan 68 (derived from JCS 2339/66-3), JMF 907/305 (29 Sep 67) sec 2.

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Chapter 45

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH JUNE 1967 - JANUARY 1968

General Westmoreland's Summer Plans

In the months immediately following Secretary McNamara's approval of Program 5, General Westmoreland continued to press ahead with combat operations designed to attain the objectives of the Combined Campaign Plan. His primary plan for the months ahead, he reported to Admiral Sharp, was to take full advantage of the good weather in the northern provinces of SVN to wage a major offensive in I CTZ throughout the summer, while preparing to move into the central highland area of II CTZ if the enemy presented a favorable target by massing troops. In III and IV CTZs General Westmoreland planned to adjust to unfavorable summer weather and dispersed enemy positions by limiting operations to a few selected offensives on a modest scale to keep the enemy off balance. A major offensive would not be launched in these two zones until fall unless an opportunity arose to destroy major enemy forces.

The enemy, General Westmoreland reported, was also planning a "main effort" to start in June or July and had concentrated his major forces in the same area where friendly forces were to make their main effort. According to his calculations, the enemy had up to three divisions in the DMZ and the equivalent of two more divisions in the northern provinces of SVN capable of mounting a coordinated offensive. Elements of two other divisions were located in the southern part of I CTZ. In II CTZ elements of five regiments were positioned along the Cambodian border with the mission to tie down friendly forces by attacking isolated Special Forces camps. In III CTZ two divisions were deployed in a manner that constituted a similar threat to Special Forces camps in the northwest and central parts of the Zone. Friendly forces were disposed in an "optimum posture to meet the anticipated enemy threats." They were "massed against the enemy major threats" and were "employing economy of force measures" in other areas.

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1. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 041216Z Jun 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 67.

Summer Operations in III CTZ

In III CTZ COMUSMACV set as immediate objectives the disruption and defeat of enemy offensive actions, harassment and destruction of enemy main force units, maintenance of continuous pressure on VC regional and local forces, neutralization of enemy base areas, and defeat of enemy efforts to sabotage the national elections. To this end, a total of 11 operations, each resulting in killing 50 or more enemy soldiers, were conducted. Of these 11 operations, 9 were conducted by US forces and 2 by the ARVN. Two were of division size; the remainder were conducted by brigade-size forces. Of these operations, five were of more than passing interest: BARKING SANDS, DIAMOND HEAD, KOLE KOLE, FAIRFAX and ENTERPRISE.[2]

The first three were search-and-destroy operations of brigade size and were conducted by the US 25th Infantry Division. They began in May and continued until December. Conducted in three provinces west of Saigon and near the Cambodian border, they were not particularly impressive in terms of numbers of enemy killed, but were effective in increasing friendly influence over the countryside. ENTERPRISE, a similar operation with similar results, was carried out by three battalions of the US 9th Infantry Division in an area along the Cambodian border immediately to the south of that in which the 25th Division was operating. FAIRFAX, conducted by the US 199th Light Infantry Brigade, had as its objective to counter increasing VC efforts to reestablish influence over the villages and hamlets immediately surrounding Saigon. Typical operations conducted in FAIRFAX included night ambush patrols, cordon and search of hamlets and villages, small-unit search-and-destroy actions, and waterway traffic control activities.

A particularly successful measure employed in conjunction with the combat operations was the clearing of vast jungle tracts by means of Rome plows. Operating under the nickname PAUL BUNYAN, specially equipped combat engineer teams had cleared 75,000 acres of jungle by the end of

2. These are the operations singled out for special coverage by the HQUSMACV historian. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, I, pp. 382-395.

September, of which 30,000 bordered key lines of communication, and another 30,000 were in a former enemy base area. The results, COMUSMACV reported, were to reduce the effectiveness of VC ambushes and tax collections on the lines of communication and to inhibit enemy reoccupation of base areas from which he had been driven by combat forces.[3]

General Westmoreland reported substantial progress in III CTZ during the summer months. Recounting operations conducted during July, he informed Admiral Sharp that it was a "month of heartening progress both in terms of our success in attaining planned objectives and the enemy's failure to attain his planned objectives." A month later he detected an improvement in overall security. There was increasing evidence that enemy main force units were "avoiding significant contact" and were suffering a decline in morale. Reporting on operations conducted during September, he noted that the enemy had "failed to achieve a single significant victory" and was apparently continuing his policy of avoiding contact with major forces.

Summer Operations in II CTZ

The major military objectives in II CTZ continued, as in the previous period, to be to destroy or drive enemy main forces away from the populated coastal regions and to block incursions by enemy forces from sanctuary areas in Cambodia. In pursuit of the former objective, the US 1st Cavalry Division continued Operation PERSHING in the northern coastal areas of the Zone, while the ROKFV launched Operation HONG KIL DONG in the coastal regions to the south. In the latter, elements of two ROK divisions conducted search-and-destroy operations against one VC and five NVA battalions. Following an initial contact on 9 July, four ROK battalions assaulted the objective area by air to establish support bases and begin search-and-destroy operations. Airmobile assaults, supported by air and artillery, characterized the ROK offensive.

The 1st Cavalry Division, meanwhile, continued PERSHING search-and-destroy operations aimed at destruction or disruption of enemy main force units. Vigorous offensive actions led to frequent small unit contacts, but the enemy continued to avoid major engagements. The result of these

3. (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 2 Oct 67, JCS IN 21700.

operations during July and August, COMUSMACV reported, was to reduce a "major threat posed by main force elements." Local force units and terrorists, however, remained active in the coastal plain.[4]

In September the enemy shifted his method of operation and pushed major forces down from the mountains toward Tuy Hoa and Phu Yen, with the apparent objective of seizing the rice harvest. Vigorous counterattacks by US, ROK, and ARVN forces thwarted these attempts, inflicting heavy casualties and driving the surviving enemy forces back into the mountains.[5]

The US 4th Infantry Division and 173rd Airborne Brigade, supported by three ARVN battalions, continued to block the Cambodian border in Operations FRANCIS MARION and GREELY. The enemy made no effort to cross the border in major force during the summer months. There were, however, numerous small-unit engagements in which friendly forces inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. Reporting on operations as of the end of September, COMUSMACV termed military progress "modest but steady."[6]

Summer Operations in IV CTZ

In IV CTZ, as in the other zones, destruction of enemy main forces and bases continued to be the primary objective of combat operations. In pursuit of these goals, friendly forces conducted a total of seven operations, each resulting in more than 50 enemy killed. One operation was of particular significance because it marked the entry of US combat units into action in the Zone. On 4 June the Mobile Riverine Force, consisting of US Navy TF 117 and a brigade of the US 9th Infantry Division and supported by various ARVN and VNMC units, launched CORONADO, a search-and-destroy operation which, under successive number designations, was to continue for the remainder of the year. There were frequent contacts with enemy units, the two largest being defeats of battalion-size forces on 19 June and 29 July. Reporting on conditions in IV CTZ as of the end of September, COMUSMACV pointed out that "the enemy situation . . . continues to deteriorate . . . . Continued GVN pressure, particularly against Viet Cong main force units and base areas, has affected . . . [the enemy's] ability to significantly deter the pacification effort and interdict lines of communication."[7]

4. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 6 Sep 67, JCS IN 63618.
5. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 10 Oct 67, JCS IN 35776.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

Summer Operations In I CTZ

In I CTZ, where General Westmoreland concentrated his major offensive efforts during the summer months, Marines and soldiers of the III MAF, Task Force OREGON, the ARVN, and ROK Marine Corps engaged in almost continuous heavy fighting. Along the DMZ, the 3rd Marine Division conducted Operations BUFFALO, HICKORY II, and KINGFISHER in succession. All were characterized by artillery exchanges and small unit engagements. A major action took place on 8 July during KINGFISHER when Marines routed an enemy force in a bunker complex within four kilometers of Con Thien. Despite the continuous combat activity, the enemy did not attempt the anticipated major assault on friendly positions during July or August. Guerrilla and terrorist attacks, however, remained at a high level.

In the southern portions of I CTZ, meanwhile, the 1st Marine Division and Task Force OREGON were also heavily engaged. Search-and-destroy operations such as COCHISE, MALHEUR, BENTON, COOK, and WHEELER were typical of these actions. In these engagements, friendly forces were universally victorious in terms of favorable casualty ratios and of driving opposing forces from the field. The enemy, nevertheless, continued to score successes in interdicting lines of communications, launching rocket and mortar attacks, and attacking isolated Vietnamese installations. On balance, however, COMUSMACV estimated that enemy combat effectiveness south of Route 9 was being continually degraded.[8]

The Enemy Offensive Along the DMZ

In spite of heavy fighting in the area of the DMZ, the major enemy offensive predicted by General Westmoreland for June or July had still not developed by the end of August. Greatly intensified bombardment of Con Thien, beginning in early September, however, marked the start of a strong effort by the enemy to win a major victory. Con Thien, situated 2 miles south of the DMZ and 14 miles from the coast, lies across a key infiltration route into the south. Its loss could open the way for a major invasion from the north by the 35,000 North Vietnamese troops massed in the area. At the very least, loss of Con Thien would block

8. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 6 Sep 67, JCS IN 63618.

construction of the anti-infiltration barrier system. More important would be the psychological impact of a major military victory by the enemy over US forces -- a goal the enemy had still been unable to achieve more than two years after the entry of US forces into combat on a large scale.

North Vietnamese bombardment of Con Thien reached its peak during the week of 19-27 September when 3,077 mortar, artillery and rocket rounds fell on the beleaguered US position. To counter the enemy bombardment General Westmoreland assembled one of the greatest massings of firepower in support of a single division in the history of warfare. These included 78 B-52 ARC LIGHT strikes, artillery fires, tactical air strikes, and naval gunfire. These fires, combined with an active defense and adverse weather conditions apparently dissuaded the enemy from mounting a major attack. By the end of September the hostile fires had substantially decreased.[9]

US casualties at Con Thien had, however, been heavy. During the period 1-24 September, enemy artillery, rocket, and mortar fire exacted a toll of 196 KIA and 1,917 WIA from US forces defending the DMZ. Concerned over the situation, President Johnson, on 21 September, asked the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., for a report. General Greene, the next day, described the situation for the President as one in which we "faced . . . increasing harassment of our fixed installations and units in the DMZ area by artillery, rocket and mortar fire" compounded by the heavy monsoon rains which severely impeded air support and overland movement.

The Marines were "not supinely enduring," General Greene reassured the President, but were actively countering by air, artillery, and infantry patrol actions, all of which were taking a toll in enemy casualties. Nevertheless, the situation was "not to our liking," Greene admitted. "It might be improved," he pointed out, "by attacking north to drive the enemy from positions on the DMZ, increasing forces on the DMZ and continuing present operations, or by withdrawing fixed defenses southward out of artillery range and conducting a mobile defense on the DMZ." All these courses of action, Greene concluded, were "under active consideration by the Theater Commander and his operational subordinates."[10]

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9. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 10 Oct 67, JCS IN 35776.
10. (TS) Memo, CMC to Pres, "Situation in the Area of the Vietnam Demilitarized Zone," 22 Sep 67, JMF 911/321 (22 Sep 67).

Although he had assured President Johnson that the Marines on the DMZ were giving a good account of themselves, General Greene was disturbed by the situation there. On 24 September he addressed a memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in which he stated that he considered "the casualty level currently being experienced by the Marines in the DMZ region is too high, considering the operational benefits received." The main problem, as General Greene saw it, was that the friendly forces confronted at a disadvantage an enemy who was becoming increasingly skillful in employing artillery. The friendly forces were butted up against the DMZ and unable to get behind the enemy to cut off supplies or overrun his artillery.

As possible remedies for this situation, the Commandant of the Marine Corps listed four alternative courses of action: the three he had described for President Johnson plus a proposal to increase the air and naval gunfire effort north of the demarcation line. At the present time, he concluded, the "preferred course of action" was a combination of two of the four he had listed: namely, to reinforce forces along the DMZ and continue current operations, and to increase air and naval gunfire north of the demarcation line. To implement these courses of action would require a reinforcement of the northern I CTZ area by at least two regiments, improvement in target acquisition north of the demarcation line, employment of the entire ARC LIGHT capability, "several thousand" tactical air sorties, and maximum naval gunfire against the targets acquired, using the complete range of conventional weapons including MK-36 Destructor, Gravel and Dragon Tooth AP Mines, and Walleye.

General Greene recommended that the Joint Staff prepare for JCS consideration a memorandum to CINCPAC expressing the "concern of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the situation along the DMZ /and/ their views on possible courses of action," and requesting "the development of appropriate plans and recommendations to improve the situation."[11]

11. (TS-GP 4) CMCM 31-67 to JCS, 24 Sep 67, Att to JCS 2472/158, same file.

On 25 September the Joint Chiefs of Staff referred General Greene's memorandum to the Joint Staff, but rather than wait for preparation of a report, they decided to make an immediate request to Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland for information and views on the situation. A message to that effect, dispatched the same day, requested "any observations which you would care to offer regarding measures under way or planned which offer promise in relieving this situation. . . . In particular, are there any areas in which additional assistance and/or authorities beyond those now in hand would materially assist you?"[12]

Replying on 27 September, General Westmoreland confessed that he, too, was concerned over the situation on the DMZ on two counts: first, because of the high casualties and the ineffectiveness of efforts to suppress fires into friendly positions; and secondly, because he feared the DMZ situation would be viewed out of perspective. With regard to the second count, he pointed out that the casualties for September, while high, were not out of line with casualties incurred on other occasions. During July and August 1966, for instance, forces attempting to drive the enemy out of positions in Quang Tri Province suffered monthly casualties of 125 KIA and 488 WIA, and 115 KIA and 448 WIA respectively.

The fundamental difficulty on the DMZ, Westmoreland explained, was that the posture of friendly forces there was defensive, and, around Con Thien, relatively static. To shift to the offensive in operations limited to the area south of the Ben Hai River (the demarcation line) would invite repeated heavy casualties to attacking troops from enemy artillery north of the river. To make a major combined attack on these enemy positions from the sea and across the DMZ was out of the question until May or June because of the weather, even if political obstacles could be overcome. Limited offensive operations of the raid type, however, should not be ruled out, and plans for such operations were being prepared by CG, III MAF, and Commander, Seventh Air Force, for use if the situation required it.

12. (TS) Msg, JCS 7987 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 25 Apr 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67. (S) Note to Control Div, "CMCM-31-67 . . .," 25 Sep 67, JMF 911/321 (22 Sep 67).

In the current situation, General Westmoreland said he felt it to be unwise to increase the forces north of Route 9. He had accordingly taken several steps: stopped the installation of the anti-infiltration barrier and put resources earmarked for it into immediate hardening of combat bases and strong points north of and along Route 9; started emergency construction of an airstrip and logistical base near Quang Tri City out of range of artillery across the Ben Hai River; persuaded the South Vietnamese JGS to contribute two airborne battalions to the forces constructing and manning the strong points north of Dong Ha; directed CG, III MAF, to conduct operations north of Ai Van Pass to take pressure off friendly forces from the rear and along the critical line of communications; directed CG, III MAF, to consider thinning out his forces in forward areas near Con Thien and the Trace (the strip cleared for installation of the barrier) as soon as minimum defensive installations could be constructed behind these positions from which surveillance and patrol of the area could be conducted; and accelerated port development near Hue as a fall back position from Cua Viet.

To permit a shift of III MAF forces north should the need arise, General Westmoreland reported he had directed Lieutenant General Robert E. Cushman to assign full responsibility for the three provinces comprising the southern part of I CTZ to the Americal Division (formed from Task Force OREGON on 22 September). Westmoreland reported he had also directed CG I FFORCEV to be prepared to move forces into southern I Corps should III MAF forces have to be redeployed north.

Turning to the areas in which he needed assistance from higher authorities, General Westmoreland listed the following: provide an immediate surge in B-52 sorties to the maximum sustainable rate, with a goal of 1,200 strikes per month as soon as possible; investigate the feasibility of employing 2,000 pound bombs in B-52s; make a liberal allocation of MK-36 weapons for use in the DMZ as soon as technical problems were solved; increase the number of naval gunfire ships in the DMZ area; provide flash and sound locator units as soon as possible; accelerate the deployment of units authorized under Program 5; approve increases in the RVNAF as recommended to the

Secretary of Defense in July; accelerate the issue of M-16s to ARVN units; and intensify research and development methods to locate concealed artillery pieces.[13]

Even as these messages and memoranda were being written, action was already in train that would ease the situation not only on the DMZ but also throughout SVN. On 22 September Secretary McNamara had approved Secretary of the Army Resor's request to move ahead the deployment of the headquarters group and one brigade of the 101st Airborne Division from February 1968 to December 1967.[14]

On 28 September General Westmoreland explained to Admiral Sharp the changes in USMACV plans and force deployment projections resulting from the accelerated movement of the 101st Airborne Division and the heavy enemy pressure on the DMZ. One of his major objectives for fall and winter had been to relieve the 1st Cavalry Division in Binh Dinh Province of II CTZ and commit it to successive countrywide offensive operations: PHOENIX to eliminate the enemy's Military Region 6; SANTA FE to destroy the 5th VC Division; SAN ANGELO to disrupt Military Region 10; and YORK to clean out the Do Xa. Other major objectives had been to reinforce I CTZ to the extent possible without unduly retarding operations elsewhere, to move additional elements of the 9th Infantry Division to the delta, and to reinforce III CTZ for major operations to drive the enemy away from populated areas.

These plans had been based on freeing the 1st Cavalry Division to reinforce II FFORCEV in early December, a move made impracticable by the heavy enemy pressures on the DMZ. The early arrival of the 101st Airborne Division would permit scheduled operations to proceed but with different unit assignments. The 1st Cavalry Division would not deploy to I CTZ, while the 101st Airborne Division would replace it in II CTZ.

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13. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 9056 to Actg CJCS, 2704382 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 67.

14. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecA, 22 Sep 67, Att to JCS 2472/153-1, 25 Sep 67; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, 16 Sep 67, Att to JCS 2472/153, 21 Sep 67; JMF 911/375 (16 Sep 67).

Early arrival of all the major combat units authorized under Program 5--the 11th Infantry Brigade and the remainder of the 101st Airborne Division--would facilitate the conduct of planned operations, General Westmoreland concluded.[15]

Admiral Sharp informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 October that he concurred in General Westmoreland's assessments and requests of 27 and 28 September for reinforcing actions by higher authority.[16]

Actions To Strengthen USMACV

The authorities in Washington lost no time in acting on General Westmoreland's proposals. The request for accelerated deployment of the 11th Infantry Brigade and the remainder of the 101st Airborne Division was taken under consideration by the Department of the Army, and, after a restudy of the problems involved, Secretary Resor recommended to Secretary McNamara that both units be deployed by air to SVN during December. Mr. McNamara on 21 October approved the request for early movement of the remainder of the 101st Airborne Division and on 6 November the request for early movement of the 11th Infantry Brigade.[17]

The request for an increase in ARC LIGHT to 1,200 sorties per month received equally speedy consideration. On 4 October General McConnell informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that Secretary McNamara had requested of the Air Force an assessment of its capability to attain the desired rate. General McConnell furnished the Joint Chiefs

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15. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 281500Z Sep 67, JCS IN 14370.

16. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010608Z Oct 67, JCS IN 19184.

17. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, 16 Oct 67, Att to JCS 2472/153-2, 17 Oct 67; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, 20 Oct 67, and (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecA, 21 Oct 67, Att to JCS 2472/153-3, 23 Oct 67; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, 31 Oct 67, Att to JCS 2472/153-4, 1 Nov 67; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecA, 6 Nov 67, Att to JCS 2472/153-5, 8 Nov 67; JMF 911/375 (16 Sep 67).

of Staff with a copy of the assessment he had supplied. It concluded that a surge in sorties could begin immediately and attain the 1,200 level by the end of December without a major relocation of major forces or an unacceptable degradation of SIOP capability. However, an increase in MK-82 and MK-117 bomb production would be required. On the basis of this assessment Secretary McNamara had recommended to President Johnson an immediate surge in ARC LIGHT sorties to 1,200 per month, a level that could be reached by January or February.[18]

General McConnell recommended that his memorandum be acted upon by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On 14 October they completed their review of the problem and forwarded a memorandum to Secretary McNamara recommending the continuation of the existing 800 sorties per month but with forces capable of a rapid increase to 1,200 sorties per month if required. This "surge" capability was to be attained by stationing an additional 9 B-52s on Guam, earmarking an additional 19 to begin movement to Guam on 72 hours' notice, constructing the necessary base facilities for them at Guam and U Tapao, and prepositioning support equipment at both bases. An increase in bomb production would also be required. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, in addition, increasing the number of B-52s permanently stationed at U Tapao from 15 to 30. This was an economy measure, calculated to save $3.5 million per month by eliminating flights from Guam and flying all ARC LIGHT sorties from U Tapao. The Secretary of Defense, on 10 November, approved the concept for providing a surge to 1,200 sorties and the proposal to base additional B-52s at U Tapao. However, he reduced the number from 30 to 25.[19]

18. (TS-GP 3) CSAFM R-10-67 to JCS, 4 Oct 67, Att to JCS 2472/166, 4 Oct 67; (S) Note to Control Div, "Increase in B-52 Sorties to 1200/Month," 4 Oct 67; JMF 907/323 (4 Oct 67).

19. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-55-4-67 to SecDef, 14 Oct 67 (derived from JCS 2477/166-5); (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecAF, CJCS, ASD(ISA), 10 Nov 67, Att to JCS 2472/166-7, 14 Nov 67; same file.

On 2 October, in another move designed to provide more effective fire support to forces deployed near the DMZ, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, acting on a request from CINCPAC, recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he delegate to them, for further delegation to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, authority to approve ARC LIGHT strikes in southern NVN up to 170 degrees north latitude. The Secretary approved the recommendation on 28 November.[20]

Action on General Westmoreland's other requests was also speedily taken. Two destroyers and a cruiser of the SEA DRAGON force were diverted to augment naval gunfire operations in the DMZ, and a target acquisition battery was ordered to SVN to arrive about 15 October. In the research and development field, the minimum safe separation distance of MK-36 Destructors was determined to be 100 feet on land and 50 feet in the water. Investigations were continuing on operational problems concerning their use. In the meantime, CINCPAC was planning additional seedings of the weapons. Research in target acquisition of concealed artillery pieces had been in progress and was continuing, but no new types of equipment were expected to be operational before August 1969.[21]

Enemy Pressure on the Cambodian Border

The artillery duels around Con Thien had hardly subsided when enemy forces massing on the Cambodian border in II CTZ presented a threat of invasion from that quarter. During October, COMUSMACV reported, there were ominous signs of an enemy buildup in this area which reached critical proportions in November. On 2 November COMUSMACV estimated that four North Vietnamese regiments totaling approximately 9,000 men were massed astride the border in preparation for offensive action in Kontum Province.[22]

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20. (S-GP 3) JCSM-532-67 to SecDef, 2 Oct 67 (derived from JCS 2472/157); (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 28 Nov 67, Att to JCS 2472/157-1, 30 Nov 67; JMF 912/323 (11 Sep 67).

21. (TS-GP 3) CM 2668-67 to SecDef, 28 Sep 67, JMF 911/321 (27 Sep 67).

22. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 160113Z Dec 67, JCS IN 75000, and 120100Z Nov 67, JCS IN 12346.

To forestall an enemy attack, General Westmoreland rapidly moved five additional US battalions--two from the 1st Cavalry Division and three from the 173rd Airborne Brigade--into the area and launched preemptive attacks in the vicinity of the town of Dak To. Contact with enemy forces dug in on jungle-clad heights was quickly made, and a series of vicious firefights followed. After repeated assaults, US and ARVN forces succeeded in seizing the key heights and driving most of the enemy back across the border into Cambodia. Casualties on both sides were heavy: US, 289 KIA; ARVN, 73 KIA; enemy, 1,222 KIA.[23]

The enemy objective, as revealed by a captured document, was to annihilate a major US unit, thereby drawing US troops away from the coastal areas and exposing the pacification efforts to enemy attack. This effort was at least partially successful, for the 1st Cavalry Division's Operation PERSHING, after early successes, became essentially a holding action after the redeployment of two of its battalions to the border area.[24]

Operations in the other CTZs continued, meanwhile, at much their previous pace throughout the remainder of the year. In I CTZ the Marines continued search-and-destroy missions in the northern part of the Zone under the nicknames KENTUCKY, LANCASTER, SCOTLAND, and NEOSHO. Fighting during these operations consisted largely of small-unit engagements. In the southern part of the Zone, Army forces conducted Operations WHEELER and WALLOWA against the 2nd NVA Division, and inflicted heavy casualties upon it and prevented it from interfering with the rice harvest. In III CTZ, also, search-and-destroy operations continued. Operations SARATOGA and YELLOWSTONE succeeded KOLE KOLE, BARKING SANDS and DIAMOND HEAD. The CORONADO operations continued in IV CTZ.[25]

During 1967 friendly forces suffered casualties totaling 23,199 KIA and 93,791 WIA, Enemy losses during the year were 88,104 KIA.[26]

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23. Ibid. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, I, pp. 378-379.
24. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, I, p. 375.
25. Ibid., pp. 363-367, 393-394, and 396-398.
26. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) Combat Analysis Group, J-3, "Statistical Digest of Military Developments in Southeast Asia," CAG Statistical Series, vol I, No. 7, 3 Feb 69.

Reinforcement of Free World Military Assistance Forces

Reinforcements for FWMAF contingents in SVN continued to arrive during the last half of 1967 and the early months of 1968. By September all the Australian, New Zealand, and Thai forces offered by the respective governments the previous winter had arrived in the country.

During July the ROKFV was swelled by about 3,000 troops--a Marine battalion, miscellaneous small Army units, and an increase to cover patients in hospitals. The provision of these forces by the ROK was the result of a visit by the ROK Minister of Defense to Korean forces in SVN in December 1966. Highly impressed by what he saw, the Minister urged his government to deploy additional forces to SVN. Because of approaching elections, however, the ROK government took no action until April 1967, at which time it proposed a package increment to provide these additional forces. Negotiations followed between US and Korean representatives, leading to an agreement on 17 June under which the US Government would fund completely the augmentation in the same manner it had funded the ROK forces provided in 1966.

Additional Free World forces were promised during October. On 16 October the New Zealand Government announced it would deploy an additional infantry company (150-170 men) to SVN. The next day the Australian Government declared its intention to reinforce its forces in SVN by 1,700 men comprising an infantry battalion and a tank squadron. Subsequently the addition of a helicopter unit and a small naval aviation contingent brought the total to 1,978. These Australian and New Zealand offers were in response to requests made on behalf of President Johnson by Mr. Clark Clifford and General Maxwell Taylor during visits to the two countries in July. The New Zealanders and the Australian infantry battalion arrived in SVN in mid-December. The remaining Australian units did not arrive until February and March 1968.[27]

At the end of 1967, FWMAF in RVN numbered 60,531--47,802 from Korea; 6,715 from Australia; 2,205 from

27. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, I, pp. 252-266. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, II, p. 567.

Thailand; 2,020 from the Philippines; 522 from New Zealand; 31 from Nationalist China; and 13 from Spain.[28]

The Barrier and Other Anti-Infiltration Programs

Without continuous fresh injections of men and materiel from NVN, the communist insurgency in SVN could not have been sustained. At the beginning of 1967 infiltration from NVN to SVN was estimated by US intelligence agencies to be running at a rate of about 3,000 men per month. Curtailment of the flow of men and supplies from NVN into SVN became, therefore, a major objective of US strategy. ROLLING THUNDER had as one of its main purposes the interdiction of men and supplies moving through NVN on their way to SVN, while the companion interdiction programs STEEL TIGER and TIGER HOUND attacked the part of this supply and reinforcement movement that passed through Laos.[29]

The STEEL TIGER program during 1967 was marked by a relaxation of previous restraints which had required aircraft to avoid populated areas and thus had inhibited the maximum use of air power in Laos. In early 1967 authorities refined the STEEL TIGER operating guidelines and created four zones within the panhandle of Laos. Zone I, adjacent to the SVN border, was designated as a "TIGER HOUND Special Operating Area," in which armed reconnaissance was permitted against all roads, tracks, paths, and rivers, and air strikes were permitted against all enemy activity. In Zone II, just to the west and north of the first zone, STEEL TIGER armed reconnaissance was permitted day or night against targets of opportunity located within 200 yards of a motorable trail or road. Other targets in this zone could be struck under certain special circumstances. In Zone III, still further west and north, all strikes had to be under positive FAC or MSQ radar control. Zone IV, including approximately the western half of the Laotian panhandle, was a STEEL TIGER controlled zone in which all strikes required approval of the US Ambassador to Laos as well as positive FAC control. The combined efforts in the

28. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, II, pp. 568-569.
29. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) DIA/JCS, "Southeast Asia Military Fact Book," Jul 67, p. A-85.

STEEL TIGER and TIGER HOUND areas by USAF, USN, and USMC aircraft during the year averaged 3,219 attack sorties per month.[30]

Closely allied to the air interdiction programs was SHINING BRASS, which continued throughout 1967 sending small teams from SVN to conduct cross-border operations into Laos, including reconnaissance operations to confirm targets for air strikes, and exploitation and support operations. On 25 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff expanded the SHINING BRASS operating zone. The former line had extended from the southwest corner of the DMZ south to the Cambodian border, varying in depth from 5 kilometers in the north to 20 kilometers in the south. The new line began at a point on the NVN/Laotian border approximately 30 kilometers north of the DMZ and extended south to the Cambodian border, with a depth variation of from 20 kilometers in the north to 30 kilometers near the Cambodian border. SHINING BRASS was also renicknamed PRAIRIE FIRE effective 1 March.[31]

A companion reconnaissance operation to PRAIRIE FIRE was DANIEL BOONE, a program of clandestine ground reconnaissance in Cambodia approved on 22 May 1967. The decision to conduct DANIEL BOONE operations was based on the recommendations of a joint State-Defense-CIA Study Group for Cambodia, which had been established on 21 December 1966 to consider the problems generated by enemy occupation and exploitation of Cambodian territory. Among the matters presented to the Study Group was a JCS recommendation of 19 December that US forces be permitted to pursue enemy forces with whom they were engaged into Cambodia. The Study Group reported in early May, and recommended that efforts to deal with the problem of enemy forces in Cambodia be primarily political. The JCS proposal for "hot pursuit" should not be implemented, the Study Group recommended, in order to avoid provocative actions which might jeopardize political approaches or extend the war into Cambodia. To obtain intelligence of enemy activities in Cambodia, the Study Group recommended the execution of DANIEL BOONE operations. The Departments of State and

30. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, I, pp. 438-441. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, II, pp. 660-666.

31. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, II, pp. 741-745. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7248 to CINCPAC, 251907Z Feb 67. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6319 to CINCSAC, et al., 142123Z Feb 67.

Defense approved the Study Group recommendations on 9 and 17 May. The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 22 May directed CINCPAC to initiate DANIEL BOONE.[32]

These programs enjoyed some modest success, but the continuing high rate of infiltration stimulated a search for more effective counterinfiltration measures. During 1966, despite military opposition, the Secretary of Defense had strongly advocated the construction of an anti-infiltration barrier (PRACTICE NINE) across the northern part of Quang Tri Province in SVN, and considerable discussion and planning had taken place. On 13 January 1967 the President approved the plan and assigned to it the highest national priority. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had already requested that COMUSMACV and CINCPAC submit requirements plans based on the 22 December project definition plan of General Starbird, who was the Director of the Defense Communications Planning Group (DCPG), the body organized by Secretary McNamara to manage PRACTICE NINE. The plan for a conventional ground-supported linear barrier for eastern Quang Tri Province was due by 10 February, while that for an air-supported barrier westward and into Laos was due by 15 April.[33]

On 26 January 1967, COMUSMACV forwarded the MACV PRACTICE NINE Requirements Plan for the linear barrier to CINCPAC, who a week later passed it on to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The purpose of the plan was not only to provide subordinate MACV commands with broad planning guidance, but also to provide higher headquarters with concepts and estimated requirements to support the system. The linear strong point and obstacle system, designed to impede infiltration and to detect invasion, would extend from the South China

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32. (TS) Initial Rept, Jt State-Def-CIA Study Gp for Cambodia, n.d., JMF 9155 (1 Feb 66) sec 1A. (TS) Ltr, USecState to DepSecDef, 9 May 67; (TS) Memo, ASD (ISA) to DepSecDef, 15 May 67; (TS-GP 1) Ltr, DepSecDef to USecState, 17 May 67; Att to JCS 2343/820-6, 24 May 67. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5937 to CINCPAC, 221958Z May 67. See Ch.35, for earlier developments regarding Cambodia.

33. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2986 to CINCPAC, 061927Z Jan 67. For the beginning of the story on the anti-infiltration capability during 1966, see Ch. 35.

Sea near the DMZ westward to the vicinity of Dong Ha Mountain, some 19 miles inland.[34]

The system would consist of a series of obstacles, observation posts, strong points, and base areas. The barbed wire and minefield obstacles, equipped with sensor/detector devices, starlight scopes, and searchlights, would vary in length and width and would be placed so as to deny enemy access to known infiltration routes, provide early warning of intrusion, and compel the enemy to concentrate forces by channeling his movements. Eventually the obstacles would be extended to form a solid line westward, possibly to the Laotian border. The observation posts would simply serve to insure the surveillance of the fixed obstacles. The strong points would be heavily fortified with bunkers and trenches around the perimeters of helicopter pads. Each would be bolstered against overhead fire and would have the necessary communications capability to request and direct air, ground, and naval fire support. Each would be manned by up to a reinforced company and would be provided with automatic and direct fire weapons and mortars. The strong points would be placed in position to interdict the channelled enemy infiltrators. Adding depth to the obstacles, the observation posts, and the strong points would be the base areas, which along with the strong points would occupy key terrain features and would originate patrol and fire support. These areas would serve as bases for forces of less than battalion strength operating from the strong points, and would hold artillery units that would be within range of the strong points.[35]

All civilians would be evacuated from the area immediately in the vicinity of obstacles, strong points, and forward base areas. Extensive air and ground patrolling would detect intrusion and maintain contact with the populace in surrounding areas. Tactical air and naval gunfire would be available on short notice, and aerial reconnaissance would be performed. Helicopters would lift mobile strike forces from rear areas to block penetrations or to destroy intruders.[36]

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34. (TS-GP 3) MACV PRACTICE NINE Requirements Plan, 26 Jan 67, Encl to (TS-GP 3) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, Ser 00057, 3 Feb 67, Att to JCS 2471/3, 6 Feb 67, JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67)..

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

COMUSMACV estimated that the linear barrier ultimately would have to be manned by a division, an armored cavalry regiment, and necessary supporting units. He assumed that maximum support would be provided by combat, combat service, and combat service support forces already in the area. An infantry brigade of 4,460 personnel plus augmentations totaling 3,231 men would be required initially, and would be the first increment of the division force.37

General Westmoreland pointed out that even if his command was reinforced by the necessary units, substantial MACV forces would have to be diverted to support the plan, thereby interfering with current operations. He also warned that the strong point obstacle line was but one of many anti-infiltration programs and that a proper balance should be maintained among all of them. These programs, he continued, would not stop all infiltration, but would make it more difficult and more costly for the enemy. In that light, the term "barrier" should be dropped, COMUSMACV said, since it implied an impregnable defense. In order to meet the proposed 1 November 1967 initial operational capability (IOC) date established by the Starbird plan, immediate action was necessary to provide construction funding, procurement of materials, and authority to negotiate with the RVN.38

Admiral Sharp, following his review of the MACV plan, recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it not be implemented within the time frame envisioned because of the need for additional forces to construct and man the obstacle system, the diversion of forces deployed in or en route to SVN, and the need to maintain a balance in all anti-infiltration programs.39

When the Joint Chiefs reviewed the MACV plan they were unable to agree, and on 22 February forwarded split views to the Secretary of Defense. The four Service Chiefs recommended against implementation of the plan. They noted that it would require a total of 7,691 personnel above those currently authorized in Program 4, and diversion of some 11,500 US military and ARVN personnel from current programs. GVN agreement would have to be obtained in order

37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 060820Z Feb 67, JCS IN 87183, JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67) sec 1.

to provide about 23,000 acres and to relocate 13,000 to 18,000 civilians. The plan also required immediate authority to procure and schedule shipment of construction material for strong points and bases and additional FY 1967 funding authority of $13.5 million for specified construction projects. Another objection to the plan was that the increased anti-infiltration capability would be in northeastern SVN where NVN infiltration had been minimal.[40]

The Chairman, on the other hand, recommended to Secretary McNamara that he approve the MACV plan. Although he supported the conclusion of the Service Chiefs regarding the resources required to implement it, General Wheeler believed that the eastern DMZ area represented a potential corridor for infiltration, and installation of a barrier would therefore be a prudent action. In addition, he believed it was possible that the level of activity near the DMZ might require a large diversion of forces to that area whether the barrier was constructed or not. In any event, plans could always be changed if the situation required it. He therefore recommended immediate authority and funding for improvements to Route 1 and the port at Hue, a necessary requirement to implement the plan; approval in principle for the deployment of 7,691 personnel as additive to Program 4; immediate representation to the State Department regarding negotiations with the GVN to acquire land; and authorization for procurement of materials for installation of strong points and base camps, for delivery in phase with force closure and logistic buildup plans.[41]

Secretary McNamara accepted General Wheeler's recommendations, decided that "preparations for the execution of the . . . plan . . . should go forward as quickly as possible," and directed that the necessary implementing actions be taken. This was not a decision to execute the plan, but merely to continue preparations to meet the IOC date in the event such a decision was made. The Secretary also requested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff furnish recommendations for providing the added forces required by the plan.[42]

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40. (S) Note to Control Div, 17 Feb 67; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-97-67 to SecDef, 22 Feb 67, (derived from JCS 2471/3-3); JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67) sec 2.

41. (TS-GP 1) CM-2134-67 to SecDef, 22 Feb 67, Encl A to JCS 2471/3-3, 18 Feb 67, same file.

42. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Mar 67, Att to JCS 2471/3-4, 7 Mar 67, same file.

Providing these additional forces posed a problem for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Selected reserve units could not be made available for the requirement, and there was a risk of an unfavorable personnel impact upon the existing overall force structure. To minimize that risk, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the Army withdraw subordinate units totaling 8,353 personnel from the NATO M+30 reinforcing divisions, which were slated to deploy within 30 days to Europe in the event of NATO mobilization. This would enable the brigade force to close SVN in time to meet the IOC date. The Army Chief of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations "indicated" that additional strength authority and funding totaling $296 million would be required to provide the additive forces and their equipment and to restore the sustaining base. Readiness dates for these units depended upon a decision date not later than 31 March, and any decision made subsequent to that time would bring corresponding slippage.[43]

The Service Chiefs took the opportunity in the memorandum to the Secretary to reiterate their earlier position expressed on 22 February, and to recommend that no decision be made to increase anti-infiltration operations along the DMZ until the second MACV plan, due in April 1967, had been evaluated. The Chairman did not concur with the Service Chiefs, but reiterated his own earlier position. He did recommend, however, that the Secretary approve the added forces and the required funding as recommended by the Service Chiefs.[44]

On 8 April the Secretary of Defense approved for planning purposes the deployment of forces recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the linear barrier, but he excepted certain units totaling 531 personnel that either were not considered necessary or would have to be provided from present MACV resources. The approval increased US strength in SVN by 7,522, and offshore Navy strength by 300. Program 4 was revised accordingly.[45]

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43. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-162-67 to SecDef, 23 Mar 67 (derived from JCS 2471/3-5), JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67) sec 3.

44. Ibid. (C-GP 4) CM-2195-67 to SecDef, 23 Mar 67, Encl A to JCS 2471/3-5, 17 Mar 67, same file.

45. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Apr 67, Att to JCS 2471/3-7, 10 Apr 67, same file.

In the meantime the MACV staff had been preparing the PRACTICE NINE Air-Supported Anti-Infiltration Plan, which was forwarded on 11 March to CINCPAC and on 3 April to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This plan was designed to complement the strong point obstacle system described in the earlier MACV plan, and to augment existing anti-infiltration programs through the selective use of specialized munitions, sensors, and related equipment then under development. A portion of the air-supported system would be established in western Quang Tri Province until the ground-supported obstacle system could be extended to the Laotian border. The air-supported plan anticipated increased infiltration activity through Laos as a result of the installation of the linear capability across northern RVN. Like its companion plan, the air-supported system would make infiltration more difficult and costly to the enemy but would not stop it.[46]

The antivehicle portion of the system was to be operational by 1 November 1967, but the antipersonnel portion on that date would simply enter an operational test phase with a limited capability. It would be upgraded later to a full operational system if tests proved successful. The antivehicle portion would be based upon anti-infiltration systems already in operation. US forces had already demonstrated their ability to interdict the flow of vehicular traffic, but this would have to be expanded and improved in the face of the anticipated increase in enemy infiltration activity in Laos. Current operations in the STEEL TIGER and TIGER HOUND areas would continue at an equal or greater intensity to destroy enemy vehicles as far from SVN as possible. Concurrently, the air-supported antivehicle plan would concentrate on new or improved techniques, equipment, and forces.[47]

Stopping the infiltration of personnel, on the other hand, was a far greater problem, if not an insurmountable one when attempted solely from the air. It would require massive quantities of sensors and ordnance. The goal, therefore, would be not to stop, but to restrict infiltration, inflict casualties, disrupt infiltration patterns,

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46. (TS-GP 3) MACV PRACTICE NINE Air-Supported Anti-Infiltration Plan, 11 Mar 67, Encl to (TS-GP 3) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 11 Mar 67, Att to JCS 2471/3-3, 4 Apr 67, JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67) sec 5.

47. Ibid.

force infiltration into difficult terrain, and demoralize porters and soldiers. Under the air-supported system, denial weapons would be seeded in areas of known infiltration routes and where the terrain permitted ease of access. There would be a selective use of sensors to locate activity, to detect when seeded areas had been breached, to identify additional areas requiring seeding, and to pinpoint targets for air strikes. There would be a constant shifting of interdiction points and seeded areas.[48]

Located at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, would be the Infiltration Surveillance Center (ISC), within VHF/UHF range of airborne EC-121 monitor aircraft to receive and act upon any sensor information or detonations in the minefields. That center would also pass along to the Seventh Air Force any strike request. To meet the stated operational date of 1 November 1967, COMUSMACV recommended immediate funding action so that necessary construction could be initiated.[49]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in their evaluation of the plan, agreed with COMUSMACV that any increase in efforts to inhibit and interdict infiltration should involve intensifying current programs as well as combining them with new programs of proven effectiveness. The Joint Chiefs pointed out that, in order to meet the IOC date, the air-supported plan assumed that all of the component and subsystem development then under way would proceed without delay; that the governments of South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand would approve the concept and its associated risks to friendly forces and civilians; that authorization would be given to conduct PRAIRIE FIRE operations in the PRACTICE NINE area and to base in and operate from Thailand as well as from South Vietnam; that the government of Thailand would agree to expansion of air base facilities at Nam Phong, Nakhon Phanom, and Ubon, as well as to the construction of additional Army logistic support facilities at various locations in Thailand; and that funding authorization and political clearances for construction and communications expansion could be obtained immediately. There were many other risks and problems associated with the

48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

plan that were intensified, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by the urgent schedule demanded by the 1 November IOC date.[50]

The Joint Chiefs also noted that the required additive resources included 5,444 personnel, 47 fixed-wing aircraft and 24 helicopters, and funding totaling $22.3 million. Additional funds of approximately $2.5 million would be required in the PRAIRIE FIRE account administered by the Navy for the initial one-year period. They were becoming increasingly concerned, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, over the availability of funding to support the PRACTICE NINE requirements.[51]

In light of all these problems, the Joint Chiefs recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the execution of the plan be delayed until approximately 1 April 1968, when the capabilities of the new equipment under development would have been more fully proven and the inherent risks in the program lowered. They also recommended that immediate steps be taken to obtain approvals needed for PRACTICE NINE construction and operational concepts, and for expansion of PRAIRIE FIRE operations; that required forces be approved for planning as additive to Program 4; and that the required funds be designated and allocated immediately.[52]

The Secretary of Defense was determined to hold to the 1 November IOC date and to go forward with the preparations. On 22 April he initiated action with the State Department for negotiations with the governments of Laos and Thailand to obtain the approvals needed for PRACTICE NINE basing and for concurrences in the required expansion of area and scope for PRAIRIE FIRE operations. He also took steps to determine required additional costs, and to prepare resources needed to support the plan. About two weeks later the Secretary, after deleting 1,368 Air Force and 419 Army transportation personnel spaces, approved for planning purposes the deployment of the forces recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He did not,

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50. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-204-67 to SecDef, 17 Apr 67, (derived from JCS 2471/11-1), JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67) sec 6.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.

however, approve the opening of Nam Phong Air Base but suggested that aircraft planned for deployment there should be shifted to Korat and Nakhon Phanom or some other suitable base. Program 4 was revised to include the approved forces. A later reevaluation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff persuaded the Secretary of Defense to approve the 419 Army spaces he had previously deleted.[53]

On 8 June the Joint Chiefs again reemphasized their views of 22 February. They recommended that if the Secretary decided to execute the plan CINCPAC and COMUSMACV be given maximum flexibility in the employment of PRACTICE NINE resources. The Chairman, again dissenting from the earlier views of his colleagues, recommended simply that COMUSMACV be authorized to utilize PRACTICE NINE resources in accordance with his needs.[54]

The Secretary of Defense on 13 June finally expanded his approvals of 6 March and 8 April to include authorization to employ resources earmarked for the PRACTICE NINE strong point obstacle sector in the execution of the MACV plan of 26 January. But the decision came too late to permit material to arrive in SVN in time for construction to be completed by the IOC date. Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed deployment of certain forces associated with the anti-infiltration capability. In addition, the GVN had been approached, and US forces were assisting the ARVN in clearing land.[55]

That same day, 13 June, the name PRACTICE NINE was discontinued because of a partial compromise and was replaced by ILLINOIS CITY until 15 July, when it became DYE MARKER. Still later, on 7 September, following the public

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53. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 22 Apr 67, Att to JCS 2471/11-2, 28 Apr 67; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 May 67, Att to JCS 2471/11-3, 10 May 67; same file. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-400-67 to SecDef, 15 Jul 67, (derived from JCS 2471/11-5); (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 25 Jul 67, Att to JCS 2471/11-6, 27 Jul 67; same file, sec 7.

54. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-322-67 to SecDef, 8 Jun 67, Encl A to JCS 2471/3-9, 8 Jun 67, same file, sec 7.

55. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Jun 67, Att to JCS 2471/3-10, 16 Jun 67, JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67). (TS-GP 3) Memo, DCPG to SecDef, 23 May 67, Encl B to JCS 2471/3-9, 8 Jun 67, same file. (TS-GP 1) Interv, author with SEA Br, J-5, OJCS, 3 Apr 69.

release in Washington of certain information strongly implying that construction of a strong point obstacle system was under way, the classified name of DYE MARKER was changed again to the Strong Point Obstacle System (SPOS). The two air-supported subsystems in Laos and western SVN became DUMP TRUCK (antipersonnel) and MUD RIVER (antivehicle), collectively known as MUSCLE SHOALS.[56]

By 14 July, the bulldozing of a 600 meter strip for the DYE MARKER line had been completed from the coast to a point 13 kilometers inland, except for a 4 kilometer gap beginning 4 kilometers from the coast. CINCPAC on that same date requested JCS approval for additional materials required to plug the gap and to extend the line westward another 6 kilometers. However, the Secretary of Defense did not approve the extension until a month later.[57]

In the early fall, the enemy began to concentrate artillery, rocket, and mortar fires in the area of the DMZ, hampering the emplacement of the system. Press disclosures, about the same time, gave the enemy valuable knowledge of the SPOS. Furthermore, heavy monsoon rains impeded the flow of materials to the forward sites, delayed construction, and increased the period of troop exposure. These developments threatened to inflict unacceptable casualties if work on the SPOS continued. COMUSMACV, therefore, recommended to CINCPAC on 16 September a delay in the construction of the system until the weather and the enemy situation permitted work to be resumed. CINCPAC informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 18 September that he concurred in the recommendation of COMUSMACV and expressed the opinion that there had been too much emphasis on the 1 November IOC date. The recommendations of COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, along with certain technical and logistical difficulties, led the Joint Chiefs of Staff to conclude on 19 September that the IOC date should be postponed for 30 days. The Chief of Staff, USAF, as acting Chairman, informed the Secretary of Defense of the JCS views on 22 September. The Secretary approved them and accordingly deferred the IOC date for

56. (C) Msg, DCPG to SecDef, 132118Z Jun 67, JCS IN 76886. (S-GP 3) Msg, DCPG to SecDef et al., 7 Sep 67, JCS IN 66612, JMF 911/321 (7 Sep 67).

57. (S-GP 4) Memo, CINCPAC to JCS, 14 Jul 67, Encl to JCS 2471/27, 20 Jul 67; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 Aug 67, Encl to JCS 2471/27-1, 18 Aug 67; JMF 911/321 (9 Jan 67) sec 7. (TS-GP 1) Interv, author with SEA Br, J-5, OCJCS, 3 Apr 69.

MUD RIVER to 1 December 1967, and for DUMP TRUCK to 1 January 1968. MUD RIVER began operations on schedule, but technical difficulties forced a postponement of the planned initiation date of DUMP TRUCK until 20 January 1968. The siege of the Khe Sanh, however, forced a further postponement until the spring of 1968.[58]

Logistics

The operational successes enjoyed by allied forces would not have been possible without a strong logistics base. Created almost from scratch following the decision of the United States to commit troops to combat in 1965, this base had been largely completed by the end of 1966. At this date, it included such installations as five deep-water ports and eight jet-capable airfields with a combined freight throughput of 870,000 short tons per month, cantonments, a modern communications system, and efficient systems for storage and distribution of supplies. Still far from satisfactory, however, was the condition of the port of Saigon and the roads comprising the ground lines of communication. Improvement of these facilities became major logistics tasks for 1967. There were also major logistics problems to be solved as the result of the increased forces provided by Program 5, the heavy combat operations along the DMZ, and the construction of the anti-infiltration barrier. In other respects the major logistic undertakings were intended to refine the system and to improve its efficiency by such means as the transfer of certain functions from AID to DOD and the expansion of the Army common supply system to replace the system operated by the Navy to support units operating in I CTZ.

By the beginning of 1967, the highway system of SVN had deteriorated badly as a result of many years of enemy interdiction, lack of maintenance, and increasingly heavy use by allied military forces. But even if it had been

58. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 30673 to CINCPAC, 161208Z Sep 67, JCS IN 82485; (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 180740Z Sep 67, JCS IN 85864; JMF 911/321 (16 Sep 67). (TS-GP 3) JCSM-517-67 to SecDef, 19 Sep 67 (derived from JCS 2471/41) (not sent); (TS) Memo, CSAF to Actg CJCS, 22 Sep 67, Att to (TS-GP 3) 1st N/H to JCS 2471/41, 26 Sep 67; JMF 911/321 (17 Sep 67).

in good condition, the system would not have been adequate for the large carriers and heavy-axle loads of military traffic.[59]

The 1967 military goals for road clearance, set forth in the Combined Campaign Plan for 1967, were to "secure" all roads in national priority areas and to "secure" about 500 miles and "open" about 600 additional miles of highways considered essential for military operations. The term "secure" was defined to mean "controlled by RVN/US/FWMAF during daylight hours. Isolated incidents may occur." The term "open" was defined to mean "used by RVN/US/FWMAF employing thorough security measures. Frequent incidents may occur."[60]

Allied forces scored dramatic successes during 1967 in securing and opening the essential highways. At the beginning of the year, COMUSMACV classified only 500 miles, or about 30 percent, of the military essential roads as "secure" and 76 percent as "open." By the end of the year, these figures had increased to 60 percent "secure" and 98 percent "open."[61]

Congestion in the port of Saigon was another major unsolved logistics problem at the beginning of 1967. As the year began, military operations at leased piers were proceeding with reasonable efficiency, but the commercial port was jammed with ships and barges containing some 311,400 short tons waiting to be unloaded. By late spring new construction and improved management had ended the crisis in the commercial port. The completion of facilities in the military Newport permitted release of leased berths to civilian use, and the training and guidance by USMACV and AID port organizations, had improved the GVN Port Authority to the point where it could move cargo through

59. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, II, pp. 762-764.
60. (S-GP 3) COMUSMACV and CJGS, RVNAF, AB 142, "Combined Campaign Plan, 1967," 7 Nov 66, JMF 9155.3/3100 (7 Nov 66) sec 1A.
61. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, II, p. 765. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 296.

the port expeditiously. As a result, by the end of June there were no ships in a hold status and average ship turnaround time had dropped from 89 to 7 days.[62]

In view of this substantial improvement in port operations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that it was no longer necessary for USMACV to continue handling AID Central Purchasing Authority cargoes. These cargoes consisted of goods consigned to the GVN for use in the counter-insurgency program. COMUSMACV had agreed to handle them in 1966 in order to ease the commercial cargo backlog. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 19 August, recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he seek agreement of the Department of State and the AID to transfer responsibility for these cargoes to an appropriate US or GVN agency. Agreement was reached among these agencies, leading on 29 August to the dispatch of a joint State/Defense/AID message to the US Embassy in Saigon requesting the preparation of a plan for this purpose.[63]

On 1 December the joint USMACV/AID Saigon Port Advisory Plan providing for transfer of responsibility from USMACV to AID had been completed, but the implementation date was still under negotiation between the US Mission in SVN, OSD, and AID at the end of 1967.[64]

In the northern I CTZ, the need for port facilities increased as the result of the heavy fighting along the DMZ and the decision to install the anti-infiltration system. In the absence of deep-draft facilities in the area, landing craft sites in the Hue area were doubled during the year. During 1967 throughput of port facilities in the area increased from 540 to 5,500 short tons per day.[65]

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62. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, II, pp. 808-816.

63. (S-GP 4) JCSM-458-67 to SecDef, 19 Aug 67 (derived from JCS 2472/130); (S-GP 4) Msg, DEF 5000 to Saigon, 29 Aug 67; JMF 911/479 (7 Aug 67).

64. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, II, p. 816. (U) Memo, Actg VD/JS to ASD(I&L), 18 Jul 68, Att to JCS 2472/330, 20 Jul 68, JMF 911/479 (7 Aug 67).

65. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 292.

Providing the necessary support for the additional forces authorized under Program 5 was another new logistic task that had to be faced in 1967. The facility with which the logistic system accommodated to the added burdens was proof of the soundness with which it had been planned and built. CINCPAC and COMUSMACV determined that existing port facilities would be adequate to support the movement of the additional forces, but that additional housing and related troop facilities would have to be constructed. On 7 October CINCPAC recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff construction of facilities costing $216.2 million. They reduced the figure and recommended new construction in the amount of $168.9 million to the Secretary of Defense. This latter figure represented a mere 10 percent increase in the amount already appropriated for military construction in SVN. The items recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff were included by the OSD in the FY 1969 Military Construction Program.[66]

Among the many refinements in the logistic system in SVN, one of the more important resulted from Secretary McNamara's decision of 30 November 1966 to shift responsibility for certain specific services from AID to DOD. This action imposed additional responsibilities on the logistic system in SVN. According to CINCPAC, these additional responsibilities generated a need for an additional 5,858 military personnel spaces, an added $37 million in FY 1967 construction funds, and an increase of 2 billion piasters in the amount of this currency available for military spending.[67]

There was also a need to delegate authority within the DOD for management of the newly acquired functions. On 26 February General Westmoreland recommended to CINCPAC that he be delegated directive authority for program approval and direction in SVN, but that funding and fiscal accounting be a Service responsibility. CINCPAC approved

66. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, II, pp. 897-900. (S-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, 7 Oct 67, Att to JCS 2472/146-1, JMF 911/420 (5 Sep 67) sec 2. (S-GP 4) JCSM-677-67 to SecDef, 4 Dec 67 (derived from JCS 2472/146-4); (C-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 19 Jan 68, Att to JCS 2472/146-5, 22 Jan 68; same file, sec 3.

67. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, II, p. 853.

the recommendation, but it was rejected at a joint AID/DOD meeting in Washington in late March. Final decision was delegated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who, on 11 April, rejected the action taken at the joint meeting and delegated to CINCPAC "program directive and review authority." He, in turn, delegated the authority to COMUSMACV.[68]

Another effort to refine the logistic system, the establishment of a single common supply system to provide common-user items to all units in SVN, did not meet with success. The establishment of such a system to replace the dual system then in effect had been directed by Secretary McNamara on 12 December 1966. At that time, USARV and NAVFORV operated parallel systems, the former supplying all units in II, III, and IV CTZs and the latter performing the same function in I CTZ. Secretary McNamara tasked the Department of the Army with preparation of a detailed plan, and made clear that approval would be dependent upon the establishment of the necessary control mechanism in the theater. On 8 February, the Department of the Army submitted a plan to the Secretary of Defense providing for establishing this mechanism by deploying an Inventory Control Center to SVN. On 9 May, following consultation with the other Service Departments, the Department of the Army submitted a detailed plan calling for the phased implementation of a single common supply system. Secretary McNamara, on 21 July, informed the Service Secretaries that he was withholding approval of the Army plan pending presentation of more definitive requirement data, establishment of the necessary Army supply capability in SVN, and the resolution of certain interservice disagreements. By the end of 1967, the single common supply system had still not been put into effect.[69]

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68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, II, pp. 722-723. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2478 to CINCPAC, 112316Z Apr 67.

69. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Service Secys and CJCS, 12 Dec 66, Att to JCS 2315/349-23, 15 Dec 66, JMF 4060 (8 Jan 65) sec 4. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, 8 Feb 67, Att to JCS 2315/349-24, 10 Feb 67; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, 8 May 67, Att to JCS 2315/349-25, 12 May 67; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Service Secys, 21 Jul 67, Att to JCS 2315/349-26; same file, sec 5.

The Situation at the End of 1967

During 1967 Admiral Sharp, summing up operations in SVN for the year, reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that there was a "definite shift in the military situation favorable to us." This happy result was made possible by the "significant increase in the strengths and capabilities of allied forces which facilitated expansion of combat operations to an extent which "denies the enemy the capability to conduct significant operations in the populated areas." Ground operations, closely supported by close air and ARC LIGHT strikes, had increasingly neutralized enemy base areas, located and destroyed his supplies, and driven him into sparsely populated regions where food was scarce. Most of the enemy main force units had been driven to positions near the borders, where they took advantage of sanctuaries for protection and resupply.

Steady progress had also been made in destroying communist local forces and infrastructure. As a result, the proportion of the population and area under enemy control had slowly but steadily declined.

In spite of these favorable trends, CINCPAC cautioned, the enemy had "demonstrated a willingness to accept the situation as it exists and continues to attack, harass, and terrorize in many areas. . . ." Enemy employment of artillery, rockets and mortars had also shown a marked increase in both quantity and caliber. Even more disturbing, CINCPAC reported, was evidence of "recent large unit deployments from North Vietnam which indicate that the enemy may be seeking a spectacular win in South Vietnam in the near future." However, CINCPAC continued, these enemy capabilities were not overpowering. Through "careful exploitation of the enemy's vulnerability and application of our superior fire power and mobility," he concluded, "we should expect our gains of 1967 in South Vietnam to be increased many fold in 1968."[70]

70. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010156Z Jan 68, JCS IN 12089.

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Chapter 46

PACIFICATION AND NATION-BUILDING--1967

During 1967, efforts in pacification and nation-building made some progress. Of particular significance was the replacement of the military regime by an elected constitutional government, a major objective long sought by the United States. Progress in other areas was also encouraging. The rate of inflation was reduced by more than half, the RVNAF was increased in size and improved in quality, and new energy was injected into the pacification program.

From Military Directorate to Constitutional Government

The inauguration of General Nguyen Van Thieu on 31 October 1967 as the first president under the new and democratic constitution was a significant milestone in the political development of SVN. The legitimacy and democratic character of the Saigon government had now been established. Its predecessor, the military regime of Air Vice Marshal Ky, had attained a certain degree of stability, but it lacked both legitimacy and a broad popular base. For these reasons, the United States had enccuraged the GVN to take the succession of steps which led finally to the establishment of constitutional democracy.

This process of political evolution had begun with the election, on 11 September 1966, of a Constituent Assembly for the purpose of drafting a constitution. However, the Leadership Council for the Nation, the military-dominated 19-member body which ruled SVN, was reluctant to confer sole responsibility for this important task on the newly elected body. In December, by means of Decree 21, it assumed the authority to amend any constitution drafted by the Constituent Assembly. Concerned by this turn of events, the Department of State urged Ambassador Lodge to seek some form of accord between the Assembly and Thieu, Ky, and the other military members who exercised the real power in the Leadership Council. In this endeavor Ambassador Lodge was at least partially successful. His efforts

led to an informal agreement by the Leadership Council to discuss any changes they felt to be necessary in the draft constitution with the Constituent Assembly.[1]

The Constituent Assembly began open debate on the first draft of the constitution on 19 January 1967. The draft provided for well-defined rights of citizens, elected local officials, substantial legislative powers, and restrictions on presidential authority. During its review of the draft, however, the Leadership Council raised objections on several points. Its greatest concern was over the proposed grants of power to the National Assembly to vote "no confidence" in the government and to declare emergencies and impose curfews. On all these points, the view of the Leadership Council prevailed and the powers in question were assigned to the President rather than to the Assembly. The Leadership Council also objected to the proposal to elect, rather than to appoint, province chiefs. On this point, too, the view of the Leadership Council prevailed.

Another point of disagreement concerned the particulars of the transition period. It was finally agreed that the Leadership Council would remain in power until the president was inaugurated. The Constituent Assembly would continue in existence and would exercise limited powers until the National Assembly convened. After the constitution was promulgated, it would assist in drafting election laws and monitoring the elections.

The Constituent Assembly approved the draft constitution on 18 March. The next day the Leadership Council accepted it, but only after heated argument between its civilian members and the supporters of General Thieu. The constitution as finally adopted called for a strong executive authority tempered by the powers of the National Assembly. The executive branch of the government consisted of a President and Vice-President elected on the same ticket, and a Prime Minister chosen by the winning Presidential candidate. It also provided for a National Assembly (NA) consisting of an upper house composed of 30 to 60 senators chosen at large,

1. (U) Msg, USIA to All Principal USIS Posts, 17 Aug 67, JCS IN 3812. (S) Msg, State 97909 to Saigon, 6 Dec 66, JCS IN 71508. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 1142-1143.

and a lower house of 100 to 200 representatives chosen from constituencies no larger than provinces. Once elected, the National Assembly would choose the Supreme Court. Local officials were to be elected in villages and hamlets, as well as in provinces, cities, and the capital.

As soon as the Leadership Council had accepted the constitution, top Vietnamese officials, including Thieu and Ky, left Saigon to attend a conference with President Johnson and other US officials in Guam. At this conference (19-21 March 67) the RVN delegation outlined the new constitution to President Johnson. On 24 March, the Constituent Assembly presented the final draft to the Leadership Council who submitted it in turn to the Armed Forces Council. Chief of State Thieu officially promulgated the constitution on 1 April 1967.

The local elections began on 2 April and continued through June. According to the election laws drawn up by the Constituent Assembly, the village chiefs were elected by the village councils from among their own members. Hamlet chiefs were elected directly. Elections took place in 984 out of an estimated 2,500 villages in RVN and in 4,476 out of approximately 13,000 hamlets. The VC opposed these elections with threats, assassinations of candidates, and harassment of voters. Nevertheless, about 77 percent of those registered voted.[2]

The presidential election campaign, meanwhile, had gotten under way. According to the qualifications drawn up by the Constituent Assembly, candidates had to be Vietnamese citizens at birth and residents of South Vietnam for at least ten years prior to election day. Suspended or dismissed military or civilian officials could not run for the two offices nor could those who had worked directly or indirectly for communism.[3]

General Thieu, the Chief of State, and Air Vice Marshal Ky, the Premier, were the chief contenders for the Presidency. Since both were military officials in the Vietnamese

2. (U) Msg, USIA to All Principal USIS Posts, 17 Aug 67, JCS IN 38212. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 1143-6.
3. (U) Msg, USIA to all Principal USIS Posts, 17 Aug 67, JCS IN 38212.

government, the military leadership split into pro-Thieu and pro-Ky factions. The US Department of State expressed deep concern about the split and instructed the US Ambassador to attempt to alleviate it. After long, heated discussions at the meeting of the Leadership Council on 28-30 June, Ky withdrew his candidacy and agreed to become Thieu's Vice Presidential running mate. According to a CIA report, Ky's version of the understanding was that he had agreed that Thieu would be the figurehead president, but that he would be the actual ruler.[4]

Tran Van Huong, who had been premier in 1964, was the leading civilian candidate. Others were Truong Dinh Dzu and Phan Khac Suu. Dzu was a wealthy Saigon lawyer and a leading opponent of the government and proponent of a peaceful settlement of the war. Suu was the chairman of the Constituent Assembly and had been Chief of State in 1964. Another leading candidate was General Duong Van ("Big") Minh, who had overthrown the Diem regime in 1963, only to be overthrown himself in 1964 and forced into exile.[5]

The United States did not openly endorse a candidate, and pledged noninterference in the elections. Yet the election of the Vietnamese President caused the United States considerable concern. Secretary of State Rusk considered it important that the civilians participate in the government, but with minimum loss of the strength the military offered. The United States, Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Lodge on 12 January,

> must be prepared to take risk of reducing to some degree governmental effectiveness which continued military leadership might provide . . . and of supporting emergence of a regime which . . . /would have/ better prospects than current or past GVN's for attracting and exploiting the local political strength to the disadvantage of the VC.

4. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 010020Z Jul 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67. (S) Msg, State 202550 to Saigon, 25 May 67, JCS IN 34643. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) Information Msg CIA 030922Z Jul 67, JCS IN 28054, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 67.

5. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 1147-1154.

The ideal Vietnamese regime would combine both military and civilian elements and also provide representation for the Buddhists and "Southerners". On 8 February, the State Department informed the US Ambassador that a Huong/Ky ticket would be a satisfactory civilian-military combination. Huong, however, refused to run with Ky.[6]

The 18 slates were submitted to the Constituent Assembly by 30 June, and on 18 July that body made its final decision on their eligibility. Seven slates were disqualified, including that of "Big" Minh.[7]

The GVN took care that the election campaign proceeded "freely and fairly". It lifted press censorship, and gave all the candidates money to campaign, free transportation, and free time on government radio and television. General Vien, the Defense Minister, stated publicly that the armed forces would not support a candidate, and General Thanh, the Minister of RD, indicated that no RD workers would engage in the political campaign. Generals Ky and Thieu told the province and district leaders that they should not pressure the people to vote for any particular candidate.[8]

Since the candidates, except for Thieu and Ky, were not well known, group campaign trips were planned by the GVN. The first such trip was a complete fiasco. The plane was scheduled to land at Quang Tri but was forced to divert to Dong Ha owing to heavy crosswinds. The civilian candidates blamed the GVN for the diversion and charged that the elections were a fraud. As a result Thieu and Ky drew up a new itinerary of campaign trips.[9]

In order to insure that the elections were honestly conducted, the GVN provided poll watchers, and the Constituent Assembly monitored the electoral proceedings. The GVN, in addition, invited representatives of the UN, governments

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6. (S) Msg, State 202559 to Saigon, 25 May 67, JCS IN 34643. (S) Msg, Saigon 21073 to State, 3 Apr 67, JCS IN 15705. (S) Msg, State 117709 to Saigon, 12 Jan 67, JCS IN 65555. (S) Msg, Saigon 19123 to State, 28 Feb 67, JCS IN 38291. (S) Msg, State 133730 to Saigon, 8 Feb 67, JCS IN 93315.

7. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 1148-1149.

8. (S) Msg, Saigon 2972 to State, 12 Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67, pt. 1.

9. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 1149-1150.

having relations with the GVN, several parliamentary organizations, and the international press to observe the polling. To forestall intervention by the VC, COMUSMACV placed his command in a posture of maximum alert.10

The Presidential election was held on 3 September 1967. All Vietnamese men and women were eligible who were 18 years old as of 31 December 1966, who were inscribed on electors' lists, and who held electors' cards. Of those registered to vote 83 percent went to the polls. The Thieu/Ky ticket won, as expected, but with only 34.8 percent of the vote, less than anticipated. Trong Dinh Dzu, the peace candidate, came in second with 17.2 percent. Phan Khac Suu received 10.8 percent, Tran Van Huong 10 percent, and the other seven candidates the remaining 37.2 percent. Elections for the 60-seat upper house of the National Assembly were also held on 3 September and its inaugural session convened on 9 October. The campaigning for seats in the lower house, which had begun on 6 October, culminated in the election of 137 members on 22 October.11

The honesty and freedom of the elections were endorsed on 4 September by three election experts who had been members of the US group invited by the GVN to observe the voting. Speaking for the three experts, Professor Richard M. Scammon called the election "reasonably free and honest . . . . I would use exactly the same words to describe an election in the United States."12

On 30 October the Leadership Council was dissolved. The following day President Thieu and Vice President Ky were inaugurated, the lower house installed, and the Constituent Assembly dissolved. The newly inaugurated President announced

10. (S) Msg, Saigon 2972 to State, 12 Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67, pt. 1. (S) Msg, JCS 6871 /CJCS/ to COMUSMACV, 222135Z Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67. (C) Msg, COMUSMACV 28421 to CJCS 260606Z Aug 67, JCS IN 44924.

11. (U) Msg, USIA to All Principal USIS Posts, 17 Aug 67, JCS IN 38212. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, p. 1143.

12. NY Times, 5 Sep 67, 1.

the appointment of Nguyen Van Loc as Premier. Premier Loc, a southern Buddhist lawyer who had been the Chairman of the Leadership Council, announced the installation of his cabinet on 9 November 1967.

The initial actions of the newly elected Thieu/Ky government showed evidence of a new seriousness of purpose and a determination to direct the full energies of the South Vietnamese people to the task of winning the war. Even before their formal inauguration, they had promulgated, on 25 October, a new and sweeping Mobilization Decree which had provided for the conscription of all men between the ages of 18 and 45 for military service, the mobilization of technicians of all types up to the age of 45, and the recall of some veterans to the colors.[13]

After its inauguration, the new administration issued a comprehensive, long-range program of economic, social, and political reform entitled "National Policy." It called specifically for action in such chronically neglected areas as land reform. Whether "performance" in these fields would live up to "promise" was, of course, a question that could only be answered after the passage of time.[14]

The GVN had been transformed from a military directorate into an elected constitutional government. Although civilians, Buddhists, and Catholics were all now represented in the government, the military still predominated and familiar officials were still in power. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese election of 1967 was an important step in accomplishing the US goal of developing democracy in RVN. For democracy to survive, however, RVN would also have to make progress toward a strong and stable economy, and at the beginning of 1967 the economy was still being eroded.

Efforts to Control Inflation

Inflation, which had threatended to reach runaway proportions in 1966, continued to be a problem in 1967.

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13. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, p. 1153.

14. Ibid. (S) Msg, Saigon 10479 to State, 6 Nov 67, JCS IN 92565.

Fortunately, however, the anti-inflation measures that had been instituted in 1966 paid substantial dividends in 1967, and by the end of the year inflation, if not halted, was at least being controlled.

To fight inflation the US Mission developed four primary measures, and secured GVN cooperation in their implementation. The four measures were: 1) massive importation of goods; 2) increase of domestic production; 3) more efficient and wider tax collection by the GVN; and 4) imposition of spending restraints on US agencies and personnel.[15]

Of these measures, the imposition of spending restraints was by far the most effective. The largest single factor contributing to inflation was the massive US participation in the war. This participation necessarily entailed vast expenditures that the small and relatively undeveloped RVN was unable to absorb. Attacking the source of the problem, the US Government had imposed a ceiling for piaster spending by US military agencies and personnel in RVN. The Secretary of Defense had established the CY 1967 ceiling at 42 billion piasters, and set the ceiling for the first two quarters of the year at 10.5 and 11.0 billion piasters respectively.

Much of the credit for the eventual success in holding down piaster expenditures belongs to COMUSMACV. He devised a program to limit piaster spending that proved highly effective. His program concentrated on three categories of expenditures: 1) maintenance and operation, 2) construction, and 3) personal spending by US troops. To curb expenditures in the first two categories, COMUSMACV imposed austere standards of design on new construction, reduced the number of leased billets in urban areas, and limited the purchase of local commodities to nine items. To reduce local personel spending, COMUSMACV increased on-post recreational facilities, expanded the R&R program, started new savings programs, and improved PX stocks. He also took steps to influence personnel to increase their pay allotments, to save their money, and to spend only MPCs.[16]

Studies undertaken during February 1967 by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV indicated that actual piaster spending was running below the established ceiling. Expenditures for the first

15. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 1035-1036.
16. Ibid., pp. 1046-1051.

quarter amounted to only 8.53 billion piasters, some one billion less than the ceiling. On the basis of these figures, CINCPAC, on 24 June, submitted projected expenditures for the third and fourth quarters of CY 1967 of 9.3 billion and 9.2 billion piasters respectively. On 5 August, the Secretary of Defense approved the figure for the fourth quarter but reduced the ceiling for the third quarter to 8.6 billion piasters.[17]

Additional expenditures resulting from the approval of Program #5 led CINCPAC, on 20 September, to request increases in the piaster ceilings for the last two quarters to 9.4 and 10.3 billion respectively. On 2 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed him that there would be no official changes in the two quarterly ceilings but that expenditures at the rate anticipated by CINCPAC would be acceptable because total spending for the year would still be within the 42 billion piaster ceiling for CY 1967. Actual expenditures for the year totaled 34.539 billion piasters.[18]

The other programs designed to combat inflation met with less success. Massive importation of consumer goods, financed jointly by the United States and the GVN, proved successful from an economic standpoint: It provided goods to meet increased consumer demands for items that could not be produced domestically because of full employment in war-related industries and the disruption of the GVN economy. There was an undesirable side effect, however: The program gave a few individuals who were making a minimal contribution to the war effort an affluent standard of living that stood in sharp contrast to the numerous improverished victims of the war.

Efforts to increase the tax collections of the GVN met with only limited success. A general reform of the tax system proved impossible for political reasons; tax revenues increased slightly but not enough to have a significant effect on the inflation. A major obstacle to increasing the tax yield was the inefficiency of collection agencies.

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17. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, pp. 578-579.

18. Ibid., pp. 580-583. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4179 to CINCPAC, 020147Z Dec 67.

The effort to encourage domestic production, while containing some promise for the future, produced no immediately significant results.[19]

Despite their uneven pattern of success, the overall effect of the four primary measures developed by the US Mission was highly beneficial to the economy of SVN. The runaway inflation, which had threatened the country in the spring of 1966, was checked. The unemployment problem was solved, and the standard of living was rising. Most significantly, during 1967 prices in RVN rose only 30 percent--a large decrease from the 70-percent rate of inflation of the previous year.

Pacification and Revolutionary Development

It will be recalled that the President, on 15 October 1966, had given the system of divided military-civilian responsibility for the pacification program 90 days to show substantial progress. He had indicated that if it did not do so he intended to place the entire program under military control. He waited longer than 90 days but, finally on 9 May, obviously dissatisfied with the limited progress then being made, President Johnson directed that US programs for pacification and Revolutionary Development be integrated under the "single manager" system in order to provide "added thrust forward in this critical field." Because the resources committed to pacification were primarily military, the President assigned to General Westmoreland this responsibility under the overall authority of Ambassador Bunker. To carry out these responsibilities, under COMUSMACV, the President named Robert W. Komer Deputy for Pacification (Revolutionary Development) with the personal rank of Ambassador. Implementing the President's directive, COMUSMACV united the US Mission Office of Civil Operations and his own RD Support Directorate into a single agency, the Assistant Chief of Staff for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS).[20]

The President's action reflected the importance attached to Revolutionary Development at the highest level of the US Government. This was a view shared by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. On 27 March he had informed the Director, Joint Staff, that Revolutionary Development was "in effect the 'pay off' item for our investment in South Vietnam, and the success of our

19. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 1035-1038.

20. (C) NSAM 362 to SecState and SecDef, 9 May 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 67. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, p. 587.

total effort will be increasingly measured by our ability to achieve progress in RD." General Wheeler was concerned that the Joint Staff was not keeping pace with the expansion of RD activities in the field. He therefore appointed SACSA as Special Assistant for Revolutionary Development on 14 April. In a further action to strengthen staff support in this field, the Revolutionary Development Division was added to SACSA on 14 April.[21]

One of Ambassador Komer's first innovations as he took up his new duties was the establishment of a new integrated civilian and military program to assure more effective control and supervision of the numerous and diverse subprograms supporting pacification. This program, designated TAKEOFF, was primarily a management tool. It did not initiate any new subprograms but was designed to bring existing ones together under a centralized management. Each of these several subprograms had its own field advisor and staff. Most important among these were the subprograms for Chieu Hoi, the RD cadre, the increasing of RVNAF support of pacification, and the eradication of the VC infrastructure.[22]

Because the elimination of the VC infrastructure in the villages and hamlets of RVN was the crux of the pacification program, Ambassador Komer gave it primary attention. As a first step he established an "Infrastructure Intelligence and Exploitation Program" (ICEX) which provided for the systematic accumulation of intelligence by US and GVN agencies aimed at identification of VC agents. The GVN National Police would arrest such agents when identified. Unfortunately, the GVN initially displayed little interest or energy in seeking and providing intelligence of this nature. As a result ICEX performance was not very successful at first. Later in the year, the GVN took a more positive approach and began providing the required intelligence. In December, the Prime Minister directed the establishment of coordinating committees at all levels of government and of District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers. This broadened program was given the title PHOENIX.[23]

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21. (S) CM-2197-67 to D/JS, 27 Mar 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 67. (S) SACSA-M 341-67, 12 Apr 67, SACSA Files. (U) CM-2261-67 to SACSA, 24 Apr 67, JMF 031 (24 Apr 67).

22. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 594-596.

23. Ibid., pp. 602-604. (TS-GP 3) OJCS, "1968 Year-End Review of Vietnam," p. 5-19.

TAKEOFF attempted to give new impetus to some other subprograms as well. Under TAKEOFF, the RD cadre program nearly reached its established goal of sending 590 teams into the field in 1967, falling short by only 35 teams. The RVNAF also expanded its support of the pacification program, improving the training of its units and increasing the number of ARVN battalions assigned to support RD. During 1967, 93 percent of all ARVN battalions completed a special training course in RD. The number of battalions supporting RD increased from 38 to 53. The Chieu Hoi program, however, did not fare nearly so well. Although Chieu Hoi had been assigned a goal of 95,000 ralliers during 1967, the subprogram fell far short of this, rallying only 27,000 VC to the GVN.[24]

All subprograms under the pacification program had one common goal--to increase the population under effective control of the GVN. To measure the success in reaching this goal, the Hamlet Evaluation Program (HES) was put into operation in January 1967. According to statistics developed by HES, the GVN succeeded in making modest gains in population control during 1967. The number of people in "secure" hamlets increased from 7,033,700 to 8,455,400 during the year. The population in "contested" hamlets dropped from 2,765,900 to 2,476,300. Population in hamlets under VC control declined from 3,011,200 to 2,748,500. Summing up the results obtained during the year, Ambassador Komer reported that "In sum, much has been accomplished, but much remains to be done. Nonetheless, the greater resources, greater experience and improved organization generated during 1967 provides a solid base from which to achieve greater results in 1968."[25]

Improvement in the RVNAF

During 1967, noteworthy progress was made in enhancing the capability of the RVNAF to perform its mission of supporting the RD program. This progress was largely the result of an increase in ARVN force levels.

24. Ibid., pp. 599-613.
25. Ibid., pp. 622-625, 627.

Although RVNAF force levels for FY 1967 had been set at 633,645, the limited manpower that RVN was able to provide and the inflation generated by high force levels made it necessary to reduce this strength temporarily to 622,153 in April 1967. The reduction was carried out at the expense of the PF only.[26]

This downward turn was quickly reversed. Apparently judging that the inflation problem was no longer so dangerous, COMUSMACV, on 26 April, recommended a force level of 678,728 for FY 1968; three months later he raised the recommended strength to 685,739. His purpose was to establish "realistic force levels which will satisfy projected operational requirements . . . , particularly in support of RD," and at the same time "be attainable and maintainable within the constraints of manpower availability, leadership potential, and inflationary considerations." The new strength was attainable, COMUSMACV pointed out, on the basis of a new and higher estimate of the population of SVN, now calculated to be 16.5 million, and on the assumption that the GVN would take action to reduce the draft age and extend the tours of personnel on active duty. The US Mission and CINCPAC approved the recommendation.[27]

The proposed increase to 685,739 spaces included 15,747 for the regular forces and 47,839 for the RF/PF, a net addition of 63,586 spaces above the force levels originally projected for FY 1967. The increase would require an addition of 2,243 US advisors, but because this addition was already included in the Program #5 deployment plan, no problem was anticipated in filling advisor spaces. The higher force levels would also add piaster expenditures of 4.7 billion to 1968 costs. In US dollars the one-time cost would be $10.2 million and the recurring cost $47.5 million, all to be borne by the US Army. The provision of the equipment required would adversely affect US Army forces and cause certain other problems, but minimum equipment was available in 1967 for 53,000 of the 63,586 increases.[28]

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26. (S-GP 4) JCS 2472/151, 28 Sep 67; (S-GP 4) JCSM-530-67 to SecDef, 28 Sep 67 (derived from JCS 2472/151); JMF 911/535 (26 Jul 67).

27. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 261145Z Apr 67, JCS IN 62616. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 261220Z Jul 67, JCS IN 75415.

28. Ibid.

Recapitulation of Current and Proposed

RVNAF Force Levels

Regular

Service	End FY 66 1/	MACV Approved FY 67 RVNAF 2/	Proposed Change 3/	FY 68 Total
Army	277,363	283,207	+14,966	298,173
Navy	15,833	16,076	- 112	15,964
Air Force	15,292	15,687	+ 761	16,488
Marines	7,172	7,189	+ 132	7,321
Total	315,660	322,159	+15,747	337,906

Paramilitary

RF	141,731	152,516	+32,229	184,745
PF	176,254	147,478	+15,610	163,088
Total	317,985	299,994	+47,839	347,833
Grand Total	633,645	622,153	+63,586 4/	685,739[29]

1/ CINCPAC was authorized to adjust spaces between forces within the level of 633,645, subject to approval by the Mission Council.

2/ Approved by the Mission Council.

3/ Concurred in by the Mission Council.

4/ This is a net increase of 63,586 over the FY 67 level established by COMUSMACV (622,153) or 52,094 over the SecDef authorized level (633,645).

29. (S-GP 4) App A to JCSM-630-67 to SecDef, 28 Sep 67 (derived from JCS 2472/151), 20 Sep 67, JMF 911/535 (26 Jul 67).

In their review of COMUSMACV's proposal, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that the FY 1968 buildup would serve the US national interest because it would increase the capability of the Vietnamese forces to accomplish mutual objectives. They believed, too, that the increase would enable the RVNAF to shoulder a greater share of the burden in RVN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, therefore, that the Secretary of Defense approve the recommended FY 1968 RVNAF force level, the funds to support it, and continued authority for CINCPAC to adjust forces within the overall approved level. The Secretary did so on 7 October.[30]

In addition to this increase in strength, the RVNAF also improved its overall level of competence. This improvement had several facets. During 1967 many RVNAF units participated closely in operations with US forces, benefiting greatly from observing and practicing US military techniques in the field. Concurrently, other units were benefiting from training by US advisors in patrolling, intelligence operations, and night operations. In addition, strong efforts were made to increase the quality of military leadership in the RVNAF by improved schooling and stress on leadership principles. Finally, during the year some qualitative improvement came from modernization of the RVNAF, through provision of improved weapons on a selective basis.[31]

COMUSMACV, in early 1966, had requested 115,436 M-16 rifles for distribution to the RVNAF. Because of production limitations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the allocation of only 9,731 rifles at that time. Delivery of this allotment was completed on 31 May 1967. On 28 August, COMUSMACV entered a reclama for the remaining 105,705 weapons, plus a request for an additional 3,005, a total of 108,710. He asked that 5,000 rifles be delivered immediately from current stocks and the remainder from future production. The Secretary of Defense, on 4 October, approved immediate delivery of 5,000 M-16s from US Army depot stocks for issue to selected RVNAF units. He also directed the Joint Materiel Priorities and Allocations Board to recommend future allocations. On 12 October, the Board recommended delivery by

30. Ibid. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 7 Oct 67, Att to JCS 2472/151-1, 11 Oct 67, JMF 911/535 (26 Jul 67). (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8670 to CINCPAC, 112108Z Oct 67.

31. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1967, p. 920.

the end of the first quarter of FY 1969 of the remaining 103,710 rifles requested by COMUSMACV. The Secretary of Defense approved the recommendation on 24 October.[32]

As another means to improve the RVNAF, steps were taken to attain a greater flexibility and responsiveness in the procedures by which US support was furnished. In April 1966, the Secretary of Defense had transferred responsibility for furnishing support from MAP to the Military Departments. On 13 January 1967, he directed each Service to budget for the support of its South Vietnamese counterpart. The implementation of this directive was delayed, however, by an inter-service dispute over supply of items common to two or more SVN Services. On 4 May, the US Services finally agreed that for FY 1968 the US Army would fund "Operation and Maintenance common item support" provided to all the RVNAF, but that effective with FY 1969 each US Service would budget at departmental level for all support to its SVN counterpart.[33]

Year-End Assessment

Ambassador Bunker, in an address before the National Press Club on 17 November 1967, summed up progress in nation-building as "steady but not spectacular." The development of representative institutions and vigorous political life, he said, was "encouraging," as were the halt to runaway inflation, the extension of GVN control over the population,

32. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, pp. 736-738. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to JCS, 281011Z Aug 67, JCS IN 65481. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 260329Z Sep 67, JCS IN 99164. (TS-GP 4) DJSM-1214-67 to J-4, 4 Oct 67, Att to JCS 1725/758, 4 Oct 67; (TS-GP 4) JCSM-472-67 to SecDef, 12 Oct 67, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 1725/758, 16 Oct 67; (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Oct 67, Att to JCS 1725/758-1, 26 Oct 67; JMF 489 (4 Oct 67).

33. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3635 to CINCPAC, 13 Jan 67. (S-GP 4) Msg, CNO to CINCPAC and CMC, 251918Z Nov 66, JCS IN 53568. (S-GP 4) Msg, CSAF 90850 to CINCPAC, 092251Z Dec 66, JCS IN 84390. (S-GP 4) Msg, CMC to CINCPAC, 300239Z Nov 66, JCS IN 84391. (S-GP 4) Msg, DA 813287 to CINCUSARPAC, 042009Z May 67, JCS IN 79784.

and the increasing effectiveness of the RVNAF. These developments, in combination with the military successes achieved by allied forces, had, in Ambassador Bunker's opinion, placed victory beyond the enemy's reach. The attempt by NVN and the VC "to impose a solution by force," he said, "has run into a stone wall." This appraisal, when added to the optimistic assessments of progress in military operations by Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland, put the officials in direct charge of US civil and military operations in the field on record as believing that US objectives in Vietnam would be achieved.[34]

34. Dept of State Bulletin, LVII (11 Dec 67), pp. 781-784.

Chapter 47

THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC DISSENT

Public Opinion Turns Against the War

In spite of the apparent successes in the theater of operations, political opposition at home threatened to undermine the very real progress being made in the field. During 1967 a growing number of Americans, including many members of Congress and leaders of professions and the press, ceased to believe that victory was possible in South Vietnam and began to speak out in favor of some form of compromise solution to end the war. To leaders of the Administration, there seemed a real danger that the enemy strategy, as they understood it, would succeed--that the American people would eventually tire of a prolonged and seemingly inconclusive war of attrition and would force their government to withdraw or to accept terms favorable to the enemy.

As in 1966, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee served as the principal focus of the intellectual, moral, and emotional dissatisfaction with the war. On 21 January Chairman Fulbright presented his comprehensive peace plan: Washington and Saigon would propose ceasefire talks with the NLF and Hanoi; the United States should cease bombing the North, send no further reinforcements, reduce military activity to a level compatible with safety of our forces, and promise an eventual US withdrawal; following agreement upon plans for a ceasefire and self-determination in South Vietnam, convene an international conference of "all interested parties" to guarantee the same; if no settlement proved possible, consolidate US forces within fortified areas.[1]

The testimony of Committee witnesses generally supported these propositions. Edwin O. Reischauer, recently Ambassador to Japan, saw scant hope for fruitful negotiations between the NLF and the GVN; nonetheless, he advocated "prudent de-escalation" of the war's purely military

1. NY Times, 22 Jan 67.

aspects. More broadly, Reischauer sensed a misapplication of Atlantic policies to Pacific affairs; in Asia, military power inevitably floundered in the quagmire of economic and political disruption. Accordingly, he recommended that the United States minimize its Far Eastern commitments, avoid formal alliances, and encourage both nationalistic feeling and regional association.[2]

Retired Lt. General James M. Gavin held a higher hope for the possibilities of a successful settlement, on grounds that China's "Cultural Revolution" had at least partially freed Hanoi from entanglement with Red China. Consequently, the US could enter into negotiations "confident that ultimately a free, neutral and independent Vietnam" could be established, "with guarantees of stability from an international body." General Gavin likewise spoke of the possibility that "our society is going to be torn apart," and advised that solution of domestic problems be accorded the highest national priority. This theme echoed Senator Fulbright's statement that the "Great Society" had become a "sick society."[3]

Concerning the impact of ROLLING THUNDER upon the enemy, a New York Times correspondent, Harrison Salisbury, offered his opinion, based on a visit to NVN, that the military benefits were far outweighed by the sense of national unity and purpose which the bombing had inspired among the people of North Vietnam.[4] The Committee also heard historian Henry Steele Commager argue that the Puritan ethic had led the United States to an obsession with communism, and that the notion of New World purity and mission had led the nation to accept a "double standard" in America's conduct of foreign relations.[5]

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2. Hearing, "Asia, the Pacific, and the United States," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 31 Jan 67, 90th Cong, 1st Sess (1967), with Former Ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer.

3. Hearing, "Conflicts Between United States Capabilities and Foreign Commitments," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 21 Feb 67, 90th Cong, 1st Sess (1967), with LTG James M. Gavin (U.S. Army Ret.), pp. 3, 25.

4. Hearing, "Harrison E. Salisbury's Trip to North Vietnam," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 2 Feb 67, 90th Cong, 1st Sess (1967).

5. Hearing, "Changing American Attitudes Toward Foreign Policy," S. Com on Foreign Relations, 20 Feb 67, 90th Cong, 1st Sess (1967), with Henry Steele Commager, Professor, Amherst College.

Critics concentrated their efforts upon forcing a suspension of ROLLING THUNDER. In January 462 faculty members of Yale University "most respectfully" urged the President to declare an unconditional bombing halt. A few days later 50 Rhodes Scholars informed the White House that their attitude was one of "skepticism and concern" rather than "active support." If the Administration was fully committed to the goal of a negotiated settlement, they asked, why did it not take the initiative and halt air attacks? On 2 March Senator Robert F. Kennedy stated that "we are now at a critical turning point in pursuit of our stated limited objectives," and aligned himself among the advocates of a bombing suspension.[6]

But despite the rising chorus of dissension, critics still constituted a definite minority. A mid-February Harris survey showed the number who wished to maintain military pressure on North Vietnam had risen from 43 percent in December to 55 percent; specifically, 67 percent favored continuation of ROLLING THUNDER. An April Gallup poll showed that, although the supporters of the US policy toward Vietnam outnumbered those opposed by 49 percent to 38 percent, twice as many Democrats disapproved the President's Vietnam policy as twelve months before. Democrats were deeply divided, but leading Republicans strongly endorsed a program of firmness and perseverance. On 23 March, Republican Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts reversed his position and came out in support of the President, saying North Vietnam was not now prepared for meaningful negotiations. Two weeks later Michigan's Governor, George Romney, outlined a policy much like the President's, saying that "our military effort must succeed." Richard Nixon indicated that he favored a sharp increase in military effort, and asserted that defeat of the enemy was "inevitable. The only question is how soon."[7]

Dovish minority and hawkish majority each pressed toward more extreme positions. Concluding that Vietnam posed the greatest obstacle to progress in civil rights, Dr. Martin Luther King depicted the United States as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today,"

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6. NY Times, 15 and 26 Jan 67, 3 Mar 67.
7. Ibid., 22 Feb 67, 10 Apr 67, 24 Mar 67, 8 and 18 Apr 67, 18 May 67.

and called upon "all white people of good will" to declare themselves conscientious objectors. On 15 April, under the leadership of Dr. King and Dr. Benjamin Spock, 100,000 persons gathered before the UN Building to protest the war; at this rally occurred the first large-scale burning of draft cards. On the other hand, a May Harris poll revealed that the number of those favoring a military solution still exceeded those wishing withdrawal; while 45 percent of those interviewed desired a total military victory, only 41 percent wanted both sides to withdraw under UN supervision. The Gallup poll's findings were more ambiguous: the percentage believing that the US original commitment of ground troops was wrong had risen from 32 percent in January to 37 percent in May; 49 percent believed there was moral justification for the war, while 26 percent did not. Support for the war was strongest in the South and weakest in the Northeast.[8]

During the summer, however, a marked shift of sentiment took place. The familiar evidences of protest increased. On 4 June, 5,000 students and faculty members at Columbia University signed a statement protesting what they perceived to be the Administration's apparently increasing commitment to military victory; four days later, 80 percent of Harvard's Far Eastern specialists approved a similar declaration favoring negotiations for a compromise solution. An advertisement by 300 business executives urged the President to stop the bombing, de-escalate and negotiate; it stated that, on both moral and practical grounds, the war served neither national nor world interests. A mid-June Gallup poll presented evidence that Vietnam presented the greatest obstacle to President Johnson's re-election: 48 percent of those polled still had no clear notion of the national purpose and objectives being served in Vietnam; only one person in four believed that a South Vietnamese government sufficiently strong to withstand communist pressures could be created following the peace settlement.[9]

A Gallup poll released on 30 July showed that public censure of the Administration had reached its highest point. Opinion concerning Mr. Johnson's Vietnam policy

8. Ibid., 5 and 16 Apr 67, 15 and 17 May 67.
9. Ibid., 28 May 67, 5, 9 and 19 Jun 67.

had been evenly divided in June; 52 percent now disapproved the President's conduct of the war, while only one-third supported it. Two weeks later, Gallup reported that approbation for the President's overall performance of his office had fallen to 39 percent; disapproval of his actions toward Vietnam stood at 54 percent. Likewise, a Harris poll in late August showed that support for US participation in the war had declined in six weeks from 72 percent to 61 percent; dispatch of 50,000 reinforcements was disapproved by 61 percent to 29 percent. Still more significantly, Harris reported that the number willing to continue military action in order to achieve a negotiated settlement had fallen from 51 percent to 37 percent; conversely, the percentage desiring to disengage as rapidly as possible had risen from 24 percent to 34 percent. Revealingly, various Republican leaders who had previously supported the war began to reflect this softer trend. On 15 August, Governor Romney declared that US involvement was a "tragic" mistake, and warned that a massive US military buildup would threaten the peace of all Southeast Asia. Senator Thruston Morton of Kentucky also withdrew his long-standing support, saying simply "I was wrong." Asserting that the "military-industrial complex" had "brainwashed" President Johnson into believing that a military victory was possible, Morton asked for an indefinite bombing halt and an end to search-and-destroy operations.[10]

By midsummer the President and his advisors had become deeply concerned over the erosion of popular support for the Administration's Vietnam policy. On 1 August General Wheeler informed General Westmoreland: "We are becoming increasingly concerned with news media and Congressional attitudes regarding the progress of the war . . . which characterize the war as being a 'stalemate.'" Thirty days later the Chairman reported an even greater concern, when he sent a message to Westmoreland on 30 August informing him that there was "deep concern here in Washington because of the eroding support for our war effort. Much attention is being given at high governmental levels to this situation and possible measures to overcome it."[11]

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10. Ibid., 31 Jul 67, 13, 16 and 29 Aug 67, 28 Sep 67.
11. (S) Msgs, CJCS to COMUSMACV, JCS 6105, 1 Aug 67 and JCS 7126, 30 Aug 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 67.

The results of these deliberations at high levels began to unfold as the President launched a multi-point campaign to silence his critics and restore public confidence in his policy toward Vietnam.

The San Antonio Speech

The President opened the campaign with a candid re-appraisal of the basic issues underlying US policy in Southeast Asia, a sober description of the difficulties to be overcome if these policy objectives were to be attained, and an appeal to the American people to stay the course. Speaking before the National Legislative Conference in San Antonio on 29 September, the President stressed that the "key" to all the United States had done in South Vietnam was its "own security," that the purpose of its action there was to meet an aggression that was a threat "not only to the immediate victim but to the United States of America and to the peace and security of the entire world of which we in America are a very vital part." This, said the President, was the position taken by the Congress when it resolved on 7 August 1964 by a vote of 504 to 2 "to take all steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom." It was also, he pointed out, the position taken by his two predecessors, President Eisenhower and President Kennedy, and by such Asian leaders as the Prime Ministers of Australia, Malaysia, and New Zealand, the President of South Korea, and the Foreign Minister of Thailand. He could not say with certainty, President Johnson continued, that a "Communist conquest of South Vietnam would be followed by a Communist conquest of Southeast Asia," or that a Southeast Asia dominated by Communist power would bring a third world war much closer to terrible reality . . . .But all that we have learned in this tragic century strongly suggests that it would be so." He was, therefore, "not prepared to gamble on the chance that it is not so. I am convinced that by seeing this struggle through now we are greatly reducing the chances of a much larger war--perhaps a nuclear war."

The President then attempted to answer his critics who claimed the war was stalemated. Substantial progress was being made both in political development and on the battlefield. On 1 November an elected government would

be installed. On the field of battle friendly forces had, since the US commitment of major forces in 1965, driven the enemy from many of his interior bases, had reduced the proportion of the population under communist control to well under 20 percent, and had gained secure control over 65 percent of the people.

The President then attempted to counter the enemy strategy of exploiting both the attrition inflicted on US forces and American war-weariness. In spite of the progress that had been made, he cautioned, a long hard struggle lay ahead, and the enemy was convinced that the American people would not perservere. The Premier of North Vietnam had said in 1962 that "Americans do not like a long inconclusive war . . . . Thus we are sure to win in the end." "Are the North Vietnamese right about us?" the President asked. "I think not . . . . I think it is a common failing of totalitarian regimes that they cannot really understand . . . the strength and perseverance of America."

The President then sought to answer the critics who were demanding immediate negotiations. The charge that his Administration was unwilling to negotiate was simply untrue. "I am ready to talk with Ho Chi Minh, and other chiefs of state concerned, tomorrow," he said. "Our desire to negotiate peace--through the United Nations or out--has been made very clear to Hanoi--directly and many times through third parties."

He then stated his conditions for halting the bombing of North Vietnam. Somewhat modified from his earlier pronouncements on the subject, the new formulation became known as the "San Antonio Formula." It stated:

> The United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation.[12]

The San Antonio Formula, although it still called upon Hanoi to reciprocate a suspension of bombing, gave the impression of being the least demanding US proposal to date. It set no specific conditions for a cessation of bombing. Before delivery of the San Antonio speech, the most recent offer was the one in President Johnson's letter of 8 February

12. The text is in Dept of State Bulletin, LVII (23 Oct 67), pp. 519-522.

to Ho Chi Minh. In it, the President called upon the North Vietnamese to stop infiltrating forces into South Vietnam in return for a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam and a halt to the buildup of US forces in South Vietnam.

Hanoi, however, was not sufficiently moved by the San Antonio Formula to agree to negotiation. On 3 October the North Vietnamese communist party newspaper, Nhan Dan, stated that President Johnson's offer was a "faked desire for peace," and flatly refused to reciprocate for a halt in the bombing.13

The SEA CABIN Study

In spite of North Vietnam's rejection of the San Antonio Formula, General Wheeler became seriously concerned over what might follow if the North Vietnamese accepted it. On 19 October he established an ad hoc study group (SEA CABIN) under the direction of Lieutenant General Andrew Goodpaster, consisting of representatives of the Joint Staff, DIA, and OASD(ISA). The objective of the study was to examine the major military and political-military questions which would arise from acceptance of the President's offer, and to consider the implications of the "assumption" it made that North Vietnam would not "take advantage" of a halt in the bombing. In particular, the study group was to identify the dangers to the US military position in South Vietnam resulting from a bombing halt, to determine the actions needed to overcome these dangers, and to establish, in the event such a halt occurred, the conditions that would call for a resumption of the bombing.

In its study, submitted to General Wheeler on 22 November, the SEA CABIN group concluded that US intelligence evaluations lacked evidence to assess the effectiveness of the bombing of North Vietnam. The study group was convinced, however, that cessation of bombing would make possible a higher rate of infiltration from North to South Vietnam. But the current detection techniques were so crude that such an increase could not be discovered until four to six months after the event. As a consequence, the enemy could increase infiltration during protracted talks with confidence that detection would be too slow and uncertain for the United States to justify stopping negotiations or resuming the bombing. The study group nevertheless included among the "minimum acceptable actions" by the North Vietnam the following:

13. NY Times, 4 Oct 67, 1.

Agree that for the DRV to increase over the current level the flow of personnel and material south of 19° N latitude would be to take advantage of cessation and that it will refrain from doing so.

The other "minimum acceptable actions" to which North Vietnam should adhere were to stop artillery fire from and over the DMZ into South Vietnam, accept "open skies" over NVN and withdraw from the DMZ within two weeks after cessation of bombing.[14]

On 5 December General Wheeler directed the Joint Staff to examine the study to determine whether it would be "timely and useful" to initiate an interdepartmental study of the subject, using SEA CABIN as an input. On 15 December, after considering the Joint Staff recommendations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that they had noted SEA CABIN, and recommended that an interdepartmental study group be formed to examine the "problem of NVN acceptance of the San Antonio offer, or other possible offers, and to recommend a US national position." The Joint Chiefs of Staff also asked to be represented on such a study group if it was formed and to be allowed to review the findings.[15]

Mr. McNamara accepted the JCS recommendation and made the overtures to Secretary of State Rusk that led to the establishment on 22 January 1968 of the "Contingency Study Group/VN," under the chairmanship of Assistant Secretary of State (FE) William Bundy and including representatives of the Department of State, OASD(ISA), JCS, DIA, CIA, and the White House.[16]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, meanwhile, subjected the SEA CABIN study to close scrutiny, and on 31 January forwarded to

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14. (TS) Study, "SEA CABIN," 22 Nov 67, OCJCS File, Vietnam Negotiations. (S) CM-2700-67 to LTG Goodpaster, 19 Oct 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Negotiations through Apr 68.

15. (TS-GP 1) CM-2803-67 to D/JS, 5 Dec 67, Att to JCS 2339/266; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-698-67, 16 Dec 67, (derived from JCS 2339/266-1); JMF 907/305 (29 Sep 67) sec 1.

16. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 28 Dec 68, Att to to JCS 2339/266-2, same file. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record, Dir J-5, "Bundy Planning Group," 22 Jan 68, OCJCS File, Vietnam Negotiations. The output of the "Contingency Study Group/VN" is described in Ch. 53 in connection with negotiations planning.

Mr. McNamara their views on the substantive issues raised. In their memorandum the Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized that the campaign against North Vietnam was "one of our strongest bargaining points"; therefore, the price for stopping it should be high. To illustrate what they meant by a "high" price, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided precise definitions of certain terms in the San Antonio Formula. These terms were "not take advantage," "promptly," and "productive discussions."

With regard to "not take advantage," the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with the proposed definition in the SEA CABIN report, but subtracted one condition and added another: they did not call for withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from the DMZ; they added the condition that North Vietnamese forces not attack South Vietnam across the DMZ.

With regard to "prompt" discussions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff called for the North Vietnamese to make initial contacts with the United States within 48 hours of the suspension of bombing; "serious discussion" should begin within one week and be "substantively productive" within 30 days.

The term "productive discussion," that is, "substantively productive" discussion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff defined in terms of purely military conditions--timely and "reciprocal action by North Vietnam which will de-escalate the war in South Vietnam."

Such "substantively productive" discussions would be indicated by North Vietnam taking the following actions: 1) withdraw all forces from the DMZ within 15 days from the end of the bombing; 2) cease all personnel movement into South Vietnam within 30 days of the end of the bombing; 3) agree within 30 days of a bombing halt to withdraw all forces, including fillers with VC units, to North Vietnam within 120 days of the bombing halt, or within 30 days after giving evidence that withdrawal had begun; and 4) agree within 15 days after bombing ceased to exchange prisoners of war within 60 days from the bombing halt. Failure of North Vietnam to live up to these terms or any attempt to take advantage of a bombing cessation should, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, lead to a resumption of bombing.[17]

17. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-62-68, 31 Jan 68 (derived from JCS 2339/66-3), JMF 907/305 (29 Sep 67) sec 2.

The Search for Peace Continues

Undeterred by the rejection of his San Antonio Formula, President Johnson persisted in his efforts to bring about negotiations for peace. On 11 November, in a speech delivered at sea aboard the carrier ENTERPRISE, he announced his willingness to meet the leaders of Hanoi aboard a "neutral ship on a neutral sea" if it would speed settlement. Two days later Hanoi rejected the offer out out of hand.[18]

North Vietnam countered on 14 December with a new elaboration of its position, which was circulated among members of the United Nations in the form of a 16-point political program of the National Liberation Front. The main feature of the program was its apparent acceptance of the possibility of a coalition. The program called for the establishment of a "national union democratic government" by means of a "free general election." The Department of State, however, discounted any intention by the NLF to move toward political compromise. Its objective in any coalition, said the Department's press spokesman, would be to secure control of the machinery of government at all levels.[19]

In a television interview on 19 December President Johnson expressed his own views of terms that might be useful in ending the Vietnam war. He stated that a fair solution could be worked out on the basis of five points: 1) the DMZ must be respected in accordance with the Geneva Agreement of 1954; 2) the unity of Vietnam as a whole must be a matter of peaceful adjustments and negotiations; 3) North Vietnam troops must leave Laos as required by the Geneva Agreement of 1962; 4) South Vietnam should be governed on the basis of one man, one vote; and 5) President Thieu should be encouraged to undertake the informal discussions that he had already said he was prepared to enter with the NLF.

This five-point plan proved to be no more acceptable to Hanoi than the many previous US negotiating offers and proposals. On 25 December the North Vietnamese newspaper,

18. NY Times, 12 and 14 Nov 67, 1.
19. Ibid., 16 Dec 67, 1.

Nhan Dan, condemned the five points as "nothing but worn-out tricks," and reiterated Hanoi's demand for an unconditional halt to the bombing of North Vietnam and the withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam.[20]

Operation Quick Results

A second phase of President Johnson's campaign to restore public confidence in his Vietnam policy was to demonstrate significant progress toward victory. To this end the President launched his key advisors on a search for means to attain quick and visible progress in the war effort. At a meeting of the Tuesday luncheon group on 12 September, the President raised the question of the means available to increase the pressures on North Vietnam, and called for the preparation on an urgent basis of a list of actions that would have the desired result. General Harold K. Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff, who attended the meeting in place of General Wheeler, reported the President's desire to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the same day. The Joint Chiefs of Staff initiated the appropriate staff study on 22 September.[21]

On 17 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to Mr. McNamara the information requested by the President, and asked that the Secretary submit it to the Chief Executive. In their memorandum, the Joint Chiefs of Staff contended that military operations, conducted under the current policy guidelines and operational restraints, were making North Vietnam pay a heavy price for its aggression, and that NVN had lost the initiative in the RVN. However, accelerated progress toward a victory by the Free World forces would require an appropriate increase in military pressure.

The policy guidelines, designed to achieve US objectives without expanding the conflict, were: to avoid widening the war into conflict with Communist China or the Soviet Union; to refrain from invading North Vietnam or attempting to overthrow

20. Ibid., 19 and 26 Dec 67, 1.
21. (S) CM-2640-67 to GENs McConnell and Green and ADM McDonald, 12 Sep 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 67. (TS) Briefing Sheet, "JCS 2472/167 - Increased Pressures on North Vietnam (U)," 5 Oct 67, JMF 911/320 (2 Sep 67). Evidence available to the author does not reveal what action, if any, was taken on the President's request by agencies other than the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

the North Vietnamese Government; and to be guided by the principles set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962.

The objectives of the United States in Southeast Asia could be achieved within the framework of these policies, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. But to bring about an end to North Vietnam's military effort in the near future would require the relaxation of certain existing operational limitations. The expansion of operations that would result from the removal of these restraints would entail some additional risk, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the danger of overt intervention by the Soviet Union or Communist China to be remote.

The specific measures recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to speed the war to a successful conclusion were actions they had advocated unsuccessfully on frequent occasions in the past: the removal of restrictions on the air campaign against all militarily significant targets in North Vietnam; the mining of North Vietnamese deep water ports; the mining of inland waterways and estuaries in North Vietnam to within 5 nm of the Chinese borders; the extension of SEA DRAGON operations to within 10 nm of the Chinese border; the use of ship-based TALOS missiles against enemy aircraft over North Vietnam; an increase of air interdiction in Laos and along the borders of North Vietnam; authority for B-52s to overfly Laos and attack targets there both day and night; and the expansion of covert operations in Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam.[22]

Although he was not willing to authorize the military actions listed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, President Johnson directed a continuing search for measures promising quick and dramatic results. On 8 November the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed General Westmoreland that the items under consideration included: coordinated attack on the VC infrastructure; increased integration of ARVN into operations with US forces; operations aimed at destroying VC provincial battalions; reinforcement of RD teams with local personnel; the assignment of additional US advisors for RF and PF; the opening and securing of lines of communication; various economic programs, such as land reform, universal elementary education, and an increase in agricultural productivity; an

22. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-555-67, 17 Oct 67 (derived from JCS 2472/167), JMF 911/320 (2 Sep 67).

attack on corruption; and encouragement of local government to assume more responsibility.[23]

General Westmoreland replied on the following day that he agreed with assigning priority to these measures "because these are precisely the items to which we have already been devoting urgent efforts." An additional area promising good results, said COMUSMACV, was improvement of the RVNAF.[24]

After analyzing General Westmoreland's reply and conducting a study of the various programs under consideration, the Director of the Joint Staff advised General Wheeler that "progress in South Vietnam can be enhanced substantially by forward movement in all . . . [these] programs." For discernible progress within six months on the program calling for an attack on the VC infrastructure, action was required at the Washington level. Washington authorities could expedite the construction of detention centers and the assignment of advisors to the ICEX program. In the longer run, the most promising program was improvement of the RVNAF. If the necessary decisions were made to overcome equipment shortages, the Director said, "good momentum could be imparted to the program within twelve months."[25]

Operation Reassurance

The President also sought to regain public support for his Vietnam policy through optimistic reports of progress from the responsible commanders and officials in charge of operations in RVN. To this end, he asked Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland, whom he had ordered home to discuss the progress of the war effort, to set the record straight in public speeches. Bunker, in his address delivered on 18 November before the National Press Club, stressed that "steady but not spectacular progress" was being made militarily and in nation-building. The development of representative

23. (TS) Msg, JCS 9566 to COMUSMACV, 8 Nov 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 67.
24. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 091610Z Nov 67, same file.
25. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-1381-67 to CJCS, 13 Nov 67, same file.

institutions and vigorous political life was encouraging, and the enemy's attempt to impose a solution by force had "run into a stone wall." Ultimate victory seemed assured, but, said the Ambassador, "I can't answer the big question that I know is on your minds: How long will it take?"[26]

General Westmoreland, speaking before the same organization three days later, also displayed confidence that a military victory was attainable. He described progress in the war effort in terms of four phases. In Phase I, which had ended successfully in mid-1966, the United States had built up an elaborate logistic infrastructure in South Vietnam, deployed some 400,000 men and several thousand aircraft, expanded, equipped, and revitalized the South Vietnamese Army, and prevented an enemy military victory. In Phase II, which would be concluded by the end of 1967, the United States had continued the activities of Phase I, driven the enemy divisions back to sanctuary or into hiding, entered enemy base areas and destroyed his supplies, and raised enemy losses beyond his capability to replace them. With 1968, a third phase would begin. This would be an "important point when the end begins to come into view."

During Phase III, the main emphasis would be on strengthening the South Vietnamese government and its armed forces to the point where they would be able to take over the burden of self-defense. When this objective was reached, Phase IV would begin. This phase would see the gradual withdrawal of US forces and a final mopping up of the Viet Cong by South Vietnamese forces. General Westmoreland set no specific date for the beginning of Phase IV, but he claimed that enough progress had been made so that the goal "lies within our grasp--the enemy's hopes are bankrupt."[27]

The President's initial efforts at rallying public support for his policies had little effect. In fact, it appeared that public support of the Administration's Vietnam policy was still slipping. According to a Harris survey published on 2 October, approval for the President's Vietnam policy stood at 31 percent; 58 percent supported the war, a decline of 3 percent from August. While continuation of ROLLING THUNDER had been favored by 59 vs. 25 percent in June, the ratio now had fallen to 48 vs. 37 percent. Significantly,

26. "Background Information Relating to SE Asia and Vietnam," S. Com on Foreign Relations, Mar 68, pp. 249-254.
27. Ibid., pp. 254-259.

only 37 percent still wished to fight in order to achieve negotiations and 37 percent preferred to withdraw as rapidly as possible. A New York Times poll of 243 governors, senators, and representatives yielded the following results: 69 saw no weakening of support for the Administration; 64 detected broad general opposition; 80 discerned strong sentiment for either negotiation or withdrawal; and 30 reported a feeling that military action was too limited to achieve victory. The trend was plain. Many Congressmen believed the President's request for a tax increase had crystalized sentiment against the war.[28]

The intensity and varieties of dissent grew still more dramatic. On 21 October, a crowd of 50,000 gathered in Washington to "confront the warmakers"; Dr. Spock informed the rally that the "real enemy" was not Ho Chi Minh but Lyndon Johnson. College campuses and draft boards served as the sites for spectacular protests well covered by the press. Between September and December, recruiters for Dow Chemical--sole manufacturers of napalm--encountered either verbal or physical opposition from students on 46 occasions. On 5 December, 264 persons were arrested after they had barred the entrance of a New York City induction center; two weeks later, 207 were seized in a similar episode at Oakland. And on 18 December, Senator Eugene McCarthy announced that he would enter the primaries in the hope of forcing President Johnson to alter his Vietnam policy.[29]

The growing dissent was reflected in a further decline of popular support for the war. A mid-November Harris survey indicated that 46 percent disapproved the President's Vietnam policy, and only 23 percent supported it. The number that favored continuation of the fight until a negotiated settlement could be reached fell from 51 percent in July to 26 percent in November; in the same time span, the percentage of those wishing to withdraw as quickly as possible rose from 24 percent to 44 percent.

It was at this juncture that Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland had returned to the United States and assured the nation that the war was progressing well and denied emphatically that a stalemate existed. Immediately thereafter, popular support for Administration policy suddenly

28. NY Times, 3 Oct 67, 8 Oct 67.
29. Ibid., 21 Oct, 6 Dec, 19 Dec 67.

and sharply increased: the Harris poll showed a rise from 23 to 34 percent in approval of Presidential conduct of the war. According to Gallup, approval of Mr. Johnson's overall performance advanced from 38 to 41 percent.[30]

At year's end, therefore, the Administration had lost, and then regained, a narrow plurality of support. President Johnson seemed personally secure within his own party; a Harris poll showed 63 percent of Democrats favored his re-nomination, as compared to 20 percent for Senator McCarthy. Among the public at large, however, the margin of support specifically for Vietnam policy was far smaller. For example, a December poll by Good Housekeeping indicated that women favored continuation of the war effort by only 46 to 41 percent. Similarly, a survey of the University of Michigan faculty showed members were almost evenly divided; only among natural scientists did a majority favor continuation of bombing of the North.[31]

A group of well known Far Eastern scholars (including Professors Scalapino, Barnett, and Reischauer) concluded that the ability to develop and defend policies attuned to limited objectives constituted the "vital test" confronting the United States. Indeed, a Gallup report indicated 65 percent of the sample polled foresaw a compromise peace, while only 19 percent envisioned all-out military victory. However, James Reston wrote that the major question was whether the Chief Executive could bridge the "credibility gap" and so regain that popular trust which is the first condition of effective leadership. Mr. Johnson evidently decided that the war had fatally sapped his influence and prestige. According to later accounts by his aides, the President decided in December that he would not seek re-election.[32]

Whether President Johnson would be able to regain popular trust obviously depended in large measure on fulfillment of his predictions of a favorable outcome of the war within a reasonable time. Unfortunately for the President, the enemy was about to embark upon actions that would deeply erode public confidence in both the President himself and the hope that his goals in Vietnam could be achieved at a reasonable cost and in a reasonable time.

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30. Ibid., 14 Nov, 26 Nov, 5 Dec 67.
31. Ibid., 6 Nov, 6 Dec, 19 Dec 67.
32. Ibid., 19 Nov, 11 Dec, 20 Dec 67, 2 Apr 68.

Chapter 48

THE TET OFFENSIVE

The Holiday Ceasefires

In the closing weeks of 1967, suggestions were again heard for ceasefires to mark the three approaching holidays: Christmas, New Year, and Tet. As in previous years, US military commanders objected to these proposals, which, they feared, would place US fighting forces at a disadvantage. But the Administration, considering the question from a different viewpoint, and sensitive to the growth of criticism at home and abroad, decided it could not afford to reject suggestions for holiday truces.

The subject was first raised on 13 October 1967 by Ambassador Bunker, who urged that Christmas and New Year ceasefires, if they were decided upon, should not exceed 24 hours each. For Tet, he suggested 48 hours, with 72 as a maximum "fallback" position. At the same time he pointed out that last year's rules had been inadequate to regulating enemy resupply activities, and recommended a total freeze on logistics and force repositioning by both sides during the ceasefires.[1]

General Westmoreland regarded these suggested time limits as acceptable if ceasefires were considered necessary. However, he opposed any logistic freeze so long as there existed a possibility that it might become a precedent in future ceasefire negotiations. On his part, Admiral Sharp recorded his opposition to any holiday ceasefires.[2]

Echoing CINCPAC's views, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense on 23 October 1967 that, in their opinion, the United States should urge the RVN and its allies to announce, as soon as possible, that there

1. (TS) Msg, Saigon 8432 to State, 130934Z Oct 67, JCS IN 42411.
2. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 34790 to CINCPAC, 221152Z Oct 67, JCS IN 59001. (TS-NOFORN-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 200132Z Oct 67, JCS IN 54974.

would be no standdown of military operations during any of the holidays. Even a 24-hour truce, they argued, was disadvantageous to US forces, because of the respite it would afford the enemy. They expressed particular opposition to the suggested freeze on logistic activities. The enemy, they declared, could carry out his activities clandestinely, but it would be impossible to conceal the steady flow of logistic support and personnel required by US forces.[3]

While the question remained unresolved, the Viet Cong Liberation Radio announced that its forces would observe ceasefires of 72 hours at Christmas and New Year, extending from 24 to 27 December 1967 and from 30 December 1967 to 2 January 1968, respectively, and a seven-day period for Tet (27 January-3 February). In each case the ceasefire would begin at 0100, Saigon time.[4]

With this announcement, it became urgent for the Allies to determine and announce their own policy. When the subject was discussed by the Administration in Washington, General Wheeler reaffirmed the opposition of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to any ceasefires and urged that, if they were necessary, they should not exceed the periods suggested originally by Ambassador Bunker. Accepting this latter view, the Department of State instructed the Ambassador to uphold the 24-24-48 hour formula in discussing the matter with GVN.[5]

Ambassador Bunker accordingly presented this proposal to President Thieu, who at first countered with a 36-36-72 hour formula, but dropped it and accepted the US recommendation. It was agreed that GVN would submit this plan to the other troop-contributing countries.[6] Their assent was

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3. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-567-67 to SecDef, 23 Oct 67 (derived from JCS 2472/177-1), JMF 911/305 (6 Oct 67).

4. (C) Msg, Saigon 11408 to State, 180920Z Nov 67, JCS IN 23776.

5. (S-GP 3) Msg, State 72761 to Saigon, 212139Z Nov 67, JCS IN 30502; (S) CM-2773-67 to ASD(ISA), 20 Nov 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 67. (S-GP 2) Msg, State 74877 to Saigon, 260205Z Nov 67, JCS IN 38981.

6. (S) Msg, Saigon 12799 to State, 061040Z Dec 67, JCS IN 56195; (S-GP 3) Msg, State 80713 to Saigon, 070130Z Dec 67, JCS IN 58244.

forthcoming and the beginning of the 24-hour Christmas truce was set for 1800, Saigon time, on 24 December (240500, EST).[7]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff drafted rules of engagement for the ceasefire periods, modifying those of the preceding year in order to lessen enemy opportunities to take advantage of them. The JCS draft was submitted to the Defense and State Departments, where it was amended to make it slightly more restrictive for US forces. As finally promulgated on 15 December, the rules provided that US forces, during the Christmas, New Year, and Tet standdowns, would initiate no military offensive operations except in response to (1) enemy initiatives that endangered the safety of US/RVN/FWMA forces, (2) "abnormally great" resupply activities or infiltration into the southern part of the DMZ or the area immediately south thereof, (3) other "abnormally great" resupply activities.[8] Authority to react to such enemy actions was vested in CINCPAC. US forces would assume full alert posture and continue all security precautions, including patrol activity. Forces in contact with the enemy were not to break contact unless enemy effort to withdraw was "clearly evident," or until the operation was concluded. MARKET TIME, GAME WARDEN, and search and rescue operations would continue, and aerial reconnaissance would be intensified. Air and naval operations were authorized in support of any of the above operations, and ARC LIGHT support might be requested through normal channels.

Operations in or over North Vietnam were to be suspended unless authorized by CINCPAC. He was empowered to approve SEA DRAGON operations, air strikes, and artillery fire south of 20 degrees against "abnormally great" resupply activities or other actions that posed a "direct and immediate threat" to friendly forces. North of 20 degrees, CINCPAC might authorize air strikes against targets presenting an "immediate and direct threat" (for example, movement of SAMs indicating prospective extension of SAM defenses south of the 20-degree line). Normal operations in Laos and Cambodia were to continue.

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7. This was the hour at which the Christmas truce actually began, as shown by later records. No record has been found of the agreement of the other troop-contributing countries or of the formal announcement of the decision.

8. The phrase "abnormally great" had been inserted by the State and Defense Departments, where the Joint Chiefs of Staff had wished to speak of "major" activities.

Notwithstanding these restrictions, US commanders were given "full authority" to act "for the safety of their forces," and might resume military actions if necessary for that purpose. Moreover, they were warned to be ready to resume normal operations at once should enemy violations make it necessary to terminate the ceasefire.[9]

Christmas came and went, with US and allied forces observing a truce from 1800 on 24 December to the same hour on 25 December. During this period, according to US estimates, VC/NVA forces committed 118 truce violations, of which 40 were considered "major."[10] Enemy efforts to make maximum use of the ceasefire were indicated by visual and photographic evidence collected over North Vietnam, showing at least 750 trucks moving southward between Than Hoa and Dong Hoi.[11] CINCPAC did not, however, exercise his discretionary authority to order offensive operations.

The New Year ceasefire, under the agreement reached by the US and its allies, was scheduled to begin at 1800H on 31 December. Before it took effect, Pope Paul VI made a personal appeal to President Johnson for an extension of the agreed 24-hour period. The Department of State accordingly informed Ambassador Bunker on 28 December 1967 that the Administration was considering a 12-hour extension, that is, until 0600 on 2 January. This period would extend beyond the announced termination of the Viet Cong's ceasefire (0100 hours), but it seemed preferable to the alternative of an earlier beginning for the truce, which would have increased the number of daylight hours available to the enemy.[12]

Ambassador Bunker at once consulted the Deputy COMUSMACV, General Abrams (COMUSMACV was then absent in Manila), and obtained his concurrence to the Department's proposal.[13]

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9. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-687-67 to SecDef, 9 Dec 67 (derived from JCS 2472/197); (TS) Memo, DepASD(ISA) to LTG Brown, 15 Dec 67; (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5343 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 160120Z Dec 67; JMF 911/305 (6 Oct 67).
10. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 300-67, 26 Dec 67.
11. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 251-67, 28 Dec 67.
12. (S-GP 1) Msg, State 90178 to Saigon, 28 Dec 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 67.
13. (S) Msg, Saigon 14540 to State, 280945Z Dec 67, same file.

General Abrams had concurred with some reluctance, since he was aware of the position of COMUSMACV and of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding holiday ceasefires. He merely told the Ambassador that, in his judgment, the projected 12-hour increase would make little difference in enemy capabilities in view of the current weather in North Vietnam.[14]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed any extension of the agreed 24-hour period.[15] General Westmoreland, when consulted at Manila, also expressed opposition to the extension but accepted it as politically inevitable. Indicating a viewpoint directly opposite to that of the Department of State, he urged chronological limits that would include a maximum of daylight hours, since darkness could be turned to the enemy's advantage. Accordingly, he recommended a period running from 1200H on 31 December to 2400H on 1 January, which would meet the objective expressed by the Pope to make New Years Day a "day of peace."[16] The Department of State, however, considered that discussion of the original extension plan had progressed too far to be modified in this manner.[17]

Following agreement among the allies, the GVN publicly announced that a ceasefire would be observed from 311800H December to 020600H January.[18] Before it took effect, CINCPAC reviewed the volume of logistic activity observed in North Vietnam during the recent Christmas truce and instructed his commanders that any repetition of this volume would be considered as "abnormally great" resupply operations, as defined

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14. (TS) Msg, DEPCOMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 282216Z Dec 67, OCJCS, same file.

15. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Actg CJCS to Actg SecDef, "New Year's Ceasefire (U)," 28 Dec 67 same file. (Bears no CM number, but handwritten note states: "This memo was signed by Gen. McConnell and taken by him to Mr. Nitze on 28 Dec 67.")

16. (S) Msg, AFSSO 13AF to SSO CINCPAC, 291155Z Dec 67 (readdressed by CINCPAC, info Actg CJCS, 291912Z Dec 67); (S) Msg, Saigon 14610 to State, 290721Z Dec 67; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 67.

17. (S) Msg, State 90905 to Saigon, 29 Dec 67, JCS IN 90905, same file.

18. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 44204 to JCS, 301028Z Dec 67, same file.

in the rules of engagement.[19] This interpretation was concurred in by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the exception of General McConnell, the Acting Chairman.[20] No use was made of this authority, although US forces reported 63 major and 107 minor enemy violations during the 36-hour period.[21]

Probably influenced by this record of violations, General Westmoreland sought to avoid any ceasefire on the occasion of the approaching Tet holiday, for which the US and South Vietnamese governments had tentatively agreed upon a 48-hour period. On 8 January 1968 General Westmoreland indicated to General Vien, Chief of the JGS, his opposition to any Tet truce. While General Vien was inclined to agree with this view, he considered that some cessation of operations for this important holiday was essential for the morale of his troops. He was willing, however, to support a recommendation that it be limited to 24 hours. Admiral Sharp approved his proposal. President Thieu, when it was presented to him, demurred, since he had publicly committed himself to the 48-hour plan. He finally accepted a 36-hour period, to begin at 1800H on 29 January. This compromise was endorsed by Ambassador Bunker.[22]

In Washington, President Johnson questioned the reasons for thus reducing the agreed 48-hour period.[23] Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after consulting COMUSMACV and CINCPAC,[24] furnished a detailed justification. The substance of their argument was that in 12 additional hours the enemy could quadruple the volume of supplies moving southward. In a 36-hour ceasefire, the enemy, according to their estimate, could move 3,300 tons; in 48 hours, the figure would rise to 14,400 tons. Coastal shipments would account for this enormous

19. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to Actg CJCS, 300255Z Dec 67, same file.
20. (TS) CM-2877-67 to SecDef, 30 Dec 67, same file.
21. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 1-68, 2 Jan 68.
22. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 00338 to CINCPAC, 090331Z Jan 68; (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 092115Z Jan 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 01665 to CINCPAC, 160415Z Jan 68, JCS IN 38608. (S) Msg, Saigon 16071 to State, 160400Z Jan 68, JCS IN 39064.
23. (TS) Msg, JCS 00554 to COMUSMACV, 182104Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.
24. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 200323Z Jan 68; (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 00943 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 200843Z Jan 68; same file.

difference; the longer period would enable waterborne logistic craft to move southward from as far north as Thanh Hoa, near the 20th parallel, to Dong Hoi, just above the DMZ, and, after unloading, to return or disperse. This contention was supported by the volume of WBLC activity observed during previous ceasefires of varying periods.[25]

The JCS reasoning prevailed. The United States and the allied governments agreed that the Tet ceasefire would be limited to 36 hours.[26] Before it took effect, however, General Westmoreland concluded that the situation in I CTZ, where enemy forces were known to be concentrating, was so threatening that this region should be excluded from the ceasefire. There should be no interruption in the bombing of North Vietnam, at least as far north as Vinh, just below the 19th parallel. Ambassador Bunker and Admiral Sharp agreed with these views.[27]

The Administration approved General Westmoreland's views, with the stipulation that bombing would be restricted to the region south of Vinh. President Thieu also gave his concurrence. On 26 January 1968 the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC and CINCSAC of these exceptions to the 36-hour Tet truce, which would begin at 1800H on 29 January. They were publicly announced by the GVN on 29 January, shortly before the truce took effect.[28]

The Attack and Its Repulse

With the announcement of the Tet ceasefire, the stage was set for what was to prove the most widespread enemy offensive of the entire war thus far. The attackers achieved both

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25. (TS) CM-2927-68 to SecDef, 20 Jan 68, JMF 911/305 (6 Oct 67).

26. Again the decision is not documented in available records, but is apparent from later developments.

27. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 01165 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 241239Z Jan 68; Saigon 16815 to State, 241230Z Jan 68, JCS IN 55711; (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 250216Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

28. (TS-GP 3) Msg, State 104215 to Saigon, 25 Jan 68, JCS IN 57706. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01219 to CJCS, 251416Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8282 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 261714Z Jan 68. NY Times, 30 Jan 68, p. 1.

strategic and tactical surprise, despite the fact that the US command was fully aware that the enemy was capable of attacking at any time and that he probably intended to do so in the near future. On 20 December 1967 COMUSMACV, in an appraisal of communist intentions that proved to be highly accurate, had forecast that the enemy, seeing that the trend of events was running against him, would "undertake an intensified country-wide effort, perhaps a maximum effort, over a relatively short period." If successful, he would probably seek to negotiate from his dominant position; if not, he would probably "continue the war at a reduced intensity," rather than negotiate from weakness.[29]

In a similar vein, CINCPAC, in summing up the course of the war during 1967 and outlining plans for the coming year, noted on 1 January 1968 that the tempo of enemy bombardments was rising and that enemy forces were showing increased willingness to engage in sustained combat. "Recent large unit deployments from North Vietnam," he warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "indicate that the enemy may be seeking a spectacular win in South Vietnam in the near future."[30]

Intelligence obtained during January 1968 bore out these appraisals by pointing to the probability of a major attack. Specific objectives were mentioned: Saigon, Kontum, Pleiku, Hue, Quang Tri, Da Nang, and other localities. It was indicated that the attack might come in late January or early February. But the veil of security maintained by VC and NVA forces succeeded in concealing the precise timing of the attack, as well as its unprecedented scale. General Westmoreland's principal object of concern as of the end of January

29. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 12397 to CJCS, 200609Z Dec 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 67.

30. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010156Z Jan 68, JCS IN 21089. After the Tet offensive, a NY Times reporter obtained access to this message, or parts of it. A story published in the Times on 21 Mar 68 quoted verbatim certain passages in which CINCPAC gave a generally optimistic summary of the course of the war in 1967 and forecast further allied gains in 1968. The obvious intent of the story was to discredit COMUSMACV (to whom the message was erroneously ascribed) by implying that he considered the enemy incapable of large scale attacks. It is impossible to state whether this biased selection of excerpts is to be attributed to the reporter or to some official who made the message available.

was the situation in the western end of I CTZ, where he feared a major attack at Khe Sanh, perhaps coinciding with diversionary offensives elsewhere in South Vietnam. He had reinforced Khe Sanh in order to bar the enemy's route toward the important coastal cities in I CTZ. At the same time, forces in III CTZ were redeployed to provide better coverage of Saigon and its approaches.

The atmosphere of the Tet holiday helped to confer upon the enemy the advantage of surprise. Violations of the cease-fire were of course expected, but the profound significance of Tet in Vietnamese life made it difficult to conceive that the enemy would deliberately choose this occasion to launch a concerted, country-wide attack. Large numbers of RVNAF officers and men had been granted leave for the occasion.[31]

The enemy's preparations for the attack were thorough. Munitions and supplies in ample quantities had been stockpiled along the Cambodian border and then moved up to secret cache sites within South Vietnam. Large numbers of enemy troops, in civilian guise, had been infiltrated into major cities, with their weapons and ammunition.[32]

Enemy strength on the eve of the Tet offensive, according to estimates accepted by USARPAC, totalled 114,866, of which 55,349 were North Vietnamese regulars and 59,517 were members of VC main and local force units. The geographic distribution of this manpower was as follows:

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31. The extent to which the Tet offensive was forecast by intelligence was later summarized in information compiled by the Joint Staff and DIA in answer to inquiries submitted by Congressmen shortly after the attack. This information appears as a (TS) Encl to SACSA M-109-68 to D/JS, 12 Feb 68, OCJCS File, 091 Vietnam Feb 68 (Bulky). Answers were supplied to eighteen questions, with comment on four criticisms of US and SVN forces and their performance. Questions 1 and 3 dealt with the degree of advance warning. For examples of intelligence available before the attack, see (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 14-68, 19 Jan; 16-68, 23 Jan; 17-68, 24 Jan; 20-68, 29 Jan. For US troop movements in the days preceding Tet, see (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, June 1968, pp. 222, 226, 229 (hereafter cited as CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report). The situation at Khe Sanh is described later in this chapter.

32. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, pp. 229-230.

	NVA	Main and Local
I CTZ	26,715	11,190
II CTZ	17,614	10,870
III CTZ	11,020	19,262
IV CTZ	--	18,195
Total	55,349	59,517

VC irregulars added another estimated 71,700 to the enemy total. These figures did not include forces across the border in Laos or Cambodia.[33]

The massive assault burst forth on the night of 29-30 January 1968. Following mortar and rocket barrages, enemy troops struck the major cities in II CTZ: Kontum, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Pleiku, and others. US military installations at Da Nang, in I CTZ, were similarly assailed. With the coming of daylight, enemy troops did not withdraw but dug in and attempted to maintain their positions in the cities. Shortly before 1000H on the morning of 30 January, the Saigon government cancelled the Tet truce. US forces were directed to resume full operations.[34]

On the following day the wave of attacks engulfed cities in other parts of South Vietnam. The most spectacular manifestation was an assault on Saigon by a large force of infiltrators. The Presidential palace and the headquarters of the JGS were assailed, and a portion of the outer compound of the US Embassy was seized and held for a time. President Thieu declared martial law, denouncing the communists for their "act of perfidy" in violating their own self-imposed truce.[35]

The brunt of the assault fell upon the ARVN, since most US forces were at that time engaged in search and destroy

33. Figures as of the end of January 1968, from (S-GP 3) Hq USARPAC, Highlights of United States Army, Pacific, Activities, Jan 68.

34. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 25-68, 30 Jan, and 26-68, 31 Jan 68; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01438 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 301255Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68. NY Times, 31 Jan 68, p. 1.

35. (TS) NMCC OPSUM 27-68, 1 Feb 68; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 310707Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01449 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 310918Z Jan 68, same file. NY Times, 31 Jan 68, p. 1, 1 Feb 68, p. 1.

operations at some distance from the principal cities. Thus tested, the often-criticized ARVN forces met the challenge. Disappointing enemy hopes, they did not break, flee, or defect, but turned at once to the task of repelling the invaders. In Saigon, Hue, and some other places, the scale and duration of the attacks required the diversion of US forces to assist in driving out the enemy. In the judgment of General Wheeler, expressed later after a visit to Saigon, the timely intervention of US reaction forces made the difference between victory and defeat in those particular localities. "In short, it was a very near thing," remarked General Wheeler.[36]

Official Washington was startled by the news of the attack. President Johnson was immediately and intensely concerned, and sought a first-hand assessment of the situation from General Westmoreland. General Wheeler transmitted this request to COMUSMACV via secure telephone at 0545H on 1 February. By that time, General Westmoreland was able to report that the attack had passed its peak and that the enemy was losing the initiative. The attackers had had only local successes, he continued, and they had not succeeded in capturing a single city in entirety, although they still held parts of Saigon and six other cities. He viewed the Tet offensive as the second stage of a three-phase campaign. The first phase had been a preparatory buildup combined with sporadic attacks; the third would consist of a "massive" attack in Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces.[37]

In succeeding days the offensive continued to ebb. The enemy committed no additional major forces, and those that had entrenched themselves in the cities and towns were rooted out by Allied forces, which had orders to block the enemy's

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36. (TS) Encl to SACSA M-109-68 to D/JS, 12 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68 (Bulky) (answers to Question 1); (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01539 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 021337Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) Rpt of CJCS on Situation in Vietnam and MACV Force Requirements, 27 Feb 68 (hereafter cited as "Rpt of CJCS on Situation in Vietnam . . . , 27 Feb 68"), (JCS 2472/237, 28 Feb, amended by corrig, 29 Feb); JMF 911 (27 Feb 68).

37. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01464 to CJCS, CINCPAC, and Saigon, 010013Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

escape, to pursue the fleeing enemy as closely as possible, and to reopen lines of communication.[38] By the middle of February the offensive could be regarded as essentially over,[39] although an outburst of mortar and rocket attacks on various cities and airfields took place on the night of 18-19 February, and was described by Ambassador Bunker as the "second wave" of the Tet offensive.[40] Enemy ground forces held out longest in Hue, where they were not dislodged until the morning of 25 February.[41]

The Aftermath

At its height, the Tet offensive had involved an estimated 67,305 enemy troops, of which 44,990, or almost exactly two-thirds, were Viet Cong forces. Evidently the enemy's strategy had been to launch the attack with VC forces and to hold back the major NVA units to exploit any later attacks that might be gained.[42]

Out of these totals, the enemy lost an extraordinarily high proportion of men. An initial estimate showed 15,595 killed in action as of 041200H February. Three days later the figure had risen to 24,199, compared with 670 US dead, 1,294 ARVN and 44 FWMAF (a total of 2,008). Still later, after the offensive had subsided, COMUSMACV estimated 33,875

38. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 01539 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 021337Z Feb 68; MAC 01588, 031253Z Feb 68; COMUSMACV MAC 01592 to CINCPAC, 031512Z Feb 68; COMUSMACV MAC 01614 to CJCS, 040959Z Feb 68; same file.

39. DIA later adopted the date of 13 Feb 68 as marking the end of the Tet offensive for statistical reporting purposes. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 200-68, 11 Oct 68, Supplement.

40. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 42-68, 19 Feb 68; 43-68, 20 Feb 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 20175 to State, 221200Z Feb 68.

41. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 47-68, 26 Feb 68; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 02667 to Actg CJCS, 250929Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

42. This was the estimate given by CJCS following his visit to SVN, 23-25 Feb 68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) Rpt of CJCS on Situation in Vietnam, 27 Feb 68; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01592 to CINCPAC, 031512Z Feb 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

enemy killed in action between 291800H January and 151200H February.[43]

The magnitude of these figures inspired some skepticism on the ground that they were inflated or that they included large numbers of hastily conscripted civilians along with actual troops. General Westmoreland assured General Wheeler that the size of the figures had "caused a good deal of consternation out here too," but he was convinced that they were reasonably accurate and that most of the casualties represented combat troops. The nature of the offensive, he explained, had been responsible for an extraordinarily high rate of slaughter. The enemy had committed units without regard to their combat effectiveness, and had given them "do-or-die" orders that forbade withdrawal.[44]

What had been the enemy's purpose in thus flinging so many of his chips on to the table for a single throw of the dice? The Hanoi radio had proclaimed that the Tet attacks were "part of a general offensive aimed at overthrowing of the Saigon Government."[45] At the most, the enemy perhaps hoped that the Saigon regime and its armed forces would disintegrate under the shock. There was abundant evidence that the Communists had counted upon a large measure of popular support and a significant number of defections from the RVNAF. At the least, Hanoi and the Viet Cong probably expected to deal a severe blow to the government of SVN and to the morale of the United States, while at the same time seizing and maintaining control of several major cities where a communist administrative apparatus could be created. The "Alliance of Peaceful and Democratic Forces," the formation of which was announced by the VC radio early in the offensive, was apparently intended to serve as a convenient "front" to attract opponents of the Thieu government. With this group to make a claim to political legitimacy, and with the principal

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43. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 25-68, 5 Feb 68. (C) Memo, DepDir for Opns, NMCC to CJCS, "Casualties, Weapons Seized and Aircraft Losses in South Vietnam," 7 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 34-68, 16 Feb 68.

44. (S) Msg, JCS 01439 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 062218Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01754 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 072350Z Feb 68, same file.

45. NY Times, 2 Feb 68, p. 1.

cities under actual or apparent occupation, the communists would enjoy a powerful negotiating position, just as they had in 1954 after the fall of Dien Bien Phu.[46]

If this reading of the enemy's intentions was correct, it could be seen that his offensive was largely a failure; he had achieved none of his major political or military objectives. The government in Saigon and its administrative structure throughout the country were shaken but intact, although the blow to its prestige could not be denied. No cities had passed under enemy control. There had been no evidence of large-scale rallying to the NLF or its new "Alliance." RVNAF forces did not defect or desert in large numbers; US advisers rated their performance as up to or beyond expectations, even in those units that were seriously understrength because of leaves granted for the Tet holiday.

Nevertheless it could not be denied that the enemy had achieved certain successes, which could hardly be dismissed as negligible. Probably his most important accomplishment was to force the concentration of US and ARVN forces around the cities, thus leaving large portions of the countryside wide open to exploitation by the Viet Cong. The vital Revolutionary Development program had suffered a serious setback. The extent of its disruption, which could only be judged with the passage of time, would be the surest measure of the degree to which the Tet offensive had affected the course of the war. The ARVN had been driven into a defensive posture; it remained to be seen how well it would bear up if enemy forces were able to maintain pressure. Finally, despite the size of his losses, the enemy remained capable of mounting another wave of attacks. "In essence, the side who

46. (S) Memo, no sig, "Information from Prisoners and Documents Which Indicate Possible VC/NVA Intentions During the Tet Period," 3 Feb 68, Att to Memo, G.A. Carver, CIA to SecDef, same date; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01592 to CINCPAC, 031512Z Feb 68; (TS) Msg, COFS MACV MAC 01926 to MG DePuy, 110538Z Feb 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 19428 to State, 151100Z Feb 68. (C) Msg, Saigon 21322 to State, 061210Z Mar 68, JCS IN 55651.

can rebuild fastest and take the offensive around the cities and towns will win the next round," said General Westmoreland on 26 February.[47]

General Westmoreland felt that the psychological effect had been considerable, especially in Saigon, where the population had hitherto enjoyed reasonable security. The communists had shown themselves able to bring the war into the heart of the capital, in the face of the overwhelming military strength of the RVN and its allies. On the other hand, the enemy's action in launching the assault during the Tet holiday--a sacred occasion for the poeple of Vietnam--had inspired a large measure of anger against the communists.[48]

The physical damage left in the wake of the fighting was enormous. On 15 February Ambassador Bunker estimated that 485,000 new refugees or evacuees had been created, 48,000 houses destroyed, 3,800 civilians killed, and 21,000 wounded. Moreover, industry and commerce had been disrupted and lines ofcommunications severed.[49] A revised estimate made at the end of March listed a maximum of 650,000 evacuees (which had by then declined to 400,000), 95,000 homes destroyed, 7,500 civilian deaths, and 15,500 wounded.[50]

Looking toward the future, Ambassador Bunker believed that the Tet attack had created a rare opportunity for the Saigon government to turn the situation to its advantage. The shock to the nation had been severe, but it had served as a stimulus to national unity; people were rallying to the support of the government. Moreover, for the first time there was a feeling of pride toward the RVNAF. Working closely with President Thieu and Vice-President Ky, the Ambassador urged them to exploit these favorable developments and to move swiftly and vigorously to repair the damage, to demonstrate

47. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) Rpt of CJCS on Situation in Vietnam . . . , 27 Feb 68. (S) Msgs, DCG USARV ARV 344 to CSA, 121200Z Feb 68; COMUSMACV MAC 02701 to CINCPAC, 260731Z Feb 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

48. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01614 to CJCS, 040959Z Feb 68, same file. (S) Msg, Saigon 19428 to State, 151100Z Feb 68.

49. (S) Msg, Saigon 19428 to State, 151100Z Feb 68.

50. (C) Msg, Saigon 23150 to State, 270430Z Mar 68, JCS IN 97060.

genuine concern for the population, to get the pacification program back on schedule, to attack the VC infrastructure where it had surfaced, and to press the fight against corruption. Six weeks after the end of the attack, he could report encouraging evidence that his efforts were producing results. Thieu and Ky seemed to be submerging their differences and working together effectively. A high-level committee had been set up to coordinate relief efforts; it had begun operations under the direction of the Vice President, but had completed the first phase of its work and had been turned over to the Prime Minister. Thieu was emerging as a real leader who was making his presence felt in Saigon and in the countryside. Removal of corrupt and inefficient officials had begun, together with a weeding out of incompetent military commanders.[51]

But even while it was becoming clear that the new political structure in South Vietnam had survived the shock of Tet, events were revealing that the most severe effects of the enemy offensive had been felt in the United States, where public and official opinion was brought to a turning point. Military men had been perfectly aware that the enemy possessed the capability of attacking on a large scale if he were willing to pay the price. But this fact had not been appreciated in the United States. In many quarters, the enemy's ability to attack throughout South Vietnam was misinterpreted as proof that previous optimistic progress appraisals had been wholly erroneous, that the enemy was growing stronger rather than weaker, that he was a hydra-headed monster invulnerable to military defeat. These sentiments contributed to bring about the drastic change in US policy announced by President Johnson on 31 March 1968, as described in the next chapter. Whether the enemy had counted on influencing US opinion as part of his objectives for the Tet attack was not clear. But there could be no doubt whatever that, in this realm, he had attained unqualified success, to a degree perhaps exceeding his fondest hopes.

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51. (S) Msgs, Saigon to State: 17920, 041100Z Feb 68; 18582, 081115Z Feb 68; 19428, 151100Z Feb 68; 20175, 221200Z Feb 68; 20798, 290940Z Feb 68; 21321, 061200Z Mar 68; 22088, 141030Z Mar 68; 22579, 201130Z Mar 68; 23308, 281200Z Mar 68. These are Ambassador Bunker's 37th-45th regular weekly messages for the Pres. (S) Msgs, Saigon 18699 to State, 090930Z Feb 68, and 20928, 011130Z Mar 68.

The Siege of Khe Sanh and Its Anticlimax

Throughout the Tet offensive, the northern part of I CTZ, adjacent to the DMZ, constituted in effect a separate theater where events took a different course. Even before the attack, an ominous situation had developed in this region, notably in the western part, around Khe Sanh. Here a USMC force of two battalions had been conducting a search-and-destroy operation (SCOTLAND) since early November 1967.[52] Beginning in January 1968, the enemy moved to invest Khe Sanh in strength. Three NVA divisions were assembled in the vicinity and a large supply base was set up in nearby Laos. The relatively small Marine force was thus in a precarious position, the more so since the highway on which ground resupply depended had been rendered impassable, by weather and by enemy action, as early as September 1967.[53] This highway, Route 9, ran eastward from Laos through Khe Sanh to the coast of Vietnam, where it linked up with the main north-south highway connecting the coastal cities.

Largely owing to its location along Route 9, Khe Sanh could be described as a "strategic crossroads." In US hands, it could bar a major enemy advance into Quang Tri province. At the same time, it overlooked the routes into southern Laos. Lying some 30 miles from the ocean, it was separated by approximately 23 miles from the Marines' logistic base at Dong Ha. Fire support bases were located at Camp Carroll and at Than Son Lam, approximately ten and seven miles east of Khe Sanh, respectively. The base area at Khe Sanh was about three kilometers long and one kilometer wide. It was dominated on the north, west, and south by mountains rising about 800 meters above the valley.[54]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had laid heavy stress on the situation at Khe Sanh when they argued in favor of a Tet ceasefire of 36 as opposed to 48 hours. At that time, according to the JCS estimate, there were 15,500 NVA troops within 20 miles of Khe Sanh. "This massing of enemy troops indicates

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52. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 256-67, 1 Nov 67, 304-67, 30 Dec 67. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, p. 362.

53. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, p. 221.

54. (S-GP 4) "Fact Sheet" on Khe Sanh, 17 Apr 68, Encl to DJSM-448-68 to CJCS, same date; JCS 2472/277, 26 Apr 68; JMF 911/175 (28 Mar 68). (Cited hereafter as "Khe Sanh Fact Sheet").

an attack of major proportions on Khe Sanh is imminent," argued the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Khe Sanh may be an intermediate objective with the final objective of Quang Tri City or possibly Hue."[55]

COMUSMACV, working closely with General Cushman (commanding the III MAF), had laid plans to deploy reinforcements to Khe Sanh on short notice. Four USMC battalions could be sent in within 12 hours. Preparations were being made to shift forces northward to bring additional Marine elements within reach of Khe Sanh, as well as two Army brigades. The JGS had agreed to deploy two additional airborne ARVN battalions to I CTZ, making a total of four in that zone. General Westmoreland had also approved plans for a coordinated air support campaign, consisting of B-52 and tactical air strikes on enemy forces massing around Khe Sanh.[56]

To make certain that air assets were properly exploited in the battle that seemed to be approaching, General Westmoreland planned to assign temporary operational control of the 1st Marine Air Wing to his Deputy for Air, General Momyer, Commanding General of the 7th Air Force.[57] Admiral Sharp, on learning of this proposal, expressed misgivings and asked COMUSMACV to submit the final plan for his approval before putting it into effect. "Any plan which might divest CG, III MAF of operational control of his own assets will require full consideration of all aspects of the problem," he warned.[58]

General Westmoreland replied that he had no intention of denying the Marines their necessary close air support or of interfering with the system by which it was provided. His draft directive on the subject charged General Momyer with developing a plan to "concentrate all available air resources

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55. (TS) Att to CM-2927-68 to SecDef, 20 Jan 68, JMF 911/305 (6 Oct 67).
56. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 00547 to CJCS, 121422Z Jan 68; (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 00276 to CINCPAC, 071230Z Jan 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.
57. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 00797 to CINCPAC, 180009Z Jan 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CG III MAF and CG 7th AF, 171206Z Jan 68, retransmitted to CINCPAC as MAC 00994, 210951Z Jan 68, same file.
58. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 182231Z Jan 68, same file.

in the battle area" and with "overall responsibility for air operations for the execution of this plan." General Momyer would "coordinate and direct" the employment of all air strikes, but would coordinate the details of his plan with the 1st Marine Air Wing and III MAF. The Commanding General, III MAF, was instructed to make available for this purpose those tactical bomber sorties "not required for direct air support of Marine units." Moreover, it was stipulated that "the direct support of Marine units by the 1st Marine Air Wing is not affected by this plan." Admiral Sharp was satisfied with this directive, and it was promulgated by COMUSMACV on 22 January.[59]

It was inevitable that the position of the Marines at Khe Sanh--in an exposed forward position, surrounded by swelling numbers of seasoned communist jungle fighters, and wholly dependent for their survival upon aerial resupply--should invite comparison with a somewhat similar situation that had ended in a smashing communist victory: the French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The comparison was being made by Administration policy-makers early in January. On 11 January General Wheeler informed COMUSMACV that two courses of action, based on the analogy with Dien Bien Phu, were being discussed in "high non-military quarters." One was to launch a lightning stroke into Laos in order to hit the enemy from the rear, followed by assault on his bases in that part of Laos. The other was to withdraw from Khe Sanh while it was still possible to do so with relatively little public notice. Those supporting the latter suggestion argued that the road to Khe Sanh had already been cut; that the enemy controlled the surrounding hills and would soon be able to interdict the airfield with artillery; and that there was an "awkward relationship" between COMUSMACV and CG III MAF, which made the latter reluctant to withdraw and the former reluctant to order him to do so. General Wheeler referred these suggestions to COMUSMACV, making it clear that he himself rejected both.[60]

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59. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 00992 to CINCPAC, 210945Z Jan 68 (as corrected by SSO MACV to SSO CINCPAC, 211223Z Jan 68); CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 211917Z Jan 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 02378 to CDR 7 AF and CG III MAF, 220448Z Jan 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

60. (TS) Msg, JCS 00343 to COMUSMACV, 111546Z Jan 68 same file.

General Westmoreland pronounced both courses of action infeasible. The first would depend upon airlift capabilities, and would strain them to the utmost at a time when the beginning of the northeast monsoon season was making air resupply precarious; moreover, enemy forces were probably too strong for success in a short campaign. As for withdrawal, that was unthinkable. Khe Sanh was militarily important, as the western anchor of defenses along the DMZ, but it was even more important psychologically. "To relinquish this area would be a major propaganda victory for the enemy," declared COMUSMACV. Concerning the arguments used to support this suggestion, General Westmoreland observed that:

(1) Route 9 could be opened if necessary, but it was not decisive, since Khe Sanh could be reinforced and resupplied by air.

(2) All tactically essential hills around Khe Sanh were in US hands and would remain so.

(3) The enemy would have great difficulty in trying to move in heavy artillery through the terrain of western Quang Tri province, although large quantities of mortar and rocket fire should be expected.

(4) The allegation of a difficult relationship between himself and General Cushman was "absurd."[61]

General Wheeler forwarded COMUSMACV's comments to the Secretary of Defense on 13 January 1968, indicating his concurrence.[62] CINCPAC also emphatically rejected both of the suggested courses of action. "In the event a major attack against Khe Sanh materializes," he declared, "it will be fought on our terms, on our ground, and within supporting range of our weapons."[63]

Operation NIAGARA, the air campaign intended to disrupt the enemy's preparations in the Khe Sanh area and keep him off balance, was launched early on 20 January 1968 (Saigon time). B-52 aircraft bombed enemy forces believed to be

61. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 00547 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 121422Z Jan 68, same file.
62. (TS-GP-3) CM-2908-68 to SecDef, 13 Jan 68, same file.
63. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 142146Z Jan 68, same file.

staging for attacks, as well as suspected troop concentrations, storage areas, and transshipment points.[64] By 29 January approximately 40 B-52 and 500 tactical air sorties were being flown each day as part of this campaign. The large number of secondary explosions suggested that these air strikes, together with artillery fire, were disrupting the enemy's logistic buildup and troop concentrations.[65]

It appeared that, in launching this campaign, General Westmoreland had beaten the enemy to the punch. On the night of 20-21 January, the enemy began a seven-hour barrage of rocket and mortar fire against Khe Sanh airfield, followed by a ground attack that overran the village of Khe Sanh. Most of the Marine defenders (who had been strengthened a few days earlier by a third battalion) withdrew into the perimeter, abandoning all outposts except a few of the most commanding hill positions. "The anticipated enemy attack on Khe Sanh was initiated last evening," announced COMUSMACV on 21 January. He reported that planned northward movement of Army forces was already underway.[66] On the following day, air evacuation of civilian refugees who had fled into the perimeter was begun.[67] On 23 January a fourth Marine battalion was brought in to reinforce Khe Sanh, followed several days later by an ARVN Ranger Battalion.[68]

The initial enemy attacks were repulsed and tapered off, and the situation again became quiescent. On 23 January COMUSMACV appraised these assaults as "reconnaissance in force designed to knock off the outposts. It remains to be seen," he concluded, "whether our initiatives thus far have off-set his time-table."[69] But there was no doubt in his mind that a

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64. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 17-68, 20 Jan 68.
65. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-63-68 to Pres, 29 Jan 68, JMF 911/301 (29 Jan 68).
66. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 18-68, 22 Jan 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 00992 to CINCPAC, 210945Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68; (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, p. 226.
67. (C) Memo for Record, DepDir for Opns, NMCC, "Khe Sanh Situation Report," 23 Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.
68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, p. 226.
69. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01108 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 231329Z Jan 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

major battle impended. In an appraisal of prospects, he predicted to CINCPAC that the nature of the operations around Khe Sanh would be misunderstood at home and that it would be possible for "skeptics and dissenters to construct erroneous and misleading assessments of our battle field posture . . . . As the Quang Tri battle develops there will be those quick to advocate abandonment of 'indefensible and unimportant positions'. I unreservedly maintain that Khe Sanh is of significance; strategic, tactical, and most importantly, psychological."[70]

In the days that followed, General Westmoreland, taking advantage of the lull, established a provisional Field Army headquarters in the Hue/Phu Bai area, to assume operational control of all US ground forces in I CTZ. It was designated MACV Forward and placed under the command of Deputy COMUSMACV, General Abrams.[71] Subsequently, on 10 March, MACV Forward became a corps headquarters, designated Provisional Corps, Vietnam (PROVCORPV); it was placed under the command of LTG William B. Rosson, USA, with operational control assigned to III MAF. General Abrams then returned to his duties in Saigon.[72]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff kept in close touch with the developing situation at Khe Sanh. On 29 January General Wheeler discussed it via telephone with General Westmoreland, who affirmed his conviction that "we can hold Khe Sanh and we should hold Khe Sanh." He reported that morale was high and that there appeared an opportunity to inflict a "severe defeat" upon the foe. He believed that everything possible had been done, both in South Vietnam and in Washington, to insure success.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately forwarded this information to President Johnson. They indicated their agreement with COMUSMACV's assessment of the situation and

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70. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01060 to CINCPAC, 230138Z Jan 68, same file.

71. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 01215 to CINCPAC, 251237Z Jan 68 and MAC 01233, 260445Z Jan 68; same file. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-63-68 to Pres, 29 Jan 68, JMF 911/301 (29 Jan 68).

72. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, p. 242.

recommended that the US position at Khe Sanh be maintained.[73] The President now had the assurance of his highest military advisors, given in writing, that Khe Sanh was defensible.

By the end of January it was known that two NVA divisions had been positioned for a direct assault at Khe Sanh, two more for attacks on US positions between there and the coast (Camp Carroll, Con Thien, and Gio Linh), and another two, plus three additional regiments, for assaults on the major cities of I CTZ, farther south: Quang Tri, Hue, Da Nang, and Hoi An. The enemy dispositions, were described in a CIA briefing on 31 January 1968 that was attended by SACSA, General DePuy. The CIA spokesmen presented evidence that the enemy around Khe Sanh was organizing a "massive" personnel replacement system like that used at Dien Bien Phu, which had provided for 100 percent replacement capacity before the attack began. Further evidence suggested that the North Vietnamese Home Army was to be thrown into the assault--proof that the enemy regarded the campaign as decisive. Analogy with previous battles suggested that General Vo Nguyen Giap himself--the architect of victory at Dien Bien Phu, now NVA Minister of Defense--was in command of the forces around Khe Sanh, though there was no hard evidence of this. In short, the conclusion of the CIA representatives, as summed up by General DePuy, was that "although they don't know with certainty whether Vince Lombardi is on the coaching bench, there is no mistaking the fact that the Green Bay Packers are on the field."[74]

To a layman the disparity in numbers at Khe Sanh might seem dangerous: 20-25,000 NVA troops against 5,700 US Marines and 500 Vietnamese Rangers. But in the theater as a whole, the balance was not unfavorable. There were 3,800 additional Marines and 500 Army troops within ten miles of Khe Sanh, and 37,000 more friendly troops within a 40-mile radius. Moreover, fire support bases at Camp Carroll and Than Son Lam, equipped with 175mm guns and 155mm howitzers, were near enough to affect the outcome of the battle.[75]

When the communists struck throughout South Vietnam in their Tet offensive, their forces around Khe Sanh remained relatively inactive. But COMUSMACV did not allow his

73. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-63-68 to Pres, 29 Jan 68, JMF 911/301 (29 Jan 68).
74. (TS-GP 1) SACSA M 79-68-F for CJCS, 31 Jan 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.
75. (S-GP 4) Khe Sanh Fact Sheet.

attention to be diverted. He remained convinced that a Khe Sanh attack would follow the Tet assault, as part of an overall strategic plan. He outlined in more detail his conception of the enemy plan in a message to General Wheeler on 9 February. An objective of the Tet offensive, he believed, was to seize control of Pleiku and Darlac Provinces, giving the enemy control of the western part of the country from the A Shau Valley, in Thua Thien province, all the way to northern Tay Ninh. A massive attack against Khe Sanh and across the DMZ, if successful, would add the two northernmost provinces, Quang Tri and Thua Thien, to his holdings. Thus, in effect, the communists would have partitioned the country, as in Laos, and would be in an excellent position to dictate a favorable political settlement.[76]

President Johnson also kept one eye fixed on Khe Sanh while the Tet offensive was in progress. On 31 January he asked General Wheeler how the Khe Sanh garrison could be reinforced in case bad weather descended and the enemy interdicted the airfield with artillery, as at Dien Bien Phu. General Wheeler pointed out in reply that COMUSMACV could resupply with helicopters, which required no runways, and could if necessary reopen Route 9, though at considerable cost. He pointed out also that the US forces, unlike the French in 1954, had artillery and tank units nearby.[77] Commenting on this exchange of views, General Westmoreland noted further that he now had three Army brigades north of the Hai Van Pass; that radar techniques made it possible to direct air strikes at night or in conditions of zero visibility; and that if the enemy massed for attack, he would become correspondingly more vulnerable to superior US artillery and air striking power.[78]

Pursuing the subject further, General Wheeler asked if it would be desirable to employ additional mortars and artillery in the Khe Sanh perimeter. General Westmoreland replied that any increase of forces within the perimeter would increase the risk of loss by fire and add to the difficulties of logistic support. Any additional fire support should be retained outside the perimeter, for use with counterattacking

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76. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01858 to CJCS, 091633Z Feb 68, JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68) sec 1.

77. (TS) Msg, JCS 01147 to COMUSMACV, 010351Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jan 68.

78. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01586 to CJCS, 031226Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

and exploitation forces when the time came. "All available resources required by General Cushman," he affirmed, "are being provided within the practical limitations of the overall situation in RVN."[79]

The possibility of using nuclear weapons at Khe Sanh, to retrieve the situation if it should become desperate, had already been considered. On 1 February 1968 General Wheeler asked the advice of COMUSMACV and CINCPAC about the advisability of doing so, though he considered it unlikely that the necessity would arise.[80] Two days later he informed General Westmoreland that the President had made it clear that he did not wish to be placed in a position in which he would have to decide whether to use nuclear weapons.[81]

General Westmoreland thought it unlikely that such weapons would be needed, but that if the situation in the DMZ area should change "dramatically," the United States should be prepared to introduce "weapons of greater effectiveness against massed forces"--either tactical nuclear weapons or chemical agents.[82] Admiral Sharp reported that contingency plans for using nuclear devices were being prepared at Okinawa, though he did not expect them to be required.[83] General Wheeler directed that these plans not be forwarded to Washington until the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked for them or until a critical situation should make it necessary (in CINCPAC's opinion) that they be considered by the Joint Chiefs.[84]

When the President heard that these plans were in preparation, he ordered them discontinued. Already there had been speculation on the subject in the news media, and he wished to make certain that allegations by the opposition would have no foundation.[85] Accordingly, by direction of CINCPAC,

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79. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 01305 to COMUSMACV, 032310Z Jan 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01635 to CJCS, 050125Z Feb 68; same file.
80. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 01154 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 011526Z Feb 68, same file.
81. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 01272 to COMUSMACV, 030332Z Feb 68, same file.
82. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01586 to CJCS, 031226Z Feb 68, same file.
83. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 020208Z Feb 68, same file.
84. (TS) Msg, JCS 01678 to CINCPAC, 101848Z Feb 68, same file.
85. (S) Msg, JCS 01690 to CINCPAC, 111913Z Feb 68, same file.

this planning program (FRACTURE JAW) was at once terminated.[86]

The siege of Khe Sanh was a principal topic of conversation at a White House luncheon on 3 February attended by General Wheeler, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and other officials. The civilian officials expressed considerable apprehension, but there was no disposition to abandon the position. Several courses of action were discussed, such as a diversionary amphibious operation against North Vietnam or a ground attack northward through the DMZ. General Wheeler passed along the substance of the conversation to General Westmoreland, with assurances that official Washington, from the President on down, reposed complete confidence in his judgment.[87]

On the night of 4-5 February, a new rocket barrage assailed the defenders of Khe Sanh, followed by enemy ground attacks against outposts.[88] One of these attacks was by a regimental-size force (2,000-3,000 men), but was broken up by an air and artillery barrage before it could reach the hill position that apparently constituted its objective.[89] Again the conclusion was drawn that the decisive hour had struck. "Now that the attack has been launched," said General Wheeler in a message to COMUSMACV, "the President is interested in all details." He asked COMUSMACV to furnish a daily summary of the situation at Khe Sanh and in the DMZ, with a forecast of planned US actions.[90] He also instructed the Joint Staff and DIA to provide daily briefings on the Khe Sanh/DMZ situation to the Armed Services Committees of both Houses of Congress.[91]

Again the enemy chose not to, or could not, press home his attack; enemy forces broke contact and resumed their

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86. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV et al., 120242Z Feb 68, same file.
87. (S) Msg, JCS 01216 to COMUSMACV, 041642Z Feb 68, same file.
88. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 30-68, 5 Feb 68; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01666 to CJCS, 051131Z Feb 68, same file.
89. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, pp. 241-242.
90. (S-GP 1) Msg, JCS 01320 to COMUSMACV, 042330Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.
91. (C-GP 4) CM-2981-68 to DJS and Dir DIA, 5 Feb 68, same file.

campaign of artillery harassment.[92] But on the night of 6-7 February, the enemy attacked and overran the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei, four miles southwest of Khe Sanh, making use of tanks for the first time.[93]

There followed another lull of about two weeks' duration. But the enemy's continuing interest in Khe Sanh was confirmed by a Viet Cong radio broadcast on 18 February 1968 (made available to newsmen in Saigon on 26 February), which asserted for the first time that General Giap was commanding the offensive in South Vietnam. While it did not specifically assert that he was in direct command at Khe Sanh, it declared that he "dares guarantee" that Khe Sanh would indeed become "another Dienbienphu."[94] Perhaps in reaction to this boast, the New York Times printed a lengthy article comparing these two situations. The reporter did not overlook the differences, but it was evident that he believed that the Khe Sanh position shared many of the weaknesses of Dien Bien Phu and that he had doubts about its defensibility.[95]

The author of this news story could perhaps be classified among the "skeptics and dissenters" who, as General Westmoreland had predicted, would misunderstand the reasons for holding Khe Sanh and urge its abandonment. Such a point of view was not without its advocates even within the Department of Defense. A study prepared in the office of the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs early in March 1968 argued that US forces were playing into enemy hands by holding on to the Khe Sanh position, that the enemy could take it if he wished, and that a US withdrawal might free enough troops to make it unnecessary to send COMUSMACV the reinforcements for which he was asking.[96] These conclusions, however, were not accepted

92. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 31-68, 6 Feb 68.
93. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 32-68, 7 Feb 68, 33-68, 8 Feb 68. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 01741 to CJCS, 071026Z Feb 68; MAC 01798, 081022Z Feb 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (S-GP 3) Hq USARPAC, Highlights of United States Army, Pacific, Activities (U), Feb 68.
94. NY Times, 27 Feb 68, p. 3.
95. NY Times, 8 Mar 68, p. 1.
96. (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to Dep SecDef, 9 Mar 68, w/encl, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68.

by Administration policy-makers, civilian or military.

Toward the end of February there was another sharp increase in the rate of artillery and mortar fire on Khe Sanh. The peak was reached on 23-24 February, when 1,300 rounds landed in or near the combat base within 24 hours.[97] But there was no ground attack, and the rate of fire soon slacked off to normal.

As the weeks slipped by, the anticipated massive attacks that would tighten the noose about the defenders failed to materialize. To use the metaphor employed earlier by CIA, the whistle never blew for the kickoff; the "Green Bay Packers" picked up their football and went off to play elsewhere, presumably against less formidable opposition. A reasonable assumption was that the severe toll taken by US aircraft and artillery had led to the repeated postponement and finally the abandonment of the operation. The effectiveness of US firepower was indicated by an estimate that 3,543 enemy troops had been killed in the DMZ during the first quarter of 1968, as compared with 6,884 during the entire preceding year.[98]

The initiative now passed to friendly forces. In March COMUSMACV laid plans to reopen Route 9 as part of a general offensive against enemy forces in the Khe Sanh area.[99] These plans went into effect on 1 April 1968 (Saigon time) with the launching of PEGASUS, a combined linkup-search and destroy operation. Elements of the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile), assisted by an airborne ARVN task force, seized positions along Route 9 and south of Khe Sanh Combat Base, while two Marine regiments moved westward from Camp Carroll along Route 9. At the same time, Operation NIAGARA, the coordinated

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97. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 02501 to CJCS, 221035Z Feb 68; MAC 02-71 (number garbled), 231142Z Feb 68; MAC 02625, 241203Z Feb 68; MAC 02667, 250929Z Feb 68, same file; (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 47-68, 24 Feb 68, 47-68, 26 Feb 68.

98. (TS) Hq USMC, Commandant's Vietnam Chronology, 25 Mar 68.

99. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 03572 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 150422Z Mar 68; (TS) CM-3147-68 to SecDef, 22 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68.

program of air strikes, was called off. By that time the number of enemy troops around Khe Sanh, according to US estimates, had declined to 11,900.[100]

The distance to be covered was short and the operation proceeded against relatively light opposition, which naturally stiffened as the advancing forces drew closer to Khe Sanh.[101] The siege of Khe Sanh was officially declared ended on 5 April 1968.[102] There was no dramatic "relief" of the once-beleaguered Marines, but the press attempted to dramatize the situation. A reporter described how, on 6 April 1968, a 20,000-man US relief column reached the base at Khe Sanh and then, instead of entering the base, "fanned out on three sides in search of the vanishing enemy soldiers."[103] The erstwhile besiegers had now become the quarry.

The first element of the relief force to enter the Khe Sanh Combat Base was an ARVN company, which was air-landed on 6 April. Two days later elements of the First Air Cavalry Division entered the base.[104] By that time, US forces clearly held the initiative and were conducting clearing operations on all sides of Khe Sanh.[105] On the same date, the emergency airborne resupply effort, which had begun on 21 January, was discontinued.[106] On 10 April COMUSMACV reported that the airfield was open to all aircraft and that, during the period 090900 to 100900, Khe Sanh had received no incoming enemy

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100. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 77-68, 1 Apr 68. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 08886 to CINCPAC et al., 291240Z Mar 68. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 04395 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 011102Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8592 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 280225Z Jun 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, p. 244.

101. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 04443 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 021028Z Apr 68; MAC 4494, 031117Z Apr 68; MAC 4538, 041217Z Apr 68; MAC 04567, 051108Z Apr 68; MAC 04613, 061107Z Apr 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

102. NY Times, 6 Apr 68, p. 1.

103. Ibid.

104. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8592 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 280225Z Jun 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68.

105. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 70-68, 9 Apr 68. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 04768 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 091143Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

106. (TS) Hq USMC, Commandant's Vietnam Chronology, 8 Apr 68.

fire, for the first time since 20 January. He estimated that Route 9 would be open for logistic traffic on 12 April.[107] In another significant development on 10 April, US troops re-occupied the Lang Vei Special Forces Camp against little opposition.[108] On 12 April 1968 General Westmoreland asked permission to discontinue the special daily report on Khe Sanh. General Wheeler agreed that these reports had served their purpose and instructed him to submit in their stead a series of daily reports on the overall situation in the DMZ.[109]

The last enemy-held outpost near Khe Sanh--Hill 881 North, four miles northwest of the combat base--was seized by the Third Battalion, 26th Marines, on 14 April 1968.[110] Operation PEGASUS was declared ended on that day and the related ARVN operation (LAMSON 207) three days later.[111] As of 0800H on 15 April, responsibility for the PEGASUS area of operations was transferred to the Third Marine Division.[112]

The battle of Khe Sanh was over, and unquestionably it ended as an impressive tactical victory for the allies. From a strategic viewpoint, however, it was not entirely clear which side deserved the palm of victory. The enemy's concentration of forces around Khe Sanh, and along the DMZ generally, had disrupted US troop dispositions and forced COMUSMACV to spread his forces dangerously thin at a time of great crisis in SVN. The siege of Khe Sanh, hard on the heels of the Tet offensive, had led General Westmoreland to ask for massive reinforcements. His request, and the events that had motivated it, subjected the Administration to the severe internal stress that led ultimately to the President's decision to curtail the bombing of North Vietnam and to seek negotiations.[113] Thus Khe Sanh could be regarded as part of a

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107. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 04795 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 101130Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

108. (S-GP 4) Hq USARPAC, Highlights of United States Army, Pacific, Activities (U), Apr 68.

109. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 4897 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 121148Z Apr 68; (C) Msg, JCS 04014 to COMUSMACV, 122246Z Apr 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

110. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 05009 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 151106Z Apr 68, same file.

111. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 93-68, 19 Apr 68.

112. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 05009 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 151106Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

113. See Ch. 49.

strategy that had produced favorable consequences for the foe. On the other hand, the small Khe Sanh garrison of 6,200 US Marines and ARVN Rangers had blocked the principal route of advance through Quang Tri province to the coastal cities, and had tied up approximately four times their number of troops in the immediate vicinity of Khe Sanh during the perilous days of Tet.

If the enemy had actually hoped to produce "another Dien Bien Phu" by overwhelming the garrison, his defeat was plain to see. Intelligence accumulated during and after the siege suggested that the enemy had indeed planned a massive ground attack, supported by artillery and armor. The date had been successively moved back; it had first been set to coincide with the Tet offensive, then was rescheduled for the latter part of February, for 13/14 March, and finally for 22/23 March. Presumably these postponements reflected the spoiling effects of US airpower and artillery on the enemy's preparations.[114]

The analogy with Dien Bien Phu was supported by a study of enemy tactics at Khe Sanh. The hardening of weapons sites, the closing in of the enemy infantry, the probing attacks, and the attempt to interdict the airfield--all of these followed the 1954 model.[115] The radically different outcome in 1968 could be ascribed to US firepower, which General Westmoreland had predicted would prove decisive.

The effects of this firepower showed up in an enormous disparity in casualty figures. Estimates prepared by MACV's operational analysis group, MACEVAL, early in April 1968 were that the enemy had suffered casualties ranging from 14,600 to 28,900 men, of whom from 3,288 to 6,515 had been killed. The casualty rate amounted to between 49 and 65 percent of the personnel committed to the operation (including replacements).[116] A later estimate gave total enemy casualties of approximately 15,000, as compared with 197 US/ARVN killed and 822 wounded evacuees.[117]

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114. (S) Memo, Dir MACEVAL to COMUSMACV, "An Analysis of the Khe Sanh Battle," 5 Apr 68, Encl to Memo, Actg CS, MACV to CJCS, same subj, 10 Apr 68 (hereafter cited as "Memo, Dir MACEVAL to COMUSMACV, 5 Apr 68"), OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.
115. (S-GP 4) Khe Sanh Fact Sheet.
116. (S) Memo, Dir MACEVAL to COMUSMACV, 5 Apr 68.
117. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, p. 242.

Most of the enemy casualties could be ascribed to Operation NIAGARA, the air counteroffensive. Between 15 January and 31 March 1968, 96,000 tons of air ordnance had been delivered against enemy positions, as compared with 3,600 tons of ground ordnance.[118] Nevertheless the artillery effort had been formidable; 102,857 rounds were fired between 20 January and 1 April 1968. During this same period, the enemy had fired 11,114 rounds of artillery, mortar, and rocket ammunition against the Khe Sanh compound--a daily average of 150 rounds, approximately equal to the 1967 figure for the entire I CTZ.[119]

Air power also contributed to the US success by maintaining a constant flow of supplies and replacements and by making it possible to evacuate the wounded. The air line of communication, which was never severed, delivered a daily average of 194 short tons of supplies and 70 troops during the siege, making it possible not only to meet the requirements of the garrison but to build up a reserve of about 20 days' supplies at combat rates.[120] The Marines in the Khe Sanh perimeter had endured much, but at no time had they been forced into the desperate plight of the hapless French defenders of Dien Bien Phu fourteen years earlier.

118. (S) Memo, Dir MACEVAL to COMUSMACV, 5 Apr 68.
119. (S-GP 4) Khe Sanh Fact Sheet.
120. (S-GP 4) Khe Sanh Fact Sheet.

Chapter 49

A NEW DEPARTURE IN POLICY

Emergency Reinforcement of COMUSMACV

When the news of the Tet attack reached the Joint Chiefs of Staff, they at once considered ways of strengthening General Westmoreland's position without delay. The most prompt method of doing so would be through the application of increased airpower. On 31 January General McConnell declared that "this vicious turn in the nature and conduct of the war must be met in kind with greater force than is permitted by our present policy of limited objectives with limited force." Consequently, he recommended removal of all geographic restrictions on military operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered this suggestion but decided to send a less sweeping recommendation to the Secretary of Defense. On 3 February they urged that the prohibited and restricted areas around Hanoi and Haiphong be eliminated. They recommended instead the establishment of "control" areas around the centers of these two cities, consisting of circles with radii of 3 nm for Hanoi and of 1 1/2 nm for Haiphong. Strikes on targets within these areas would remain under close Washington control. The President did not act on this request, but on 6 February he removed the special ban on strikes within 5 nm of the centers of these two cities that he had imposed a few weeks earlier.[1]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also firmly resisted suggestions that ROLLING THUNDER be curtailed. On 7 February 1968 the Joint Staff forwarded to General Wheeler a critical analysis of a study by the Institute for Defense Analyses that downgraded the effectiveness of the bombing campaign. The Joint Staff concluded that the authors of the study had produced misleading results by compartmentalizing the campaign and had ignored the cumulative effectiveness of an interdiction program unhampered by "vacillating restraints that permit and aid recuperation." On 19 February 1968 the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that the Chairman would present their views on ROLLING THUNDER to higher authority "as the opportunity presented itself." They advocated conduct of armed

1. (TS) CSAF-A-34-68, 31 Jan 68; (TS) Note to Control Div., "ROLLING THUNDER," 31 Jan 68, (TS) JCS 2472/222, 1 Feb 68 (revised Dec On, 2 Feb 68); (TS) JCSM-78-68, 3 Feb 68. JMF 912/323 (31 Jan 68).

reconnaissance within eight miles of the Chinese border and reaffirmed their view that the Hanoi-Haiphong control areas should be reduced.[2]

At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the possibility that it might become necessary to send troop reinforcements to COMUSMACV. This contingency presented grave implications because of the depleted state of the US strategic reserves. A list of forces available for dispatch to Southeast Asia, submitted by J-5 on 5 February 1968, presented a bleak picture. The only available Army unit in CONUS strategic reserve (apart from three heavy divisions committed to NATO, each of which required twelve weeks for mobilization) was the 82nd Airborne Division. The Marine Corps had available approximately one and one-third divisions/wings: the 5th Division/3d Wing (6/9 of a division), in the Pacific Command, and the 2d Division/Wing (7/9 division), in the Atlantic Command. The Navy could supply five aircraft carriers and an equal number of cruisers, but only by drawing on forces required to support NATO. Available Air Force units in CONUS strategic reserve were 12 TFS, eight of which were Air National Guard units recently called to active duty. Presenting this meager list, J-5 pointed out that the deployment of any of these forces would require compensating mobilization of Reserve units to replenish the strategic reserve.[3]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff studied this paper and decided to call for more information before reaching a decision. On 7 February 1968 they considered a somewhat more comprehensive study prepared by J-5. Again they reached no decision except to agree that any dispatch of reinforcements to COMUSMACV would require mobilization of some reserve units and some change in rotation policies and other existing ground rules.[4]

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2. (TS) Memo, D/JS to CJCS, "Comments on IDA JASON Study on 'The Bombing of North Vietnam'" 7 Feb 68; (TS) DJSM-148-68, 7 Feb 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 68. (TS) Secy, JCS, Dec On "ROLLING THUNDER Targets," 19 Feb 68, JMF 912/323 (31 Jan 68).

3. (TS) J-5 T 9-68, "Forces Available for Emergency Deployment to Southeast Asia," 5 Feb 68, JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).

4. (S) Note to Control Div, "Forces Available for Emergency Deployment to Southeast Asia," 5 Feb 68; (TS) J-5 T 12-68, same subj, 7 Feb 68; (C) Note to Control Div, same subj and date, JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).

On the following day, at the request of General Wheeler, J-5 prepared a study of the deployability status of the 82d Airborne Division and of the 6/9 Marine division (5th Division/3d Wing) available in PACOM. J-5 concluded that the former could close South Vietnam within nine to 29 days after a decision was made and the latter within five to 17 days, depending on various possible "mixes" of airlift capacity.5

As yet there had been no request from General Westmoreland for reinforcements. On 7 February (Washington time), General Wheeler consulted COMUSMACV by telecon and learned that he contemplated a move of the 101st Airborne Division north to meet the threat in I CTZ. In a message to COMUSMACV later that day, General Wheeler suggested that the enemy buildup around Khe Sanh was intended to serve just such a purpose--to siphon off forces from the south, exposing the ARVN to attack. To counter such an enemy strategy, the Chairman suggested that reinforcements could be sent in the form of the 82d Airborne and of approximately one-half of a Marine division. Both steps would require changes in the length of tours in Vietnam and the time between tours. Although such changes would not be popular, the US Government, according to General Wheeler, "is not prepared to accept a defeat in South Vietnam. In summary," he concluded, "if you need more troops, ask for them."6

Agreeing that General Wheeler's view of enemy strategy was logical, General Westmoreland replied that it would be well to plan for the worst possible contingency--the loss of Khe Sanh, which would then have to be retaken. He therefore "strongly urged" that plans be made to provide the 82d Airborne and the one-half Marine division of which General Wheeler had spoken. In the event of a setback in northern I CTZ, these reinforcements could make an amphibious landing somewhere in the area to eject the enemy. Surf conditions for such an effort would be favorable in April.7

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5. (TS) J-5 Briefing Sheet for CJCS on JCS 2472/226, 5 Feb 68, JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).

6. (TS) Msg, JCS 01529 to COMUSMACV, 080448Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

7. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01810 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 081440Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

General Wheeler still desired a more forceful recommendation from the field commander. Reinforcements might be desirable earlier than April, he suggested, to assist in defense or pursuit. "I am not trying to sell you on the deployment of additional forces which in any event I cannot guarantee," he said. But, sensing that "the critical phase of the war is upon us," he did not believe that COMUSMACV should "refrain from asking for what you believe is required under the circumstances."[8]

On 9 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed with the President the possible deployment of the 82d Airborne and 6/9 Marine division, to be accompanied by mobilization of 120,000 reservists and by legislative action to extend terms of service and to permit recall of individual reservists. No decision was reached, but later that day Secretary McNamara asked General Wheeler to submit a tentative deployment plan, plus two others of lesser scope, one for dispatching only the 82d Airborne, another for sending only those Marine battalions available in CONUS. Neither of these smaller plans would require reserve mobilization or legislative action. Mr. McNamara stressed the difficulty of getting Congressional action, which would probably be preceded by "prolonged and divisive debate." He pointed out, moreover, that it was necessary to plan for the possibility of "substantial and perhaps widespread civil disorders" in the United States during the coming summer.[9]

The three plans, drawn up by J-5, were sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 February. J-5 concluded that the most comprehensive plan, embracing both the 82d Airborne and 6/9 of a Marine division, would be the most advantageous, but that it would require immediate callup of reserve component units at least comparable in size. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the J-5 paper and sent it back for a revision that would indicate more clearly the support forces required for the proposed deployments and would stress the impact on the US world-wide force posture.[10]

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8. (TS) Msg, JCS 01590 to COMUSMACV, 090021Z Feb 68.
9. (S) Memo for Record, CJCS, "Actions in Southeast Asia," 9 Feb 68. JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).
10. (TS) JCS 2472/226-1, 10 Feb 68; (S) Note to Control Div, "Emergency Reinforcement of COMUSMACV," 10 Feb 68; JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).

Meanwhile COMUSMACV had become more emphatic in his demand for reinforcements. On 9 February 1968, in a long assessment of the enemy's strategy and his own situation, he declared that he "would welcome reinforcements at any time they can be made available." Even a "six-month loan" of reinforcements might "turn the tide to the point where the enemy might see the light or be so weakened that we could return them."[11] Two days later he declared that "additional forces from CONUS would be most helpful in permitting us to rapidly stabilize the current situation."[12]

Such language was not strong enough to sway the Administration. COMUSMACV's message of 9 February was discussed at a meeting at the White House on 11 February, attended by General Wheeler, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Secretary-designate Clifford, and other officials. The interpretation placed on the message by the conferees, as General Wheeler informed COMUSMACV, was that "you could use additional U.S. troop units, but you are not expressing a firm demand for them; in sum, you do not fear defeat if you are not reinforced."[13]

Before General Westmoreland could reply to this message, J-5 completed the revised deployment paper called for by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. J-5 recommended that measures be taken at once to prepare the 82d Airborne and 6/9 Marine division for possible deployment, but that the decision on sending these units be deferred temporarily. Meanwhile, according to J-5, reserve units suitable for replacement should be called up and legislation should be sought to authorize recall of individual reservists and to extend terms of service for active duty personnel. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved this paper on 11 February and sent their conclusions to Secretary McNamara the following day.[14]

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11. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01858 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 091633Z Feb 68. JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).
12. (TS-NOFORN) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01924 to CJCS, 110308Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.
13. (S) Msg, JCS 1695 to COMUSMACV, 120108Z Feb 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.
14. (TS) JCS 2472/226-2, 11 Feb 68; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-91-68 to SecDef, 12 Feb 68; JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68) sec 2.

Early on 12 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff finally received from General Westmoreland an unequivocal statement that he "desperately" needed reinforcements to enable him to hold the northern I CTZ without endangering other areas. He pointed out that he was 25,000 short of the ceiling of 525,000 men that had been authorized for South Vietnam. "I need these 525,000 troops now," he declared. He urged immediate deployment of a Marine regiment package and a brigade package of the 82d Airborne, with the remaining elements of these units to be sent later. "Time is of the essence," he declared. He asked that the Secretary of Defense and the President be informed of his views, in which Ambassador Bunker had concurred.[15] In a further communication, General Westmoreland addressed himself to General Wheeler's account of the 11 February White House meeting:

> I am expressing a firm request for additional troops, not because I fear defeat if I am not reinforced, but because I do not feel that I can fully grasp the initiative from the recently reinforced enemy without them.[16]

Meeting at 0930 on 12 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the new and urgent appeal from General Westmoreland. They agreed to reconvene that afternoon, at which time the Army and Marine Corps would provide information on the impact of deployments to South Vietnam and on the minimum levels of reserve mobilization required.

Before this subsequent meeting could be held, however, General Wheeler was unexpectedly summoned to the White House. There the President announced that he had decided to approve COMUSMACV's request, that is, to deploy at once a brigade of the 82d Airborne and a Marine RLT. At 1600 that afternoon General Wheeler informed his colleagues of this decision, at the same time directing the Joint Staff to prepare a study of the necessary reserve mobilization and legislative actions.[17]

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15. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and CJCS, 120612Z Feb 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

16. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 02018 to CJCS, 121823Z Feb 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

17. (S) Note to Control Div, "Deployments to SVN," 12 Feb 68, JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).

The resulting report from J-5, submitted on 13 February and approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff the same day, indicated that the emergency reinforcement of MACV would require mobilization of the following reserve units: two Army infantry brigades; one Marine regiment; one composite Marine group; and two Navy mobile construction battalions. A total of 46,300 reservists would have to be called immediately to active duty, and 137,000 more should be placed in readiness for probable mobilization.[18]

Concurrently, Secretary McNamara asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study four possible courses of action consequent upon the emergency deployments to South Vietnam. These were as follows:

a. To defer any additional actions pending receipt of further information from CONUSMACV.

b. To mobilize 40,000 reservists (which could be done without legislative action).

c. To call up either 40,000 or 130,000 reservists, and at the same time to ask Congress to authorize additional personnel actions to strengthen the Armed Forces.

d. In addition to Course c, to submit supplemental appropriation requests for legislative approval.

On 15 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that further reinforcements to South Vietnam should be deferred until General Westmoreland asked for them, but they did not consent to delay in the mobilization of reserve units. They again recommended immediate call-up of 46,300 men and an immediate request for authority to call individual reservists and to extend terms of service. They also urged prompt action to obtain financial authorization to support these recommendations.[19]

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18. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/231, 13 Feb 68; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-96-68 to SecDef, same date; JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).

19. (TS) JCS 2472/234, 14 Feb 68; (TS) JCSM-99-68 to SecDef, 15 Feb 68; JMF 911/384 (13 Feb 68).

The President, however, tended to favor one of Mr. McNamara's more moderate alternatives. On 16 February Mr. Walt Rostow informed General Wheeler that, while no decision had been made, Mr. Johnson was considering a call-up of 40,000 reservists in units plus a request to Congress for the necessary appropriations, but with no further action for the moment. Reporting this development to his colleagues, General Wheeler directed the Joint Staff to study further actions to improve the US posture in Southeast Asia, indicating the rationale for the recommendation for authority to extend terms of service and to call up individual reservists.[20]

Three days earlier, on 13 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed the deployment to South Vietnam by air of one airborne brigade task force of the 82d Airborne Division (at a strength of approximately 4,000) and one Marine regiment (reinforced) from the Fifth Marine Division, about 5,200 men. Both were to be deployed on a temporary basis.[21] These orders were carried out swiftly. The 27th Marine Regimental Landing Team arrived at Da Nang on 17 February 1968. Four days later the Third Brigade, 82d Airborne, reached Chu Lai.[22]

Strategy Debated

Apart from COMUSMACV's need for immediate reinforcements, a case could be made for a larger overall force in SVN to carry out the US long-range strategy there. On 8 February 1968 General Westmoreland had informed General Wheeler that his staff was restudying requirements, on the assumption that the 525,000 ceiling in Program 5 would be lifted. A preliminary estimate of additional requirements included an additional US infantry division and the ROK Light Infantry Division already under discussion, plus additional helicopter and

20. (TS) CM-2976-68 to CSA et al., 16 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-Up and Call-Up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

21. (S) Msgs, JCS 9926 to CSA et al., 130218Z Feb 68, and JCS 9929 to CMC et al., 130341Z Feb 68; JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68) sec 2.

22. (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 242.

airlift units and more ships for the Mobile Riverine Force.[23] General Wheeler, in reply, asked COMUSMACV to withhold his estimate of his requirements at least until the next month. He feared that the effort to meet emergency needs might be jeopardized by introducing the subject of long-range requirements at that time.[24]

It could be foreseen that any effort to stretch the 525,000 ceiling on MACV forces would spawn a host of political difficulties for the Administration. Even before the Tet offensive, there was some evidence that public support for the Vietnam war was wavering. Ostensibly, President Johnson's political position seemed reasonably secure. A trial heat of Presidential aspirants conducted in mid-January by the New York Times showed that Mr. Johnson led all potential opponents. Furthermore, a Gallup poll published on 28 January indicated the President had widened his lead over Senator McCarthy from 3-1 to 4-1; 57 percent of Democrats listed themselves as "hawks," only 27 percent as "doves." Among the public at large, approval for the President's overall performance had risen in three months from 38 percent to 48 percent. The vital ingredient in this improvement was optimism concerning Vietnam; 50 percent of those polled believed the United States was making good progress in the war.[25]

But further evidence demonstrated that Mr. Johnson actually stood atop a shaky pyramid. Thus although the AFL/CIO convention in December 1967 gave overwhelming endorsement to the President's war policy, a Gallup poll taken during that same month showed that union families approved Mr. Johnson's handling of the war by only 47 percent to 43 percent. More significantly, the same poll indicated that nearly half of all voters--49 percent--actually disapproved, as against 39 percent who approved.[26]

This dangerous cleavage in public opinion was broadened by the news of the Tet offensive. True, the initial public response appeared to be one of unity and resolution. A

23. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01812 to CJCS, 081557Z Feb 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.
24. (TS) Msg, JCS 01589 to COMUSMACV, 090020Z Feb 68. OCJCS F81e 091 Vietnam Feb 68.
25. N.Y. Times, 21 Jan 68; 29 Jan 68.
26. N.Y. Times, 12 Dec 67, p. 12; 3 Jan 68, p. 3.

Harris poll taken shortly after Tet recorded a rise in war support to 74 percent, as compared with 61 percent in December. Similarly, the Gallup survey reported that "hawks" now outnumbered "doves" by 61-23 percent. But at the same time, Gallup found that support for the President's conduct of the war had fallen to 35 percent and approval of his overall performance to 41 percent.

Even clearer was the shock of the Tet offensive in the minds of minds of many of those who might be considered leaders or molders of public opinion. Thus the New York Times declared that "the facts of life about the war have finally been made unmistakeably clear to everyone in the United States, from President Johnson on down." Similarly, Senator Robert F. Kennedy proclaimed that events had "finally shattered the mask of official illusion," revealing the impossibility of a military solution.[27]

Against this backdrop, General Wheeler undertook his visit to South Vietnam on 23-25 February, as described in the last chapter. On his return, he brought with him COMUSMACV's new list of requirements. This list called for no less than three additional divisions and 15 tactical fighter squadrons--a total of 206,756 spaces over and above the current ceiling of 525,000 men. General Westmoreland wished the first increment to be deployed by 1 May; it should consist of one mechanized brigade, one armored cavalry regiment, the remaining two regiments of the Fifth Marine Division, and eight tactical fighter squadrons.[28]

For the Administration, this request, which would require large-scale mobilization and additional appropriations, was potential political dynamite. Inevitably, the response was a reexamination of current strategy in Vietnam to see if US objectives could be achieved with a smaller investment of resources. "My report on the situation in South Vietnam and your force requirements touched off an intense discussion of where we stand and where we are going in the war," reported General Wheeler to COMUSMACV on 29 February. The President had turned over COMUSMACV's request to a newly appointed committee headed by the newly designated Secretary of Defense, Mr. Clark Clifford. This committee, which included General

27. NY Times, 4 Feb 68; 9 Feb 68; 13 Feb 68; 14 Feb 68; 18 Feb 68.

28. (TS) JCS 2472/237, 28 Feb 68, JMF 911 (27 Feb 68).

Wheeler among its members, was instructed to render by 4 March 1968 a preliminary report on the military implications of the following five possible courses of action:

1. To honor COMUSMACV's proposal as submitted.

1 A. To do so, but with accompanying stipulations that US forces in SVN would not be employed in Cambodia, Laos (except as already authorized) or North Vietnam, that no further increase in US forces would be contemplated, that the bombing campaign would not be expanded, and that the Port of Haiphong would not be mined or bombed.

2. To maintain forces at the present level of Program 5 (525,000 spaces plus the units deployed during February).

3. To increase the present level by 50,000.

4. To increase it by 100,000.

General Wheeler asked COMUSMACV to consider the feasibility of changes in US political and military objectives and of alternative military strategies that could be implemented with smaller forces than those he had requested.[29]

General Westmoreland replied that, in his opinion, existing objectives in Vietnam were sound. The additional forces that he was seeking were needed to restore flexibility to allied forces, which had been stretched thin by the Tet attacks and the concentration of enemy troops in the northern part of I CTZ. If suitably enlarged, these forces could expand and intensify offensive operations against enemy forces, base areas, and infiltration routes, and could maintain pressure on the enemy in all CTZs in order to hinder his recovery from the effects of his recent defeat. Without reinforcements, it would be necessary to continue to accept a calculated risk in II and III CTZs, which had become "economy of force" areas, and it would be impossible to maintain constantly a division-size force in IV CTZ (as had been done before the Khe Sanh

29. (TS) Msg, JCS 02430 to COMUSMACV, 292339Z Feb 68; (TS) CM-3067-68 to CSA et al., 28 Feb 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68. Other members of the new committee were GEN Maxwell Taylor, Nitze, Warnke, Goulding, Rusk, Katzenbach, Habib, Fowler, and William Bundy.

situation necessitated a northward shift of forces).30

Admiral Sharp endorsed COMUSMACV's troop request, but pointed out that it could not at once affect the situation. He therefore urged a major step-up in the air campaign, to be followed by "a combined amphibious and air mobile campaign against North Vietnam as early as the weather and the current situation permits." On 9 March 1968 Admiral Sharp reported that, in accordance with his instructions, COMUSMACV had submitted plans for an amphibious/airmobile/airborne assault on North Vietnam, to be followed by a swing southward through the DMZ to destroy enemy forces and materiel. CINCPAC requested authority to conduct this operation--DURANGO CITY--on or about 1 June.31

This judgment in favor of an enlarged sphere of military operations was supported by staff studies undertaken within the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In two examinations made at the Chairman's direction, J-5 emphatically endorsed the first of the five options under study by the Clifford Committee. J-5's Southeast Asia Branch concluded that the initiation of a strategic ground offensive in North Vietnam, coupled with the expansion of existing strategic air and naval campaigns, "would hasten the accomplishment of U.S. objectives in South Vietnam and successfully conclude the war." Similarly, the Short Range Branch of J-5 judged that implementation of Option One "will greatly reduce risks to Free World forces in South Vietnam and will accomplish U.S. objectives more rapidly than the forces of the other options." Reviewing this latter paper, the Army Chief of Staff wrote General Wheeler that, while he supported the force levels recommended in Option One, he did not approve the implication that expanded ground operations into Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam would be allowed. "The guidance for consideration of the option did not include a change in basic national objective nor alter political guidance in any way," he pointed out. General Johnson believed that, consequently, the strategy pursued by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV must continue to

30. (TS-NOFORN) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 02951 to CJCS, 020947Z Mar 68; MAC 02956, 021109Z Mar 68; MAC 02962, 021223Z Mar 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010823Z Mar 68, JCS IN 44082. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 032253Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 092348Z Mar 68, JCS IN 62030.

fall within the limits of current political guidance until such time as this directive was altered.[32]

But influential voices within the Administration were raised in opposition to General Westmoreland's request by those who believed the time had come for a major revision in US policy. Thus one study prepared for submission to the President concluded that a 205,000-man augmentation in US troops could be neutralized by a mere 25,000 additional men from North Vietnam and that it was utterly impossible to accomplish current objectives with any level of US forces whatever. The study urged that COMUSMACV be assigned the limited mission of maintaining the security of populated areas while the United States exerted its efforts to build up the GVN and its armed forces to enable them to assume the burden of the war.[33]

Four days later Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge, an architect of US policy in Vietnam who had generally been considered a "hawk," presented somewhat similar conclusions to Secretary Rusk. American public opinion, he pointed out, would tolerate either a short war with high casualties or a long war with few casualties, but not a combination of a lengthy war and a high casualty rate. He believed that military victory through ground action was impossible. Reinforcements should be sent only in numbers sufficient "to enable us to keep faith with our troops in exposed positions." Military operations should aim at splitting up the enemy and keeping him off balance, and emphasis should be placed on "the creation of durable local political institutions under which police-type programs—for 'territorial security'--can operate."[34]

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32. (TS) Rpt by SEA Br, J-5, "Comparison of Two Courses of Action in Vietnam," 29 Feb 68, OCJCS File, VN, SecDef Mtgs, STRATEGIES, Msc. (TS) Rpt by Short Range Br, J-5, "Analysis of COMUSMACV Force Requirements and Alternatives," 1 Mar 68, OCJCS File, Black Book. (TS) Memo, CSA to CJCS, same title, 2 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

33. (TS) Memo for the Pres, "Alternative Strategies in SVN," 1 Mar 68 (labelled "3d draft"; no signature or other identification), OCJCS File, Black Book No. 1. (Filed with other papers relating to the Clifford Committee, and probably prepared somewhere in OSD by, or at the request of, one or more of the civilian members of that Committee).

34. (TS) Memo, Lodge to Rusk, 5 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 68.

On 5 March, Secretary Rusk reviewed a possibility that had been discussed and discarded in mid-1967. In a memorandum to Secretary Clifford, he suggested the President might announce that bombing attacks would henceforth "be limited to those areas which are integrally related to the battlefield." ROLLING THUNDER would continue "presumably as far North as Vinh"; full bombing could resume in the event of either a major attack on Khe Sanh or a second wave of assaults against the cities. The advantage of this course of action was that it "would shift away from the logical debates about words and put the problem on the de facto level of action. If Hanoi took no corresponding military action, the bombing would be resumed."35

Public opinion had been shaken even far more severely than these proposed reappraisals might indicate. Speaking to General Wheeler on 7 March, Secretary Clifford warned the Chairman that "the American public cannot stand another shock such as that administered by the Tet offensive." MACV now must be "conservative in assessments of the situation and enemy capabilities," thus placing the Administration in "a strong public information position." Unless this were done, Clifford believed, Westmoreland's request for major reinforcements "will be made much harder--perhaps impossible--to sell . . . ." In a message to Westmoreland, General Wheeler observed, "I must admit that Secretary Clifford's assessment is shared by me . . . ." In a further communication to COMUSMACV on 8 March, the Chairman stated that "I feel I must tell you frankly that there is strong resistance from all quarters to putting more ground force units in South Vietnam." A call-up of reserves and concomitant actions, he declared, "will raise unshirted hell in many quarters . . . ."36

By mid-March, a Senatorial revolt against further escalation seemed imminent. In the course of an 8 March floor debate Robert Kennedy declared that it had become "immoral and intolerable to continue the way we are." William Fulbright demanded that the President consult Congress before making any further decisions, and announced that the Tonkin Gulf resolution was a "contract based on misrepresentation"

35. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 5 Mar 68, same file.
36. (S) Msg, CJCS to COMUSMACV, JCS 2721, 7 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68. (TS) Msg, CJCS to COMUSMACV, JCS 2767, 8 Mar 68, JMF 911/374 (9 Mar 68).

and therefore "null and void." Senators Lausche (D., Ohio) and Tower (R., Texas) were among the few who spoke on behalf of the Administration. When General Westmoreland's request for 206,000 additional troops became known, the New York Times shrilly denounced such "suicidal escalation": "The time has come to abandon this bankrupt policy. The American people have been pushed beyond the limits of gullibility." A correspondent noted the bitter temper of the times: President Johnson now followed a secret itinerary, appearing mostly at military bases; a poet accepting a literary award casually referred to the Vice President as a man "famous for his lies"; Secretary Rusk said of reporters who questioned official reports of progress in Vietnam, "Whose side are they on?"[37]

Program 6 for COMUSMACV

The cleavage in opinion was reflected in the report submitted to the President by the Clifford Committee on 4 March 1968. The committee recommended the following actions:

1. Immediate deployment of 3 TFS (two Air Force and one Marine) deferred from Program 5.

2. Immediate deployment of an additional 22,000 men, consisting of the 4th Marine Expeditionary Force Minus (18,100 men, consisting of three BLTs, four TFS, and command and support elements), six additional TFS, and one Naval Mobile Construction Battalion. All of these could be deployed by mid-June.

3. A call-up of reserves and other actions necessary to improve the strategic reserve, so that it would be possible later to grant COMUSMACV's full request if the President decided to do so. A total of 262,000 reservists would be required for this purpose, plus increased draft calls and extension of terms of service; taken together, these measures would increase the FY 1969 end strength of the Army Forces by 511,000 men.

37. NY Times, 8 Mar 68; 11 Mar 68.

In other words, General Westmoreland would receive some reinforcements immediately but the decision on his requested addition of 205,000 men would be deferred for the time being. These measures should be accompanied, according to the committee, by an effort to galvanize the ARVN to improve its performance.

The committee noted that even COMUSMACV's full reinforcement plan would provide no truly satisfactory answer to the Vietnam problem. It would "Americanize" the war and might frustrate South Vietnam's political development. The members therefore suggested a "study in depth, to be initiated immediately, of possible new political and strategic guidance for the conduct of US operations in South Vietnam." Such an analysis might conclude that COMUSMACV should not be expected either to destroy or to expel the enemy.

On the question of ROLLING THUNDER, the committee divided. Some members, notably General Wheeler, sought a substantial expansion of targets and authority in and near Hanoi and Haiphong, including the mining of Haiphong harbor, and the extension of SEA DRAGON operations up to a Chinese buffer zone. Other members favored nothing more than a "seasonal step-up" in air operations through the spring.

With regard to negotiating options, however, the committee agreed in doubting that Hanoi would be prepared for a "serious move toward peace" in the near future, except on its own terms. They therefore recommended that the San Antonio formula should remain as the "rock bottom" US negotiating position; any change in terms appeared to be "extremely unwise" at present.[38]

The President did not at once render a formal decision, but it soon became clear that the committee's recommendations regarding deployments would be generally followed. Indeed, there was at first a disposition to allow somewhat larger forces than those proposed by the committee. In a meeting on 8 March 1968, the President agreed to cancel the tentative decision to "civilianize" 12,545 spaces in MACV and thus at

38. (TS) Msg, JCS 02590 to COMUSMACV, 051658Z Mar 68. (TS) "Draft Memorandum Prepared by Special Committee," 4 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

once to raise the approved Program 5 ceiling to 537,545. Moreover, it was agreed that COMUSMACV should receive an additional 30,000 men by 15 June 1968, over and above those in Program 5 and the temporary emergency redeployments sent in February. Reporting these developments to General Westmoreland, General Wheeler submitted a list of available Marine, Air Force, and Navy units that could be deployed by 15 June 1968, asking him to select from them a package of 30,000 men.[39]

The larger force ceiling thus tentatively approved became known as Program 6.[40] It was agreed also that the Army would call up enough reserves to make it possible to provide by 28 July 1968 an Army component for Program 6, including a mechanized infantry brigade and an armored cavalry regiment.[41] Already General Westmoreland had submitted two alternative 30,000-man force packages made up of varying proportions of Army and Marine Corps forces.[42]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out to Secretary Clifford on 15 March 1968 that Program 6 as then drafted did not meet the problem of sustaining the forces to be supported to South Vietnam, nor did it provide support forces for the emergency units deployed in February. Moreover, they again took the opportunity to request authority to call up reserve units and individuals, to extend terms of service, and to enlarge the end strengths of the Services. These steps were needed in order to restore existing active forces to full combat readiness.[43]

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39. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2766 to COMUSMACV, 090045Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

40. (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to JCS, "Southeast Asia Deployments," 14 Mar 68, Encl B to JCS 2339/271, 15 Mar 68, JMF 911/374 (9 Mar 68).

41. (S) Memo, SecA to CSA, no subj, 13 Mar 68, JMF 911/374 (9 Mar 68). (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 02777 to CS MACV, 092243Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

42. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 3385 to CJCS, 111150Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

43. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-159-68 to SecDef, 15 Mar 68, JMF 911/374 (9 Mar 68).

Following further discussion, Program 6 was sharply reduced. General Westmoreland, accepting the impracticability of large-scale reinforcements, reviewed his requirements in the light of the improved situation after the defeat of the Tet offensive and the recovery of the RVNAF. He then cut back his estimated requirements for the immediate future to the following: permanent retention of the two units shipped in February (or their equivalents), the three TFS still due under Program 5, two more TFS, one armored cavalry squadron, and additions to the Navy Mobile Riverine Force. COMUSMACV believed that these reinforcements, with forces already available, would "provide us the means necessary to contain further enemy initiated actions while continuing forward progress in most areas." They would be adequate for any eventuality other than "heavy enemy reinforcements from the north." General Wheeler, in a hurried meeting with General Westmoreland at Clark AFB on 24 March 1968, indicated that these additional forces represented the limit of what the President would grant.[44]

As finally approved in early April, Program 6 established a new troop ceiling of 549,500--an increase of 24,500 over Program 5. Approximately 11,250 of this increase would consist of combat troops; this figure included the reinforcements already sent (the 3d Brigade, 82nd Airborne, to be converted to a separate light infantry brigade, and the 27th Marine RLT, which was to be replaced by an Army mechanized brigade), plus an armored cavalry squadron and two TFS. The remainder consisted of engineer, artillery, and other support units, and constituted COMUSMACV's principal net gain under Program 6.

The new ceiling assumed that the "civilianization" program would go forward as originally planned, starting in September 1968. Other elements of Program 6 included the following: deployment of three TFS authorized under Program 5 but not yet sent; an increase in the B-52 sortie rate from

44. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 4192 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 271333Z Mar 68; (S) Msg, JCS 3449 to COMUSMACV, 280152Z Mar 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 16 Mar - .

1,200 to 1,800 per month for the period March-June 1968 and 1,400 per month thereafter; increases in planned air ordnance consumption and fixed-wing aircraft losses as a result of the higher sortie rates; and increases in projected helicopter losses, based on more recent loss experience as well as the added Program 6 deployments.[45]

The revised Service ceilings under Program 6 were as follows:

Service	Program 5	Program 6 Add-On	Total Program 6
Army	348,896	19,692	368,588
Navy	35,447	1,775	37,222
Air Force	58,977	2,540	61,517
Marine Corps	81,680	493	82,173
Total	525,000	24,500	549,500[46]

The Policy Decision

Announcement of the reserve call-ups requisite for Program 6 could be expected to fuel the flames of controversy raging in Congress and in the press concerning the Vietnam war. Prudence dictated that the announcement should be coupled with a statement indicating how the projected mobilization fitted the Administration's strategy and objectives in Vietnam.

The debate on strategy went on within the Administration. On 12 March 1968 former Secretary of State Dean Acheson conferred with representatives of the White House, CIA, and the Departments of State and Defense. Mr. Acheson likened the situation in Vietnam to that which existed in Korea after July 1951, when the Eighth Army limited its task to strategic

45. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS et al., "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #6," 4 Apr 68, JMF 907/374 (14 Mar 68). (TS) MACV Troop List, OSD Program 6 Add-on, 28 Mar 68, prepared by Pacific Division, J-3; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 16 Mar - . (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5766 to CINCPAC et al., 061701Z Apr 68.

46. (S) Troop List, Program 6 Add-On Forces, SVN, Encl A to (S-GP 3) MJCS 197-68, 10 May 68, JMF 907/374 (14 Mar 68).

defense. The implication was that US forces in South Vietnam should go on the defensive. Major General DePuy rejected this suggestion, arguing that it was "illusory to suggest that there was some brand new, more clever way to fight in Vietnam." He believed that he succeeded in dissuading Mr. Acheson to some extent. An extremely pessimistic view was expressed by Mr. Richard C. Steadman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) for East Asia and Pacific Affairs; he judged the situation "utterly hopeless," and believed that the only solution was "to cut our losses, go on the defensive and seek the earliest possible way out." Mr. Acheson was "unprepared to accept this point of view," pointing out that "if we do make a decision in Washington that the situation is hopeless, it then automatically becomes a fact."[47]

At this juncture, a sudden financial crisis was added to the Administration's troubles. On 13 March the London gold market suspended trading amid intense speculation. The international monetary system seemingly stood on the brink of collapse, a victim of the Vietnam war and of Congress' refusal to approve a tax increase. The President had presented a $186,000,000,000 budget, in which expenditures for Vietnam totaled $25,700,000,000. Of the $2,900,000,000 increase in a $79,800,000,000 defense budget, $1,300,000,000 was directly attributable to the war. Accordingly, Tom Wicker in the New York Times ascribed the monetary crisis to "Guns, Butter and Folly"; in his opinion, fulfillment of Westmoreland's request had become "an economic impossibility."[48] Indeed, General Wheeler wrote COMUSMACV on 16 March that the fiscal crisis and the troop deployment issue together had "placed the Government in as difficult a situation as I have seen in the past five

47. (TS-GP 1) SACSA M-185-68 to CJCS, 13 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68. The strategic debate within the Administration after the Tet offensive is imperfectly documented in available records, but has since been described in various press accounts. Two noteworthy examples are in the Washington Post, 9 Feb 69, p. 1, and the NY Times, 6-7 Mar 69, p. 1. The Times story is longer and more detailed, but both generally accord with such documentary evidence as is available. It is apparent that both were based on extensive interviews with cognizant officials (most of them doubtless civilians, inasmuch as some animus toward the military viewpoint appears). Both emphasize that a major role in leading the President toward his final decision was played by Secretary Clifford, whose own position changed from "hawk" to "dove" as a result of the Tet offensive and COMUSMACV's request for reinforcements.

48. NY Times, 17 Jan 68; 17 Mar 68.

years"; he further cautioned Westmoreland not to reveal to anyone that the situation "is as serious as I think it is."[49]

Following an emergency conference in Washington, the US and six nations of Western Europe agreed to uphold the gold price of $35 per ounce among central banks while permitting private markets to fluctuate freely. The immediate problem thus was resolved; the larger causes from which it sprang--taxes, budgets and deficits--had still to be settled.

Simultaneously came the New Hampshire Presidential primary, held on 12 March, in which Senator McCarthy won an astonishing 42 percent of the Democratic vote, against 49 percent for President Johnson. Observers had believed that a McCarthy vote of only 25 percent would severely damage the President's standing. What, then, did the results signify? One pre-election survey showed that more than half the Democrats polled were ignorant of Senator McCarthy's Vietnam position; indeed, the more voters became aware of his opposition to the war, the less likely they were to support him. Whatever the reasons, a large section of the party obviously had lost confidence in Mr. Johnson. On 16 March, Senator Kennedy decided also to seek the Presidency, saying that the "disastrous divisive policies" pursued in Vietnam could be altered "only by changing the men who are now making them."

By the end of March, the Harris poll found that basic war support had declined in six weeks from 74 to 54 percent; dispatch of a further 100,000 troops was disapproved 52 percent to 31 percent. Likewise, the Gallup poll showed that approval for the President's overall performance fell in March from 41 to 36 percent; his positive Vietnam rating lessened from 32 to 26 percent. According to Gallup's findings, Vietnam discontent had become the majority sentiment among all parties, classes and regions. Republicans disapproved the Johnson policy, 74 percent against, 18 percent for; Democrats by 51 versus 37 percent. Although continuation of the bombing campaign was favored 51 to 40 percent, a clear majority stood ready to approve cessation if the government so decided. [50]

At mid-month, the outcome of the debate within the Administration seemed highly uncertain. On 16 March General Wheeler informed CINCPAC that, although there was little hope for approval of the mining of the Haiphong port approaches, the long-standing JCS request to reduce the Hanoi and Haiphong control

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49. (S) Msg, JCS 03024 to COMUSMACV, 162045Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 16 Mar- .

50. NY Times, 15 Mar 68; 17 Mar 68; 29 Mar 68; 31 Mar 68; 3 Apr 68.

areas to 3 and 1.5 nm respectively "appears to stand a good chance of approval."[51] Simultaneously the Department of State asked Ambassador Bunker's opinion of proposals that the United States discontinue or sharply limit the bombing campaign. The Ambassador replied that these proposals were most unwise; they would raise doubts about US intentions, feed the latent anti-Americanism that the Viet Cong were exploiting, and endanger the "new mood of unity and anti-Communism" in the country.[52]

A key development in the progress toward a decision within the Administration was a meeting of the President's Senior Informal Advisory Group on 25-26 March. Members of the group included Dean Acheson, George Ball, Arthur Dean, McGeorge Bundy, Cyrus Vance, and Douglas Dillon and Generals Ridgway, Taylor, and Bradley. On 25 March the group met at the State Department for a series of briefings. The meeting was also attended by a number of high government officials. General DePuy (SACSA) described the military situation in SVN and Mr. George Carver, of CIA, the state of internal security in that country. Mr. Phil Habib, of the Department of State, discussed South Vietnam's political situation, while Mr. William Bundy, of the same Department, appraised the prospects for negotiations.[53]

On the following day the members met with the President, in a meeting attended by General Wheeler. Reportedly they advised Mr. Johnson to reject any idea of military escalation and urged him instead to intensify efforts to reach a political solution. Since this verdict represented a reversal of opinion for most of the members of the group, its impact upon the President must have been striking.[54]

This advice presumably played a role in the President's decision to restrict sharply the number of reinforcements granted COMUSMACV under Program 6. Events soon showed that the President had decided also to adopt the other part of

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51. (TS) Msg, JCS 03023 to CINCPAC, 161657Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68.

52. (TS) Msgs, State 131732 to Saigon, 16 Mar 68; Saigon 22548 to State, 20 Mar 68.

53. (UNK) "Schedule and Participants in Special Meetings," undated, OCJCS File, 091 Vietnam Troop Build-up and Call-up, 16 Mar - (filed under date 25 Mar 68); (TS) Interv, Robert J. Watson with BGEN Robert N. Ginsburgh, Chairman's Staff Group, 24 Jan 69.

54. Washington Post, 9 Feb 69, p. A 16; NY Times, 7 Mar 69, p. 14 (The Post story erroneously dates the two-day meeting a week early, i.e., 18-19 March.)

the group's recommendation: a new initiative for peace, which would involve a sharp cutback in US air operations. He revealed this decision to Congressional leaders before announcing it to his military advisors. Not until 29 March 1968, in a meeting with Secretary Clifford, did the Joint Chiefs of Staff learn that the curtailment of bombing was under consideration. On the following day, at a White House meeting, they learned of the decision.[55]

As the President described his plan, he would make a public announcement that additional men would be sent to Vietnam, but would couple it with a new effort to break the diplomatic deadlock and to move Hanoi toward negotiations. A sharp restriction on the bombing campaign would be an essential part of the President's peace move. As General Wheeler later explained to Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland, the President based his decision on the following considerations:

1. Public support for the war had decreased alarmingly since the Tet offensive.

2. Weather over North Vietnam would be unfavorable for air operations during the next 30 days.

3. Announcement of a US peace initiative might reverse the growth of domestic dissent and opposition, and would aid in countering foreign criticism.

4. President Thieu of South Vietnam had been consulted and agreed to the limitation of bombing.[56]

The President's Speech of 31 March 1968

Addressing the nation on 31 March 1968, President Johnson proclaimed to all the world his willingness "to move immediately toward peace through negotiations." As a step

55. Senators Mansfield and Russel were privy to the decision at least by 27 Mar 68. (U) Congressional Record, vol 114, 2 Apr 68, pp. 3776-3777. (S) Msg, JCS 3583 to CINCPAC, 011951Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

56. (S) Msg, JCS 3583 to CINCPAC, 011951Z Apr 68. (TS) Msg, JCS 3561 to CINCPAC et al., 310232Z Mar 68; (S) Msg, JCS 3564 to COMUSMACV, 310304Z Mar 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68.

in that direction, he announced that he was "taking the first step to deescalate the conflict," by unilaterally reducing the level of hostilities:

> Tonight I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam, except in the area north of the demilitarized zone where the continuing enemy buildup directly threatens Allied forward positions and where the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

Mr. Johnson did not delimit the precise area in which attacks would continue. He pointed out, however, that "the area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90 percent of North Vietnam's population and most of its territory." At the same time, he promised that "even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi."

Moving further, the President announced that the United States was "ready to send its representatives to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this ugly war to an end." For this purpose, he designated Ambassador Averell Harriman as his "personal representative for such talks." He called on Ho Chi Minh to "respond positively and favorably" to his overture. At the same time, he made it clear that the US objective in South Vietnam had not been changed. The goal was not, he said, the "annihilation of the enemy," but rather the creation of conditions that would permit the people of South Vietnam "to chart their course free of any outside domination or interference, from us or from anyone else."

The President told his hearers that approximately 11,000 men had been sent to South Vietnam on an emergency basis a few weeks earlier. Now, he continued, support forces totalling 13,500 men would be added over the next five months, in accord with JCS recommendations. Some of these men would be drawn from Reserve units that were to be called up for service. He did not indicate the number of reservists to be mobilized. He estimated that actions taken since the beginning of the year to strengthen US forces in South Vietnam (and also those in Korea), and to build up the RVNAF, would require an additional $2.5 billion in expenditures in the current fiscal year and $2.6 billion in the following year.

The President saved for the end of his speech the most moving and dramatic announcement of all: a renunciation of any further political ambitions, in order to advance the cause of national unity and to put an end to the ugly spirit of divisiveness that was developing in the nation. As he expressed his decision:

> What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people.
>
> Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year. . . .
>
> Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.57

Events were soon to show that the President's speech gave a new turn to the war. A diplomatic struggle opened, paralleling the conflict of armies and guerrillas in the cities and villages of South Vietnam. The experience of Korea made it safe to predict that the communists would show themselves as tenacious at the conference table as on the battlefield.

57. Text of President's address of 31 Mar 68 in Dept of State Bulletin, LVIII (15 Apr 68), pp. 481-486.

Chapter 50

DE-ESCALATION AND THE QUEST FOR TALKS

Implementation of the Bombing Restrictions

Upon receiving the President's order on the evening of 30 March to limit the bombing of NVN to the area south of the 20th parallel, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff went immediately to his office to dispatch the brief "execute" order to CINCPAC.[1] General Wheeler directed Admiral Sharp to discontinue all air strikes against NVN north of the 20th parallel beginning at 0800, 1 April, Saigon time, or 1900, 31 March, Washington time (two hours before the beginning of the President's nation-wide address). Photo and visual reconnaissance was still permitted beyond the 20th parallel, but it could no longer be given an armed escort.[2] This restriction against escorted reconnaissance flights did not apply to the Gulf of Tonkin beyond the twelve nautical mile territorial limit claimed by NVN.[3]

In a subsequent message to Admiral Sharp, General Wheeler defined the reduced objective of the curtailed ROLLING THUNDER program as "the maximum destruction and disruption of NVN support of their combat forces." To this end, air strikes in the area below the 20th parallel were to be conducted against military targets related to the movement of troops and supplies, as well as against any enemy activity that posed a threat to friendly forces. The long-standing prohibition against attacks on targets located in populated areas, however, remained in effect.[4]

Reflecting upon the military consequences of the President's unilateral deescalatory measure, the Chairman concluded that these were negligible, at least for the next thirty days. The weather over the northern portion of NVN would continue to be unsuitable for air operations throughout the month of April, so this was not a bad time for such a cessation.[5]

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1. (TS) Msg, JCS 3583 to CINCPAC, 1 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).
2. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5145 to CINCPAC, 31 Mar 68.
3. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5183 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 1 Apr 68.
4. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 5291 to CINCPAC, 2 Apr 68.
5. (TS) Msg, JCS 3561 to CINCPAC *et al.*, 31 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).

Within minutes after transmitting his orders to CINCPAC limiting operations in NVN, General Wheeler sent another message to COMUSMACV conveying the President's instructions for operations in SVN. Here, there was to be no change. General Westmoreland's efforts to regain the initiative after the Tet offensive were to continue unabated, including his planned Operation PEGASUS which was designed to eliminate the remaining threat to Khe Sanh, and which was scheduled to begin on 31 March, the same day the bombing restrictions were to take effect.[6] These instructions were in keeping with the President's intention to assume a strong fight-and-talk posture for any negotiations that might materialize with NVN.

Replying to General Wheeler's order to restrict air operations, Admiral Sharp revealed some chagrin at the short notice he had been given:

> Again I have been caught completely unaware of an impending major change of policy on the air war . . . . Frankly I simply cannot understand why I am not forewarned of the possibility of such important decisions . . . . In summation, I have not been kept informed . . . . If this results from decision by higher authority then I suggest revision of this policy be urgently requested.[7]

Admiral Sharp was also concerned because the President's decision contravened his repeated recommendations that ROLLING THUNDER be expanded as the weather over NVN improved. Had these recommendations been given any consideration? Another question in his mind was whether or not the thirty-day figure mentioned by General Wheeler, in his assessment of the consequences of the restriction, was intended to indicate the actual duration of the bombing curb.[8]

General Wheeler replied that he had informed Admiral Sharp of the President's decision as soon as he had received it himself. He went on to assure him that he and the Service

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6. (S) Msg, JCS 3564 to COMUSMACV, 31 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (14-31 Mar 68). For a description of Operation PEGASUS see Ch. .

7. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 010315Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).

8. Ibid.

Chiefs had not only given serious attention to his ROLLING THUNDER recommendations but had approved them and intended to seek approval of higher authority as soon as events would permit. With regard to the duration of the restrictions, the Chairman could not be certain when they would be lifted, if at all. Hanoi's response to the President's peace overture, if and when it came, would have a major influence on this matter.[9]

At the conclusion of this message, General Wheeler touched on the fact that the President, in his speech, had not specified the exact line of demarcation for the bombing limitation. He had said, instead, that all attacks would be ended "except in the area north of the demilitarized zone where the continuing enemy buildup directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movement of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat." According to General Wheeler, the President had in mind as the line of demarcation the 20th parallel that was mentioned in the "execute" order, but had left it out of his speech in order to keep valuable information from the enemy.[10]

There is some evidence, however, that on 31 March the President revealed the exact dimensions of the bombing curb to several governments, including that of the Soviet Union. Ambassador Harriman, whom the President appointed to handle any talks that might materialize with the North Vietnamese, referred to the President's disclosure in a discussion with the Swiss Ambassador on 4 April. Still later, in a conversation in Paris on 27 May with Ambassador Zorin, he said that President Johnson had "explained to Dobrynin on March 31st that the 20th parallel would be the limit of the bombing . . . ."[11]

Assuming that Ambassador Harriman was accurately informed, it may be that the President was not as concerned with keeping the demarcation line a secret from Hanoi as he was with not committing the United States to it publicly. This tactic would allow the President a certain degree of flexibility in the bombing of NVN. Should the North Vietnamese attempt to use the area beyond the 20th parallel as a sanctuary, the President would be in a position to thwart their actions without arousing great public criticism.

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9. (TS) Msg, JCS 3583 to CINCPAC, 1 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).

10. Ibid.

11. (S) Dept of State, Memo of Conversation, "Swiss Offer Geneva as a Site for Peace Talks," 4 Apr 68, OCJCS File CROCODILE Outgoing, 1-30 Apr 68. (S) Msg, Paris 14827, DELTO 176 to SecState, 27 May 68, OCJCS File Viet/Paris Mission, May 68.

Unfortunately the President's public vagueness on the exact limitations of the bombing curb misled many of his critics into thinking that it was much closer to the DMZ than the 20th parallel and thus a greater concession than was actually the case. Senator Fulbright, who had not been taken into the President's confidence prior to the delivery of the speech, was among these. He had called the President immediately after the speech to congratulate him on the move and the next day enthusiastically joined his like-minded colleagues on the Senate floor to praise the President for his major unilateral concession in behalf of peace.[12]

The President's critics, however, did not labor very long in their exaggerated conception of the magnitude of the bombing curb. At the very moment the Senate was praising the President for his actions on 1 April, a UPI news release from Saigon had reported a US air strike against the city of Thanh Hoa which was located more than two hundred miles north of the DMZ. In disbelief Senator Fulbright sought verification of the strike and on the following day, 2 April, ruefully observed in the Senate that he had been mistaken about the magnitude of the President's gesture and of its significance as a move towards peace. "I thought," said Fulbright, "he would in a significant way stop the bombing in an effort to stop the war." Instead, it was a "very limited step" and one "not calculated to bring a response from North Vietnam." Senator Mansfield, who had been busy at his desk plotting the position of Thanh Hoa on a map, rose to the defense of the President. Here, for the first time, Senator Mansfield publicly revealed the 20th parallel as being the demarcation line for the bombing that President Johnson had in mind when he announced the bombing curb, and pointed out that Thanh Hoa was within the prescribed area. The President's language could have been clearer, Mansfield admitted, but its vagueness stemmed from his wish to avoid giving the enemy a clear sanctuary and not from a desire to deceive his critics. Mansfield went on to say that while he had personally preferred a greater restriction on the bombing than the President had ordered it was nevertheless a substantial concession and a serious bid for a negotiated peace.[13]

12. NY Times, 3 Apr 68, pp. 1 and 14.
13. Ibid.

The long Senate debate over the extent and significance of the President's bombing limitation touched off such a furor that the Administration felt constrained to offer an immediate clarification. Thus, while Senator Mansfield was trying to enlighten his Congressional colleagues, the President closeted himself with his advisors at the White House in order to work out an official statement for the general public. At 1650 EST, just as the Senate debate was drawing to a close, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs released the statement. Quoting the President's speech at some length, Mr. Goulding announced that while attacks had been halted in an area of NVN containing almost 90 percent of its population and three fourths of its land, "attacks are continuing in the remaining southern quarter of NVN--from the twentieth parallel just north of Thanh Hoa, south to the DMZ, the area in which, in the President's words, 'the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to the threat against allied foward positions.'" Pursuant to the President's purpose, bombing since 31 March had been directed "primarily against targets in the southernmost areas of the panhandle. Ninety percent of the sorties have been within 60 miles of the DMZ while only 2.3 percent were against targets in the Thanh Hoa area."[14]

About the same time Mr. Goulding was making this statement, General Wheeler had sent a message to CINCPAC directing a forty-eight hour postponement of a strike against the Thanh Hoa bridge--which had been scheduled for the following day, 3 April. In addition, he suggested that responsible commanders "maintain a close control over strike sorties over the next week or so to the end that our weight of effort favors the southern portions of the authorized strike area in North Vietnam." This was not to be construed, however, as preventing strikes against lucrative targets throughout the zone involving supplies and men moving toward the DMZ or into Laos.[15]

If it was difficult for the President to convince his critics that his curb on the bombing of NVN was a genuine deescalatory gesture, how could he answer the charge that the expanding operations in conjunction with Operation PEGASUS in SVN were designed to offset it? The President spoke with General Wheeler about his problem on the eve of his 31 March speech. The President wanted to avoid this customary charge and yet did not wish to interfere with General Westmoreland's

14. (U) Msg, DEF 5321 to CINCPAC et al., 2 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).
15. (S) Msg, JCS 3652 to CINCPAC, 2 Apr 68, same file.

actions in any way. Recognizing the impossibility of concealing the extent of these actions in the presence of more than six hundred reporters in SVN alone, General Wheeler could suggest only that General Westmoreland be instructed not to modify his plans, but to try to "play them in low key." Every effort, in other words, should be made by COMUSMACV to describe Operation PEGASUS and related actions as the usual run of offensive operations against the enemy in order to provoke as little adverse criticism as possible.[16]

Hanoi's Positive Response: Further Restrictions on Military Operations

Throughout 1 and 2 April the Administration essentially was preoccupied with its critics. There was no word from Hanoi until the morning of 3 April, when Radio Hanoi relayed the North Vietnamese Government's first response to the President's speech. The text of the Hanoi statement followed its usual harsh line, but with one important exception: it was no longer insisting on a complete cessation of the bombing before contacts between the US and NVN were made. Now, as the statement read, "the DRV Government declares its readiness to send its representatives to decide with the U.S. side the unconditional cessation of bombing and all other acts by the United States against the DRV so that talks could begin."[17]

The President seized upon this brief but seemingly promising passage. In a broadcast of his own later that same day, he reiterated his willingness to send representatives "to any forum at any time" to discuss ways in which the war could be brought to an end. "Accordingly," the President went on, "we will establish contact with the representatives of North Viet-Nam."[18]

Previously, when diplomatic feelers had been put out for talks with the North Vietnamese, there had been some instances where coordination between these efforts and military actions in the field was inadequate. (See Ch 40.) This time the

16. (S) Msg, JCS 3564 to COMUSMACV, 31 Mar 68, OCJCS 091 Vietnam (14-31 Mar 68).
17. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," Encl to Memo, ExecSecy, Dept of State to SecDef et al., 6 Apr 68, p. 2 (hereafter cited as "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE"), OCJCS File, CROCODILE, Outgoing (1-30 Apr 68).
18. Ibid.

President was intent upon avoiding any incident, even accidental, that might jeopardize this exchange. To this end, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, ordered, for the time being and until further notice, the discontinuance of all operations north of the 20th parallel over NVN and the Tonkin Gulf.[19] As an added precaution the President directed his military commanders to cease all air strikes and SEA DRAGON operations in NVN above the 19th parallel. In so doing, he stressed the importance of not revealing this new restriction, which if known might weaken the US negotiating position. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, accordingly instructed CINCPAC to hold this directive as closely as possible and to execute it in a manner that would conceal the fact that the discontinuance of operations between the 19th and 20th parallels came from a decision by higher authority. Revealing his displeasure over "leaks" in the past, General Wheeler further suggested that field commanders should adopt the same "no comment" rule for press inquiries regarding operations in NVN that was being followed in Washington.[20]

Something akin to what the President had feared actually occurred on the very day these precautionary measures were ordered. Hanoi Radio on Thursday, 4 April, charged that three waves of US aircraft had bombed populated areas of the Province of Lai Chau, which lay in the northwestern section of NVN along the Laos border many miles north of the 20th parallel. In response to these allegations, the Secretary of Defense ordered the review of all strikes in NVN and Laos to determine if any US or allied aircraft could have been involved. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, after a thorough check of the flights scheduled and/or flown in NVN and Laos, found no evidence to suggest that US aircraft were responsible. The American Embassy in Vientiane had reported that no Laotian planes had attacked NVN, and bad weather in the area inclined the JCS to believe it; still, they were not willing to rule out the possibility that Lao T-28s might have been involved in the Lai Chau attack.[21]

For his part, Prince Souvanna Phouma of Laos denied that his aircraft were responsible for the alleged attack on Lai

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19. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5380 and 5420 to CINCPAC, 3 Apr 68. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5381 and 5491 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 3 and 4 Apr 68.

20. (TS) Msg, JCS 3668 to CINCPAC, 3 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).

21. (S) CM-3189-68 to SecDef, 8 Apr 68, same file.

Chau. It was his guess that Red China had carried out the attack with the aim of ending the US-NVN contacts that they had opposed from the beginning.[22] Choosing to forego any public speculation on the matter, Secretary Clifford merely declared US innocence in the incident in a press conference on 8 April.[23]

The Lai Chau incident, however, did prompt the US to place restrictions on its military operations in Laos. In a message sent out on the day of the Hanoi broadcast, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to discontinue, until further notice, BARREL ROLL air strikes in the ALPHA, BRAVO, and COCO areas of Laos that bordered northwest NVN.[24] BARREL ROLL operations in other areas along the Laos-NVN border above the 19th parallel were still authorized, but had to be conducted under positive forward air control (FAC).[25] These restrictions were in sharp contrast to the level of operations the US had actually intended to carry out in Laos. In fact, Ambassador Sullivan in Vientiane, on the eve of the President's speech, had been instructed to assure Prince Souvanna that air strikes in Laos would be augmented rather than curtailed.[26]

The Administration's fear of any action in NVN that might subject it to a charge of deliberately trying to sabotage the prospective talks soon affected the actions of its allies as well. General Westmoreland had been approached by the Vietnamese Air Force on 12 April about the introduction of its recently acquired F-5 squadron in the air interdiction program north of the DMZ. General Westmoreland, in a cable to General Wheeler, expressed his fear that, while such a step would mean an increase of only six sorties per day, the fact that it would mark the first use of jet aircraft by RVN might give it an escalatory connotation.[27] General Wheeler, after conferring with Secretary Clifford, agreed with General Westmoreland and asked that he take steps to get the VNAF to withdraw its request. "As you

22. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC HWA 1213 to CJCS, 13 Apr 68, same file.
23. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 6
24. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5540 to CINCPAC et al., 4 Apr 68.
25. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5617 to CINCPAC et al., 5 Apr 68; JCS 5686, 6 Apr 68.
26. (TS) Msg, VIENTIANE 5814 to CINCPAC, 12 Apr 68, JCS IN 39897, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).
27. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 4893 to JCS, 12 Apr 68, same file.

no doubt know," he told COMUSMACV, "we are in a real hassle as to the locale of the prospective talks, and one more propaganda advantage placed in the hands of the North Vietnamese could well bring the whole effort to naught . . . a breakdown in talks attributable to us would be a disaster here in the United States."[28]

Some of the precautionary steps ordered by the President after the 3 April exchange with Hanoi had to be reversed or modified shortly thereafter. This was particularly true in the case of reconnaissance, which had been prohibited in NVN above the 20th parallel. The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were especially concerned with the military risks that such a prohibition entailed. They wanted it resumed as early as politically possible and continued throughout the course of any future negotiations. On 6 April, Secretary Clifford and General Wheeler raised the issue at a White House meeting with the President. Their arguments apparently persuaded the Chief Executive, because he ordered the resumption of a slightly reduced reconnaissance program above the 20th parallel on 11 April.[29]

The Search for an Acceptable Talk Site

The "hassle" over the locale for talks that General Wheeler referred to in his 12 April message to General Westmoreland had been going on since the first US-NVN exchange was announced by the President on April 3.

At that time, President Johnson had promised to establish direct contact with NVN representatives regarding specific arrangements for talks. This was done formally through the US Embassy in Vietiane, Laos, where NVN was also represented and where there had been previous diplomatic contacts between the two countries.

In the note that Ambassador Sullivan delivered to his NVN counterpart, the President proposed a meeting at the ambassadorial level in Geneva, beginning 8 April.[30] Geneva, a traditional location for international meetings, could easily

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28. (S) Msg, JCS 4013 to COMUSMACV, 12 Apr 68, same file.
29. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6226 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 11 Apr 68, same file.
30. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 2.

accommodate a large number of diplomats and the world press. It was also in a neutral country. This made it the favorite choice for the US Government.[31] Still, Switzerland was a European nation, and North Vietnam did not have a mission there, which made its acceptance by NVN unlikely. For this reason, the President stated his readiness to consider "any reasonable alternative suggestions" by the DRV.[32]

For the next five days there was no official reply from Hanoi. On April 8, the day the President had proposed for the beginning of talks in Geneva, the NVN Representative in Vientiane delivered Hanoi's brief, formal reply. Hanoi pointedly ignored President Johnson's Geneva proposal, but agreed to meetings at the ambassadorial level, and suggested Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as an appropriate place. If the US was not agreeable to Phnom Penh, then it was open to "another place to be mutually agreed upon." President Johnson publicly acknowledged this message, but made no reference to its content.[33]

In his official reply on 9 April, the President ruled out Phnom Penh on the grounds that the United States did not have there a diplomatic mission, which was necessary to insure secure communications. The President repeated his preference for Geneva, but also proposed four Asian sites as possible alternatives, with the first meeting to take place on 15 April: Vientiane, Rangoon, Djakarta, or New Delhi.[34]

The NVN reply, dated 11 April, countered with a suggestion of Warsaw, with a date of 18 April for the beginning of the talks.[35] This suggestion came as a surprise, since it had been expected that NVN would insist on an Asian site. Warsaw was clearly unacceptable to the US because Poland's assistance to NVN did not qualify it as a neutral in the Vietnam war. But rather than address itself to this second suggestion in private, the United States Government decided to prod Hanoi publicly. Accordingly, the White House issued a comparatively lengthy public statement that went beyond the mere acknowledgement of Hanoi's latest response. "On serious matters of this kind," the statement read, "it is important to conduct talks in a neutral atmosphere, fair to both sides. The selection of an appropriate site in neutral territory, with adequate communications facilities, should be achieved promptly through

31. (TS) Project B, OCJCS File, Viet-Nam Negotiating Book.
32. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 2.
33. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
34. (TS-GP 3) Msg, State 143729 to Vientiane, 9 Apr 68, JCS IN 33785, OCJCS File, CROCODILE Outgoing, (1-30 Apr 68).
35. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 11.

mutual agreement. Those acting in good faith will not seek to make this a matter of propaganda.[36]

Radio Hanoi, in a broadcast on 13 April, bitterly attacked this statement, interpreting it as being irreconcilable with the oft-repeated US pledge to meet anywhere at anytime. Instead of answering Hanoi's suggestion of Warsaw, the United States was announcing conditions for a talk site and suggesting at the same time sites that were "not adequate to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." This, Hanoi concluded, was indicative of the US efforts to deliberately sabotage the talks.[37]

While the North Vietnamese offered no reasons for the inadequacy of the five US proposed sites, US officials speculated that they had rejected most of them out of deference to Communist China. Polish authorities, who had been monitoring the diplomatic and propaganda exchange, concurred in this interpretation. The Poles, on the other hand, sensing US dissatisfaction with Warsaw and reflecting growing pressure on Poland from France, began to mention Paris rather than Warsaw as a possible site.[38]

Paris by this time was also being mentioned unoffically by several other interested governments. On 18 April, a French Foreign Ministry official informed an American diplomat that in the past twenty-four hours there had been indications that the "choice of a site for US-DRV contacts is moving in the direction of Paris." The United States, however, was decidedly cool to Paris as a site for the talks. In view of France's Vietnam policy, it seemed doubtful that France would be impartial. Moreover, given France's general uncooperative attitude toward US policy in Western Europe, the US did not wish to risk giving France any credit for resolving the Vietnam war. Consequently, the United States sought to induce the North Vietnamese to agree on another site. To this end the United States delivered another note to the NVN representative in Vientiane on 18 April, the same day the French approached the US about Paris. It repeated the five previously mentioned sites and added six others in Asia and four in Europe: Colombo, Tokyo, Kabul, Katmandu, Rawalpindi, Kuala Lumpur, Rome, Brussels, Helsinki, and Vienna.[39]

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36. Ibid., p. 12.
37. NY Times, 14 Apr 68, p. 1.
38. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE." p. 26.
39. Ibid., pp. 30-32.

The United States had now offered a list of fifteen possible locations. NVN, however, was quick to charge that none satisfied the two conditions that the US itself had insisted upon. Many of the countries on the list were not neutral, and most had no diplomatic relations with North Vietnam. It thus rejected all of the sites recommended by the US. North Vietnam repeated its preference for Warsaw, and charged the United States with "full responsibility for delaying the talks between the two sides." The United States replied that Warsaw was not acceptable as a site because Poland was a direct contributor to the Vietnamese war.[40]

In subsequent public statements, Secretary Rusk expressed his impatience with NVN's intransigence. Almost three weeks had passed since the President had ordered a restriction on the bombardment of NVN. In this time, the United States had suggested fifteen sites while NVN had offered only two. This record, Rusk felt, showed none of the flexibility indicated in Hanoi's 3 April message. "While the US was businesslike in proposing sites, NVN engage[d] in polemics. . . . meanwhile NVN infiltration continues and is growing in face of US unilateral act of deescalation."[41]

Increasing Enemy Threat and the Question of Expanding ROLLING THUNDER

Secretary Rusk's doubts about NVN's sincerity with regard to the talks had increased with recent reports from the field. Before mid-April enemy-initiated actions had declined sharply. Some observers were inclined to view this as evidence of deescalation on the part of NVN. Others, including the allied military field commanders, believed that the decline resulted from the continuing general allied offensive, which forced the enemy to withdraw to comparatively safe sanctuaries in the border areas of Cambodia and Laos where he could regroup his forces and prepare for another offensive of his own.[42]

Evidence that the enemy was indeed preparing for a new offensive began to mount by mid-April. On 18 April a COMUSMACV intelligence survey of enemy LOCs in the DMZ area revealed a massive enemy effort underway to move large quantities of

40. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
41. Ibid., p. 39.
42. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS et al., 130212Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).

equipment, supplies and personnel into SVN. Truck traffic on the major LOCs in southern Laos and in the area of Route Package I was approaching an all-time high. The repair and improvement of railroads and roads had been accelerated appreciably, and new roads were being built by the enemy in SVN.[43] A broader CINCPAC intelligence survey of the entire panhandle area corroborated COMUSMACV's evaluation. Air reconnaissance had revealed an increased use of both coastal and inland waterways. Water traffic observed in the vicinity of Vinh was heavier than it had been since 1965, and convoys of more than 100 trucks each--ten times the normal average--had been sighted frequently in the panhandle by mid-April.[44]

Air reconnaissance of NVN above the 20th parallel, which had resumed after 11 April, also revealed increased efforts to support a major infiltration of SVN. Photographs taken of Hanoi and Haiphong on 14 and 15 April showed the completed repair and construction of key rail bridges in that vicinity. This included the vital Doumer bypass rail bridge on the Hanoi-Vinh rail line. With the repair of these key rail bridges, traffic between Hanoi and Haiphong and between these cities and the south once again was resumed.[45]

Repair and improvement of NVN port facilities were also underway. On 18 April, reconnaissance of Haiphong harbor revealed the presence of the large Soviet-made suction dredge Zemleses, after a two-year absence. With this vessel, NVN had the capability of clearing Haiphong channel of the accumulated silt that had impeded shipping for the past year.[46]

The repair and construction of military installations, particularly those related to air defense such as MIG bases and SAM sites, were also going on at an alarming pace. Photographs taken on 22 April, for example, detected a large SAM site about five miles southeast of Hanoi in the last stages of construction. This was the second such site discovered in this area in the past two weeks.[47]

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43. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 180508Z Apr 68, JCS IN 50236, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (16-30 Apr 68).
44. (S-GP 2) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 272158Z Apr 68, JCS IN 71044, same file. (S) DIA IB, 29 Apr 68, pp. S-1, 2.
45. (S) DIA IB, 24 Apr 68, p. A-3.
46. (S) DIA IB, 25 Apr 68, p. A-6.
47. (S) DIA IB, 29 Apr 68, p. A-5.

The apparent deadlock over a talk site, coupled with this massive NVN logistical buildup indicating a pending NVA/VC offensive in SVN, prompted General Wheeler on 23 April to direct CINCPAC to make contingency plans for resuming the bombing of NVN beyond the 20th parallel. The plans were to cover three target options, each for a minimum of two days of strikes, and capable of being executed on short notice and with maximum surprise.[48]

By this time, President Johnson was also showing increased concern over the high infiltration rate. The decline in NVA/VC initiated attacks since his 31 March speech was gratifying, but the ever-increasing infiltration of men and supplies into SVN was viewed by the Administration as a clear violation of the "no advantage" conditions of the President's 1967 San Antonio formula. As Secretary of Defense Clifford interpreted the formula, infiltration was not expected to exceed "normal levels." A normal level for personnel had been estimated at around 6,000 men per month. Estimates of the infiltration rate for April, while admittedly "rougher" than usual, ran as high as 20,000--a peak rate for the entire war.[49]

By the Administration's estimate, North Vietnam was taking an intolerable military advantage of the bombing restrictions. Nevertheless, the President did not feel that he could resume the bombing above the 20th parallel, at least not as a first step. The unannounced restriction of the bombings between the 19th and 20th parallels was another matter.

On 28 April, the President indicated to General Wheeler that he was considering the possibility of resuming the bombing between these two parallels, and would probably make a decision on April 30. If he did decide to resume air strikes in this area, he wanted to make certain they would come as a surprise in order to insure maximum destruction. Accordingly, General Wheeler instructed CINCPAC to be prepared to resume strikes in this region in line with the President's suggestions.[50]

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48. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7218 to CINCPAC, 23 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (16-30 Apr 68). See Ch. 52 for a detailed account of the pending NVN/VC offensive.
49. NY Times, 2 May 68, p. 1.
50. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4569 to CINCPAC, 28 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (16-30 Apr 68).

Before reaching a decision, however, the President wanted General Westmoreland's personal assessment of the effects of the bombing restriction on the situation in SVN. Specifically, he wanted to know how the further reduction of the bombing area from the 20th to the 19th parallel had affected infiltration and whether or not, in COMUSMACV's opinion, the line should be returned to the 20th parallel.[51]

General Westmoreland, in his 30 April reply to the President, observed that the bombing restriction enabled the enemy to shift the center of gravity of his logistics from Hanoi southward. The resulting increase in the infiltration of men and supplies into SVN might already have adversely affected the allied combat position. General Westmoreland strongly recommended the resumption of the bombing between the 19th and 20th parallels, immediately and in force: it should be directed particularly at the area of Thanh Hoa, the critical link in the NVA's logistic system.[52]

Despite the apprehensiveness of his field commander over the enemy logistic buildup, the President was apparently still clinging to the hope of reaching an agreement with NVN on a site for talks and did not wish to take any action that might jeopardize this possibility. Thus, the date of 30 April came and passed without a Presidential decision on the bombing. General Wheeler told CINCPAC on 2 May that the question was still being considered.[53]

Agreement on Paris as a Site for Talks

After weeks of fruitless exchanges with the North Vietnamese and third parties, Secretary Rusk had become increasingly pessimistic about the prospect for talks. On the morning of 2 May, he was informed by the US Embassy in Vientiane that Hanoi had rejected the latest US proposal for a meeting in the Gulf of Tonkin on an Indonesian ship, and had indicated that there would be no further communication for "quite some time."[54] Later that day, in an appearance before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Secretary revealed some of his discouragement when he cited NVN infiltration as an

51. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4568 to COMUSMACV, 28 Apr 68, same file

52. Interv. J. F. Schnabel with Mr. Paul Kearney, Admin. Asst. to the CJCS, 9 Jan 68.

53. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7996 to CINCPAC, 2 May 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (16-30 Apr 68).

54. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 68

indication of Hanoi's lack of good faith. He warned that a NVA/VC offensive would measurably set back the possibility of talks.[55]

Only a few hours later, however, the NVN representative in Vientiane unexpectedly delivered another note to Ambassador Sullivan proposing Paris as the site for talks commencing on or about 10 May.[56] The Administration at once decided to accept Hanoi's proposal and so informed its allies. Admittedly, Paris was less than ideal, but it was acceptable for initial talks. If the French Government created difficulties, a change in the site could be arranged for the substantive negotiations to follow.[57]

After obtaining agreement from the allies, President Johnson announced on 3 May that the United States Government accepted Hanoi's proposal to meet in Paris on 10 May. The President spoke of his belief that in Paris the parties would receive fair and impartial treatment. He also expressed hope that this agreement on initial contacts would lead to peace in Southeast Asia, but added a cautionary note for those who might expect too much from the talks: "This is only the first step. There are many, many hazards and difficulties ahead."[58]

55. NY Times, 3 May 68, p. 1
56. "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 70.
57. Ibid., p. 71.
58. "The President's News Conference of May 3, 1968," Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, GPO: Washington, D.C., pp. 741-742.

Chapter 51

STRENGTHENING THE RVNAF

RVNAF Force Levels Before Tet

The US military intervention in Vietnam had begun as an attempt to build up South Vietnam's own forces to enable them to cope with the insurgency. This objective remained high on the list of US goals even after US forces took over the principal burden of the fighting. The attempt to maximize the full military potential of RVN was hindered by a variety of factors: inflationary trends in the economy, shortage of facilities and equipment, lack of competent leaders and instructors, and poor motivation of personnel (reflected in low morale and a high desertion rate). But by the end of 1967, General Westmoreland was able to report that the long US military assistance program for RVN was yielding unmistakable results. The improved quality of the RVNAF was being reflected in better combat performance, both offensively and defensively.[1]

The Combined Campaign Plan for 1968, adopted in November 1967, provided a general division of responsibilities between US and RVN forces. The RVNAF were given primary responsibility for the pacification and security of "National Priority" areas, or those containing a large majority of the population, food producing regions, and vital LOCs. US and FWMA forces assumed primary responsibility for destroying the main VC/NVN armed forces, base areas, and resources. But it was understood that combat conditions would often require overlapping or shifts in responsibilities.[2]

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1. (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, pp. 267, 272, 274; (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History 1967, pp. 184, 197-199.

2. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History 1967, pp. 317-20. (TS) Memo, J-5 to CJCS, "Comparison of Objectives," 1 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68. (S) RVNAFSCS and USMACV, "Combined Campaign Plan 1968," 11 Nov 67, JMF 911/350 (11 Nov 67).

The RVNAF continued to show improvement throughout 1967. In October of that year the United States agreed to support a rise in force levels to 685,739 for FY 1968. The new RVNAF force structure would include:

ARVN	301,468
VNN	16,003
VNMC	7,321
VNAF	16,448
RF	183,546
PF	160,953
Total	685,739

GVN officials planned to support the rise in force levels by lowering the draft age to 19, extending tours of service by one year, and recalling some reservists. During FY 1969, the GVN would expand the draft to include 18-year-olds and would extend tours of service by an additional six months.[3]

In November 1967, General Westmoreland announced that his headquarters was taking further actions to improve the effectiveness of the RVNAF. Efforts were being made to improve their equipment, organization, leadership, training, morale, and management. Additional attention was also to be given to the US advisory effort.[4]

In line with these objectives, he requested delivery of ten items of equipment during 1968 to accelerate the modernization of RVNAF firepower, mobility, and communications. These items included M16 rifles, M79 grenade launchers, M60 machine guns, 81mm mortars, howitzers, trucks, radios, and additional ammunition allocations. Most of these items, including the M16s, were approved for delivery during 1968, but some were held up pending decision on the FY 1969 RVNAF force structure.[5]

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3. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History 1967, pp. 187-90.
4. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 10726 to CJCS, 9 Nov 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 67.
5. (S) Tab C to CM-3116-68 to SecDef, 13 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/137), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

As of 31 December, the total strength of the RVNAF was 643,100, of which 342,900 were allocated to the regular forces and 300,200 to the territorial forces (RF/PF).6

The Tet Offensive and Its Effects

The attack launched by VC/NVA forces on the night of 29-30 January 1968, during the Tet holiday, has been described in Chapter 48. The enemy was largely successful in catching RVNAF forces off guard. Unit commanders had granted leave liberally to their personnel for the holiday occasion. As a result, most units were down to about 40-50 percent of their strength when the enemy struck. Some unit commanders had been careful to keep their on-hand personnel at full combat readiness. In other units, however, officers and men were caught unprepared, doubtless influenced by a subconscious expectation that the enemy would respect the holiday--the most solemnly regarded one in the entire Vietnamese calendar.

Others of the enemy's hopes were destined to disappointment. Intelligence obtained after the attack indicated clearly that the enemy high command had fully expected that ARVN units and personnel would defect in large numbers, or, at the least, would offer only half-hearted resistence. With this expectation in mind, the communists directed the brunt of their attack against the ARVN. But the troops of South Vietnam rose to the occasion. US advisors later reported that, of the 149 ARVN maneuver battalions, 42 had performed exceptionally well during the attack, while only eight were rated poor in performance. Not a single ARVN unit defected to the enemy. In some cases, RVNAF units carried out effective counterattacks even though outnumbered.

For this creditable record, the RVNAF paid a high price in casualties. Approximately 535 ARVN soldiers were killed in action and an additional 1,698 wounded. COMUSMACV reported on 29 February 1968 that the effectiveness of the ARVN had been degraded in all four CTZs. But already the losses were being replaced and ARVN units were approaching their pre-Tet operational status.

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6. (S) Interv, Robert J. Watson and Arthur A. Chapa with CDR Paul F. Abel, USN, Revolutionary Development South Vietnam Branch, Office of SACSA, 3 Feb 69.

The level of hostilities in the urban areas had forced the GVN to supplement ARVN forces with RF/PF units redeployed from the countryside. As a result, some 96 RF companies and 388 PF platoons in II, III, and IV Corps had changed their mission or their location as of 29 February. US advisors reported that RF/PF capabilities had been degraded in 20 of the 44 provinces but felt that the units had performed better than expected. In most cases these units held their positions and fought the enemy forces.

MACV also reported that the performance of the Air Force and the Marine Brigade had been highly effective while that of the Navy had been excellent.

The Tet attacks amplified some problems in the RVNAF that the United States had been attempting to rectify prior to the offensive. Key among these were short-comings in weaponry and transportation. RVNAF forces had been equipped with less sophisticated weapons than those of the enemy, whose modern Russian AK-47 assault rifles, light and heavy machine guns, and antitank and artillery rockets had given him fire superiority. The shortage of transportation facilities had in many cases prevented RVNAF personnel on leave from rejoining their units during the offensive.[7]

On 3 February, General Westmoreland requested that the United States accelerate delivery of the M16 rifles, M60 machine guns and M29 mortars he had requested for the RVNAF prior to the Tet hostilities. He also asked that the RVNAF be provided with additional armored personnel carriers and helicopters.[8]

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7. (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 282. (S-GP 4) MACV, Report-Reassessment of RVNAF Status, as of 29 February 1968, 21 Mar 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68). (S) Msg DCG USARV to CSA, 121200Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (TS) CM-2973-68 to Spec Asst to Pres for National Security Affairs, 13 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam 12-29 Feb 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 20928 to State, 1 Mar 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 894 to State, 16 Jan 69, JCS IN 38225.

8. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01586 to CJCS, 3 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. Tab C to CM-3116-68 to SecDef, 13 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/137), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

Within 24 hours, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed General Westmoreland that his request had been approved. Immediate arrangements were made to accelerate delivery of the requested items.[9]

Immediately following the Tet offensive, the GVN accelerated implementation of its previously planned mobilization efforts. As President Thieu later announced to his countrymen, such action was necessary because, "we must make greater effort and accept more sacrifices . . . the existence of the nation is at stake and this is mainly a Vietnamese responsibility."[10] The government at once began drafting 19-year-olds and announced that 18-year-olds would be drafted in May 1968. Veterans under the age of 33 with less than five years service were informed that they would be recalled to duty, and the length of service of all members of the RVNAF was extended indefinitely. Prior to Tet, the RVNAF had expanded to approximately 631,000 personnel, but mobilization efforts drove RVNAF force levels to a new high of 647,000 by 13 March 1968, just 38,739 short of the 685,739 the United States had agreed to support in FY 1968.[11]

In March, General Westmoreland spoke of building a "self-sustaining RVNAF capable of expanding or contracting its main effort to conform to shifts in the direction of the war."[12] He estimated that the accelerated recruiting drive would swell the RVNAF force structure to 707,000 by September 1968 and to 751,739 by December 1968. If the recruiting momentum continued at the immediate post-Tet level, the RVNAF could be expanded to 779,154 by the end of FY 1969 and to a maximum sustainable strength of 801,215 by the end of FY 1970. He recommended that the United States approve these figures as planning objectives for the years indicated.[13]

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9. (TS) Memo for Record, ASD(I&L) "Actions in Response to MACV Msg on 'Additional Help Required,'" 3 Feb 68; (TS-GP 3) Msg, CJCS 1303 to COMUSMACV, 3 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam 1-12 Feb 68. (S) Tab C to CM-3116-68 to SecDef, 13 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/137), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

10. NY Times, 1 Apr 68, 26.

11. (S) Tab B to CM-3116-68 to SecDef, 13 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/137), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

12. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 06882 to CINCPAC, 9 Mar 68, JCS IN 61553, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam 16-30 Apr 68.

13. Ibid. (S) Tab B to CM-3116-68, 13 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/137), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

General Westmoreland's expressed desire to support the GVN's mobilization efforts and to accelerate and modernize the RVNAF received the full support of Ambassador Bunker. On 11 March, he informed the Secretary of State that it was "most urgent that we get the weapons RVNAF needs over here as expeditiously as possible, in order to maintain the momentum of the GVN's present mobilization efforts." He agreed with General Westmoreland's suggested increase in RVNAF force levels for FY 1969 and advised that the United States encourage the GVN to continue its mobilization efforts "not only to form additional units that are sorely needed and to fill up their ranks, but to deny this manpower to the Viet Cong, who are themselves in desperate need of manpower."[14]

On 19 March, General Wheeler informed the Secretary of Defense that it was important that the United States authorize expansion of the RVNAF force structure beyond the authorized FY 1968 level of 685,739 in order to permit the GVN to fill unit shortages, to sustain the momentum of RVNAF procurement and training programs, and to show US support of the GVN mobilization efforts. He recommended that this be done immediately by authorizing the addition of 31,475 personnel spaces previously authorized for expansion of the RVNAF during FY 1969.[15]

US Presidential Decision to Shift Major Portion of War Effort to GVN

President Johnson's decision to send only a limited number of US reinforcements to South Vietnam after the Tet offensive -- approximately 24,500 instead of the 206,000 requested by General Westmoreland -- has been described in an earlier chapter. In reaching this decision, the President determined to prepare the RVNAF to assume a greater share of the war effort. In his speech to the nation on 31 March 1968, Mr. Johnson applauded the GVN's recent mobilization efforts and stated:

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14. (TS) Msg, Saigon 21733 to State, 11 Mar 68, JCS IN 64635.

15. (S-NOFORN-GP 4) CM-3128-68 to SecDef, 19 Mar 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68). (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 07327 to CINCPAC, 15 Mar 68, JCS IN 72264.

. . . . Our first priority will be to support their effort.

We shall accelerate the re-equipment of South Vietnam's armed forces in order to meet the enemy's increased firepower. And this will enable them progressively to undertake a large share of combat operations against the Communist invaders.[16]

Four days later, General Westmoreland recommended revision of the current practice of distributing M16 rifles to US and RVNAF troops on a 50-50 basis. He asked that the RVNAF be given 75 percent of the available M16s, to capitalize on the high morale and aggressiveness that RVNAF personnel were exhibiting during the post-Tet period. He also recommended that this weapon be provided to the RF/PF forces for the first time. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the request and stipulated that the RVNAF would continue receiving 75 percent of the monthly allocation until they had received all they required.[17]

That same day, the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved the 19 March request by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for 31,475 additional personnel spaces for the RVNAF for FY 1968, raising the authorized ceiling to 717,214. Mr. Nitze further requested that the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, submit to his office certain additional information concerning RVNAF force structure, combat effectiveness, and equipment shortages, together with studies that would justify the 779,154 RVNAF force level that General Westmoreland had recommended for FY 1969.[18]

Long-Range Objectives: Initial JCS Plans

Before the Joint Chiefs of Staff could provide Mr. Nitze with the information he had requested on 4 April, the United States and NVN agreed to the opening of negotiations in Paris. This development had important implications

16. NY Times, 1 Apr 68, 26.
17. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 945 to CSA, 4 Apr 68, JCS IN 23458, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68. (FOUO) COMUSMACV Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 278.
18. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "Increase in FY 1968 RVNAF Force Level (U)," 4 Apr 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

for the RVNAF program. Negotiations might well lead to a "freeze" on force levels and armaments in RVN or to restrictions on postwar US military aid to the GVN. It was therefore important to bring the RVNAF to maximum strength as rapidly as possible.

Realization of these facts shaped the JCS reply to Mr. Nitze. On 15 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told him that the goal should be

> ...to bring the RVNAF to a self-sufficient posture prior to any freeze, and thus create the largest sustainable RVNAF in-being prior to a negotiated settlement.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were thinking in terms of building an RVNAF force structure capable of coping with a "residual internal insurgency threat," but not of defeating a renewed invasion from North Vietnam.

They felt confident that the 801,215 force level could be reached even before the end of FY 1970, the date originally proposed by COMUSMACV. Recognizing that the armor, artillery, transport, construction, engineer, and other special equipment could not arrive in RVN in time to arm new recruits, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested that the new personnel could be armed with available M2 carbines and assigned to existing units as light infantrymen until the equipment could be deployed. The carbines might be provided as an interim weapon until M16s became available. They also recommended that all RVNAF, including RF/PF, be provided with M16s.[19]

This JCS memorandum apparently "crossed" one from the Deputy Secretary of Defense that showed that Mr. Nitze was thinking along the same lines. As he wrote:

> We have embarked upon a course of gradually shifting the burden of the war to GVN forces. We now must support as quickly as possible and to the maximum extent feasible efforts of the GVN to enlarge, improve, and modernize their armed forces.

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19. (S-GP 4) JCSM-233-68 to SecDef, "Accelerated Expansion of the RVNAF (U)," 15 Apr 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

Mr. Nitze recognized that in the course of negotiations the United States and the Government of NVN might agree to a mutual restriction of military operations. Given this possibility, he requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop a comprehensive and feasible plan to reorient the GVN forces to make them self-sufficient in the areas of logistics, airlift, and air/artillery support.[20]

On 17 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Admiral Sharp to develop a plan according to Mr. Nitze's specifications. He was also told that he might "coordinate" his efforts with the RVN JGS on the basis of "strengthening" the RVNAF rather than making it "self-sufficient" so as not to cause undue alarm.[21]

While Admiral Sharp prepared the plan, both he and COMUSMACV expressed their opinions regarding the prospects of a larger role for the RVNAF. They agreed that the RVNAF was not capable of self-sufficiency at the present time and that US units would be needed to provide substantial combat and logistical support, for a time at least.[22]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized that the modernization of the RVNAF would not in itself guarantee that the RVNAF could operate effectively in a combat role. They saw value in testing the ARVN's capabilities in an expanded combat role, but recognized that such tests would not be valid if elite units of the ARVN were used. They felt that the tests should be carried out by COMUSMACV and the JGS without undue political pressure to get the RVNAF to assume greater responsibility too quickly. They also believed that the task of turning over a larger part of the war in RVN to the RVNAF should proceed at a rate to be determined by COMUSMACV, with no "attempt to rush the process or to attempt at this point to draw up firm schedules." In sum,

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20. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (U)," 16 Apr 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 1.

21. (S-NOFORN) Msg, JCS 6703 to CINCPAC, 17 Apr 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

22. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 5388 to CINCPAC, 23 Apr 68; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS 030314Z May 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 68.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw grave risks in a policy that would turn over the main combat role to the RVNAF too rapidly.[23]

On 23 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted the plan requested by Mr. Nitze on 16 April. It was designed to shift the burden of the war gradually to the GVN, completing the process by the end of FY 1973. It assumed that the RVNAF, when enlarged and improved, could successfully cope with the Viet Cong in the absence of large-scale infiltration, but that some US support would continue, especially for the GVN Navy and Air Force.

Under the JCS plan, the RVNAF would be expanded in three increments, or phases. The first phase would go into effect immediately and would run through FY 1968. During this period, the RVNAF would increase to the newly authorized FY 1968 strength of 717,214 and would be provided with modern equipment. The second increment would be implemented during FY 69, when the RVNAF would be further enlarged to 801,215 men, with additional modernization. The final phase would run from the close of FY 1969 through FY 1973. No detailed plans for this period were scheduled, since, as the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out, it was impossible at that time to determine the rate at which the RVNAF could absorb modern equipment. However, they did provide contingency measures for the third phase that allowed the RVNAF to take over equipment in the hands of selected US units if US and NVN forces withdrew from South Vietnam.

As to the ultimate effects of the plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned that:

> the RVNAF, even though expanded and modernized may continue to suffer from important deficiencies, such as training, leadership, and morale, which may limit RVNAF capability to achieve the objectives established for it.

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23. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Discussion Topic for SecDef-JCS meeting, Monday, 29 Apr 68," 26 Apr 68; (TS) J-3 TP 42-68, 29 Apr 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

They added that the plan would require the diversion of equipment from US active and inactive units, with consequent adverse effects on US force readiness.[24]

On 24 May, Mr. Nitze approved the recommendations that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted on 15 April to increase RVNAF strength to 801,215 and to issue M2 carbines and M16 rifles to the RVNAF (including RF/PF). The additional personnel were to be allocated to the RVNAF service and paramilitary forces as follows:

Service	FY 68 Force Levels As of 4 Apr 68	Proposed FY 69 Add-on	FY 69 Total
1. Regular Forces			
Army	321,056	34,079	355,135
Navy	17,178	728	17,906
Air Force	17,198	4,374	21,572
Marine Corps	8,271	629	8,900
Total Regular	363,703	39,810	403,513
2. Paramilitary Forces			
Regional Forces	185,871	32,816	218,687
Popular Forces	167,640	11,375	179,015
Total Paramilitary	353,511	44,191	397,702
Grand Total	717,214	84,001	801,215

But Mr. Nitze withheld approval of funds to support the personnel expansion until he could study the long-range plan submitted the previous day.[25]

The Modernization and Expansion of the RVNAF in Two Phases

After reviewing the JCS long-range plan, Mr. Nitze issued his decision on 25 June 1968. He approved the proposal to expand and modernize the RVNAF during FY 1968 (except for certain portions dealing with the VNN). He

24. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) JCSM-324-68 to SecDef, 23 May 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec IA.

25. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "Accelerated Expansion of RVNAF (U)" (derived from JCS 2472/264-1), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

also approved the proposed FY 1969 force structure for ARVN combat units, for ARVN and VNMC artillery battalions, and for the RF/PF, as well as the planned activation of two VNAF helicopter squadrons. While he did not approve the rest of the plan, he instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review the RVNAF program in two phases. The Phase I plan would concentrate on maximizing the ground combat power of the ARVN, rather than on building a balanced RVNAF. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to indicate the actions that the United States should take to reach this goal, assuming that the United States would continue participating in the war at presently approved levels. The Phase II plan should delineate a program to build a RVNAF force structure capable of coping with an internal insurgency if both NVA and US forces withdrew. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to assume that the GVN would receive any necessary equipment as early as possible and that it would eventually acquire most of the facilities currently being used by US forces. Mr. Nitze asked that a preliminary report on Phase I be submitted to him by 15 August 1968.[26]

While these plans were being prepared, Mr. Nitze and the Joint Chiefs of Staff took steps to carry out the RVNAF expansion and modernization already approved for FY 1968. Owing to Mr. Nitze's decision temporarily to withhold funds, General Westmoreland approved a somewhat lower strength objective than had been authorized in Washington--751,513 instead of 801,215. But the process of mobilization set in motion by the GVN soon outstripped this goal. By the end of June 1968 the RVNAF had reached a strength of 765,050.[27]

The GVN's mobilization efforts were thus outpacing US support. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore recommended that, as an interim measure, the Secretary of Defense authorize the Military Departments to program certain equipment for ARVN combat and combat support units due to

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26. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (U)," 25 Jun 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-2), JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 2.

27. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3920 to CINCPAC, 2 Jul 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4080 to CINCPAC, 5 Jul 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 2. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 19762 to CINCPAC, 9 Jul 68, JCS IN 29587, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 3.

be activated in FY 1969. Additionally, they requested the immediate activation of a number of combat service support elements.[28]

On 30 July, Mr. Nitze approved these requests. He also instructed the Service Secretaries to make every effort to provide support to match the GVN's mobilization efforts and to expedite delivery of the equipment.[29]

In August, for reasons of speed and efficiency, the Secretary of Defense appointed Mr. Richard Steadman, of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, to oversee those actions needed to improve the capabilities and performance of GVN forces. General Wheeler appointed Rear Admiral W. D. Houser, USN, to perform the same task within the OJCS. Mr. Steadman was given the additional responsibility of managing all OSD matters dealing with US support of the RVNAF.[30]

Development of Phase I Plans

The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a preliminary report on Phase I RVNAF improvement and modernization on 29 August and a second and final report on 2 October. Under the plan, the RVNAF strength of 801,215, already approved as a final goal, would be reached in FY 1969. Subsequently, these forces would be modernized by the end of FY 1973, at an approximate cost of $8,028,912,000, 66 percent of which would be for ammunition. The program was designed to "maximize, for the indefinite future, ground combat capabilities within the RVNAF." It was assumed that a balanced RVNAF force structure would not be needed because US forces would continue operating at present levels and would provide such logistic support as port terminal service, airlift, engineer construction, property disposal, and out-of-country maintenance.

28. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 19762 to CINCPAC, 9 Jul 68, JCS IN 29587, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 3. (S-GP 4) JCSM 455-68 to SecDef, 19 Jul 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-4), JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 2.

29. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to SecA et al., "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (U)," 30 Jul 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 3.

30. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 6931 to CINCPAC, 12 Aug 68. Adm Houser was replaced in Nov 68 by BG A.J. Bowley. See CM-3753-68 to SecDef, 5 Nov 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam 1 Nov 68.

Since the plan emphasized ground combat strength, only limited expansion was envisioned for ARVN logistic units and for the VNN and VNAF. Combat elements of the ARVN, including the RF/PF, would be allocated more than 64,000 of the planned increase of 84,001 men, with the rest distributed to the VNN and VNAF. It was anticipated that later, during Phase II, the ARVN would be reduced to allow expansion of the other services.

The JCS schedule called for the Phase I ARVN forces to be trained and ready for activation by the end of the third quarter of FY 1970 and the VNN and the VNAF by the end of the second quarter of FY 1971. The limited expansion envisioned for the VNN would take place during 1969. The entire RVNAF force structure could be modernized by the end of FY 1973, but achievement of Phase I objectives would depend on the ability of the Services to provide equipment on schedule and on the capacity of the RVNAF to absorb and utilize US materiel.[31]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that COMUSMACV believed the RVNAF capable of assuming an increased share of combat operations during FY 1969-70 if the Phase I Plan was implemented. But they reiterated their earlier warning that even after expansion and modernization the RVNAF might not be able to meet their objectives, because of deficiencies in training, morale, and leadership. They warned also that if US forces were withdrawn without adequate guarantees (such as those envisioned in the Manila Communique of 1966), the RVNAF would continue to require support by residual US forces. They stressed that the Phase I plan could not be implemented at the expense of other SEA or non-SEA programs without a further deterioration of an already unsatisfactory US world-wide military posture.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended approval of the Phase I plan along with the necessary additional funding and procurement authority. They also asked that COMUSMACV be given authority to make minor adjustments or revisions

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31. (S-GP 4) JCSM-524-68 to SecDef, 29 Aug 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-7), JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 3. (S-GP 3) JCSM-577-68 to SecDef, 2 Oct 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-9), same file, sec 4A.

in RVNAF force structure as circumstances might require, within Service ceilings and in in-country materiel assets approved for Phase I.

On 23 October, Mr. Nitze approved the Phase I plan with minor alterations in the ammunition levels requested and in the types of small arms to be distributed to RVNAF logistic support units. However, he indicated that the Secretary of Defense would have to request additional funds to acquire Phase I equipment requirements beyond those already programmed for FY 1969, and prepare a study of Phase I costs for FY 1970 to be included in the FY 1970 budget request. Therefore, Mr. Nitze instructed the Service Secretaries to review the net equipment requirements for the FY 1969-70 Phase I program, and to submit their findings to him by 9 November as an addendum budget. Mr. Nitze then authorized General Abrams to make adjustment in the RVNAF force structure within Service ceilings and in in-country, materiel assets approved for Phase I.32

The Phase I plan underwent three modifications in 1968. The first dealt with force levels and was necessitated by the progress of the GVN mobilization program, which surpassed US expectations. On 20 June, President Thieu signed a second General Mobilization Law, which extended the age limit for induction into the RVNAF to 43 from 35 years of age. Men between the ages of 44-50 were made liable for part-time service in civilian defense units.33

By 1 September, RVNAF force levels had risen beyond 811,000. It was expected that they would reach 850,000 by 30 October. On 25 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and Ambassador Bunker had recommended that the authorized strength of the RVNAF be raised to 850,000. They stated that under plans proposed by the GVN, approximately 39,000 of the new personnel would be used to expand the Regional Force structure. This increase would permit the RF to

32. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to SecA et al., "Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces: Improvement and Modernization (U)," 23 Oct 68, Att to JCS 2472/272-15, 25 Oct 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 8. (S-GP 3) JCSM-577-68 to SecDef, 2 Oct 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-9), same file, sec 4A.

33. NY Times, 20 June 68, 4.

extend their coverage of territory and to assume responsibility for RD programs currently undertaken by ARVN forces, which would thus be released for regular ground operations. The rest of the proposed increase (9,785 men) would be assigned to long lead-time training programs, such as those for mechanics, communications-electronics technicians, and airplane pilots, as a first step in preparing the RVNAF for eventual transition to Phase II.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed an uncertainty that the RVNAF would be able to sustain a force level of 850,000 in the long run. However, they felt that even a short-term increase in forces would have its advantages. Not only would it permit expansion of the RF, but it would reduce the supply of manpower available to the enemy.[34]

Mr. Nitze approved the increase in RVNAF force levels to 850,000 on 1 November.[35]

The second and third modifications were minor and dealt with changes in RVNAF equipment requirements. Mr. Nitze approved them on 14 November and 6 December respectively.[36]

Planning for Phase II

The JCS plan for the second phase of RVNAF modernization, submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 15 November 1968, was intended to provide a force capable of coping with a "residual" insurgency threat after US, FW, and NVA forces had been withdrawn. Such a threat was defined as one involving up to 130 VC maneuver battalions (possibly including some NVA fillers), capable of regimental-size combat operations on a scale approximating that of 1964-1965. To meet this contingency, the plan

34. (S-GP 3) Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (Force Structure Increase) (U)," 23 Oct 68, on JCS 2472-14; (S-GP 4) JCSM-633-68 to SecDef, 25 Oct 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-15), JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 8.

35. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to SecA et al., "Increase in RVNAF Force Structure (U)," 1 Nov 68, Att to JCS 2472/272-16, same file, same sec.

36. (C-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5528 to CINCPAC and CSA, 14 Nov 68. (C-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7087 to CNO and CINCPAC, 6 Dec 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 9.

envisioned a balanced, self-sufficient RVNAF, to be achieved by adding air, naval, and logistic units to the strong ground forces that would be established in Phase I. The ultimate force structure, while not "optimum," was "considered reasonably attainable by the Government of Vietnam."

The plan would go into execution at the start of FY 1970 and would be completed by the close of FY 1974. Priority would be given the ARVN, which would be completed by the end of FY 1971. The VNN would be scheduled for completion (with minor exceptions) by the end of FY 1973 and the VNAF during the following year. The estimated cost of the plan was $3.1 billion, of which about 82 percent would be for ammunition. The transition from Phase I would be assisted by the long-term training programs undertaken under the recently approved modification of Phase I.

A "key factor" in executing the plan, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the availability of equipment. Materiel requirements could be met either through additional procurement action or by turnover of equipment from US units being deactivated or redeployed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred the former alternative, since proposals for transfer of equipment to the RVNAF were still under study in MACV. In any event, additional funds would be needed. Any attempt to absorb the costs of the plan by reducing other programs, warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "would seriously erode the already inadequate capability of US military forces to respond to possible contingencies."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff took the opportunity to warn against premature withdrawal of US and FWMA forces, pointing out that their Phase II plan would not enable the RVNAF to cope with large NVA forces. They noted also that, even after the conditions of the Manila Communique were met, it would be necessary for US military personnel to remain in SVN, first to provide various types of support, then to dispose of US property, and finally to serve an advisory function.

They foresaw that the negotiators at Paris might agree to a settlement that would prohibit or restrict further military assistance to RVN. In view of this possibility,

they urged that COMUSMACV be authorized to continue progress toward Phase II goals.37

The United States ceased all bombing of NVN on 31 October, as described in a later chapter. This action caused General Abrams some concern because he saw that it strengthened the possibility of substantive negotiations leading to the mutual withdrawal of US/NVN forces in the near future. On 9 November, he recommended that the United States begin implementation of the Phase II RVNAF improvement and modernization program as rapidly as possible. He proposed an accelerated version of the Phase II plan that would permit completion by FY 1972. It called for two actions as follows. First, some equipment in the hands of US forces would have to be turned over to the RVNAF. Second, the RVNAF Phase II force structure would be expanded to 877,090. The additional 27,090 personnel would be assigned to long lead-time and on-the-job training programs to prepare the RVNAF for transition to Phase II without having to draw the needed personnel from the ARVN or the RF as previously planned. This action would permit retention of the strong ground force structure currently being built under Phase I. Once the new personnel were trained and the RVNAF was able to absorb the additional equipment, new units would be formed and provided with equipment taken from selected US units. Most of these additional RVNAF personnel would be assigned to the VNN and the VNAF.38

The Secretary of Defense considered the Phase II plan and General Abrams' accelerated version of that plan until mid-December. During that period, officials within the Department of Defense reviewed the costs involved in building a RVNAF force structure of the size envisioned in Phase II.

Army officials pointed out that the Phase II equipment requirements would have an adverse effect on the readiness

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37. (S-GP 4) JCSM-678-68 to SecDef, 13 Nov 68, same file, sec 8. (S-GP 3) Tab B to J-5 BP 65-68, 20 Nov 68, JMF /not bound/.

38. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 34325 to CINCPAC, 9 Nov 68, JCS IN 93364. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 18 Nov 68, JCS IN 20488. (S-GP 4) MACV Report, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization - Phase II," 25 Dec 68, JCS 2472/406, JMF /not bound/.

of US forces, especially if the plan was accelerated as suggested by General Abrams. They cited the fact that while supplemental funds had been requested to continue the Phase I program during FY 1969 and additional funds were being sought in the FY 1970 budget, there was no guarantee that Congress would react favorably. Thus funds might be unavailable to replace equipment turned over to the RVNAF. Therefore, they recommended that the RVNAF Phase II force structure be established on a temporary basis only. A "baseline" structure should be established for the RVNAF, smaller than that envisioned in the Phase II plan. Equipment needed to sustain the full Phase II force structure should then be "loaned" to the RVNAF, to be returned to the United States when the RVNAF receded to its "baseline" level.39

The Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the Phase II plan and the question of force levels with the Secretary of Defense and his Deputy on several occasions. The OSD officials were of the opinion that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had overestimated the enemy threat in preparing their Phase II plans. They declared that the United States would never agree to a settlement that would allow an enemy force of the estimated size to remain in South Vietnam. Both expressed doubts that Congress would appropriate the additional funds for a RVNAF force structure of the size called for in either of the plans, Phase I or Phase II. Moreover, they did not believe the GVN had the manpower and economic facilities to sustain a force of that size in the long run. Adopting the suggestion offered by Army planners, they proposed a much smaller "baseline" RVNAF structure--perhaps 250,000 men for the regular ARVN forces, with additional VNN, VNAF, and RF/PF as needed. Such a force should not be created in the image of US forces and therefore would hardly need the sophisticated equipment and mobility of US forces.40

For their part, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe it was possible to determine the proper size of the RVNAF force structure until US civilian and military officials agreed on the conditions that should be assumed

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39. (S-NOFORN-GP 4) Msg, D/JS 14353 to MACV, 21 Dec 68.

40. Ibid. (S-GP 3) Tab A to J-5 BP 65-68, 20 Dec 68 JMF /not bound/.

to exist on T-Day, such as the size and location of enemy forces and the prospect of continuing infiltration.[41] These questions would, of course, be shaped by the terms of any peace agreement. On 12 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a list of "essential conditions for a cessation of hostilities" in RVN. They recommended that US government officials review and agree on the conditions and that they then be forwarded to the US representative in Paris. The US negotiators should be instructed to make all efforts to convince their North Vietnamese counterparts to agree to all the conditions. Their level of success would determine the security situation in RVN once hostilities in RVN had ceased.

If the North Vietnamese agreed to all the conditions, an "optimum" security situation would result. If only partial agreement were achieved, then an "intermediate" situation would remain. But, if most of the conditions were rejected, the "worst" security situation could be expected.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that the Phase II force structure plan had been designed to cope with the "worst" security situation. COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, they stated, had been instructed to develop plans to deal with the "optimum" and "intermediate" situations. But they advised the Secretary of Defense that it seemed wise to continue with present plans to establish a force structure capable of coping with the "worst" situation. As a minimum, they recommended approval of the FY 1970-71 Phase II goals and General Abrams' accelerated plan.[42]

On 18 December, Mr. Nitze approved the Phase II force structure (except for portions dealing with the VNN and with ammunition requirements). He also approved acceleration of the Phase II plan as proposed by General Abrams. Since he had not approved the proposed VNN force structure, the newly

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41. (S) Note to Control Div, "T-Day Planning and Improvement and Modernization of the RVNAF," 2 Dec 68, JMF 907/305 (9 Dec 68).

42. (S-NOFORN-GP 4) JCSM-732-68 to SecDef, 12 Dec 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7580 to CINCPAC, 12 Dec 68; JMF 907/305 (9 Dec 68).

authorized RVNAF force level was 866,434, rather than the recommended 877,090. He then requested a detailed activation schedule, equipment list, and turnover schedule, together with a plan to withdraw US units freed by transfer of their equipment, for the accelerated Phase II plan.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense directed MACV and the Service Secretaries to do everything possible to accelerate the training of the RVNAF with a view toward self-sufficiency. "The time available to implement Phase II may be short," he warned, "and the residual post-hostilities MAAG may be small."

At the same time, Mr. Nitze wished preparations made to cover a postwar situation in RVN short of the "worst" contingency envisioned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He therefore requested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepare a Phase III plan, designed only "to meet an internal insurgency threat from indigenous VC forces." This plan would be the same as that requested by the JCS for an "optimum" security situation.[43]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded a plan for accelerated Phase II to the Secretary of Defense on 4 January 1969. It listed the schedules for the activation of additional RVNAF units and set forth plans for the redeployment of US units and set forth plans for the redeployment of US units and for the turnover of their equipment to the RVNAF. All ARVN forces would be activated by the second quarter of FY 1970, while the air and naval forces would be fully activated by the close of FY 1972. The costs involved were slightly larger than those in the original Phase II plan, to provide for a minor expansion of ARVN logistic units and some additional naval craft.[44]

RVNAF Effectiveness in 1968

By the end of CY 1968, MACV reported that the RVNAF had risen to an estimated total strength of 826,500, distributed as follows:

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43. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to SecA et al., Att to JCS 2472/272-27, 19 Dec 68, JMF /not bound/.

44. (S-GP 3) JCSM-6-69 to SecDef, 4 Jan 69, (derived from JCS 2472/272-28), JMF /not bound/.

Regular Forces	
ARVN	387,250
VNN	18,500
VNMC	9,000
VNAF	18,750
Total Reg. forces	433,500
Territorial Forces	
RF	219,000
PF	174,000
Total Terr. forces	393,000
Total RVNAF	826,500

This total was approximately 220,000 greater than a year earlier. Of this increase, 160,000 had been volunteers and the rest draftees.

The GVN had also expanded its paramilitary forces to 127,000 (45,000 in the CIDG and 82,000 in the National Police). In addition, a People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) had been organized, with a strength of over 1,000,000 men and women. More than half of these had received some training, and over 100,000 were armed.[45]

This expansion in size was accompanied by an improvement in quality. In the judgment of both CINCPAC and Ambassador Bunker, the RVNAF had improved in aggressiveness, self-confidence, and quality of leadership in 1968.[46] Their assessment was borne out by an increase in the number of battalion-size operations conducted by the RVNAF in the

45. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) OCJCS Study Group, 1968 Year-End Review of Vietnam (U), pp. 5-14, 15 Jan 69. (S) Interv, Robert J. Watson and Arthur A. Chapa with CDR Paul F. Abel, USN, Revolutionary Development South Vietnam Branch, Office of SACSA, 3 Feb 69. (S) Msg, Saigon 894 to State, 16 Jan 69, JCS IN 38225.

46. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 012225Z Jan 69, JCS IN 10811. (S) Msg, Saigon 894 to State, 16 Jan 69, JCS IN 38225.

last quarter of the year, in the face of a decline in the general level of hostilities.

The RVNAF increased their ratio of weapons captured to weapons lost during 1968, as well as their "kill ratio." Whereas the RVNAF had maintained a kill ratio of 2.9 to 1 during the period April through November in 1967, they expanded that ratio to 4.0 to 1 during the same months of 1968.[47]

Despite the improvements, however, many of the problems that had hampered the effectiveness of the RVNAF in 1967 remained unsolved at the close of 1968. Most serious was the high desertion rate, which had actually increased during the year, beginning after the Tet offensive. By the end of November 1968, the "gross" rate (which made no allowance for returnees) had reached 15.5%, only 2.3% lower than the 1965 figure when enemy pressure had been at a high point. Even more alarming was the fact that most deserters were from ground combat units, which had a desertion rate of 40% for the entire year. The increase was in large part a result of the rapid post-Tet mobilization; 80% of deserters were men who had had less than six months of service.

Reasons assigned for desertion included fear and confusion on the part of servicemen, concern for the welfare of dependents, excessive periods of exposure to combat, inadequate pay, expectation of an imminent peace settlement, and laxity of enforcement of punitive measures. Remedial actions had been undertaken by the JGS as of the end of the year. These included tighter application of the law, larger rewards to those who "informed" on deserters, establishment of maximum "desertion quotas" for each command (with a promise of removal of commanders whose rates exceeded their specified figures), intensive troop indoctrination programs, and improved facilities for soldiers.

US officials anticipated that these actions, together with the completion of the general mobilization effort, would produce a substantial drop in the desertion rate by

47. (S) DIA IBs 219-68 and 6-69, 7 Nov 68, and 9 Jan 69, supplements, "Statistical Summary on South Vietnam." (S) Msg, Saigon 894 to State, 16 Jan 69, JCS IN 38225. (TS-GP 3) OCJCS Study Group, 1968 Year-End Review of Vietnam (U), pp. 1-6.

the end of March 1969. But Ambassador Bunker believed that United States officials should not be disappointed if the desertion rate did not subside with time. He explained that intelligence sources had indicated that the VC/NVA forces were having similar problems and that both sides might continue to suffer from desertion because of underlying social factors, such as localism and ethnic and religious antagonisms.[48]

The problems of inadequate leadership also troubled the RVNAF throughout 1968. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had repeatedly warned the Secretary of Defense that leadership shortcomings might prevent the RVNAF from accomplishing any mission expected of them regardless of how much equipment they were given. With the approval of an 850,000-man force structure, the problem of acquiring additional and competent leaders became magnified.

COMUSMACV convinced the Joint Chiefs of Staff that additional officers and NCOs should be provided for the RVNAF.[49] The JGS developed a three-year program to increase the number of officers and NCOs to satisfy the requirements of an 850,000-man force. Ninety percent of that leadership was to be made available by the close of CY 1968. Plans were also made to improve the RVNAF promotion regulations.[50]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense with monthly RVNAF officer/NCO strengths, promotion projects, and evaluation of the promotion program; but OSD officials became skeptical that the JGS was not doing all that should be done to improve the inadequate leadership situation. They considered that the JGS programs would

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48. (C) Tab D to J-5 BP 65-68, 20 Dec 68, JMF /not bound/. (C) Msg, Saigon to State, 14 Sep 68, JCS IN 66904. (C) Msg, COMUSMACV 41264 to JCS, 11 Dec 68, JCS IN 62883; (C) Msg, COMUSMACV 17134 to CJCS, 15 Dec 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68.

49. (C) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization," 1 Nov 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 68.

50. (C-GP 4) Memo, SACSA to CJCS, "RVNAF Officer/NCO Strengths and Promotions," 18 Nov 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 68.

not provide the needed leadership for the increased RVNAF force structure and that they would not attack the corruption, prejudice, and ineptitude of the RVNAF leadership.[51]

But General Wheeler informed the Secretary of Defense that he agreed with General Abrams' view that the JGS promotion program would supply the RVNAF with the needed leadership at the proper rate. Higher rates, he warned, could have adverse effects on the quality of the RVNAF leadership and could not be supported by the RVNAF because of an inadequate grade base.[52]

In December, General Wheeler reported that projected estimates indicated that RVNAF officer/NCO quotas for CY 1968 would actually be exceeded.[53]

General Abrams assured the Joint Chiefs of Staff that efforts were being made to promote outstanding officers and NCOs through battlefield promotions and that everything possible was being done to improve the quality of the leadership. The RVNAF was reviewing selection criteria, improving the quality of training schools and senior service schools, and revising policies governing the assignment of war college graduates. Educational requirements for officers were being maintained despite the rapid mobilization effort.[54]

On balance, as 1968 drew to a close, there was reason to believe that the attempt to upgrade the RVNAF had been successful. The process had kept pace with the nation-building effort that is described in the next chapter. Both the military and the civilian institutions of RVN had been subjected to a severe test early in the year, and both had survived to emerge stronger than before. After the Tet offensive, Ambassador Bunker had reported that the

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51. Ibid. (C) J-5 BP 65-68 Tab C: "RVNAF Officer/NCO Structure," 20 Dec 68.

52. (C-GP 4) CM-3770-68 to SecDef, 19 Nov 68; (C-GP 4) CM-3803-68 to SecDef, 3 Dec 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68.

53. (C-GP 4) CM-3840-68 to SecDef, 30 Dec 68, Att to JCS 2472/358-4, 2 Jan 69, JMF 911/535 (30 Jul 68).

54. (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 17134 to CJCS, 15 Dec 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68.

people of South Vietnam were for the first time experiencing a sense of pride in the performance of their army, just as they were rallying to support the government in its hour of crisis. If the RVNAF continued to improve their combat record, there was room to hope that they might constitute a major symbol of national unity around which the democratic elements in SVN might rally. If so, the armed forces of RVN might contribute to the successful resolution of the political conflict even as they prepared themselves for their primary task of assuming responsibility for the nation's security after the United States withdrew its forces.

Chapter 52

THE COURSE OF THE WAR AFTER TET

Changes in Command: Washington, Saigon, Honolulu

The early months of 1968 saw extensive changes in the ranks of those who had directed the US war effort in SVN for the past several years. Perhaps the most important development was the resignation of Robert S. McNamara, who had held the position of Secretary of Defense longer than any other incumbent. His successor, Clark M. Clifford, was sworn in on 1 March 1968.[1]

The impending retirement of several high ranking military officers led to further personnel changes. The Chief of Staff, US Army, General Harold K. Johnson, was scheduled to lay down his duties at the end of the fiscal year. On 23 March President Johnson announced his intention to appoint General Westmoreland to this position. He added that he had asked General Wheeler, who would complete his statutory four-year term as JCS Chairman in July 1968, to remain in office for another year. Since approval of the Senate would be required, the President had already obtained the concurrence of members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.[2]

Another prospective retiree in 1968 was Admiral Ulysses S. Grant Sharp, Commander in Chief, Pacific. On 10 April Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., then holding the post of CINCNAVEUR, was nominated as his successor. At the same time, the President selected General Westmoreland's deputy, General Creighton M. Abrams, to become COMUSMACV.[3]

These appointments became effective during the next several months. General Westmoreland relinquished command in Saigon on 11 June and was sworn in as Chief of Staff, US Army, on 3 July. The Senate, meanwhile, had confirmed General Wheeler in office for another year.[4] Admiral McCain assumed

1. NY Times, 2 Mar 68, 3.
2. Ibid., 23 Mar 68, 1.
3. Ibid., 11 Apr 68, 1.
4. Ibid., 11 Jun 68, 1; 4 Jul 68, 3; 4 Jun 68, 31.

the position of CINCPAC on 31 July.[5]

Friendly Forces Resume the Offensive

None of the changes in command had any immediate effect upon the tactical situation in South Vietnam. There the Tet offensive had left both sides temporarily incapable of major action. The enemy had suffered shattering losses in manpower that would take time to replace, while US and ARVN force dispositions had in some degree been disrupted by the need to cope with the wave of attacks on the cities.

The allied military machine was quick to recover. As soon as the enemy offensive had subsided, General Westmoreland seized the opportunity to resume once more the painstaking task of hunting down and destroying the principal enemy forces. He laid plans to clear the five provinces around Saigon and to undertake a major offensive in IV CTZ, while at the same time launching a thrust in I CTZ to relieve the Marines besieged at Khe Sanh. Explaining these plans to his subordinates on 2 March, General Westmoreland stressed the importance of an aggressive attitude. "We must stop thinking about the next VC attack," he emphasized, "and start thinking, all of us, of continuing to carry the attack to the enemy."[6]

The operation in IV CTZ (TRUONG CONG DINH) was launched on 6 March by elements of the US 9th and the ARVN 7th Divisions. This was a long-term action, which was still continuing two months later. At that time, it was combined with Operation PEOPLE'S ROAD, which had begun about the same time with the objective of clearing and repairing the principal highway (Route 4) between Saigon and the Mekong River.[7]

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5. (TS) HQ USMC, Commandant's Vietnam Chronology, entry 31 Jul 68.

6. (TS-NOFORN) Msg, COMUSMACV 02984 to CJCS, 030238Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68.

7. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 60-68, 12 Mar 68; 66-68, 19 Mar 68. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," May 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 245.

Operation QUYET THANG, in the vicinity of Saigon, began on 10 March. It was a larger operation, embracing elements of four US and three ARVN divisions, plus ARVN Marine, Ranger, and National Police units. When it terminated on 7 April, allied forces had inflicted casualties of 1,420 enemy killed and 442 detained, at a cost of 105 US troops killed and 920 wounded.

A new and expanded operation, TOAN THANG ("Final Victory"), with additional US and ARVN units, was then launched to complete the destruction of enemy forces within the Capital Military District. The New York Times characterized this action as the "largest allied offensive of the war in Vietnam, involving the use of more than 100,000 troops."[8]

Press stories stressing the size of the new operation, together with the flamboyant nickname selected for it, offered ground for suspicions that the allies were escalating the war just when the United States was proclaiming a search for peace. When this fact was pointed out to General Westmoreland, he explained that the nickname had been selected by the Vietnamese but that he had concurred, not wishing to do anything that would dampen their enthusiasm. MACV had done its best to keep its announcements in "low key," he continued, but questioning by reporters had elicited information about the size of the forces involved, and press sensationalism had done the rest.[9]

Farther north, Operation PEGASUS, described in an earlier chapter, removed the last threat to the Marine defenders of Khe Sanh in mid-April. It was followed by DELAWARE/LAMSON 216, a reconnaissance in force into an important enemy base in the nearby A Shau Valley. Strikes by B-52s and tactical aircraft preceded a ground and helicopter-borne incursion by US and SVN troops that began on 19 April and proceeded against relatively light opposition. When the operation ended on 17 May, 869 enemy had been killed against 168 US and SVN; 2,565

8. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 60-68, 12 Mar 68; 84-68, 9 Apr 68. NY Times, 11 Apr 68, 1.
9. (TS) Msg, JCS 03965 to COMUSMACV, 112212Z Apr 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 4899 to CJCS, 121212Z Apr 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

individual and 93 crew-served weapons had been captured, as well as large amounts of ammunition and supplies.[10]

The pattern of activity that had marked the war in the months before the Tet offensive had now come to prevail once more. US and SVN forces were seeking out the enemy, who was attempting to avoid contact while bringing in supplies and reinforcements. General Westmoreland was able to report that "Allied operations during April were highlighted by an unparalleled display of aggressiveness and cooperation by US, ARVN, FW forces and governmental agencies."[11]

Not content, however, General Westmoreland pressed his subordinates to even greater efforts. "Commencing immediately," he told them in a directive on 6 May, "our objective will be to make a major breakthrough toward military victory in South Vietnam. . . . The fighting will be characterized by an aggressive, unremitting, twenty-four hour application of pressure on all enemy elements throughout RVN." The enemy was to be hounded relentlessly, day and night, in all weather; loss of contact would be considered a tactical error. The RVNAF would be assigned a "full role." Support of pacification operations, which "are inseparable from the main offensive," would be given as much attention as any other responsibilities of commanders.[12]

While ground operations were pushed forward with increasing vigor, air and naval warfare continued unabated. Following the President's announcement of 31 March concerning bombing restrictions over NVN, the ROLLING THUNDER campaign was redirected to concentrate on targets south of the 19th Parallel, such as roads, waterways, truck parks, and storage facilities. The number of attack sorties against North Vietnam increased

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10. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 94-68, 20 Apr 68; 118-68, 18 May 68. (TS-GP 3) CM-3265-68 to SecDef, 29 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68. (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 5223 to CJCS et al., 191155Z Apr 68; MAC 5270, 201135Z Apr 68; MAC 6516, 181119Z May 68; OCJCS File DMZ/North I CTZ Reports.

11. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 159-4 (one digit illegible) to CINCPAC, 071442Z May 68, JCS IN 94380.

12. The text of this directive, originally transmitted from COMUSMACV to his subordinate commanders as COMUSMACV 12854, 061047Z May 68, is quoted in full in (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 15262 to Paris, 271808Z May 68, JCS IN 39239, in response to a news story alleging the existence of a message from COMUSMACV that supposedly asserted a need to win the war within three months.

from 5,142 in March to 7,262 in April, and 10,000 each in May and June. The monthly average for the second quarter of CY 1968 was 9,149, as compared with 4,932 per month for the preceding quarter. The stepped-up air effort kept pace with an increase in enemy truck traffic. The monthly average of trucks destroyed rose from 896 during the first quarter to 1,101 in the second.[13]

In the hope of choking off the flow of men and supplies through southern Laos, the US 7th Air Force initiated its southwest monsoon interdiction campaign against targets in that country on 1 April, exploiting the capabilities of the new MUSCLE SHOALS sensor system (later renamed IGLOO WHITE). Beginning on 19 April, 50 percent of the ARC LIGHT force (30 B-52 sorties per day) was allocated for this purpose (Operation TURNPIKE). The monthly average of sorties against Laos, however, dropped from 7,292 for the first quarter of 1968 to 4,596 for the second, presumably reflecting the deterioration of the weather as the monsoon began.[14]

In the naval campaign against North Vietnam's coast (SEA DRAGON), the weight of effort had been shifted southward early in 1968 to provide gunfire support for the forces operating in northern I CTZ. After 31 March this campaign, like ROLLING THUNDER, was restricted wholly to the area south of 19 degrees, but there was no diminution in its intensity.[15]

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13. (S-NOFORN) CIA/DIA, "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam, 1 Apr-30 Jun 68," (S-3198/AP-YA). (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, pp. 66-68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) OJCS Study Group, "1968 Year-End Review of Vietnam (U)," 15 Jan 69, vol. II, pp. 4-2 - 4-3, (hereafter cited as "1968 Year-End Review"). (S) OASD(SA), "Interdiction Campaign Since March 31," 22 Aug 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) Combat Analysis Group, J-3, "Statistical Digest of Military Developments in Southeast Asia," CAG Statistical Series, vol. I, No. 7, 3 Feb 69.

14. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 4-4. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 10917 to CINCPAC, 180508Z Apr 68, JCS IN 50236. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 12886 to CJCS, 062357Z May 68, JCS IN 88481. (S) OASD(SA), "Interdiction Campaign Since March 31," 22 Aug 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

15. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, p. 78. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 3-16 - 3-17.

The Second Enemy Attack, May 1968

Following his repulse in the Tet offensive, the enemy turned his attention to repairing his losses. His resupply effort was reflected in the increase in truck traffic already noted. At the same time, the communists refilled their ranks by in-country recruiting and especially by a faster flow of infiltration from the north. US estimates were that infiltration had risen from approximately 7,500 in December 1967 (just about the monthly average for that year) to 24,000 in January 1968. In February the number dropped to 12,000, but immediately thereafter it soared to record numbers: 25,000 in April, 30,000 in March and May.[16]

By the middle of April it had become clear that the enemy possessed both the capability and the intention to attack. Prisoner interrogations, reports of agents, the pattern of enemy troop concentrations, and information supplied by a high-ranking rallier pointed to an offensive that would be nationwide in scope while focusing principally upon Saigon. Various dates given for the launching of the attack fitted with other evidence indicating that the operation was first planned for the middle of the month but was postponed for various reasons. Intelligence warnings were clearer and less equivocal than those available before the Tet offensive. It appeared that the enemy, observing the lack of coordination at that time--when units in II CTZ had "jumped the gun" and swung into action a day ahead of others--had modified his security restrictions and had disseminated advance information more widely to the attacking forces.[17]

It came as no surprise, therefore, when widespread mortar and rocket attacks on cities and towns burst forth on the night of 4-5 May, heralding the beginning of the enemy's second general offensive of 1968. But it soon became evident that no replay of Tet was in the offing. The scope and intensity of the attack fell far short of the earlier one. Aside from Saigon, follow-up ground attacks occurred at only a few

16. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 1-18 (numbers read from bar chart, Fig. 1-10).

17. (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 76-68, 17 Apr 68; 77-68, 18 Apr 68; 82-68, 25 Apr 68; 84-68, 29 Apr 68. (S) Msgs, Saigon 25643 to State, 250900Z Apr 68, JCS IN 86582; and 26229, 021134Z May 68, JCS IN 80438. (S) CM-3228-68 to SecDef, 23 Apr 68, OCJCS 091 Vietnam Apr 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, p. 249. Some of the evidence warning of this attack has been described in Ch. 50.

places, mostly in I CTZ, and were readily repulsed. Another contrast with the Tet attack was seen in the fact that NVA rather than VC units apparently bore the brunt of the offensive.

As US intelligence had predicted, Saigon was the hub of the attack. Many of the enemy units moving toward the capital were intercepted and engaged by allied forces taking part in Operation TOAN THANG. As a result, only small units--none of battalion size--penetrated the city.[18]

During the next few days, friendly forces fought to eject the enemy from Saigon while the attack ebbed elsewhere. Some US reaction forces had to be moved into the capital. The enemy fought stubbornly, exploiting to the utmost the disruptive capacity of even a small force in an urban environment. Regular forces were aided by VC terrorists who attacked police stations, power plants, and other key installations. On 11 May COMUSMACV was able to report that there had been no significant contacts within the city during the preceding day or night. Contacts continued outside the city, however, as US and ARVN units sought to block enemy withdrawal routes. On 13 May the US and ARVN commands formally announced that the attack had been crushed. On the following day COMUSMACV terminated the special series of message reports initiated when the attack on Saigon began.[19]

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18. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 107-68, 6 May 68; 108-68, 7 May 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 26826 to State, 091022Z May 68, JCS IN 95726. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," May 68. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 5995 to CJCS, et al., 071359Z May 68; (C) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 6299 to CJCS, et al., 141252Z May 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, pp. 248-249. (S) Harold N. Sowers, VC/NVA Operations and Activities in South Vietnam for the First Six Months of 1968 (WSEG Staff Study 144, Nov 68), pp. 49-50, JMF 907/320 (16 Feb 67) (hereafter cited as Sowers, VC/NVA Operations and Activities).

19. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," May 68. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 6040 to CJCS et al., 081121Z May 68; MAC 6081, 091210Z May 68; MAC 6139, 101158Z May 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 68. (C) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 6183 to CJCS et al., 111115Z May 68; MAC 6260, 131242Z May 68; MAC 6299, 141252Z May 68; same file. (S) Sowers, VC/NVA Operations and Activities, pp. 50-52. The May offensive was regarded as lasting from 4-9 May in (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 200-68, 11 Oct 68, Supplement.

The course of events in SVN had been followed closely in Washington. "What can we do to get additional help to Westmoreland if he becomes involved in another major enemy offensive?" asked Secretary Clifford of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 May before it was clear that the offensive was over. "Very little," was the substance of the JCS reply, delivered on 21 May. Four Army brigades could be made available during July and August, they indicated, but their deployment would leave STRAF wholly devoid of combat-ready forces. To send Marine reinforcements would require further mobilization plus involuntary extension of terms of service. Fortunately the ebbing of the attack spared the Administration the necessity of facing the consequences of another call for reinforcements from COMUSMACV.[20]

The relatively small scale of the so-called "mini-Tet" offensive, together with its timing (a few weeks after the agreement to open talks in Paris), suggested that its purpose was political and psychological rather than primarily military or, in other words, that it was intended to strengthen the enemy's position at Paris. This was the opinion of Ambassador Bunker. Seizure and occupation of all or part of South Vietnam's capital would undoubtedly have constituted a powerful bargaining counter. But the enemy had failed to achieve this goal, and had suffered losses that were quite high in relation to the size of forces engaged, though well below those of Tet. As of midnight 8-9 May, Mr. Bunker estimated that the enemy had lost 5,781 killed in action since the offensive began, as opposed to 804 US and allied troops killed. A later estimate listed approximately 12,500 enemy killed during the first two weeks in May.[21]

For his fresh expenditure of blood, the enemy had two gains to show. On 10 May enemy troops in superior numbers had assaulted a Special Forces Camp at Kham Duc, in western Quang Tin Province (I CTZ). The camp was abandoned by its garrison two days later. This tactical success had potential

20. (S) Memo, SecDef to GEN Wheeler, 13 May 68; (TS) JCSM-315-68 to SecDef, 21 May 68 (derived from JCS 2472/291-1, 18 May 68, as ameded by Dec On 20 May 68), JMF 911/372 (13 May 68).

21. (S) Msg, Saigon 26826 to State, 091022Z May 68, JCS IN 95726. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 200-68, 11 Oct 68, Supplement.

strategic importance; the site could provide a location for a supply complex to replace the one recently destroyed at A Shau and a springboard for launching attacks eastward toward the coast. COMUSMACV considered that the post could be retaken but that the forces required for that purpose could be better employed elsewhere.[22]

Far more significant--militarily, politically and economically--was the amount of destruction wrought in Saigon, partly by enemy troops and terrorists, partly by allied counteraction. The scale of damage, according to Ambassador Bunker, approached that of Tet. Preliminary estimates were that 20,000 houses had been destroyed in Saigon and Gia Dinh (as compared with 27,000 in the earlier attack), although the figure was later reduced slightly to 17,800. Estimates of refugees ranged from 90,000 to 125,000; the number finally accepted was 107,000.

Mr. Bunker drew attention to the effects of this destruction upon civilian morale. Contrasting enemy attacks on the capital of South Vietnam with the restraint shown by the United States since 31 March, he urged that there be no further concessions so long as North Vietnam felt free to attack centers of population. He pointed out that only a small fraction of enemy forces had been committed to the attack and that intelligence was already warning of another phase of the offensive expected to start soon. "If repeated enemy attacks on Saigon continue to produce this kind of devastation of the city and environs," he warned, "I wonder how long this can be borne without threatening to undermine all that has been achieved here."[23]

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22. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," May 68. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 6210 to CINCPAC, 120858Z May 68; MAC 6222, 121419Z May 68; MAC 6264, 131446Z May 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 68.

23. (S) Msgs, Saigon 27121 to State, 131128Z May 68, JCS IN 11157; 27497, 161220Z May 68, JCS IN 18320; 28566, 291140Z May 68, JCS IN 43930. (C) Msg, Saigon 27539 to State, 171048Z May 68, JCS IN 15635.

The Harassment of Saigon, May-June 1968

The warning of a second phase of the May offensive was soon borne out. A new series of attacks on the capital began, small in scale but potentially deadly in their cumulative effects. Two types of operations were involved. Starting on 18 May Saigon was subjected to intermittent nighttime fire from mortars and 122mm rockets, launched by enemy forces outside the city. At the same time, bands of infiltrators, numbering from 5 to 30, slipped into the city to carry out assassinations and to destroy or sabotage bridges, power and police stations, and other important structures.

The obvious intent of these activities was to increase the burden on South Vietnam's economy, to intimidate the populace, and to demonstrate that the GVN was powerless to protect its citizens even in its own capital. Ambassador Bunker viewed this new campaign with the utmost seriousness. The initial reaction in Saigon, he reported, had been resentment toward the VC, but he feared that this feeling might be redirected toward the United States and the GVN if the attacks continued.[24]

Both MACV and the JGS moved swiftly to take all possible defensive measures against this latest enemy threat. The broad "rocket belt" surrounding Saigon--an area of roughly 300 square miles within which the enemy, with his primitive and readily transportable launching equipment, could deliver fire upon the capital--was placed under 24-hour aerial surveillance. Construction of special radar-equipped observation towers to detect enemy firing positions and to direct counterfire was begun; meanwhile, tall buildings were employed for the same purpose. Counterfire procedures were reviewed, and every effort was made to reduce the time involved.

To cope with terrorist infiltration, plans were made to intercept and engage enemy squads outside the city. Additional ARVN and US units were assigned to the defense of

24. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 119-68, 20 May 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, pp. 250-251. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 7605 to CINCPAC, 091112Z Jun 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68. (S) Msgs, Saigon 28566 to State, 291140Z May 68, JCS IN 43930; 29565, 101157Z Jun 68, JCS IN 64371; 29880, 131200Z Jun 68, JCS IN 72383.

Saigon. Expansion of the newly activated civil self-defense corps was accelerated. A Military Governor of Saigon/Gia Dinh was appointed, with full responsibility for the defense of the capital. He was collocated with a Forward Command Post of II FFORCEV, the commander of which (Major General John Hay, USA, Deputy CG, II FFORCEV) served as his senior advisor.[25]

Simultaneously, the Administration in Washington launched a diplomatic counterattack through the medium of the Paris negotiations. At the official session of the meeting of US and NVN delegations on 12 June 1968, Ambassador Harriman spoke out strongly on the subject. He contrasted the damage deliberately inflicted upon Saigon with the exemption of Hanoi, Haiphong, and other North Vietnamese cities from US bombing. Instead of moving toward mutual deescalation, NVN, he declared, "has responded to our restraint by intensifying its own military, subversive, and terrorist efforts in the South." This fact "could have the most serious consequences for these talks." A week later, Mr. Harriman cited condemnations of the attacks on Saigon that had been made by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom and by newspapers in Oslo, Mexico City, and Madras. "I could keep you here all day reading comments from all over the world similar to those that I have just read," he added.[26]

Shortly thereafter the rocket attacks ceased, the last attack taking place on 21 June. Attempts at infiltration had already been discontinued several weeks earlier.[27] The reasons for these developments were a matter of conjecture. Some ascribed them to the hostile reaction in the world press,

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25. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 16638 to JCS and CINCPAC, 100730 Jun 68, JCS IN 63300. (S) CIA Memo, "Combatting the VC Attack Against Saigon," 17 Jun 68, Encl to Memo, Helms to Wheeler, 18 Jun 68; (S-GP 4) CM-3401-68 to SecDef, 15 Jun 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, pp. 249-250, 255-256.

26. Dept of State Bulletin, LIX (1 Jul 68), pp. 12-13; (8 Jul 68), pp. 43-44. The significance of this issue in the Paris negotiations is described more fully in the succeeding chapter.

27. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, pp. 251, 254-255.

others to the effectiveness of the new military measures in Saigon. Ambassador Bunker suggested a third possibility, that the enemy was conserving his resources in preparation for another major attack. In any event, he considered the recent defensive arrangements most impressive: the improved radar and aircraft surveillance, the reduction in reaction time for counterbattery fire (one minute was now the optimum), and the close collaboration between US and ARVN forces engaged in defense of the capital. Early in August he was able to report that US and ARVN forces around Saigon were running no less than 500 ambushes every night. These operations, together with B-52 strikes, would be effective, he believed, in forestalling the major offensive against Saigon that seemed clearly in the offing.[28]

Related to the enemy's destruction of lives and property in Saigon was another problem: the damage wrought by US and ARVN forces in combatting the invaders. On 12 May a member of the staff of the US Embassy in Saigon, Mr. Charles Sweet, had reported that many people in Saigon were angry at what they considered indiscriminate use of allied firepower, particularly aircraft. An officer on MACV's staff concluded, after an investigation, that Mr. Sweet had greatly exaggerated the amount of destruction and had underestimated the strength of enemy forces. He recommended, however, that MACV rules of engagement governing the use of tactical air, helicopter gunships, artillery, and naval gunfire be clarified.[29]

The problem was strikingly dramatized by an incident that took place in Saigon on 2 June. A group of high-ranking SVN officials were watching an attack on a position held by enemy infiltrators. Suddenly a rocket from a US helicopter went astray and landed in their midst. Seven men were

28. (S) Msg, Saigon 32822 to State, 170645Z Jul 68, JCS IN 45436. (S) Msgs, Saigon 31058 to State, 261200Z Jun 68, JCS IN 95876; 31193, 271400Z Jun 68, JCS IN 99683; 34694, 071100Z Aug 68, JCS IN 84286. (C) Msg, Paris 20251 to State, 311605Z Aug 68, JCS IN 42282, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Negotiations Aug-Sep 68.

29. (C) Extract from Memo for Record, Actg CS, MACV, "Evaluation of Saigon Situation," 14 May 68; (C) "Report of Investigation Concerning Destruction Resulting from the VC Offensive of 5-13 May 1968," n.d., sgd by COL Robert W. Marshall, USA, with 1st Ind by COMUSMACV, MAC J-2, 2 Jun 68, Att to JCS 2472/314, 12 Jun 68; JMF 911/052 (14 May 68) sec 1.

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killed, including Saigon's chief of police and the director of the port of Saigon (a brother-in-law of Vice President Ky). The mayor of Saigon and four others were wounded.[30]

In Washington, this tragic accident deepened the alarm that had been aroused by the receipt of Mr. Sweet's report. On 4 June General Wheeler told COMUSMACV that Secretary Clifford had asked him to find a better way of combatting infiltrators. "I ask that this action be done urgently," said the Chairman, "because of the very real concern here in Administration circles and the bad play we are receiving in the news media."[31]

Officers from MACV and the JGS studied the problem and suggested a number of changes in tactics, equipment, and training. They believed that direct-fire weapons and tank/infantry teams should be used in urban areas as much as possible, in preference to air-delivered ordnance. The RVNAF should be furnished with their own 90mm and 106mm recoilless rifles in order to provide their own fire support. Helicopters should be used intensively to maneuver troops and weapons into position to isolate and cordon enemy forces. The decision to use napalm, indirect artillery fire, helicopter gunships, and tactical air for close support in urban areas should be retained at corps-field force level. On 14 June General Abrams informed the Chairman that he had approved these recommendations. General Wheeler passed them to the Secretary of Defense with the observation that he believed that they would have the desired effect.[32]

Interlude, June-August 1968

The ending of the May offensive was followed by another period of relative enemy inactivity throughout most of SVN.

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30. (U) Memo for Record, DepDir for Opns, NMCC, "Ground Operations SVN 2 Jun 1968," 2 Jun 68; (U) Memo, DepDir for Opns, NMCC, to CJCS, "Accidental Delivery of Ordnance," 4 Jun 68; (FOUO) Msg, COMUSMACV 16447 to JCS and CINCPAC, 080817Z Jun 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68.

31. (C) Msg, JCS 6117 to COMUSMACV, 042315Z Jun 68, same file.

32. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 7871 to CJCS, 141007Z Jun 68; (the recommendations were stated in more detail, with supporting justification, in (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8035, to CJCS, 180022Z Jun 68; (S-GP 4) CM-3424-68 to SecDef, 24 Jun 68; same file.

Aside from the continuing attacks on Saigon already described, the most notable enemy action after the middle of May was an abortive effort in Kontum Province (II CTZ), apparently aimed at the city of the same name Anticipating an attack in this region, COMUSMACV had reinforced Kontum Province with the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (drawn from III CTZ), and had concentrated B-52 strikes on the gathering enemy forces. On 25 May, in an apparent beginning of the attack, hostile units struck at several fire support bases surrounding Kontum city. Some bunkers were overrun and occupied, but were promptly recaptured. Although skirmishes continued in the general area, the threatened offensive never materialized, apparently because it had been preempted by US air strikes and ground operations.[33]

By the first week in June the number of attacks initiated by the enemy, which had soared to 277 for the week of 5-11 May, had dropped to 50. The figure declined further in July, reaching a low of 27 for the week of 28 July-3 August. In contrast, the enemy had launched an average of 64 attacks per week during the five weeks preceding the May offensive. Five of those attacks had involved forces of battalion size or larger. During May there were 17 battalion-sized attacks; six took place in June and only two in July.[34]

Encouraging evidence of military progress appeared after the May offensive in the form of group surrenders of enemy personnel. The first such incident during the entire war occurred on 1 May in Thua Thien Province, when 95 enemy troops surrendered to elements of the US 101st Airborne Division. A number of similar incidents took place during June. Noteworthy was the surrender of 31 men, led by their commander, in Gia Dinh Province--the first organized unit to give up. The largest group consisted of 141 men, who gave themselves up to VNMC units near Saigon on 19 June.[35]

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33. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 3-5. (S) Sowers, VC/NVA Operations and Activities, p. 160. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 125-68, 27 May 68. (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 15438 to CJCS, 290841Z May 68, JCS IN 42518; 15856, 020950Z Jun 68, JCS IN 49697. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 16652 to CJCS, 100940Z Jun 68, JCS IN 64017. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," May 68.

34. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 200-68, 11 Oct 68, Supplement.

35. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, p. 254.

Unfortunately, these proved to be isolated events that did not presage a general collapse of enemy forces.

The enemy's possession of inviolable sanctuaries outside the combat zone left him in possession of the strategic initiative. It remained necessary for friendly forces to adjust their troop dispositions in reaction to his movements. One such adjustment became a matter of importance at high levels in Washington. In June intelligence suggested that the enemy was again strengthening his forces in the northern part of I CTZ, presumably in preparation for yet another offensive. To disrupt this attack and keep the enemy off balance, COMUSMACV planned to adopt a fully mobile posture in that area. Among other measures, he proposed to evacuate the base at Khe Sanh and to use its garrison (then consisting of one battalion) for offensive action. This withdrawal would be made on or about 1 July; the base would of course remain within the operating area of US forces.

Execution of this plan would have been a matter of routine except for the attention that the defense of Khe Sanh had drawn a few months earlier. It was easy to foresee that those who had opposed retention of the Khe Sanh during its siege would seize upon its abandonment as evidence that the lives lost in its defense had been wasted. Recognizing this prospect, General Abrams submitted the plan to General Wheeler. His opinion, in which Ambassador Bunker and Admiral Sharp concurred, was that the military advantages of abandoning Khe Sanh now outweighed any political or psychological costs.[36]

After obtaining approval of the plan by his JCS colleagues and by the Secretary of Defense, General Wheeler submitted it to the President. When he did so, he "ran into headwinds," as he told General Abrams, "associated primarily with the public affairs aspects." The President later approved it, but stipulated that the public announcement

36. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 8046 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 180433Z Jun 68; MAC 8206, 211017Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8250 to CJCS, 220420Z Jun 68; (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 181231Z Jun 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 30199 to State, 171210Z Jun 68, JCS IN 77962.

of the Khe Sanh withdrawal be carefully planned in order to minimize adverse publicity and triumphant enemy propaganda.37

There followed several days of intensive discussion between Washington, Saigon, and Honolulu of the wording of a suitable press release. The version finally approved declared that the enemy now had at least eight divisions in I CTZ--two more than in January--and was therefore capable of mounting "several sizeable attacks concurrently." It followed that "mobile forces, tied to no specific terrain, must be used to the utmost to attack, intercept, reinforce, or take whatever action is most appropriate to meet the enemy threats."38 This announcement was released by MACV headquarters on 27 June (Saigon time). The withdrawal began several days later and was completed on 7 July.39

The new strategy adopted in northern I CTZ was connected with a change in the concept of defense against infiltration through the DMZ. The DUEL BLADE anti-infiltration barrier had envisioned a line of strong points along the border of the DMZ near the coast, linked by sensors and observation towers, with additional sensors clustered in the defiles of the mountainous terrain farther west. Construction of the strong points, however, had been seriously hindered by enemy artillery and mortar fire from the DMZ. When the siege of Khe Sanh began in January 1968, work on the barrier was suspended. After the Tet offensive, a new plan which stressed the use of mobile forces for defense, was drawn up and approved by COMUSMACV in June. Work on the strong-point obstacle system

37. (TS) Msgs, JCS 6703 to COMUSMACV, 181355Z Jun 68; JCS 6781, 191959Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, JCS 6844 to COMUSMACV, 202134Z Jun 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68.

38. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8250 to CJCS, 220420Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, JCS 6929 to COMUSMACV, 221804Z Jun 68; (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 230715Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, JCS 7043 to COMUSMACV, 252257Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8515 to CJCS, 261202Z Jun 68; (TS) JCS 7068 to COMUSMACV, 261653Z Jun 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68.

39. NY Times, 27 Jun 68, 1. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 8756 to CJCS et al., 010920Z Jul 68; MAC 9072, 070954Z Jul 68; OCJCS File 24-Hour Summaries 1 through 50.

was again deferred, with the understanding that it might be resumed on five days' notice when permitted by the enemy situation in the DMZ area.[40]

The attack on Khe Sanh had also disrupted plans for a sensor-based antipersonnel barrier (DUMP TRUCK) on the infiltration trails in eastern Laos and the western DMZ. Enemy forces overran the area while the system was undergoing operational tests. Available sensor resources were diverted to the defense of Khe Sanh, where they provided valuable tactical intelligence during the siege. They were again employed in the subsequent incursion into the A Shau Valley, first to locate targets for artillery fire, then to pinpoint air strikes after US forces had withdrawn.[41]

These successful applications of sensors in situations for which they had not originally been designed led to their further employment. At the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, COMUSMACV drafted a proposal to use sensors in connection with combat sweeps, ambushes, surveillance of enemy routes and base areas, convoy protection, and other purposes. Eight operational tests would be conducted in May, June, and July; if they proved successful, operations would then be expanded as rapidly as resources permitted. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved this plan (DUCK BLIND) subject to further evaluation after the tests.[42]

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40. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 3-25 - 3-26.

41. Ibid., pp. 3-27 - 3-28. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 02461 to CINCPAC, 230100Z Jan 68, JCS IN 52226. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 15840 to CINCPAC, 020625Z Jun 68, JCS IN 49618.

42. (S-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to Dir Def Communications Planning Group, "Increased Use of DYE MARKER/MUSCLE SHOALS Resources for Operations Against the NVA/VC," 5 Apr 68, Att to JCS 2471/66-1, 8 Apr 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6087 to CINCPAC, 102352Z Apr 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 12363 to CINCPAC, 011052Z May 68, readdressed CINCPAC info JCS, 080216Z May 68, JCS IN 91210; (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080215Z May 68; (S-GP 3) JCSM-320-68 to SecDef, 21 May 68 (derived from JCS 2471/66-3, 17 May 68); (S-GP 3) Memo, Dep SecDef to CJCS, "DUCK BLIND Plan for Expanding the Use of Intrusion Detection Capability Against the Enemy in South Vietnam," 6 Jun 68, Att to JCS 2471/66-5, 7 Jun 68; JMF 911/321 (5 Apr 68).

The air campaign continued in both NVN and Laos. During July, 14,647 attack sorties were flown over NVN below the 19th Parallel, as compared with a monthly average of 9,149 in the preceding quarter. For the period July through September 1968, the number totaled 38,334, as compared with 27,447 flown during the three previous months. In the Laotian panhandle, where unfavorable monsoon weather continued to prevail, approximately 3,000 sorties per month were flown during the third quarter, in contrast with an average of 4,596 for the second. Operation TURNPIKE, the regular employment of B-52s in the interdiction campaign in Laos, was discontinued on 15 June, but ARC LIGHT strikes continued to be available on a case by case basis.[43]

Unfortunately, none of these efforts sufficed to stem the flow of reinforcements from NVN. The enemy continued to send men southward at a rate of 30,000 or more each month through the months of June, July, and August.[44] By so doing, he made up most of the losses he had suffered in his two sanguinary repulses in February and May. In June, according to MACV estimates, enemy strength in South Vietnam totaled approximately 215,000--not much less than the peak figure of 222,000 in October 1965. But there had been a significant change in the composition of this force since that date. NVA troops in October 1965 had accounted for only 26 percent of the enemy strength; by June 1968 they made up 70 percent of the total. A decline in the quality of the enemy units was also noticeable; many of the new recruits from NVN had been sent forward hastily with inadequate training.[45]

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43. (S) OASD(SA), "Interdiction Campaign Since March 31," 22 Aug 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68. (S-NOFORN) CIA/DIA, "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam, 1 Jul-31 Oct 68," (S-3378/AP-4A). (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 4-8, Fig. 4-2. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 18202 to CDR 7th AF, 250141Z Jun 68, JCS IN 92362. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) Combat Analysis Group, J-3, "Statistical Digest of Military Developments in Southeast Asia," CAG Statistical Series, vol. I, No 7, 3 Feb 69.

44. (TS-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 1-18, Fig. 1-10.

45. General Wheeler reported these conclusions in July 1968, following a visit to South Vietnam (which is described in a later section of this chapter). (TS) CM-3489-68 to Pres, 19 Jul 68; Att to JCS 2472/331, 22 Jul 68, JMF 911/399 (19 Jul 68).

Evaluation of the ARC LIGHT Campaign

The powerful B-52, designed originally for strategic air warfare, had come into its own as a tactical weapon by the middle of 1968. Its capabilities for close support of ground troops were effectively exploited during the siege of Khe Sanh, when it was used, along with tactical air and artillery, to break up enemy troop concentrations massing for assault. Prisoners captured around Khe Sanh testified to its devastating physical and psychological effectiveness. Subsequently, COMUSMACV credited intensive B-52 strikes with a major role in blunting the assault on Saigon in early May as well as the offensive in Kontum Province later that month.[46]

B-52 resources continued to be allocated by CINCSAC under authorization from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, subject to limitations established by the Secretary of Defense. Late in 1967 Mr. McNamara had approved an increase in the number of B-52 sorties in Vietnam from 800 to 1,200 per month, effective 1 February 1968. But when the siege of Khe Sanh commenced, COMUSMACV discovered that even this number was insufficient. On 10 February he requested an increase of an additional 40 sorties per day, to be achieved by employing the contingency B-52 force recently deployed to Guam and to Kadena, Okinawa. After obtaining informal approval from the Secretary's office, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 February authorized CINCSAC temporarily to exceed the 1,200 limit in order to support emergency requirements for Khe Sanh and the DMZ. They did not specify an alternative figure. By the end of the month, B-52 sorties were being flown to Vietnam at a rate of approximately 60 per day, or 1,800 per month--just about the maximum that could be sustained with available resources.[47]

On 22 March COMUSMACV asked that the 1,800 rate be continued indefinitely. J-3 studied the problem and concluded that the request was justified, and that aircraft and bomb resources were sufficient to support this rate through December. Deputy Secretary Nitze, however, approved the

46. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 3-13 - 3-14. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, p. 241. (C-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 10794 to DIA, 161810Z Apr 68, JCS IN 47706.

47. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 1909 to CINCPAC, 101410Z Feb 68; (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 9947 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 131611Z Feb 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (S-GP 3) JCS 2472/254-2, 2 Apr 68, JMF 911/323 (13 Feb 68).

1,800 per-month figure only through June, stipulating that it should drop to 1,400 thereafter. He announced this decision as part of the Program 6 reinforcement package.[48]

The reduced monthly rate of 1,400 sorties would cost approximately $1 billion, as Mr. Nitze pointed out to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 April. A further reduction to 800, he continued, would cut this cost almost in half. He therefore asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study carefully the effectiveness of the ARC LIGHT program and to forward their findings to him, with their assessment of the relative effectiveness of monthly rates of 800, 1,200, and 1,400 sorties.[49]

In an interim reply on 23 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued strongly against any reduction in the 1,800 rate. The full capability of the B-52 would be needed, they declared, to support offensive operations then underway and to sustain the expanded interdiction campaign that had become essential now that most of NVN was safe from bombing. Secretary Clifford accordingly reaffirmed for the time being the existing 1,800 monthly rate.[50]

On 29 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the results of a more careful study of the effectiveness of ARC LIGHT. It was the unanimous testimony of field force commanders in SVN, they reported, that this program "makes a valuable contribution to achievement of US objectives in Southeast Asia and is a major factor in preventing the enemy from pressing his offensive plans." It was impossible statistically to evaluate its effectiveness or to compare various monthly rates. But even the maximum allocation of 1,800 sorties was insufficient to strike all available targets in

48. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 8069 to CINCPAC, 220008Z Mar 68 (readdressed by CINCPAC as 220553Z Mar 68, info JCS), JCS IN 87562. (S-GP 3) JCS 2472/254-2, 2 Apr 68, JMF 911/323 (13 Feb 68). (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS et al., "Southeast Asia Deployment Program 6," 4 Apr 68, JMF 907/374 (14 Mar 68).

49. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "B-52 Sortie Rate," 15 Apr 68, Att to JCS 2472/274, 17 Apr 68, JMF 911/323 (15 Apr 68).

50. (S-GP 3) JCSM-257-68 to SecDef, 23 Apr 68 (derived from JCS 2472/270-1, 18 Apr 68); (S) Memo, Mil Asst to SecDef to CJCS et al., "B-52 Sortie Rate," 29 Apr 68, Att to JCS 2472/270-2, 1 May 68; JMF 911/323 (15 Apr 68).

Vietnam, despite a careful screening process at various levels of command to eliminate those judged unprofitable. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore urged that the 1,800 figure be continued through December. They further recommended that ten more B-52s be deployed to U Tapao Air Base, Thailand, making a total of 35 in that country. This move would not only reduce the cost of the ARC LIGHT program, but would also partially insure against the possibility that political pressure might force discontinuance of the base in Okinawa, since it would be possible to sustain a monthly rate of 1,710 sorties with the 35 B-52s in Thailand plus the 70 in Guam.[51]

On 22 June Mr. Nitze approved for planning purposes the request to fly up to 1,800 sorties monthly through December. The decision, however, would be reviewed within the next 60 days and at intervals thereafter. He also approved the recommendation to increse the B-52 force in Thailand, subject to approval of the Thai Government.[52]

General Wheeler's Visit to South Vietnam, July 1968

In July General Wheeler, accompanied by Secretary of Defense Clifford, undertook a quick journey to South Vietnam to appraise the progress of the war since his last visit five months earlier. He found the situation much improved. South Vietnam's forces had recovered from the Tet offensive and were steadily expanding and improving under the stimulus of the US assistance program. The security of urban areas had been strengthened, notably around Saigon, where the new measures of defense and counterattack instituted in June were proving effective. Allied "spoiling" actions, carried out by ground troops and by aircraft, were seriously disrupting enemy plans. The enemy's capability to mount widespread offensives had been impaired by his recent defeats. In the hope of obtaining an exploitable success, he was forced to stagger, or rotate, his local attacks, both in time and space, so as to maintain maximum pressure on allied forces.

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51. (S-GP 3) JCSM-333-68 to SecDef, 29 May 68 (derived from JCS 2472/274-1, 24 May 68), JMF 911/323 (15 Apr 68).

52. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "B-52 Sortie Rate," 22 Jun 68, Att to JCS 2472/274-2, 24 Jun 68, JMF 911/323 (15 Apr 68).

Nonetheless it seemed probable, according to General Wheeler, that another large-scale enemy effort was impending. MACV's J-2 believed that enemy forces in I CTZ and around Saigon would have completed regrouping and refitting in time to launch attacks within a few weeks, probably about the middle of August. It appeared, however, that General Abrams possessed enough forces to cope with any offensive.[53]

After returning to Washington and reporting his conclusions to the President, General Wheeler told COMUSMACV that the trip "was a great success insofar as Secretary Clifford and I are concerned." At a White House luncheon, Mr. Clifford had praised General Abrams and his subordinates "in the highest terms." "I hope," concluded the Chairman, "that his report and mine have damped some of the anxieties existent earlier here in Washington."[54]

At the same time that he informed COMUSMACV of these developments, General Wheeler took the opportunity to clarify his thinking regarding the impending enemy attack. Reviewing evidence of enemy dispositions available in Washington, the Chairman observed that the enemy appeared to be in a position to attack with division-size forces along the border and simultaneously with smaller units around Saigon. Such a pattern of attack, he observed, "would pose the greatest problems to you and your subordinate commanders."[55]

General Abrams, in reply, doubted that the regimental-size units around Saigon were strong enough to attack. He thought it probable that at least one division would be employed against the capital, probably after diversionary actions had been launched elsewhere. He added that he intended "to accommodate the enemy in seeking battle and in fact to anticipate him wherever possible." He had directed his subordinates to make every effort to find, fix, and destroy enemy forces before they could attack. General Wheeler showed this message to the President, who requested

53. (TS) CM-3489-68 to Pres, 19 Jul 68, Encl to JCS 2472/331, 22 Jul 68, JMF 911/399 (19 Jul 68) sec 1. (S) MACV Briefing for SecDef, 15 Jul 68, same file, sec 1A.
54. (S) Msg, JCS 8442 to COMUSMACV, 261911Z Jul 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 68.
55. Ibid.

that COMUSMACV be notified of his hearty approval of this aggressive plan of action.[56]

The prospect of a fresh enemy attack on the cities of SVN was of intense concern to Mr. Johnson. On two occasions, 30 July and 2 August, he discussed with General Wheeler the possibility of resumption of air and naval operations between 19 and 20 degrees if such an attack eventuated. In the end the matter was dropped, but the President expressed his alarm in public. In a news conference on 31 July, he cited intelligence reports of record levels of infiltration and of a sharp increase in truck traffic since the bombing restriction. So long as such massive preparations for a new attack continued, he said, it would be unthinkable to contemplate any further restrictions on the US military effort in SVN.[57]

The Enemy's Third Offensive, August 1968

As July passed into August, evidence of enemy intentions accumulated in volume and in detail.[58] On 12 August, in a memorandum for Secretary Clifford, General McConnell, as Acting Chairman, summarized General Abrams' most recent forecast. An offensive was expected on or about 15 August. Probable targets were the central DMZ, Da Nang and other cities in I CTZ, Ban Me Thuot (II CTZ), and Tay Ninh and other cities on the fringes of III CTZ. An assault on Saigon would probably occur several days after the attack had begun elsewhere.[59]

In the time that remained, the Administration undertook to prepare a plan for announcing the news of the attack in a manner that would minimize its impact on public opinion. The general outline of such an arrangement had been discussed in Saigon during the visit of General Wheeler and Secretary

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56. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 10181 to CJCS, 280742Z Jul 68; (S) Msg, JCS 8593 to COMUSMACV, 302019Z Jul 68 (retransmitted as 302313Z Jul; originally addressed in error to CINCPAC), OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 68.

57. (S) Msg, JCS 8594 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 302020Z Jul 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 68. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 8756 to CINCPAC, 021949Z Aug 68, same file, Aug 68. Dept of State Bulletin, LIX (19 Aug 68), pp. 193-194.

58. (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 151-68, 2 Aug 68; 152-68, 5 Aug 68; 155-68, 8 Aug 68; 157-68, 12 Aug 68; 158-68, 13 Aug 68; 160-68, 15 Aug 68; 161-68, 16 Aug 68.

59. (S) CM-3573-68 to Pres, 12 Aug 68, Encl to JCS 2472/345, 12 Aug 68, JMF 912/292 (12 Aug 68).

Clifford. It was agreed that, as soon as the attack was manifestly underway, the United States would make clear, through briefings, press conferences, and other announcements, that the action had been fully expected, that US public opinion was one of the targets, and that there was every prospect of another enemy defeat. As the attack developed, successful US and ARVN actions would be stressed, but excessive optimism would at all times be carefully avoided.[60]

The plan was overtaken by events on the night of 17-18 August, when the enemy launched fire and ground attacks at a number of objectives, principally US and ARVN military installations in III CTZ, plus two cities--Loc Ninh and Tay Ninh--on the western edge of that zone. All were repelled except the assault on Tay Ninh, which was conducted by six battalions. Four were halted outside the city, but the other two penetrated and dug in.[61]

General Abrams considered that this attack signaled the beginning of a general offensive but recommended that no announcement of that conclusion be made until events of the next few days had removed all doubt. He thought that these initial operations were diversionary and that the real objectives had yet to be revealed. "We are in good shape everywhere in the country except in Tay Ninh city," he reported on 18 August. "We have got to get the enemy out of this town and promptly."[62] General Wheeler advised the Secretary of Defense (through the NMCC) that the situation "is developing as anticipated by US intelligence," and that "General Abrams can repel any attack made by the enemy."[63]

60. (S-GP 2) Msg, State 220696 to Saigon, 141949Z Aug 68, JCS IN 98570. (S) Msg, Saigon 35464 to State, 151135Z Aug 68, JCS IN 99286. (S) Msg, Saigon and COMUSMACV MAC 11243, to ASD (PA) and AsstSecState (PA), 200207Z Aug 68, (with messages on same subject 17 and 18 Aug 68), OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

61. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 195-68, 19 Aug 68. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 25054 to CJCS, 260930Z Aug 68, JCS IN 30143. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 11181 to CJCS, 181232Z Aug 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 11246 to D/JS, 200428Z Aug 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

62. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 11181 to CJCS, 181232Z Aug 68, same file.

63. (TS) Memo, DepDir for Opns, NMCC, to SecDef, "Correspondence Relating to the Latest Situation in South Vietnam," 18 Aug 68, same file.

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The high volume and intensity of enemy activity continued in the days immediately following. Additional targets were assailed, but the enemy achieved no lasting or important successes. Hostile forces were driven out of Tay Ninh on 18-19 August by elements of the US 25th Infantry Division and SVN RF units, using only small arms fire to minimize destruction of civilian life and property. On the night of 20-21 August the attack spread to IV CTZ, which had hitherto largely escaped. On the following night, 20 rounds of 120mm rocket fire fell upon Saigon.[64]

The principal enemy efforts were made against Da Nang and Ban Me Thuot. Fire attacks on outposts around Da Nang on 20 and 21 August were followed by ground assaults. Some enemy sappers penetrated the city on 23 August, but were soon expelled by ARVN and USMC units. COMUSMACV reported that the attack had cost the enemy 1,200 dead.[65]

The attack on Ban Me Thuot took the form of a diversionary assault on a Special Forces camp at Duc Lap, 31 nm away, which began on the night of 22-23 August. An enemy regiment, supported with 122mm rockets and mortars, penetrated the camp but could not overrun it. By 26 August the attackers had been driven out. COMUSMACV believed that the purpose of this attack was to force the withdrawal of US troops from the vicinity of Ban Me Thuot and thus to expose that city to an assault by the 1st NVA Division. This objective was not attained, however. The Duc Lap camp was successfully defended by its CIDG garrison, reinforced by additional CIDG and ARVN

64. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 196-68, 20 Aug 68; 197-68, 21 Aug 68; 198-68, 22 Aug 68; 199-68, 23 Aug 68; 200-68, 24 Aug 68. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 24397 to CJCS, 200740Z Aug 68. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 24529 to CJCS, 210840Z Aug 68, JCS IN 19723. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 25054 to CJCS, 260930Z Aug 68, JCS IN 30143. (S) Msg, Saigon 36074 to State, 221115Z Aug 68, JCS IN 24226. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 11246 to D/JS, 200428Z Aug 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

65. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 199-68, 23 Aug 68; 200-68, 24 Aug 68; 201-68, 26 Aug 68; 202-68, 27 Aug 68. (S-GP 4) COMUSMACV 24858 to CJCS, 240957Z Aug 68. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 25054 to CJCS, 260930Z Aug 68, JCS IN 30143. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 118 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010943Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 36596 to State, 291115Z Aug 68, JCS IN 37720.

units, with US air and artillery support but with no aid from US infantry. General Abrams praised the performance of the SVN forces in this action as "magnificent."[66]

The offensive slackened after approximately a week.[67] It had approximated the May attack in duration, as well as in level of intensity. There had been fewer ground assaults and more attacks by fire than in the preceding offensive. It differed also from its predecessor in that it had begun slowly and built up over a period of several days; in the May offensive, all the major targets had been assailed in the beginning.

Most of the attacks had been carried out by VC local forces; the major VC and NVA units had presumably been held back to exploit any initial success. It was significant that the enemy had made an evident attempt to hold down casualties, instead of flinging his men into the assault without regard to the cost, as in the earlier offensives of 1968. This more cautious strategy had been reflected in a somewhat lower casualty rate. Approximately 8,500 hostile troops were killed in action between 18 and 29 August, according to COMUSMACV's estimate, as compared with 12,000 between 5 and 16 May.[68]

The major assault on Saigon that had been anticipated never materialized. General Abrams nevertheless remained convinced that the capital had been one of the major objectives. The enemy's strategy, he believed, had been flexible, aimed at achieving initial successes to be exploited as opportunity offered. Capture of outposts or of cities near the border (like Tay Ninh) was expected to provide springboards

66. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 200-68, 24 Aug 68; 201-68, 26 Aug 68; 202-68, 27 Aug 68; 203-68, 27 Aug 68. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Aug and Dec 68. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 24858 to CJCS, 240957Z Aug 68. (S) Msg, COMUCMACV MAC 11822 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010943Z Sep 68; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 12129 to CJCS, 080323Z Sep 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 36596 to State, 291115Z Aug 68, JCS IN 37720.

67. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 200-68, 11 Oct 68, Supplement, gives dates 18-24 Oct for the third 1968 offensive.

68. (S) Msg, Saigon 36596 to State, 291115Z Aug 68, JCS IN 37720. (S) "Report on Situation in Vietnam," 26 Aug 68, apparently prepared by NMCC for CJCS, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 11822 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010943Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

noticeable in NVA than in VC units, although some of the latter had had to be filled up with men from NVA, and others had been reduced to recruiting females or males above or below the optimum age. But none of COMUSMACV's commanders suffered from any illusion that the communist forces were disintegrating. "The enemy may not fight as well as he once did," remarked General Abrams, summing up his subordinates' comments, "but he can still prove to be a troublesome foe."[71]

The enemy's increasing reliance on NVA forces was striking. General Wheeler had commented upon it after his return from SVN in July. A CIA assessment prepared two months later, on the basis of estimates furnished by MACV, indicated that 46 of the 58 known enemy regiments consisted entirely of men from NVN, while 9 of the remaining 12 were believed to be over 50 percent North Vietnamese in composition. Even the two regiments known to exist in IV Corps contained some men from the north.[72]

General Abrams' conviction that US and SVN forces had thrown the enemy's attack plans out of kilter received unexpected confirmation from the other side of the globe. An intelligence report forwarded by the Defense Attache in Paris on 31 August ascribed to one of Hanoi's principal delegates to the Paris talks a statement that "Abrams is really hurting us. He seems to know what we are planning to do." Moreover, according to the report, the VC had paid General Abrams a very high compliment: they had marked him for assassination, at all costs, in September, together with his principal subordinates. General Wheeler, commenting on this ominous warning, enjoined General Abrams to "exercise a little extra caution during the weeks ahead." General Abrams replied that he had instituted additional security measures at MACV headquarters and that he and his subordinates were varying their movements to avoid any predictable pattern.[73]

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71. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 11672 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 290805Z Aug 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

72. (S) CIA Memo, "Increasing Role of North Vietnamese in Viet Cong Units," 17 Sep 68, Encl to Memo, Actg DepDir for Intelligence, CIA, to CJCS, 20 Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

73. (S) Msg, Def Attache Paris to Dir DIA and J-2 MACV, 311636Z Aug 68. (S) Msg, CJCS 9951 to COMUSMACV, 031902Z Sep 68; (C) Msg, COMUSMACV 11978 to CJCS, 041146Z Sep 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. A later report from the same source gave the deadline for the assassination as the end of 1968 and asserted that three special commando groups had been formed for the purpose. (S-GP 3) Msg, Def Attache Paris CROC 086 to Dir DIA and J-2 MACV, 301700Z Sep 68, same file.

for assaults on Saigon and other cities. But the scenario did not unfold as the enemy had written it, and his attack never moved beyond the initial stage. "The gradual acceleration of momentum he hoped for was checked at the outset." according to General Abrams.[69]

The failure of the attack was obvious, even more so than in May. Ambassador Bunker ascribed this fact primarily to

> the steady improvement which has taken place in the allied forces: improved intelligence, better all around performance, especially by the ARVN, RF/PF and paramilitary forces, better coordination of all units, the very effective interdiction and spoiling efforts of our forces and skillful and effective application of air power, especially the B-52s. Confidence in their ability to cope with the enemy prevails throughout the Vietnamese and allied forces to a greater degree than ever before.[70]

Part of the explanation, however, probably lay in the declining quality of enemy forces, caused by the replacement of casualties with poorly trained recruits under inexperienced leaders. Senior US commanders, when queried by General Abrams, agreed that NVA troops were deteriorating in training, leadership, and morale. Replacements were being sent in with only one to three months' training, instead of six or eight. Prisoners and defectors testified to the effects of homesickness, fear of allied firepower, food shortages, and disease. No longer was the enemy policing the battlefield as vigorously as before; the number of weapons found abandoned had significantly increased.

The decline in quality was uneven, however, according to the judgment of the commanders. It was most pronounced in units that had been subjected to heaviest military pressure; those located adjacent to the enemy sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia had held up much better. It was also more

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69. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 12129 to CJCS, 080323Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

70. (S) Msg, Saigon 36596 to State, 291115Z Aug 68, JCS IN 37720.

While withdrawing his major forces to their sanctuaries, the enemy also cut down on the flow of replacements from North Vietnam. US estimates of the rate of infiltration (admittedly of somewhat doubtful validity) showed a drop from approximately 33,000 in August to 15,000 in September, with a further decline to 10,000-12,000 in each of the succeeding three months.[77]

The significance of this decline in enemy activity was difficult to appraise, but its consequences were of the utmost importance. By the end of October General Abrams judged that the military situation was favorable enough to justify a decision by the President to cease all bombing of North Vietnam in the hope of beginning negotiations for peace. This decision is described in a later chapter.

The apparent degradation of the enemy's military capabilities, coupled with the growing strength of the RVNAF (as described in the preceding chapter), made it possible to plan for an expansion of the role of SVN's forces in the near future. The Combined Campaign Plan for 1969, issued by MACV and the JGS on 30 September, reflected this development. The corresponding 1968 plan had laid down a broad division of labor between RVNAF and FWMAF units: the former were made primarily responsible for pacification and the latter for destruction of the main VC/NVA forces and bases. The 1969 plan specified that there would be "no functional separation of responsibilities" between RVN and allied forces. "ARVN divisional units," it was stated, "will direct their primary efforts to the destruction of VC/NVA main force units." For this purpose, there was to be a "gradual phase down" of ARVN battalions committed to the support of pacification.[78]

But despite the favorable trend of the war for the allies, there was no indication that the enemy was preparing to abandon the struggle. As early as September there were warnings that he planned yet another of his "winter-spring" offensives, perhaps beginning in the following month. MACV's J-2 concluded that the enemy, far from being discouraged,

77. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 1-18, Fig. 1-10.

78. (S) Combined Campaign Plan 1969, AB 144, 30 Sep 68, JMF 911/350 (30 Sep 68).

Aftermath of the Enemy Defeat

Despite the failure of his August offensive, the enemy maintained a fairly high level of activity during the month of September. The number of enemy-initiated attacks averaged slightly more than 46 per week in that month, as compared with 31 during July and the first half of August. Eleven of the September actions involved forces of battalion size or larger--almost as many as the 12 such attacks recorded in August. Most of the September targets were US Special Forces camps, none of which was captured.[74]

The most serious action in September was another thrust at Tay Ninh. Sharp fighting occurred around the outskirts of that city on 11-12 September; one fire support base was penetrated for a time before the enemy was driven out by US Army forces. There remained some confusion about what happened, but it appeared that some enemy forces (possibly several companies) actually penetrated the city before being ejected.[75]

At the beginning of October the enemy began another period during which he limited his activity to small-scale local attacks, probes, terrorism, and similar annoying but relatively minor actions. For the final quarter of 1968, the weekly rate of enemy-initiated activities dropped to an average of 32. More significantly, only one attack during this three-month period involved forces of battalion size or larger. This action occurred near Loc Ninh (III CTZ) on 13 November, when an estimated 500-700 hostile troops attacked a fire support base defended by an ARVN Ranger battalion. US troops and aircraft were called in and the enemy withdrew, leaving 287 dead on the battlefield. Friendly forces lost only four dead, all ARVN.[76]

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74. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 2-69, 3 Jan 69, Supplement. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Sep 68.

75. (C) Memo for Record, DepDir for Opns, NMCC, "Military Operations in the Tay Ninh City Area," 11 Sep 68; (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 12337 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 120847Z Sep 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Sep 68. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 215-68, 12 Sep 68; 216-68, 13 Sep 68; 217-68, 14 Sep 68.

76. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 2-69, 3 Jan 69, Supplement. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Nov 68. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 268-68, 14 Nov 68; 269-68, 15 Nov 68.

considered that his losses so far had been fully justified by indications that the United States was losing its will to fight. The resignation of Secretary McNamara, the reassignment of General Westmoreland, President Johnson's withdrawal from the 1968 election, the noisy controversy in the United States between "hawks" and doves," the threatened instability of the dollar, and the incessant criticism of US policy by foreign sources--all these developments, when seen from Hanoi, might be fitted together to yield a picture of a nation and its leaders approaching the situation existing in France in 1954. From this viewpoint, it would be unthinkable for the enemy to weaken his resolve or to lower his objectives.79

The month of October came and went with no enemy offensive, but a stream of intelligence continued to warn of plans for large-scale actions.80 General Abrams made only one major readjustment of his forces to meet these threats. Observing a concentration of enemy forces astride the border between Cambodia and III CTZ, he strengthened the defenses of Saigon by bringing down the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) from I CTZ. The movement began late in October and was completed by the middle of the next month.81

Whatever the enemy's military intentions, he was known to be making every effort to repair and rebuild his political and administrative apparatus in South Vietnam, perhaps in anticipation of impending negotiations. Intelligence showed that the Viet Cong were attempting to organize "liberation" or "revolutionary" committees, nominally chosen by election, at every level from district to hamlet, to replace similar groups that had been driven underground or destroyed by allied operations in previous years. This shadow hierarchy could be triumphantly unveiled as the "legitimate" governmental structure at the local level, while the "Alliance of National Democratic and Peace Forces," the "Front" organization formed

79. (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 13146 to CJCS, 281241Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

80. (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 201-68, 14 Oct 68; 202-68, 15 Oct 68; 204-68, 17 Oct 68; 214-68, 31 Oct 68.

81. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 14472 to CINCPAC, 271008Z Oct 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 3-7. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Nov 68.

during the Tet offensive, offered the nucleus of a national "liberation" government to replace the "puppet" regime of President Thieu.[82]

It was obviously necessary to counter this enemy effort. Fortunately the military situation in the closing months of the year made it possible to focus attention on the smaller enemy forces and their local political cohorts, which had now been exposed by the withdrawal of the hard-pressed main forces. "If we are now hopeful of moving from the military to the political contest," observed Ambassador Bunker in a despatch to Washington, "it is primarily because of the success of our military effort." General Abrams accordingly instructed his commanders to expand their spoiling and preemptive operations against main and local forces, base areas, and lines of communication, and at the same time to conduct an intensive drive against the VC political apparatus. They were to cooperate fully with the PHOENIX campaign against the VC infrastructure (see below). General Abrams warned that the enemy must under no circumstances be allowed to win politically what he had been unable to gain on the field of battle.[83]

In a later directive, General Abrams stressed that the war must be viewed as the enemy regarded it--as a single struggle, not one that could be subdivided into big and little battles, or into military and political halves. At the same time, he urged exploitation of the weaknesses in the enemy's logistic system, which was wholly dependent upon the placement of supplies along the intended axes of advance in regions under VC control. Every effort should be made to find and

82. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SACSA to CJCS, "Trip Report," 30 Sep 68, and Encl A, "The Political Situation in the Countryside," OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. (S) Msg, JCS 10895 to COMUSMACV, 242104Z Sep 68; same file, Oct 68 [sic]. (TS-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 2-11 - 2-12. (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 223-68, 14 Nov 68; 246-68, 18 Dec 68.

83. (S) Msg, Saigon 41523 to State, 30 Oct 68, JCS IN 75427. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 13117 to CJCS, 280610Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 68 [sic].

seize these caches, while at the same time destroying the politico-military structure that provided a favorable environment for enemy military operations.[84]

The President, as usual, heartily approved of COMUSMACV's aggressive strategy. Through Secretary Clifford, he directed that "constant, relentless and persistent pressure" be maintained against the enemy in SVN.[85] These instructions remained in effect after the total cessation of bombing and the beginning of peace talks.

Looking toward the onset of the northeast monsoon season, which would begin in November, General Abrams drafted plans for his own "winter-spring offensive" to take advantage of the expected weather patterns. In September he proposed an intensified air interdiction effort in southern NVN and the Laotian panhandle and a vigorous land campaign against enemy bases and infiltration routes in the Delta--the regions where the monsoon would bring favorable weather. He planned to assign additional forces to IV CTZ for this purpose. Admiral McCain and General Wheeler approved this plan, but Secretary Clifford, when apprised of it, questioned the advisability of increasing US strength in the Delta. ARVN troops were carrying most of the burden there, he pointed out, and it seemed undesirable to "Americanize" this theater of the war. General Abrams replied that the US forces involved would consist entirely of helicopter units, except for one US airmobile brigade that would be needed for the duration of the campaign (approximately 90 days) to seal off the Cambodian border. ARVN and VNMC units, assisted by elements of the US 9th Division already in IV CTZ, would sweep the Delta in search of enemy forces and bases.[86]

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84. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 13848 to CINCPAC et al., 130945Z Oct 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 41523 to State, 30 Oct 68, JCS IN 75427.

85. (TS) Msg, JCS 11890 to COMUSMACV, 161605Z Oct 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 68.

86. (TS-NOFORN) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 12535 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 170257Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. (TS-GP 3) CM-3662-68 to SecDef, 20 Sep 68, Att to JCS 2472/364, 21 Sep 68; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Northeast Monsoon Campaign Planning," 5 Oct 68, Att to JCS 2472/364-1, 8 Oct 68; (TS) CM-3723-68 to SecDef, 23 Oct 68, Att to N/H of JCS 2472/364-1, 25 Oct 68; JMF 911/520 (20 Sep 68).

The air interdiction campaign in Laos would make full use of the IGLOO WHITE sensor system, which was already providing valuable information on truck movements in the STEEL TIGER area of operations in southern Laos.[87] Sensors had also proved their value as an adjunct to offensive ground operations; indeed, these devices--acoustic, seismic, and electronic--were emerging as a major technological innovation of the war. In September COMUSMACV evaluated the results of the DUCK BLIND test program as highly successful. He requested permission to proceed with the second phase of the plan, which called for greatly increased use of sensors emplaced by hand or by helicopter. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved this request in October. The expanded program was renamed DUFFEL BAG.[88]

Military Operations After 1 November 1968

Speaking to the nation on 31 October, President Johnson announced that he had ordered an end to all "air, naval, and artillery bombardment" of NVN effective 0800 EST, 1 November. This decision, he said, was based on his conviction that it "can lead to progress toward a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese war."[89]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately issued directives ordering a cessation of all offensive operations against NVN, the DMZ, and the 12-mile territorial waters claimed by NVN, effective at the time indicated by the President (1300Z or 2100H, 1 November). US ground forces were to be positioned south of the DMZ and naval surface units withdrawn below the 17th Parallel. Operations in Laos were not affected, but overflight of NVN or the DMZ by strike forces en route to or from Laotian targets was prohibited. Immediate pursuit into North Vietnamese seas or airspace was authorized "in response to hostile acts and in pursuit of any vessel or aircraft whose actions indicate with reasonable certainty that it is operating in support of the VC/NVA insurgency in South

87. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 231-68, 1 Oct 68.

88. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 200540Z Sep 68; (S-GP 3) JCS 2471/77, 14 Oct 68; (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3414 to CINCPAC, 182028Z Oct 68; JMF 911/321 (20 Sep 68). (TS-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 3-28.

89. Dept of State Bulletin, LIX (18 Nov 68), p. 517. The events leading up to this decision are described in the succeeding chapters.

COMUSMACV also continued to make full use of the tactical capability of his B-52 force. The enormous firepower dispensed by these aircraft, together with the ease with which they could be shifted from one target to another as occasion required, obviated the need to hold back troops to form a "strategic reserve" in the orthodox sense. The Deputy Secretary of Defense, as noted earlier, had authorized a continuance of the maximum B-52 sortie rate (1,800 per month) through 1968, subject to a proposed review of this decision within 60 days, a review which never took place. In October COMUSMACV had recommended that this rate be continued indefinitely until some major change in the situation should warrant a change. Justification for this recommendation was furnished by the results of a careful and comprehensive appraisal of ARC LIGHT effectiveness, begun by J-3 and DIA several months earlier and completed in November. The study concluded that there was no justification for any reduction in B-52 operations, since valid targets for ARC LIGHT strikes exceeded the force capability by a factor of 5 to 1.[103]

Before the Joint Chiefs of Staff had acted on COMUSMACV's recommendation, the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 26 November suggested adoption of a variable rate of 1,400-1,800 sorties per month in 1969, with a total of 19,200 for the entire year (a monthly average of 1,600). This proposal was based on an assumption that the number of high priority targets would fluctuate in response to changes in intensity of the war as a whole. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in reply, provided a detailed refutation of this assumption and at the same time forwarded a copy of the J-3/DIA study of the subject. The matter remained unresolved at the end of 1968.[104]

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103. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS et al., 191152Z Oct 68, JCS IN 48683. (S-GP 3) "ARC LIGHT Follow-On Study," 18 Nov 68, CAG 4-68, JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68).

104. Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "ARC LIGHT Sortie Rate," 26 Nov 68, Att to JCS 2472/389, 27 Nov 68; (S-GP 3) JCSM-711-68 to SecDef, 4 Dec 68 (derived from JCS 2472/389-1, 30 Nov 68); (S-GP 3) CM-3805-68 to SecDef, 4 Dec 68; JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68).

As the year drew to a close, COMUSMACV's monsoon campaign plan was in full swing. SPEEDY EXPRESS, the largest campaign ever undertaken in the Delta, had begun on 30 November. ARVN forces in IV CTZ were using the "pile on" tactic--rapid concentration of forces to smother enemy contacts--developed earlier by US units. A major part of COMUSMACV's assault helicopters and gunships had been moved to the Delta to assist the campaign. Amother center of activity was I CTZ, where at least two enemy divisions--the 2nd and 3rd NVA divisions--were the target of operations involving two USA and two USMC divisions. In III CTZ, US and ARVN units, assisted by the small Thai force, concentrated primarily on clearing the approaches to Saigon and blocking infiltration routes from Cambodia. Smaller operations were underway in II CTZ. All forces had been ordered to provide full support to the accelerated pacification campaign recently initiated by the GVN. A highly promising technique for this purpose had recently been successfully tried out in I CTZ (Operation MEADE RIVER, in Quang Nam Province). It involved a wide cordon thrown about the target area by USMC, ROKMC, ARVN, and National Police units, within which search and clear operations could be conducted with relentless thoroughness.105

The campaign in IV CTZ was supported by a naval operation (SEA LORDS) that began on 1 November, intended to deny the waterways to the enemy and to penetrate into his previously secure strongholds. For this purpose, the Mobile Riverine Force (TF 117) in the Delta had been strengthened by units from TFs 115 and 116, the normal missions of which were GAME WARDEN and MARKET TIME, respectively.106

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105. (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 17450 to CJCS et al., 230940Z Dec 68; MAC 17719, 301109Z Dec 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 42365 to JCS, 160834Z Dec 68, JCS IN 72070. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 3-7 - 3-8. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 274-68, 21 Nov 68; 290-68, 11 Dec 68. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Dec 68.

106. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 012225Z Jan 69, JCS IN 10811. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 17719 to CJCS et al., 301109Z Dec 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 3-16 - 3-19.

Reports of enemy plans to launch another offensive continued to be rife.[107] The most plausible such report pointed to an attack on Saigon scheduled for 13 December. As matters turned out, only small-scale actions took place around the capital at that time, but there was some ground for thinking that the enemy had indeed planned a major attempt that had been aborted by B-52 strikes.[108]

Whatever the enemy's intentions, there was no doubt that he was making an effort to put himself in position to launch another attack if he should so elect. In a message on 24 December, replying to a query from the President, CINCPAC detailed the changes in the enemy's military posture in Southern NVN and nearby Laos since the final curtailment of bombing of NVN on 1 November. His logistic center of gravity had been moved southward; new supply depots had been established close to the DMZ. Supplies and troops now moved southward by train at least as far south as Vinh, below the 19th Parallel, and by ship as far as Dong Hoi, approximately 30 miles north of the DMZ. "At present," reported CINCPAC, "the enemy has the capability of dramatically increasing his force in northern SVN in a matter of approximately two weeks rather than about two months as in the past." Even more ominous was the observed shipment of heavy AAA ammunition (85mm and 100mm) into both Laos and SVN, suggesting an intention to escalate the level of conflict, not merely to maintain the status quo in SVN. "If this trend continues, and there appears to be little reason to anticipate otherwise," warned CINCPAC, "a direct and continuing threat of substantial proportions will be created for free world forces early in 1969."[109]

Warnings of an impending winter-spring offensive by the enemy had a familiar ring. So did proposals for various holiday ceasefires, which had become a standard feature of

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107. (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 215-68, 1 Nov 68; 227-68, 20 Nov 68; 234-68, 2 Dec 68; 239-68, 9 Dec 68; 241-68, 11 Dec 68; 242-68, 12 Dec 68; 244-68, 16 Dec 68; 245-68, 17 Dec 68; 246-68, 18 Dec 68; 247-68, 19 Dec 68; 254-68, 31 Dec 68. (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 42365 to JCS, 160834Z Dec 68, JCS IN 72070; 43934, 230830Z Dec 68, JCS IN 85677.

108. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 14541 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 121701Z Dec 68; (S-NOFORN-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 17063 to CJCS et al., 131108Z Dec 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68.

109. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 240620Z Dec 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68.

the Vietnam war, solemnly announced at the end of each calendar year. As in 1967, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC recorded their opposition to any such proposals; nevertheless, the United States agreed to a 24-hour Christmas truce, which was observed from 241800 to 251800 December (Saigon time).110 For New Years Day, the VC announced a three-day truce, from 30 December to 2 January, but allied forces observed no ceasefire on this occasion, which, as President Thieu pointed out, had no significance for Vietnamese.111 The matter of a Tet truce was still under discussion between the United States and the GVN, although they had tentatively agreed on a 24-hour period.112 It was to be expected that the allies would approach this subject cautiously, in light of their disastrous experience with the last Tet holiday, which the enemy had chosen as the occasion for his largest military effort.

Political Development and Pacification

Military success on the battlefield, as well as diplomatic success in bringing NVN to the conference table, would go for naught unless the nascent Republic of Vietnam could develop the political strength and stability to enable it ultimately to stand alone as an independent, noncommunist nation after the war ended. Fortunately developments during 1968 suggested that the newly planted institutions of democracy in SVN, fragile though they might be, were growing stronger.

Immediately after the Tet offensive, Ambassador Bunker had commended the performance of the Saigon government, which, far from collapsing as the enemy had hoped, was responding to the emergency in an encouraging manner. Throughout the rest of the year, Mr. Bunker sent back reports that indicated that

110. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 16283 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 270403Z Nov 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 272258Z Nov 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 16464 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 301041Z Nov 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 68. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8246 to CINCPAC, 232256Z Dec 68, same file, Dec 68. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 302-68, 26 Dec 68.

111. (S) Msg, Saigon 43858 to State, 2 Dec 68, JCS IN 45810. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8467 to CINCPAC, 280017Z Dec 68.

112. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 16464 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 301041Z Nov 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 68. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 8246 to CINCPAC, 232256Z Dec 68, same file, Dec 68.

this cautiously optimistic assessment continued to be justified. The elected civilian government gained in strength and confidence. Rumors that it would be overthrown by a coup, which arose several times during the year, proved groundless. President Thieu grew in stature, increasingly playing the role of a civilian head of an elected government rather than the leader of a military junta. He appeared to possess a good understanding of what was required in his country's situation. Most important, he recognized clearly the cardinal importance of the pacification campaign and of the establishment of effective institutions of local government. He made a point of keeping in touch with public opinion through frequent trips to rural as well as urban areas.

Vice President Ky, whose incipient rivalry with Thieu represented a source of possible instability, showed himself willing to cooperate, on the surface at least. His influence, and thus his capacity for mischief, tended to decline as time went by. The legislature (National Assembly) remained in session during most of the year. It compiled a record that Ambassador Bunker judged as creditable, marked principally by the enactment of a mobilization law, and showed a willingness both to cooperate with the executive and to assert its authority against that branch when occasion demanded.

Political development was accompanied by economic progress, although in this sphere of the national life the effects of the Tet offensive had been much more marked. All of the refugees created by that offensive had been resettled by September, and most of the physical destruction had been repaired by the end of the year. A notable feature of economic development in 1968 was the spread of a new strain of "miracle" rice productive of greatly increased yields of that all-important crop. President Thieu frequently exhorted his country's farmers to take advantage of this innovation.

An important step toward SVN's political maturity occurred in May 1968, when President Thieu dismissed the somewhat ineffective prime minister, Nguyen Van Loc, and replaced him with Tran Van Huong, a civilian politician with a reputation for honesty and integrity who had run third in the presidential election of 1967. The fact that this change was made in a constitutional manner, in response to legitimate civilian pressures for more effective government, was in itself noteworthy. Huong's appointment gave the Thieu

administration a much broader political base. His vigorous leadership soon made itself felt in several ways: a stepped-up attack on corruption, a strengthening of the forces of local self-defense, and a new impetus to the campaign against the VC infrastructure, and progress in land reform.

Recognizing the need for a broad and united noncommunist political movement with firm roots throughout the country, Thieu and Huong launched their own party, the Lien Minh, or National Alliance for Social Revolution, in June 1968. It was created by amalgamation of some 60 splinter groups, of the kind that had been the curse of the nation's political life. The new party drew up its own program for social action, aimed at the betterment of the life of the population, although this remained largely on paper.

Less than six months after the Tet offensive, South Vietnam's political progress had become evident even to the New York Times. "Saigon Is Building More Vital Regime," read the headline of a story from Saigon that appeared in that newspaper on 25 July. The reporter described, among other developments, the increasingly effective leadership of President Thieu, the progress in weeding out corrupt and inefficient officials, and the rising confidence of the National Assembly and its members.

As would be expected, there remained flaws in the fabric of South Vietnam's democracy, which Ambassador Bunker did not overlook. The Saigon government showed occasional heavy-handedness in dealing with dissident groups and with press criticism. Its most deplorable action in US eyes was the arrest and prosecution of Truong Dinh Dzu, who had run second in the 1967 presidential election as a "peace" candidate, for publicly advocating an alliance with the NLF.

A matter of particular interest to the United States was a shift in official and public sentiment in SVN toward a possible political settlement. The prospect was viewed with apprehension immediately after Tet; many feared a US "sellout" that would leave them exposed to the VC (whose tender mercies had been revealed in a mass slaughter of their opponents while they occupied part of Hue). But growing confidence in the armed forces and political institutions of SVN made it possible to view with equanimity the prospect of an end to the war. By the end of 1968 the need to settle the conflict through negotiation and compromise was generally recognized by spokesmen for public opinion in SVN.

Ambassador Bunker believed that this development owed something to assurances given to President Thieu by President Johnson in July, when the two leaders held a two-day meeting in Honolulu. They had agreed that the RVN "should be a full participant playing a leading role in discussions concerning the substance of a final settlement" and that the two governments would "act in full consultation with each other, and with their allies." The United States had also promised that it would not "support the imposition of a 'coalition government,' or any other form of government, on the people of South Vietnam," who alone possessed the right to determine their future.

The US decision to stop all bombing of NVN on 1 November in return for the beginning of negotiations led to a dispute over the participation of the GVN in the negotiations. But even this controversy (acrimonious, though fortunately of short duration) had its favorable aspect, in Mr. Bunker's opinion. The independent stance publicly proclaimed by President Thieu strengthened his image as a leader in the eyes of his countrymen, and helped to discredit Hanoi's insistent attacks on him as a US "puppet."113

A vital aspect of the politico-economic development of SVN was the pacification campaign--the struggle for the loyalty of South Vietnam's peasantry. On this front, also, the news in 1968 was generally encouraging. The program was seriously disrupted by the Tet offensive. Seventeen of the 51 ARVN battalions assigned to support pacification had to be withdrawn to defend the cities; the organization created to administer the program, headed by Ambassador Robert W. Komer, Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS, was temporarily diverted to relief activities. But as the confusion subsided, it became evident that the disruption was less extensive than at first feared, being concentrated principally in I and IV CTZs. Out of approximately 5,000 small outposts or watchtowers, less than 480 had been abandoned or overrun. Losses among the forces connected with pacification amounted

113. The foregoing account of political and economic trends during 1968 is summarized from Ambassador Bunker's weekly situation reports to the President and from (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," pp. 5-22 - 5-29. For the newspaper story cited above, see NY Times, 25 Jul 68, 1. For the Johnson-Thieu meeting of 19-20 Jul 68, see Dept of State Bulletin, LIX (12 Aug 68), pp. 162-165.

to approximately 6,600 RF/PF, 460 police, and 160 RD cadres. Most of these had been killed or captured; desertions were encouragingly low in number. Moreover, the pacification organization was quick to recover. The proportion of the population living in "relatively secure" areas--those graded A, B, or C according to the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) instituted in January 1967--dropped from 67.2 percent at the end of Janury to 59.8 percent a month later, but by the end of March it had risen again to 61.0 percent. Ambassador Komer estimated that approximately 255 hamlets--a very small proportion--had reverted to outright VC control. Of 629 RD teams, 545, or 87 percent, had returned to their hamlets by the end of March, and 519 were sleeping there overnight. For the separate Truong Son (Montagnard) cadre teams, the corresponding figures showed that 88 out of 110 had returned to their assignments.114

Recovery of lost ground continued throughout the rest of the year, according to the indicators of progress employed by US and SVN pacification officials. The declining effectiveness of the enemy's two subsequent attacks was reflected in their lesser impact on pacification. In the May offensive, only one battalion and one company of the ARVN had to be repositioned to defend provincial or district capitals, and only six RD teams were withdrawn. By the end of the month the percentage of population living in "relatively secure" areas stood at 62.1 percent, while that under VC control had declined from 17.9 percent to 17.6 percent during the month of May. The August attack had no discernible physical effect at all. By October, 69.8 percent of the population was considered relatively secure--more than on the eve of Tet. A month later, it had risen to 73.3 percent, slightly higher than the goal that CINCPAC had set for the end of the year (72.0 percent). The increase of

114. (S) Msgs, Saigon 18582 to State, 8 Feb 68; 20175, 22 Feb 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 22579 to State, 20 Mar 68, JCS IN 85672. (S) Msg, Saigon 22386 to State, 181200Z Mar 68, JCS IN 78612. (C) Msg, Saigon 23150 to State, 27 Mar 68, JCS IN 97060. (S) Msg, Saigon 24361 to State, 9 Apr 68, JCS IN 33674, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68, (filed under date 10 Apr, with a convenient tabular summary of the statistics given in the message). (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 0649 to CINCPAC, 051500Z Mar 68, JCS IN 52109.

3.5 percent during November was the largest for any month since the HES was instituted. At the same time, the proportion under VC control dropped from 15.3 percent in October to 13.4 percent in November, and that in the "contested" category, from 14.9 to 13.3 percent.[115]

Progress in pacification, together with military success, contributed to improved results in the Chieu Hoi program, the GVN psychological warfare operation aimed at inducing defections from enemy ranks. The number of "ralliers" (Hoi Chanh) had reached a high monthly rate during the first half of 1967, but declined in the last six months. In January 1968, 1,179 defectors were recorded, an increase of 290 over the preceding month. The Tet offensive was followed by a sharp drop, but after the end of March the rate resumed its upward climb, as shown by the following table:

Month	Number of Ralliers
January	1,179
February	763
March	599
April	1,060
May	1,039
June	1,064
July	1,844
August	1,451
September	1,501
October	2,381
November	2,269
December	3,148
Total	18,298

Although the total was almost 50 percent below the corresponding figure for 1967 (27,178), the upward spurt during the last three months of 1968 was highly encouraging.[116]

115. (S) Msgs, Saigon 27497 to State, 16 May 68, JCS IN 18320; 30500, 20 Jun 68, JCS IN 85053; 37046, 4 Sep 68, JCS IN 48279. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 5-4.

116. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 3-21 - 3-22, 5-8, 5-15 - 5-17.

Closely related to pacification and psychological warfare was the PHOENIX (PHUNG HOANG) program for eliminating, by defection, capture, or death, the Viet Cong's political infrastructure (VCI). This was a politico-military operation directed by District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers (DIOCCs). It grew out of an earlier program (ICEX) begun in 1967 under US auspices. The GVN participated under a directive issued in December 1967, but the program lagged until July 1968, when Prime Minister Huong placed the weight of his government behind it.117

When the program began, the GVN set a goal of 1,000 "eliminations" per month for 1968. Initial achievement fell far short of hopes; approximately 600 VCI members were eliminated during each of the first two months of the year. Immediately thereafter, however, the number shot up to over 1,200 and remained near that mark until October 1968, when there was a further increase to over 1,400.118 The support given this program by COMUSMACV during the latter part of 1968 had already been noted. General DePuy, SACSA, who visited SVN in September, characterized the improved results of the PHOENIX program as a "natural outgrowth of the improved overall military/political situation." However, he found the program in its infancy. The numbers of DIOCCs remained far short of what was required, and procedures for investigating, trying, and incarcerating VCI members were quite inadequate.119

In the final analysis, all hopes for pacification were dependent upon effective local defense against communist force. The formation of volunteer self-defense units at the lowest level, able to perform guard duty and thus successively to free the PF, the RF, and the ARVN for offensive operations, was another program pushed forward by Premier Huong. It had its nucleus in a system of hamlet militia, which, after lagging for months, was given a boost by the large number of volunteers who came forward after the Tet offensive. Ambassador Komer reported that as of the end of March, 22,000

117. Ibid., pp. 5-19 - 5-20. (S) Msg, Saigon 31757 to State, 4 Jul 68, JCS IN 22071. (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 25488 to CINCPAC et al., 300435Z Aug 68, JCS IN 39329. (TS-GP 1) Encl B to Memo, SACSA to CJCS, "Trip Report," 30 Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

118. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 5-20, 5-21.

119. (TS-GP 1) Encl B to Memo, SACSA to CJCS, "Trip Report," 30 Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

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116. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 3-21 - 3-22, 5-8, 5-15 - 5-17.

Clifford. It was agreed that, as soon as the attack was manifestly underway, the United States would make clear, through briefings, press conferences, and other announcements, that the action had been fully expected, that US public opinion was one of the targets, and that there was every prospect of another enemy defeat. As the attack developed, successful US and ARVN actions would be stressed, but excessive optimism would at all times be carefully avoided.[60]

The plan was overtaken by events on the night of 17-18 August, when the enemy launched fire and ground attacks at a number of objectives, principally US and ARVN military installations in III CTZ, plus two cities--Loc Ninh and Tay Ninh--on the western edge of that zone. All were repelled except the assault on Tay Ninh, which was conducted by six battalions. Four were halted outside the city, but the other two penetrated and dug in.[61]

General Abrams considered that this attack signaled the beginning of a general offensive but recommended that no announcement of that conclusion be made until events of the next few days had removed all doubt. He thought that these initial operations were diversionary and that the real objectives had yet to be revealed. "We are in good shape everywhere in the country except in Tay Ninh city," he reported on 18 August. "We have got to get the enemy out of this town and promptly."[62] General Wheeler advised the Secretary of Defense (through the NMCC) that the situation "is developing as anticipated by US intelligence," and that "General Abrams can repel any attack made by the enemy."[63]

60. (S-GP 2) Msg, State 220696 to Saigon, 141949Z Aug 68, JCS IN 98570. (S) Msg, Saigon 35464 to State, 151135Z Aug 68, JCS IN 99286. (S) Msg, Saigon and COMUSMACV MAC 11243, to ASD (PA) and AsstSecState (PA), 200207Z Aug 68, (with messages on same subject 17 and 18 Aug 68), OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

61. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 195-68, 19 Aug 68. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 25054 to CJCS, 260930Z Aug 68, JCS IN 30143. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 11181 to CJCS, 181232Z Aug 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 11246 to D/JS, 200428Z Aug 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

62. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 11181 to CJCS, 181232Z Aug 68, same file.

63. (TS) Memo, DepDir for Opns, NMCC, to SecDef, "Correspondence Relating to the Latest Situation in South Vietnam," 18 Aug 68, same file.

members of this organization had received training and 5,000 had been armed. At the same time, analogous urban organizations, known as civil defense groups, had come into existence, and had enrolled 63,599 members (6,888 of them armed).[120]

In August these organizations were combined to form the People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF), and a rapid expansion began, in which both men and women were enrolled. The government began to overcome a long-standing reluctance to distribute weapons on a large scale lest they fall into the wrong hands. By the end of September, according to GVN, 658,934 persons had been enrolled in the PSDF, of whom 239,264 had received training, while 58,318 weapons had been issued.[121]

Encouraged by indications of progress in the political and psychological offensive against the communist apparatus, the GVN, with US encouragement, adopted a plan for an Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC). It was to begin on 1 November and run for a three-month period, as a kind of trial run for a similar effort during 1969. The general approach was to concentrate on those hamlets in the "contested" categories (D or E under the HES) and to upgrade them to relative security (category C or higher). This objective, if accomplished, would give the GVN at least nominal control of 83 percent of the population and 73 percent of the hamlets, thus putting it in a favorable position to compete with the communists after hostilities ended. The "Accelerated Pacification Campaign" (APC) was intended as the first step. It set a goal of approximately 1,000 hamlets (later increased to 1,263) to be upgraded from D or E to C by 1 February. Other targets set for the APC were: 3,000 VCI "neutralizations" during each of the three months, a total of 5,000 ralliers, and a strength of 1,000,000 for the PSDF, of whom 200,000 would be armed.[122]

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120. (S) Msgs, Saigon 22579 to State, 20 Mar 68, JCS IN 85672; 24361, 9 Apr 68, JCS IN 33674; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68.

121. (S) Msgs, Saigon 34694 to State, 7 Aug 68, JCS IN 84286; 36074, 22 Aug 68, JCS IN 24226; 40697, 19 Oct 68, JCS IN 51528.

122. (S) Msg, Saigon 39342 to State, 030600Z Oct 68, JCS IN 14623. (TS-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, pp. 5-4 - 5-7; (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 012225Z Jan 68, JCS IN 10811.

Nonetheless it seemed probable, according to General Wheeler, that another large-scale enemy effort was impending. MACV's J-2 believed that enemy forces in I CTZ and around Saigon would have completed regrouping and refitting in time to launch attacks within a few weeks, probably about the middle of August. It appeared, however, that General Abrams possessed enough forces to cope with any offensive.[53]

After returning to Washington and reporting his conclusions to the President, General Wheeler told COMUSMACV that the trip "was a great success insofar as Secretary Clifford and I are concerned." At a White House luncheon, Mr. Clifford had praised General Abrams and his subordinates "in the highest terms." "I hope," concluded the Chairman, "that his report and mine have damped some of the anxieties existent earlier here in Washington."[54]

At the same time that he informed COMUSMACV of these developments, General Wheeler took the opportunity to clarify his thinking regarding the impending enemy attack. Reviewing evidence of enemy dispositions available in Washington, the Chairman observed that the enemy appeared to be in a position to attack with division-size forces along the border and simultaneously with smaller units around Saigon. Such a pattern of attack, he observed, "would pose the greatest problems to you and your subordinate commanders."[55]

General Abrams, in reply, doubted that the regimental-size units around Saigon were strong enough to attack. He thought it probable that at least one division would be employed against the capital, probably after diversionary actions had been launched elsewhere. He added that he intended "to accommodate the enemy in seeking battle and in fact to anticipate him wherever possible." He had directed his subordinates to make every effort to find, fix, and destroy enemy forces before they could attack. General Wheeler showed this message to the President, who requested

53. (TS) CM-3489-68 to Pres, 19 Jul 68, Encl to JCS 2472/331, 22 Jul 68, JMF 911/399 (19 Jul 68) sec 1. (S) MACV Briefing for SecDef, 15 Jul 68, same file, sec 1A.
54. (S) Msg, JCS 8442 to COMUSMACV, 261911Z Jul 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 68.
55. Ibid.

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Despite the somewhat uneven record of pacification in 1968, the overall results were encouraging enough to induce the GVN to raise its sights for the coming year. The pacification objectives announced for 1969 included the following: to bring 90 percent of the population into the "relatively secure" category; to eliminate 33,000 VCI members; to establish local government in every village; to expand the PSDF to 2,000,000; and to rally 20,000 Hoi Chanh. Priority areas for the 1969 program were selected, without reference to provincial boundaries, on the basis of population density, strategic location, and economic potential. Emphasis was to be placed upon strengthening local self-government by granting more autonomy to village councils, particularly in the development and supervision of self-help projects.128

To Ambassador Bunker, appraising the success of the nation-building effort at the end of 1968, the accomplishments of the passing year seemed to promise well for the future. In a message to the President, Mr. Bunker drew attention to a number of actions that were still required: to improve the effectiveness of the government, especially in rural areas; to develop a sound political organization; to strengthen further the RVNAF, particularly the territorial forces; and to provide a better standard of living for the masses. But, continued the Ambassador,

> I think it is undeniable that progress has been and is being made in all of these areas. What is especially encouraging is the fact that the rate of progress has accelerated in recent months. I am convinced that the tide is running more strongly with us now than at any time in the past. I believe that 1968 will go into history as the year in which the strength and love of freedom of the South Vietnamese people was most severely tested and not found wanting. For all of us, it has been a long year of great sacrifice. I am convinced that if we continue patient and confident in our own strength, we will get next year the kind of peace we have sought through so many grim trials.129

128. Ibid., II, pp. 5-31 - 5-34.
129. (S)Msg, Saigon 45163 to State, 19 Dec 68, JCS IN 79360.

1,800 per-month figure only through June, stipulating that it should drop to 1,400 thereafter. He announced this decision as part of the Program 6 reinforcement package.[48]

The reduced monthly rate of 1,400 sorties would cost approximately $1 billion, as Mr. Nitze pointed out to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 April. A further reduction to 800, he continued, would cut this cost almost in half. He therefore asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study carefully the effectiveness of the ARC LIGHT program and to forward their findings to him, with their assessment of the relative effectiveness of monthly rates of 800, 1,200, and 1,400 sorties.[49]

In an interim reply on 23 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued strongly against any reduction in the 1,800 rate. The full capability of the B-52 would be needed, they declared, to support offensive operations then underway and to sustain the expanded interdiction campaign that had become essential now that most of NVN was safe from bombing. Secretary Clifford accordingly reaffirmed for the time being the existing 1,800 monthly rate.[50]

On 29 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the results of a more careful study of the effectiveness of ARC LIGHT. It was the unanimous testimony of field force commanders in SVN, they reported, that this program "makes a valuable contribution to achievement of US objectives in Southeast Asia and is a major factor in preventing the enemy from pressing his offensive plans." It was impossible statistically to evaluate its effectiveness or to compare various monthly rates. But even the maximum allocation of 1,800 sorties was insufficient to strike all available targets in

48. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 8069 to CINCPAC, 220008Z Mar 68 (readdressed by CINCPAC as 220553Z Mar 68, info JCS), JCS IN 87562. (S-GP 3) JCS 2472/254-2, 2 Apr 68, JMF 911/323 (13 Feb 68). (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS et al., "Southeast Asia Deployment Program 6," 4 Apr 68, JMF 907/374 (14 Mar 68).

49. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "B-52 Sortie Rate," 15 Apr 68, Att to JCS 2472/274, 17 Apr 68, JMF 911/323 (15 Apr 68).

50. (S-GP 3) JCSM-257-68 to SecDef, 23 Apr 68 (derived from JCS 2472/270-1, 18 Apr 68); (S) Memo, Mil Asst to SecDef to CJCS et al., "B-52 Sortie Rate," 29 Apr 68, Att to JCS 2472/270-2, 1 May 68; JMF 911/323 (15 Apr 68).

Political complications were introduced into the situation by the fact that the personnel of the 1/18 Cavalry, aided by relatives, had begun agitating to escape assignment to SVN; the White House and Congress had been bombarded with mail on the subject. To cancel its planned redeployment, even on wholly military grounds, might give the appearance of yielding to this pressure and thus start an unfortunate chain reaction. Nonetheless Secretary Clifford, after discussing the matter with Generals Wheeler and Westmoreland, decided to approve General Abrams' request. Accordingly, the heavy equipment of the 1/18 Cavalry was sent to SVN but the unit itself was reassigned to STRAF. No change was made in the Program 6 personnel ceiling.[133]

A noteworthy addition to MACV's Naval component in 1968 was the battleship NEW JERSEY, which was taken out of mothballs and reactivated for duty in Vietnam. Arriving on station on 30 September, it was assigned as part of the naval gunfire support force, relieving a cruiser that had been providing the backbone of the SEA DRAGON campaign.[134]

At the end of the year the strength of US forces in South Vietnam remained slightly below the authorized Program 6 ceiling, as indicated by the following table:

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133. (S) Msgs, CSA WDC 13937 to COMUSMACV, 121816Z Sep 68; WDC 14065, 132333Z Sep 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. (C) Msg ODCSOPS/OD DA 881149, to DA et al., 242341Z Sep 68; (U) OSA, "Information for Members of Congress," 25 Sep 68; J-3 Pac Div File, II B 4b(c) 1/18 Armored Cav Sqdn.

134. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to JCS, "Deployment Adjustment Request (N-68-10)," 16 May 68, with DAR, 25 Apr 68, submitted by J-3, JMF 907/374 (1 Mar 68). (S) Fact Sheet on USS NEW JERSEY Operations off VN Coast, 30 Sep-22 Oct 68, OCJCS Bulky File 091 Vietnam Oct 68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 3-18.

The air campaign continued in both NVN and Laos. During July, 14,647 attack sorties were flown over NVN below the 19th Parallel, as compared with a monthly average of 9,149 in the preceding quarter. For the period July through September 1968, the number totaled 38,334, as compared with 27,447 flown during the three previous months. In the Laotian panhandle, where unfavorable monsoon weather continued to prevail, approximately 3,000 sorties per month were flown during the third quarter, in contrast with an average of 4,596 for the second. Operation TURNPIKE, the regular employment of B-52s in the interdiction campaign in Laos, was discontinued on 15 June, but ARC LIGHT strikes continued to be available on a case by case basis.[43]

Unfortunately, none of these efforts sufficed to stem the flow of reinforcements from NVN. The enemy continued to send men southward at a rate of 30,000 or more each month through the months of June, July, and August.[44] By so doing, he made up most of the losses he had suffered in his two sanguinary repulses in February and May. In June, according to MACV estimates, enemy strength in South Vietnam totaled approximately 215,000--not much less than the peak figure of 222,000 in October 1965. But there had been a significant change in the composition of this force since that date. NVA troops in October 1965 had accounted for only 26 percent of the enemy strength; by June 1968 they made up 70 percent of the total. A decline in the quality of the enemy units was also noticeable; many of the new recruits from NVN had been sent forward hastily with inadequate training.[45]

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43. (S) OASD(SA), "Interdiction Campaign Since March 31," 22 Aug 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68. (S-NOFORN) CIA/DIA, "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam, 1 Jul-31 Oct 68," (S-3378/AP-4A). (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 4-8, Fig. 4-2. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 18202 to CDR 7th AF, 250141Z Jun 68, JCS IN 92362. (S-NOFORN-GP 3) Combat Analysis Group, J-3, "Statistical Digest of Military Developments in Southeast Asia," CAG Statistical Series, vol. I, No 7, 3 Feb 69.

44. (TS-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 1-18, Fig. 1-10.

45. General Wheeler reported these conclusions in July 1968, following a visit to South Vietnam (which is described in a later section of this chapter). (TS) CM-3489-68 to Pres, 19 Jul 68; Att to JCS 2472/331, 22 Jul 68, JMF 911/399 (19 Jul 68).

Strength of US Forces in SVN as of end of 1968[135]

Service	Personnel Authorized	Personnel Actual	Infantry Bns/ Separate Cavalry Sqdns	Divisional Cavalry Sqdns/Recon Bns	Tank Bns	Artillery Bns	Air Defense Bns	Strike Acft Sqdns	Recon/Electronic Acft Sqdns	Interceptor Acft Detachments
Army	368,309	360,034	86	6	3	61	4	-	-	-
Navy	37,409	36,346	-	-	-	-	-	16	7	-
Marine Corps	82,241	80,792	21	2	2	10-2/3	1	11	1	-
Air Force	61,541	59,029	-	-	-	-	-	42	13	3
Coast Guard	-	443	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	549,500	536,644	107	8	5	71-2/3	5	69(1)	21(2)	3

(1) Plus 3 detachments (1 AF, 2 Navy).
(2) Plus 5 AF detachments.

135. (S) NMCC, "Summary of US and Third Nation Military Units in Southeast Asia," 30 Dec 68. (Personnel figures are as of 26 December.)

of the Khe Sanh withdrawal be carefully planned in order to minimize adverse publicity and triumphant enemy propaganda.37

There followed several days of intensive discussion between Washington, Saigon, and Honolulu of the wording of a suitable press release. The version finally approved declared that the enemy now had at least eight divisions in I CTZ--two more than in January--and was therefore capable of mounting "several sizeable attacks concurrently." It followed that "mobile forces, tied to no specific terrain, must be used to the utmost to attack, intercept, reinforce, or take whatever action is most appropriate to meet the enemy threats."38 This announcement was released by MACV headquarters on 27 June (Saigon time). The withdrawal began several days later and was completed on 7 July.39

The new strategy adopted in northern I CTZ was connected with a change in the concept of defense against infiltration through the DMZ. The DUEL BLADE anti-infiltration barrier had envisioned a line of strong points along the border of the DMZ near the coast, linked by sensors and observation towers, with additional sensors clustered in the defiles of the mountainous terrain farther west. Construction of the strong points, however, had been seriously hindered by enemy artillery and mortar fire from the DMZ. When the siege of Khe Sanh began in January 1968, work on the barrier was suspended. After the Tet offensive, a new plan which stressed the use of mobile forces for defense, was drawn up and approved by COMUSMACV in June. Work on the strong-point obstacle system

37. (TS) Msgs, JCS 6703 to COMUSMACV, 181355Z Jun 68; JCS 6781, 191959Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, JCS 6844 to COMUSMACV, 202134Z Jun 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68.

38. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8250 to CJCS, 220420Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, JCS 6929 to COMUSMACV, 221804Z Jun 68; (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 230715Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, JCS 7043 to COMUSMACV, 252257Z Jun 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 8515 to CJCS, 261202Z Jun 68; (TS) JCS 7068 to COMUSMACV, 261653Z Jun 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68.

39. NY Times, 27 Jun 68, 1. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 8756 to CJCS et al., 010920Z Jul 68; MAC 9072, 070954Z Jul 68; OCJCS File 24-Hour Summaries 1 through 50.

The only significant increase in third-country strength during 1968 came from Thailand, which had sent a regiment to SVN in 1967. Extensive discussions among the Joint Chiefs of Staff, COMUSMACV, and COMUSMACTHAI, and between the US and Thai Governments, eventuated in an agreement in 1967 that approximately 10,000 men would be added to the small Thai force.[139] Accordingly, some 5,500 men of the RTA Black Panther Division landed in SVN in July and August 1968. The rest of the force was scheduled for deployment in January 1969.[140] Australia increased her contribution to the SVN war by sending a tank squadron to SVN in February and March 1968, in accord with a decision reached in 1967.[141]

The Republic of the Philippines, on the other hand, withdrew approximately 230 men of its Civic Action Group. President Marcos had at first announced that half of the 2,000-man PHILCAG would be withdrawn because of political and budgetary pressure, but US intervention induced him to reconsider this decision.[142]

The total strength of the FWMAF in SVN as of the end of 1968 was 65,731 men. This force contribution, amounting to about 12 percent of the US strength, had a political and psychological as well as a military value. The following table shows the distribution of this strength among the nations involved.

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139. (S) COMUSMACV Command History, 1967, I, pp. 272-276.

140. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Jul 68. (S) Memo, DepDir for Opns, NMCC, to Bromley Smith, White House, "Request for Information," 7 Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

141. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 9322 to CINCPAC, 030145Z Apr 68, JCS IN 20746.

142. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 280913Z Jul 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jul 68. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 10366 to CJCS, 010901Z Aug 68; (S-GP 4) DJSM-976-68 to CJCS, 3 Aug 68; (S) Msg, JCS 8884 to CINCPAC, 062036Z Aug 68; same file, Aug 68.

Aside from the continuing attacks on Saigon already described, the most notable enemy action after the middle of May was an abortive effort in Kontum Province (II CTZ), apparently aimed at the city of the same name Anticipating an attack in this region, COMUSMACV had reinforced Kontum Province with the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (drawn from III CTZ), and had concentrated B-52 strikes on the gathering enemy forces. On 25 May, in an apparent beginning of the attack, hostile units struck at several fire support bases surrounding Kontum city. Some bunkers were overrun and occupied, but were promptly recaptured. Although skirmishes continued in the general area, the threatened offensive never materialized, apparently because it had been preempted by US air strikes and ground operations.33

By the first week in June the number of attacks initiated by the enemy, which had soared to 277 for the week of 5-11 May, had dropped to 50. The figure declined further in July, reaching a low of 27 for the week of 28 July-3 August. In contrast, the enemy had launched an average of 64 attacks per week during the five weeks preceding the May offensive. Five of those attacks had involved forces of battalion size or larger. During May there were 17 battalion-sized attacks; six took place in June and only two in July.34

Encouraging evidence of military progress appeared after the May offensive in the form of group surrenders of enemy personnel. The first such incident during the entire war occurred on 1 May in Thua Thien Province, when 95 enemy troops surrendered to elements of the US 101st Airborne Division. A number of similar incidents took place during June. Noteworthy was the surrender of 31 men, led by their commander, in Gia Dinh Province--the first organized unit to give up. The largest group consisted of 141 men, who gave themselves up to VNMC units near Saigon on 19 June.35

33. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 3-5. (S) Sowers, VC/NVA Operations and Activities, p. 160. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 125-68, 27 May 68. (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 15438 to CJCS, 290841Z May 68, JCS IN 42518; 15856, 020950Z Jun 68, JCS IN 49697. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 16652 to CJCS, 100940Z Jun 68, JCS IN 64017. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," May 68.
34. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 200-68, 11 Oct 68, Supplement.
35. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, p. 254.

has already been noted. Its consequences were greater for the civilian economy of SVN than for the US military effort, which primarily employed airlift and intracoastal water transportation.[144]

Some thought had to be given to the day when it would be necessary to begin dismantling the huge supply complex in SVN. Planning for the end of hostilities (T-day) had begun in 1967. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved CINCPAC OPLAN 67-69, which provided for withdrawal of US and FWMA forces (except for a MAAG which might include as many as 13,425 men) within six months after fulfillment of the conditions set forth in the Manila Communique.[145] In October 1967 Secretary McNamara circulated draft memorandums to serve as guidelines for the preparation of detailed T-day plans by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Services. Following review and revision, these directives were promulgated on 25 July 1968. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were made responsible for preparing redeployment plans covering three alternative assumptions. The first was that withdrawal would be completed within six months, except for approximately 30,000 US and FWMA troops, including both a MAAG and a small combat force; the other two allowed twelve months for withdrawal, with retention of either 30,000 men or of a larger force (two full divisions plus a MAAG). All three alternatives assumed a "six month period of uncertainty" between T-day and the beginning of withdrawal (R-day).[146]

On 3 September the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent the Secretary of Defense an initial redeployment schedule, limited to major combat forces, to cover the three assumed contingencies. Mr. Nitze, in reply, suggested some minor changes to be

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144. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 012225Z Jan 69, JCS IN 10811. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, chs. 6, 7.

145. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC OPLAN 67-69 (originally 67-68), "A Post-Hostilities Plan for Vietnam," 31 Mar 67; (TS) JCS 2054/705-5, 21 Jun 67; JMF 346 (31 Mar 67) CINCPAC 67.

146. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., "T-Day Planning," 10 Oct 67, Att to JCS 2472/170, 11 Oct 67; (S-GP 4) JCSM-686-67 to SecDef, 9 Dec 67 (derived from JCS 2472/170-1, 1 Dec 67); JMF 907/305 (10 Oct 67) sec 1. (S-GP 4) JCSM-189-68 to SecDef, 28 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/170-5, 18 Mar 68); (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS et al., "T-Day Planning," 24 Jul 68, Att to JCS 2472/170-7, 29 Jul 68; same file, sec 2.

others to the effectiveness of the new military measures in Saigon. Ambassador Bunker suggested a third possibility, that the enemy was conserving his resources in preparation for another major attack. In any event, he considered the recent defensive arrangements most impressive: the improved radar and aircraft surveillance, the reduction in reaction time for counterbattery fire (one minute was now the optimum), and the close collaboration between US and ARVN forces engaged in defense of the capital. Early in August he was able to report that US and ARVN forces around Saigon were running no less than 500 ambushes every night. These operations, together with B-52 strikes, would be effective, he believed, in forestalling the major offensive against Saigon that seemed clearly in the offing.[28]

Related to the enemy's destruction of lives and property in Saigon was another problem: the damage wrought by US and ARVN forces in combatting the invaders. On 12 May a member of the staff of the US Embassy in Saigon, Mr. Charles Sweet, had reported that many people in Saigon were angry at what they considered indiscriminate use of allied firepower, particularly aircraft. An officer on MACV's staff concluded, after an investigation, that Mr. Sweet had greatly exaggerated the amount of destruction and had underestimated the strength of enemy forces. He recommended, however, that MACV rules of engagement governing the use of tactical air, helicopter gunships, artillery, and naval gunfire be clarified.[29]

The problem was strikingly dramatized by an incident that took place in Saigon on 2 June. A group of high-ranking SVN officials were watching an attack on a position held by enemy infiltrators. Suddenly a rocket from a US helicopter went astray and landed in their midst. Seven men were

28. (S) Msg, Saigon 32822 to State, 170645Z Jul 68, JCS IN 45436. (S) Msgs, Saigon 31058 to State, 261200Z Jun 68, JCS IN 95876; 31193, 271400Z Jun 68, JCS IN 99683; 34694, 071100Z Aug 68, JCS IN 84286. (C) Msg, Paris 20251 to State, 311605Z Aug 68, JCS IN 42282, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Negotiations Aug-Sep 68.

29. (C) Extract from Memo for Record, Actg CS, MACV, "Evaluation of Saigon Situation," 14 May 68; (C) "Report of Investigation Concerning Destruction Resulting from the VC Offensive of 5-13 May 1968," n.d., sgd by COL Robert W. Marshall, USA, with 1st Ind by COMUSMACV, MAC J-2, 2 Jun 68, Att to JCS 2472/?14, 12 Jun 68; JMF 911/052 (14 May 68) sec 1.

Chapter 53

THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS: FIRST PHASE

Evolution of the US Negotiating Position

President Johnson's speech on 31 March, in which he announced restrictions on air operations over NVN and issued a call for negotiations, had been followed by a month of discussions between Washington and Hanoi, ending with an agreement to open formal talks in Paris on 10 May (see Ch. 50). The purpose of these bilateral talks was to consider the possibility of further restrictions upon the bombardment of NVN in discussions that, according to the hope of the Administrations, might move on to general peace negotiations.

The curtailment of US bombing below the 20th Parallel had been a unilateral act. In announcing it, the President had held out the hope of further restrictions on a quid pro quo basis. "Even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end," he said, "if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi." This broadly worded statement was compatible with the so-called "San Antonio formula," announced by Mr. Johnson on 29 September 1967, in which the President had expressed a willingness to stop all air and naval bombardment if such action would "lead promptly to productive discussions. We of course assume," the President had continued, "that while discussions proceed, North Viet-Nam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation."[1]

But what kind of "restraint" would be acceptable to the United States in return for an end to "this very limited bombing"? What actions by NVN would constitute "taking advantage" of US concessions? Moreover, should the enemy be required to agree in advance to abjure such actions, or should he be asked only for a promise to enter substantive negotiations and thereafter be trusted to do nothing to

1. Dept of State Bulletins, LVIII (15 Apr 68), p. 482; LVII (23 Oct 67), p. 521.

The Harassment of Saigon, May-June 1968

The warning of a second phase of the May offensive was soon borne out. A new series of attacks on the capital began, small in scale but potentially deadly in their cumulative effects. Two types of operations were involved. Starting on 18 May Saigon was subjected to intermittent nighttime fire from mortars and 122mm rockets, launched by enemy forces outside the city. At the same time, bands of infiltrators, numbering from 5 to 30, slipped into the city to carry out assassinations and to destroy or sabotage bridges, power and police stations, and other important structures.

The obvious intent of these activities was to increase the burden on South Vietnam's economy, to intimidate the populace, and to demonstrate that the GVN was powerless to protect its citizens even in its own capital. Ambassador Bunker viewed this new campaign with the utmost seriousness. The initial reaction in Saigon, he reported, had been resentment toward the VC, but he feared that this feeling might be redirected toward the United States and the GVN if the attacks continued.[24]

Both MACV and the JGS moved swiftly to take all possible defensive measures against this latest enemy threat. The broad "rocket belt" surrounding Saigon--an area of roughly 300 square miles within which the enemy, with his primitive and readily transportable launching equipment, could deliver fire upon the capital--was placed under 24-hour aerial surveillance. Construction of special radar-equipped observation towers to detect enemy firing positions and to direct counterfire was begun; meanwhile, tall buildings were employed for the same purpose. Counterfire procedures were reviewed, and every effort was made to reduce the time involved.

To cope with terrorist infiltration, plans were made to intercept and engage enemy squads outside the city. Additional ARVN and US units were assigned to the defense of

24. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 119-68, 20 May 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, pp. 250-251. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 7605 to CINCPAC, 091112Z Jun 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Jun 68. (S) Msgs, Saigon 23566 to State, 291140Z May 68, JCS IN 43930; 29565, 101157Z Jun 68, JCS IN 64371; 29880, 131200Z Jun 68, JCS IN 72383.

Specific Objectives

1. Cessation of the Bombing

The US is prepared to agree to a cessation of naval, air and artillery bombardment of North Viet-Nam. In keeping with North Vietnamese statements, it is our understanding that such action on our part will lead promptly to talks in which both sides would be free to raise any elements which they believe would lead to a peaceful settlement. We are prepared in these talks to make arrangements to this end, including agreement on announcement of bombing cessation and subsequent talks.

2. Prompt Talks

Substantive talks should be held within 3 to 7 days following the cessation of bombing.

3. Serious Talks

We should seek explicit confirmation by the North Vietnamese that any topic relevant to the substance of peace could be raised in the substantive talks.

4. Participants

In any substantive discussions we expect to take account of the interests of the South Vietnamese Government and of our Manila allies. Participation in any such discussions affecting South Viet-Nam must not exclude the Government of the Republic of South Viet-Nam.

5. Not Taking Advantage

We should provide an adequate basis for the expectation that North Viet-Nam would not attempt to improve its military position as a result of the US cessation. North Viet-Nam should understand that the US would regard as acts of bad faith inconsistent with its restraints any such attempts. We would consider as examples of bad faith:

a) Artillery or other fire from or across the DMZ.

The course of events in SVN had been followed closely in Washington. "What can we do to get additional help to Westmoreland if he becomes involved in another major enemy offensive?" asked Secretary Clifford of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 May before it was clear that the offensive was over. "Very little," was the substance of the JCS reply, delivered on 21 May. Four Army brigades could be made available during July and August, they indicated, but their deployment would leave STRAF wholly devoid of combat-ready forces. To send Marine reinforcements would require further mobilization plus involuntary extension of terms of service. Fortunately the ebbing of the attack spared the Administration the necessity of facing the consequences of another call for reinforcements from COMUSMACV.[20]

The relatively small scale of the so-called "mini-Tet" offensive, together with its timing (a few weeks after the agreement to open talks in Paris), suggested that its purpose was political and psychological rather than primarily military or, in other words, that it was intended to strengthen the enemy's position at Paris. This was the opinion of Ambassador Bunker. Seizure and occupation of all or part of South Vietnam's capital would undoubtedly have constituted a powerful bargaining counter. But the enemy had failed to achieve this goal, and had suffered losses that were quite high in relation to the size of forces engaged, though well below those of Tet. As of midnight 8-9 May, Mr. Bunker estimated that the enemy had lost 5,781 killed in action since the offensive began, as opposed to 804 US and allied troops killed. A later estimate listed approximately 12,500 enemy killed during the first two weeks in May.[21]

For his fresh expenditure of blood, the enemy had two gains to show. On 10 May enemy troops in superior numbers had assaulted a Special Forces Camp at Kham Duc, in western Quang Tin Province (I CTZ). The camp was abandoned by its garrison two days later. This tactical success had potential

20. (S) Memo, SecDef to GEN Wheeler, 13 May 68; (TS) JCSM-315-68 to SecDef, 21 May 68 (derived from JCS 2472/291-1, 18 May 68, as ameded by Dec On 20 May 68), JMF 911/372 (13 May 68).

21. (S) Msg, Saigon 26826 to State, 091022Z May 68, JCS IN 95726. (S-NOFORN) DIA IB 200-68, 11 Oct 68, Supplement.

in the negotiations if military and political issues were separated, with the former being settled between the United States and NVN, the latter between the GVN and the NLF. Others, who saw the military and political issues as inseparable and believed the GVN should play a role in the settlement of both, favored multilateral talks on a basis of "our side"--the United States and SVN--versus "your side"--NVN and, presumably, the NLF. This position was upheld by MG DePuy, SACSA, in discussions with other officials.[4]

While the instructions for the US negotiating team were being drafted, General Wheeler, on 2 April, had conferred with Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, who had been named to head the US negotiating team. Mr. Harriman expressed a desire to have a list of quid pro quo actions, over and above the minimum US demands, with which to enter the negotiations. At General Wheeler's direction, J-5 drew up a list of seven possible demands upon NVN that might be specified as a basis for complete cessation of air attacks. The minimum demand was abstention from the three NVN actions in the Study Group "no advantage" list: artillery or ground attacks across the DMZ and increase in troop movements into NVN. Other demands were listed in increasing order of severity, ranging from de-escalation of actions of violence against SVN civilians to withdrawal of NVA forces from Quang Tri Province.[5]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered these J-5 proposals and tentatively decided to strengthen them by including certain other demands--notably a "conclusive demonstration" that NVN had begun withdrawal of its forces and supplies from the South, which would admittedly amount to "virtual surrender" by Hanoi. They ordered the paper sent back to J-5 for revision. Meanwhile, they informally transmitted their views to Ambassador Harriman and to LTG Andrew J. Goodpaster, who would serve as chief military advisor to the delegation.

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4. (TS-GP 1) SACSA M-269-68 to CJCS, 8 Apr 68; (TS-GP 1) Memo, MG DePuy and MG Seignious to CJCS, "Negotiations," 8 Apr 68; (TS-GP 1) SACSA M-272-68 to CJCS, 9 Apr 68; OCJCS File 091, Vietnam (Negotiations) Through Apr 68.

5. (TS) Tab A to J-5 T-34-68, 5 Apr 68, JMF 907/503 (5 Apr 68). (TS-GP 4) J-5 T-34-68, 5 Apr 68, same file.

The Second Enemy Attack, May 1968

Following his repulse in the Tet offensive, the enemy turned his attention to repairing his losses. His resupply effort was reflected in the increase in truck traffic already noted. At the same time, the communists refilled their ranks by in-country recruiting and especially by a faster flow of infiltration from the north. US estimates were that infiltration had risen from approximately 7,500 in December 1967 (just about the monthly average for that year) to 24,000 in January 1968. In February the number dropped to 12,000, but immediately thereafter it soared to record numbers: 25,000 in April, 30,000 in March and May.[16]

By the middle of April it had become clear that the enemy possessed both the capability and the intention to attack. Prisoner interrogations, reports of agents, the pattern of enemy troop concentrations, and information supplied by a high-ranking rallier pointed to an offensive that would be nationwide in scope while focusing principally upon Saigon. Various dates given for the launching of the attack fitted with other evidence indicating that the operation was first planned for the middle of the month but was postponed for various reasons. Intelligence warnings were clearer and less equivocal than those available before the Tet offensive. It appeared that the enemy, observing the lack of coordination at that time--when units in II CTZ had "jumped the gun" and swung into action a day ahead of others--had modified his security restrictions and had disseminated advance information more widely to the attacking forces.[17]

It came as no surprise, therefore, when widespread mortar and rocket attacks on cities and towns burst forth on the night of 4-5 May, heralding the beginning of the enemy's second general offensive of 1968. But it soon became evident that no replay of Tet was in the offing. The scope and intensity of the attack fell far short of the earlier one. Aside from Saigon, follow-up ground attacks occurred at only a few

16. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 1-18 (numbers read from bar chart, Fig. 1-10).

17. (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 76-68, 17 Apr 68; 77-68, 18 Apr 68; 82-68, 25 Apr 68; 84-68, 29 Apr 68. (S) Msgs, Saigon 25643 to State, 250900Z Apr 68, JCS IN 86582; and 26229, 021134Z May 68, JCS IN 80438. (S) CM-3228-68 to SecDef, 23 Apr 68, OCJCS 091 Vietnam Apr 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report, Jun 68, p. 249. Some of the evidence warning of this attack has been described in Ch. 50.

The terms of the written negotiating instructions lost some of their significance in the light of President Johnson's determination that he himself would be the "number one negotiator" for the US team. The President made this fact clear in a meeting with the US delegation on 6 May, just before its departure for Paris. He instructed the members to concentrate on protecting the US interest without worrying about public opinion, which would be his responsibility. He had removed himself from politics, he reminded his hearers, to make certain that he could not be "pressured" into accepting an unsatisfactory settlement. The negotiators were also told to seek an agreement on terms more favorable than the bare-minimum San Antonio formula; if they were unable to do so, he would make the decision when to fall back from the opening position. He added that he expected that the United States would end by accepting this formula and stopping the bombardment of NVN accordingly, but that subsequent negotiations would fail and that it would eventually be necessary to resume the air offensive in order to bring about a settlement of the war.[8]

Opening of the Paris Talks

President Johnson selected a six-man team to represent the United States in Paris. The senior member, Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, was a seasoned diplomat with a reputation for skill and tenacity. His deputy, Cyrus R. Vance, formerly Deputy Secretary of Defense, also held the rank of Ambassador. The military advisor was LTG Andrew J. Goodpaster, Commandant of the National War College. Other advisors were Philip C. Habib of the State Department and William J. Jorden of the NSC Staff. Daniel J. Davidson served as Secretary to the Delegation as well as special assistant to Ambassador Harriman.[9]

In order to make certain that the delegation received up-to-date military information during the negotiations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to make available to General

8. (TS) Memo, BG R. N. Ginsburgh to CJCS, 7 May 68, OCJCS File 091, Vietnam (Negotiations) May 68.
9. (U) "Viet-Nam Mission Delegation List," Tab A of OCJCS File, Briefing Book for VN Mission in Paris.

individual and 93 crew-served weapons had been captured, as well as large amounts of ammunition and supplies.[10]

The pattern of activity that had marked the war in the months before the Tet offensive had now come to prevail once more. US and SVN forces were seeking out the enemy, who was attempting to avoid contact while bringing in supplies and reinforcements. General Westmoreland was able to report that "Allied operations during April were highlighted by an unparalleled display of aggressiveness and cooperation by US, ARVN, FW forces and governmental agencies."[11]

Not content, however, General Westmoreland pressed his subordinates to even greater efforts. "Commencing immediately," he told them in a directive on 6 May, "our objective will be to make a major breakthrough toward military victory in South Vietnam. . . . The fighting will be characterized by an aggressive, unremitting, twenty-four hour application of pressure on all enemy elements throughout RVN." The enemy was to be hounded relentlessly, day and night, in all weather; loss of contact would be considered a tactical error. The RVNAF would be assigned a "full role." Support of pacification operations, which "are inseparable from the main offensive," would be given as much attention as any other responsibilities of commanders.[12]

While ground operations were pushed forward with increasing vigor, air and naval warfare continued unabated. Following the President's announcement of 31 March concerning bombing restrictions over NVN, the ROLLING THUNDER campaign was redirected to concentrate on targets south of the 19th Parallel, such as roads, waterways, truck parks, and storage facilities. The number of attack sorties against North Vietnam increased

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10. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 94-68, 20 Apr 68; 118-68, 18 May 68. (TS-GP 3) CM-3265-68 to SecDef, 29 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Apr 68. (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 5223 to CJCS et al., 191155Z Apr 68; MAC 5270, 201135Z Apr 68; MAC 6516, 181119Z May 68; OCJCS File DMZ/North I CTZ Reports.

11. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 159-4 (one digit illegible) to CINCPAC, 071442Z May 68, JCS IN 94380.

12. The text of this directive, originally transmitted from COMUSMACV to his subordinate commanders as COMUSMACV 12854, 061047Z May 68, is quoted in full in (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 15262 to Paris, 271808Z May 68, JCS IN 39239, in response to a news story alleging the existence of a message from COMUSMACV that supposedly asserted a need to win the war within three months.

Minh, who had faced Harriman across the negotiating table at the 1962 Geneva Conference on Laos. His deputy was Ha Van Lau, chief of NVA liaison to the International Control Commission on Vietnam.[13]

On 10 and 11 May the second-ranking delegates, Vance and Lau, worked out procedural arrangements for the conference in discussions that turned out to be surprisingly cordial. Both parties agreed to refer to their meetings as "official conversations" and to use English and Vietnamese as official languages, employing French as a working language. They also agreed that not more than twenty members of each delegation would be present in the meeting room at any time. Tape recording of the plenary sessions would be permitted, but no joint minutes would be kept. Press representatives would be allowed to attend the formal sessions in numbers determined jointly by both delegations and by the host government. Daily meetings would be held, with each session scheduled individually beforehand. The first was set for 13 May at 1030.[14]

The first session took place on schedule at the International Conference Center in the old Majestic Hotel. Nguyen Xuan Thuy fired the opening verbal salvo on behalf of North Vietnam. Setting forth his country's objectives, he repeated the four points that had been proclaimed repeatedly by Hanoi: withdrawal of US forces, temporary restoration of the North and South zones of Vietnam under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, self-determination for SVN in accord with the program of the NLF, and peaceful reunification of North and South. He assailed the United States and the "puppet" regime in Saigon as aggressors. The primary purpose of the talks, declared Thuy, was to arrange for the "unconditional cessation of the bombing and other acts of war against the DRV." The secondary purpose was to discuss any "problems which interest both sides."[15]

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13. NY Times, 10 May 68, 1. (S) Biographic Information on NVN delegation, OCJCS File, Briefing Book Prepared for VN Mission in Paris.

14. (S) Msg, Paris 13866 to State, 11 May 68. NY Times, 12 May 68, 1.

15. NY Times, 14 May 68, 18.

the position of CINCPAC on 31 July.[5]

Friendly Forces Resume the Offensive

None of the changes in command had any immediate effect upon the tactical situation in South Vietnam. There the Tet offensive had left both sides temporarily incapable of major action. The enemy had suffered shattering losses in manpower that would take time to replace, while US and ARVN force dispositions had in some degree been disrupted by the need to cope with the wave of attacks on the cities.

The allied military machine was quick to recover. As soon as the enemy offensive had subsided, General Westmoreland seized the opportunity to resume once more the painstaking task of hunting down and destroying the principal enemy forces. He laid plans to clear the five provinces around Saigon and to undertake a major offensive in IV CTZ, while at the same time launching a thrust in I CTZ to relieve the Marines besieged at Khe Sanh. Explaining these plans to his subordinates on 2 March, General Westmoreland stressed the importance of an aggressive attitude. "We must stop thinking about the next VC attack," he emphasized, "and start thinking, all of us, of continuing to carry the attack to the enemy."[6]

The operation in IV CTZ (TRUONG CONG DINH) was launched on 6 March by elements of the US 9th and the ARVN 7th Divisions. This was a long-term action, which was still continuing two months later. At that time, it was combined with Operation PEOPLE'S ROAD, which had begun about the same time with the objective of clearing and repairing the principal highway (Route 4) between Saigon and the Mekong River.[7]

5. (TS) HQ USMC, Commandant's Vietnam Chronology, entry 31 Jul 68.
6. (TS-NOFORN) Msg, COMUSMACV 02984 to CJCS, 030238Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68.
7. (TS-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 60-68, 12 Mar 68; 66-68, 19 Mar 68. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," May 68. (FOUO) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 245.

surrender. This conviction was reflected in their arrogant self-assurance. Little progress could be expected so long as they remained under this impression.[18]

In an effort to loosen the rigidity of the NVN negotiating posture, the United States sought the assistance of the Soviet Union. Ambassador Harriman met with Soviet Ambassador Zorin in Paris on 19 May and informed him that NVN's intransigence was sorely trying US patience. It would be impossible, he continued, for the United States to continue its bombing limitation indefinitely unless Hanoi exhibited some matching restraint. Zorin replied that NVN would not budge from its present position, at least not before the US Presidential election. When Ambassador Harriman suggested the possibility of private discussions (perhaps attended by Soviet representatives), Zorin dismissed this proposal as premature.[19]

Zorin's assessment of the NVN position was borne out at the fourth session, held on 22 May. Harriman suggested immediate and genuine demilitarization of the so-called DMZ as a constructive step, but drew only a denial that NVN was violating the Zone. "We all felt that today was a chapter out of 'Alice in Wonderland,'" reported Harriman afterwards. "We kept hearing the refrain, 'It's so because I say it's so.'"[20]

Impact of the Enemy's May Offensive

The Paris talks opened while the enemy's "mini-Tet" attack was in progress, as described in an earlier chapter. A major objective of this attack, in the opinion of Ambassador Bunker, was to reinforce the enemy's negotiating position by success on the battlefield. But the initial assault, centering on Saigon, was thrown back at considerable cost to the attacking forces. The subsequent prolonged siege

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18. Statement made by Ambassador Vance to GEN Wheeler in August 1968, reported in (TS) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, JCS 9019, 091649Z Aug 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

19. (S) Msg, Paris 14365 to State, 20 May 68, JCS IN 25509.

20. (TS) Summary Chronology. (S) Msg, Paris 14502 to State, 22 May 68, JCS in 29385.

people of South Vietnam were for the first time experiencing a sense of pride in the performance of their army, just as they were rallying to support the government in its hour of crisis. If the RVNAF continued to improve their combat record, there was room to hope that they might constitute a major symbol of national unity around which the democratic elements in SVN might rally. If so, the armed forces of RVN might contribute to the successful resolution of the political conflict even as they prepared themselves for their primary task of assuming responsibility for the nation's security after the United States withdrew its forces.

The second phase of the enemy's attack on Saigon--rocket and mortar fire by enemy forces outside the city--began on 18 May 1968. Ambassador Bunker promptly reported to Washington President Thieu's fear that these assaults would seriously undermine confidence in the GVN. The enemy, according to Thieu, had no intention of seriously negotiating and was merely "testing our patience." How long, he wondered, did the United States intend to restrain its air campaign in the absence of reciprocity from the enemy? President Johnson took note of Thieu's fears in a public statement on 23 May. Addressing himself to the attacks on SVN cities, Mr. Johnson declared that he would "not permit the enemy's mortars and rockets to go unanswered."[23]

Privately, the President faced up to the grim possibility that the Paris negotiations might terminate in utter failure, and asked the Departments of Defense and State to examine the possible consequences. Accordingly, Secretary of Defense Clifford, on 24 May, asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to answer the following questions:

> A. What policy should we follow if North Vietnam continues to remain unresponsive in the Paris Talks by refusing reciprocity and refusing to negotiate on other issues until we stop the bombing?
>
> B. If the Paris Talks break down completely or are abandoned, what plan or plans should we follow to achieve a resolution of the conflict?[24]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 29 May 1968. Answering the first question, they recommended a greatly expanded bombing campaign, to embrace all of NVN except areas close to the Chinese border, which should be "continued until Hanoi begins prompt and productive talks." A decision concerning the beginning of this campaign should be made soon, in order to take advantage of the favorable weather from May to November. They emphatically rejected

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23. (TS) Msg, Saigon 27938 to State, 22 May 68, JCS IN 29204. NY Times, 24 May 68, 1.

24. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Possible U. S. Courses of Action if Paris Talks Stall or Break Down," 24 May 68, JMF 911/305 (24 May 68).

the end of March 1969. But Ambassador Bunker believed that United States officials should not be disappointed if the desertion rate did not subside with time. He explained that intelligence sources had indicated that the VC/NVA forces were having similar problems and that both sides might continue to suffer from desertion because of underlying social factors, such as localism and ethnic and religious antagonisms.[48]

The problems of inadequate leadership also troubled the RVNAF throughout 1968. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had repeatedly warned the Secretary of Defense that leadership shortcomings might prevent the RVNAF from accomplishing any mission expected of them regardless of how much equipment they were given. With the approval of an 850,000-man force structure, the problem of acquiring additional and competent leaders became magnified.

COMUSMACV convinced the Joint Chiefs of Staff that additional officers and NCOs should be provided for the RVNAF.[49] The JGS developed a three-year program to increase the number of officers and NCOs to satisfy the requirements of an 850,000-man force. Ninety percent of that leadership was to be made available by the close of CY 1968. Plans were also made to improve the RVNAF promotion regulations.[50]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense with monthly RVNAF officer/NCO strengths, promotion projects, and evaluation of the promotion program; but OSD officials became skeptical that the JGS was not doing all that should be done to improve the inadequate leadership situation. They considered that the JGS programs would

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48. (C) Tab D to J-5 BP 65-68, 20 Dec 68, JMF [not bound]. (C) Msg, Saigon to State, 14 Sep 68, JCS IN 66904. (C) Msg, COMUSMACV 41264 to JCS, 11 Dec 68, JCS IN 62883; (C) Msg, COMUSMACV 17134 to CJCS, 15 Dec 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Dec 68.

49. (C) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization," 1 Nov 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 68.

50. (C-GP 4) Memo, SACSA to CJCS, "RVNAF Officer/NCO Strengths and Promotions," 18 Nov 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 68.

recommended. He expressed the view that any bombing beyond the 20th Parallel would be certain to lead to a rupture in the talks, and reaffirmed his doubts that bombing between 19 and 20° N would be efficacious in influencing Hanoi's stance in the negotiations. His views carried the day; the President ordered no change in military operations in the North for the time being.

The case for restraint was strengthened on 3 June when Le Duc Tho, a ranking member of the Hanoi Politburo, suddenly arrived in Paris. No one knew what instructions he might bring with him, but Ambassador Harriman considered that his arrival might at least signal a degree of flexibility in the enemy's position. In view of this possibility, Harriman recommended that consideration of renewed bombing between 19 and 20° N be further deferred.[27]

But it seemed necessary to take some action in light of the continuing enemy harassment of Saigon by artillery and rocket fire and by infiltrators. Ambassador Bunker, on 3 June, declared that there was a "strong argument for linking any cessation of bombing in the north to the cessation of terror attacks on the cities of the south." He suggested that the NVN delegation at Paris be warned that "continued attacks would call for appropriate retaliation," which might take the form of reprisal raids on NVN cities. Ambassador Harriman opposed this suggestion; in his view, to demand a cessation of attacks on Saigon while continuing bombardment up to 19° would violate the terms of the President's offer of 31 March, while any actual attacks on Hanoi or Haiphong would result in a breakoff of negotiations. Instead, he proposed, with Washington's approval, to bring up the matter in the negotiations and to deliver a suitable warning to Hanoi.[28]

Accordingly, on 12 June, at the eighth meeting of the negotiators, Ambassador Harriman condemned the terrorist attacks on Saigon and warned that their continuation could have "most serious consequences" for the negotiations. He followed up this statement, on 19 June by calling attention to criticism of these attacks by other nations. Two days

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27. (S) Msg, Paris 15436 to State, 3 Jun 68, JCS IN 53908.

28. (S) Msg, Saigon 28566 to State, 29 May 68, JCS IN 43930. (S) Msg, Paris 15453 to State, 4 Jun 68, JCS IN 53076. (S) Msg, Paris 16017 to State, 11 Jun 68, JCS IN 66094. (S) Msg, State 17552 to Paris, 3 Jun 68, JCS IN 52604. (S) Msg, State 180491 to Paris, 11 Jun 68, JCS IN 67960.

Regular Forces	
ARVN	387,250
VNN	18,500
VNMC	9,000
VNAF	18,750
Total Reg. forces	433,500
Territorial Forces	
RF	219,000
PF	174,000
Total Terr. forces	393,000
Total RVNAF	826,500

This total was approximately 220,000 greater than a year earlier. Of this increase, 160,000 had been volunteers and the rest draftees.

The GVN had also expanded its paramilitary forces to 127,000 (45,000 in the CIDG and 82,000 in the National Police). In addition, a People's Self-Defense Forces (PSDF) had been organized, with a strength of over 1,000,000 men and women. More than half of these had received some training, and over 100,000 were armed.[45]

This expansion in size was accompanied by an improvement in quality. In the judgment of both CINCPAC and Ambassador Bunker, the RVNAF had improved in aggressiveness, self-confidence, and quality of leadership in 1968.[46] Their assessment was borne out by an increase in the number of battalion-size operations conducted by the RVNAF in the

45. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) OCJCS Study Group, 1968 Year-End Review of Vietnam (U), pp. 5-14, 15 Jan 69. (S) Interv, Robert J. Watson and Arthur A. Chapa with CDR Paul F. Abel, USN, Revolutionary Development South Vietnam Branch, Office of SACSA, 3 Feb 69. (S) Msg, Saigon 894 to State, 16 Jan 69, JCS IN 38225.

46. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 012225Z Jan 69, JCS IN 10811. (S) Msg, Saigon 894 to State, 16 Jan 69, JCS IN 38225.

be expected of Hanoi after the cessation. Ambassador Vance recommended that this proposal be discussed in detail at private meetings between himself and his opposite number, Ha Van Lau. Thuy at first promised merely to take this suggestion under advisement, but later accepted it.31

The prospect of meetings of this nature offered real hope for progress. It was hardly to be expected that much could be accomplished at the public sessions, where the temptation was irresistible to speak for the record with a view to influencing opinion around the world.

Deadlock

On the evening of 27 June, Ambassador Vance met privately with Ha Van Lau and explained in more detail the "two-phase" proposal that had been submitted in outline the day before. He stressed his conviction that the plan went far to meet Hanoi's demands. The United States was willing to promise a total bombing halt subject to an understanding regarding actions by Hanoi that would follow, not precede, the cessation, which could therefore be considered "unconditional." Lau disputed this interpretation, pointing out that the proposal still envisioned concessions as a price for the bomb halt; however, he promised to think it over.32

The plan presented by Ambassador Vance differed in an important respect from the original Soviet proposal. The Soviets had recommended a second "phase" consisting of reciprocal actions to be taken by both sides, following at an unspecified interval of time after the termination of "phase one," i.e., the end of the bombing. This formula resembled one that the United States had drawn up in November 1966; it had been submitted to Hanoi through intermediaries, but the response had been negative. After meeting with Zorin on 28 June and hearing the Soviet plan explained in detail, Ambassador Vance tentatively decided that it offered some promise. If the United States had reasonably firm advance assurance that Hanoi would take some steps toward de-escalation after a bomb halt, it might well afford to agree to compensatory actions of its own at the same time and

31. (S) Msg, State 189086 to Paris, 24 Jun 68, JCS IN 92823. (S) Msg, State 190068 to Paris, 25 Jun 68, JCS IN 94890. (S) Msg, Paris 17053 to State, 26 Jun 68, JCS IN 95930.

32. (S) Msg, Paris 17153 to State, 28 Jun 68.

to exist on T-Day, such as the size and location of enemy forces and the prospect of continuing infiltration.[41] These questions would, of course, be shaped by the terms of any peace agreement. On 12 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a list of "essential conditions for a cessation of hostilities" in RVN. They recommended that US government officials review and agree on the conditions and that they then be forwarded to the US representative in Paris. The US negotiators should be instructed to make all efforts to convince their North Vietnamese counterparts to agree to all the conditions. Their level of success would determine the security situation in RVN once hostilities in RVN had ceased.

If the North Vietnamese agreed to all the conditions, an "optimum" security situation would result. If only partial agreement were achieved, then an "intermediate" situation would remain. But, if most of the conditions were rejected, the "worst" security situation could be expected.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that the Phase II force structure plan had been designed to cope with the "worst" security situation. COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, they stated, had been instructed to develop plans to deal with the "optimum" and "intermediate" situations. But they advised the Secretary of Defense that it seemed wise to continue with present plans to establish a force structure capable of coping with the "worst" situation. As a minimum, they recommended approval of the FY 1970-71 Phase II goals and General Abrams' accelerated plan.[42]

On 18 December, Mr. Nitze approved the Phase II force structure (except for portions dealing with the VNN and with ammunition requirements). He also approved acceleration of the Phase II plan as proposed by General Abrams. Since he had not approved the proposed VNN force structure, the newly

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41. (S) Note to Control Div, "T-Day Planning and Improvement and Modernization of the RVNAF," 2 Dec 68, JMF 907/305 (9 Dec 68).

42. (S-NOFORN-GP 4) JCSM-732-68 to SecDef, 12 Dec 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7580 to CINCPAC, 12 Dec 68; JMF 907/305 (9 Dec 68).

COMUSMACV replied that the B-52 campaign was essential to provide close support for US ground forces operating in northern I CTZ. It was restricted to tactical objectives and therefore could not be compared with the enemy's undirected random fire upon the capital of SVN. His views, with the added endorsement of CINCPAC, were forwarded to Secretary of Defense Clifford with General Wheeler's approval. Ambassador Bunker told the State Department that he fully concurred, and added that "bombing in the north is our major card to play in obtaining from Hanoi the restraints that are needed politically in SVN at this stage." Termination of the B-52 campaign in and near the DMZ should be decided only as part of an overall agreement to restore the DMZ, which in turn should be one element in a "total package of mutual restraints," including an end to terrorist attacks on SVN cities. The Department of State apparently accepted these views and did not pursue the matter further.[36]

On 15 July Vance laid before Lau the elements of the two-phase plan drawn up by the Department of State, characterizing them as a variation on the proposal submitted on 27 June. Lau showed himself willing to discuss them. At the end of the meeting, he promised he would study the plan to see whether it contained anything new.[37]

Two weeks then elapsed, during which the NVN negotiators indicated that they were studying the plan but showed no interest in further private talks at that time. Ambassadors Harriman and Vance were by then beginning to despair of making significant progress within a reasonable time so long as the United States continued on its present track. They set forth their views in a message to Washington on 29 July. They suspected that Hanoi was gambling that the forthcoming Democratic Party nominating convention would produce an irreparable cleavage in public opinion--one that might fatally undermine the US negotiating position and stampede the next Administration into a "precipitous withdrawal." The danger was increased by the unmistakable

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36. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 9376 to CJCS, 120915Z Jul 68; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 130036Z Jul 68; (S-GP 3) CM-3476-68 to SecDef, 12 Jul 68; OCJCS File 091, Vietnam (Negotiations) 1 Jun-31 Jul 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 32558 to State, 13 Jul 68.

37. Msg, Paris 18012 to State, 16 Jul 68, JCS IN 04200.

they urged that COMUSMACV be authorized to continue progress toward Phase II goals.37

The United States ceased all bombing of NVN on 31 October, as described in a later chapter. This action caused General Abrams some concern because he saw that it strengthened the possibility of substantive negotiations leading to the mutual withdrawal of US/NVN forces in the near future. On 9 November, he recommended that the United States begin implementation of the Phase II RVNAF improvement and modernization program as rapidly as possible. He proposed an accelerated version of the Phase II plan that would permit completion by FY 1972. It called for two actions as follows. First, some equipment in the hands of US forces would have to be turned over to the RVNAF. Second, the RVNAF Phase II force structure would be expanded to 877,090. The additional 27,090 personnel would be assigned to long lead-time and on-the-job training programs to prepare the RVNAF for transition to Phase II without having to draw the needed personnel from the ARVN or the RF as previously planned. This action would permit retention of the strong ground force structure currently being built under Phase I. Once the new personnel were trained and the RVNAF was able to absorb the additional equipment, new units would be formed and provided with equipment taken from selected US units. Most of these additional RVNAF personnel would be assigned to the VNN and the VNAF.38

The Secretary of Defense considered the Phase II plan and General Abrams' accelerated version of that plan until mid-December. During that period, officials within the Department of Defense reviewed the costs involved in building a RVNAF force structure of the size envisioned in Phase II.

Army officials pointed out that the Phase II equipment requirements would have an adverse effect on the readiness

37. (S-GP 4) JCSM-678-68 to SecDef, 13 Nov 68, same file, sec 8. (S-GP 3) Tab B to J-5 BP 65-68, 20 Nov 68, JMF /not bound/.

38. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 34325 to CINCPAC, 9 Nov 68, JCS IN 93364. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 18 Nov 68, JCS IN 20488. (S-GP 4) MACV Report, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization - Phase II," 25 Dec 68, JCS 2472/406, JMF /not bound/.

The plan had been discussed with Under Secretary of State Katzenbach and Assistant Secretary Bundy during their trips to Paris. It was decided that Ambassador Vance should return to the United States immediately after the 31 July meeting to explain the plan more fully.[38]

The originators of this plan characterized it as "a return to the San Antonio formula." In fact, it placed the narrowest possible interpretation upon the formula: the United States would make "assumptions" about what the enemy would do but would not ask Hanoi to confirm them. Moreover, it was very close to the minimum "fallback" position with which Ambassador Harriman had entered the negotiations. The "assumptions" specified in the plan were identical with those contained in Ambassador Harriman's written instructions except for the additional stipulation of the freedom of SVN cities from attack.

The reception of this plan within the Administration is not documented by available records, but it was never put into effect. The President had evidently decided that the time was not yet ripe to retreat to the last line of diplomatic resistance. The month of August came and went with no dramatic political démarche at Paris.

The President's decision perhaps owed something to the fact that the enemy was preparing for his third offensive. In a public statement on 31 July 1968, Mr. Johnson ruled out any further concessions for the time being in view of recent massive enemy movements of troops and supplies into SVN. On the other hand, he also rejected, after some discussion, the possibility of resuming the bombing up to 20°N. This contingency was again considered when the enemy's attack finally began on 18 August, but was again rejected, presumably on the basis of assurances from General Abrams that he could cope with the situation.[39]

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38. (S) Msg, Paris 18692 to State, 29 Jul 68. (TS-GP 1) Msg, MG Seignious to CJCS, CROC 056, 29 Jul 68.

39. (TS) Msgs, JCS 9364 and 9366 /CJCS/ to COMUSMACV, 18 Aug 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Aug 68.

extend their coverage of territory and to assume responsibility for RD programs currently undertaken by ARVN forces, which would thus be released for regular ground operations. The rest of the proposed increase (9,785 men) would be assigned to long lead-time training programs, such as those for mechanics, communications-electronics technicians, and airplane pilots, as a first step in preparing the RVNAF for eventual transition to Phase II.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed an uncertainty that the RVNAF would be able to sustain a force level of 850,000 in the long run. However, they felt that even a short-term increase in forces would have its advantages. Not only would it permit expansion of the RF, but it would reduce the supply of manpower available to the enemy.[34]

Mr. Nitze approved the increase in RVNAF force levels to 850,000 on 1 November.[35]

The second and third modifications were minor and dealt with changes in RVNAF equipment requirements. Mr. Nitze approved them on 14 November and 6 December respectively.[36]

Planning for Phase II

The JCS plan for the second phase of RVNAF modernization, submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 15 November 1968, was intended to provide a force capable of coping with a "residual" insurgency threat after US, FW, and NVA forces had been withdrawn. Such a threat was defined as one involving up to 130 VC maneuver battalions (possibly including some NVA fillers), capable of regimental-size combat operations on a scale approximating that of 1964-1965. To meet this contingency, the plan

34. (S-GP 3) Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (Force Structure Increase) (U)," 23 Oct 68, on JCS 2472-14; (S-GP 4) JCSM-633-68 to SecDef, 25 Oct 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-15), JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 8.

35. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to SecA et al., "Increase in RVNAF Force Structure (U)," 1 Nov 68, Att to JCS 2472/272-16, same file, same sec.

36. (C-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5528 to CINCPAC and CSA, 14 Nov 68. (C-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7087 to CNO and CINCPAC, 6 Dec 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 9.

Chapter 54

THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS: END OF THE BOMBING CAMPAIGN

The Diplomatic Thaw

The United States had seized upon the "two-phase" proposal of the Soviet Union in the hope of breaking the stalemate in the Paris negotiations. Details of the US version of this proposal were discussed in August 1968 in meetings between Ambassador Vance and Ha Van Lau, but there was little evidence of progress. Vance stressed that President Johnson was prepared to stop the bombing as soon as he received some indication of what course of action Hanoi would follow subsequently. Lau interpreted this statement as another demand for "conditions." The North Vietnamese spokesman also objected to the US insistence upon GVN participation in subsequent negotiations. Vance pointed out that Hanoi would not confer "recognition" upon the GVN merely by sitting at the same negotiating table; it was precisely for this reason that the United States was willing to talk to the NLF.1

Harriman and Vance were convinced that there would be no break in the deadlock unless the United States unilaterally terminated offensive operations against NVN territory.2 The President remained unwilling to do so. He asked the advice of COMUSMACV concerning the possible effects of an end of the bombardment. General Abrams replied on 23 August that the air interdiction program in the panhandle of NVN had been the principal cause for a reduction in the number of southward-moving trucks to 150-200 per day, as contrasted

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1. (S) Msgs, Paris DELTO 556 to State, 5 Aug 68, JCS IN 00979, DELTO 627, 20 Aug 68.

2. Views of Ambassadors Harriman and Vance as reported by Mr. Samuel Berger, of the Embassy staff in Saigon, after visiting Paris and returning via Washington. (TS) Msg, JCS 9905 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 302257Z Aug 68; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, MAC 12067, 061000Z Sep 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations) Aug-Sep 68.

Since the plan emphasized ground combat strength, only limited expansion was envisioned for ARVN logistic units and for the VNN and VNAF. Combat elements of the ARVN, including the RF/PF, would be allocated more than 64,000 of the planned increase of 84,001 men, with the rest distributed to the VNN and VNAF. It was anticipated that later, during Phase II, the ARVN would be reduced to allow expansion of the other services.

The JCS schedule called for the Phase I ARVN forces to be trained and ready for activation by the end of the third quarter of FY 1970 and the VNN and the VNAF by the end of the second quarter of FY 1971. The limited expansion envisioned for the VNN would take place during 1969. The entire RVNAF force structure could be modernized by the end of FY 1973, but achievement of Phase I objectives would depend on the ability of the Services to provide equipment on schedule and on the capacity of the RVNAF to absorb and utilize US materiel.[31]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that COMUSMACV believed the RVNAF capable of assuming an increased share of combat operations during FY 1969-70 if the Phase I Plan was implemented. But they reiterated their earlier warning that even after expansion and modernization the RVNAF might not be able to meet their objectives, because of deficiencies in training, morale, and leadership. They warned also that if US forces were withdrawn without adequate guarantees (such as those envisioned in the Manila Communique of 1966), the RVNAF would continue to require support by residual US forces. They stressed that the Phase I plan could not be implemented at the expense of other SEA or non-SEA programs without a further deterioration of an already unsatisfactory US world-wide military posture.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended approval of the Phase I plan along with the necessary additional funding and procurement authority. They also asked that COMUSMACV be given authority to make minor adjustments or revisions

31. (S-GP 4) JCSM-524-68 to SecDef, 29 Aug 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-7), JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 3. (S-GP 3) JCSM-577-68 to SecDef, 2 Oct 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-9), same file, sec 4A.

attacks on major cities and provincial capitals, or 3) a refusal by Hanoi to enter promptly into negotiations, in which the GVN must be included.[6]

At a meeting of the National Security Council on 25 September, the President and his advisors discussed the possibility of ending the bombing on the basis of the San Antonio formula narrowly defined, that is, on the basis of "assumptions" about NVN's future actions. At the conclusion, the President announced the following decisions:

1) Three conditions were basic to a cessation of offensive operations against NVN. These were the ones set forth in the letter to Kosygin: observance of the DMZ, absence of attacks on major cities, and the presence of the GVN in the subsequent negotiations.

2) Before ending offensive operations against NVN, it would be necessary to know what actions the enemy would undertake in regard to these conditions.[7]

The President had now come down to what one of his principal advisors, Mr. Walt Rostow, later termed his "hard and fundamental position."[8] A comparison with the original minimum position, as reflected in the instructions given to Ambassador Harriman in April 1968, shows how the focus of discussion had shifted. Thus the new list of US requirements made no reference to levels of infiltration as such; on the other hand, the demand for GVN participation was now stated far more explicitly than before. The issue

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6. This letter has not been found, but its contents were summarized by the President in a meeting at the White House in the early morning of 29 October. (TS) "Notes of the President's Meeting with Secretary Rusk . . . /et al/ October 29, 1968," no sig, OCJCS File Correspondence/Messages Pertaining to 1 November 1968 Cessation of the Bombing of North Vietnam. (Hereafter cited as (TS) Notes of the President's Meeting, 29 Oct 68.)

7. (TS) Msg, JCS 10964 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 252252Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations) Aug-Sep 68.

8. Statement by Rostow during White House briefing, 31 Oct 68, as reported in (C) Msg, State 265238 to Saigon et al, 1 Nov 68, JCS IN 80526, OCJCS File Correspondence/Messages Pertaining to 1 November 1968 Cessation of the Bombing of North Vietnam.

also approved the proposed FY 1969 force structure for ARVN combat units, for ARVN and VNMC artillery battalions, and for the RF/PF, as well as the planned activation of two VNAF helicopter squadrons. While he did not approve the rest of the plan, he instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review the RVNAF program in two phases. The Phase I plan would concentrate on maximizing the ground combat power of the ARVN, rather than on building a balanced RVNAF. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to indicate the actions that the United States should take to reach this goal, assuming that the United States would continue participating in the war at presently approved levels. The Phase II plan should delineate a program to build a RVNAF force structure capable of coping with an internal insurgency if both NVA and US forces withdrew. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to assume that the GVN would receive any necessary equipment as early as possible and that it would eventually acquire most of the facilities currently being used by US forces. Mr. Nitze asked that a preliminary report on Phase I be submitted to him by 15 August 1968.[26]

While these plans were being prepared, Mr. Nitze and the Joint Chiefs of Staff took steps to carry out the RVNAF expansion and modernization already approved for FY 1968. Owing to Mr. Nitze's decision temporarily to withhold funds, General Westmoreland approved a somewhat lower strength objective than had been authorized in Washington--751,513 instead of 801,215. But the process of mobilization set in motion by the GVN soon outstripped this goal. By the end of June 1968 the RVNAF had reached a strength of 765,050.[27]

The GVN's mobilization efforts were thus outpacing US support. The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore recommended that, as an interim measure, the Secretary of Defense authorize the Military Departments to program certain equipment for ARVN combat and combat support units due to

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26. (S-GP 4) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (U)," 25 Jun 68 (derived from JCS 2472/272-2), JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 2.

27. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3920 to CINCPAC, 2 Jul 68; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4080 to CINCPAC, 5 Jul 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 2. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 19762 to CINCPAC, 9 Jul 68, JCS IN 29587, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 3.

1) Would the United States stop the bombing after it had received a clear answer to the question of GVN participation in the ensuing negotiations?

2) After such an answer had been given, would the United States consider the answer to this question to constitute a "condition" or "reciprocity" for stopping the bombing?

Harriman and Vance replied to the second question first. Participation of the GVN, they said, was in no sense a demand for reciprocity; it was a part of the US definition of "serious" talks. How could negotiations be meaningful unless Saigon's representatives took part? As for the first question, only the President could answer it. But they reminded the NVN negotiators of the other issues included in the US position: respect for the DMZ and an end to indiscriminate shelling of cities. "It is important to understand," they continued, "that we are not talking about reciprocity or conditions but the simple fact that after a cessation of all bombardment the President's ability to maintain that situation would be affected by certain elemental considerations. We do not look at them as a condition for stopping the bombing but as a description of the situation which would permit serious negotiations, and thus the cessation, to continue."

Le Duc Tho pointed to these words as an admission that an end of the bombing on these terms would be "unconditional." The US spokesmen took no issue with this interpretation. There followed a round of cautious verbal fencing in which Tho and Thuy vainly pressed their antagonists for an answer to their first question, while Harriman and Vance, with equal lack of success, sought a commitment that Hanoi would accept the presence of the GVN if this question were answered affirmatively. The meeting closed with an agreement that the US negotiators would consult Washington.12

12. (S) Msg, Paris 22253 to State, 11 Oct 68.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw grave risks in a policy that would turn over the main combat role to the RVNAF too rapidly.[23]

On 23 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted the plan requested by Mr. Nitze on 16 April. It was designed to shift the burden of the war gradually to the GVN, completing the process by the end of FY 1973. It assumed that the RVNAF, when enlarged and improved, could successfully cope with the Viet Cong in the absence of large-scale infiltration, but that some US support would continue, especially for the GVN Navy and Air Force.

Under the JCS plan, the RVNAF would be expanded in three increments, or phases. The first phase would go into effect immediately and would run through FY 1968. During this period, the RVNAF would increase to the newly authorized FY 1968 strength of 717,214 and would be provided with modern equipment. The second increment would be implemented during FY 69, when the RVNAF would be further enlarged to 801,215 men, with additional modernization. The final phase would run from the close of FY 1969 through FY 1973. No detailed plans for this period were scheduled, since, as the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out, it was impossible at that time to determine the rate at which the RVNAF could absorb modern equipment. However, they did provide contingency measures for the third phase that allowed the RVNAF to take over equipment in the hands of selected US units if US and NVN forces withdrew from South Vietnam.

As to the ultimate effects of the plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned that:

> the RVNAF, even though expanded and modernized may continue to suffer from important deficiencies, such as training, leadership, and morale, which may limit RVNAF capability to achieve the objectives established for it.

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23. (TS) Note to Control Div, "Discussion Topic for SecDef-JCS meeting, Monday, 29 Apr 68," 26 Apr 68; (TS) J-3 TP 42-68, 29 Apr 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

President Thieu of South Vietnam was also consulted, and he agreed to a bombing cessation on these terms, subject to an understanding that the allies would continue to press the offensive in the south and to keep up the interdiction campaign in Laos, and that the bombing would be resumed if the enemy violated Mr. Johnson's conditions. "After all," he said, "the problem is not to stop the bombing, but to stop the war, and we must try this path to see if they are serious."[15]

The President then consulted the troop-contributing countries, who agreed to go along with the settlement on his terms. On 14 October he consulted his key advisors: Secretaries Rusk and Clifford, the Chairman and other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA Director Helms, and General Taylor. Their judgment was that Hanoi was serious about negotiations and that the military risks involved in a settlement on these terms were "low and manageable."[16]

Armed with this consensus, the President instructed Ambassador Harriman to give NVN an affirmative reply to the question posed by Le Duc Tho on 11 October and to press for an agreement on a date for a bombing cessation, with subsequent negotiations to begin a day later.[17] But the NVN negotiators raised new obstacles. In the words of one US official, "Hanoi turned a bunch of rabbits loose in the house."[18] Objecting that one day's delay between the end of the bombing and the opening of substantive talks was insufficient, they sought an interval of several weeks, which they reduced successively to two weeks, then to one, finally settling for three days. They also wanted a joint communique that would describe the bombing halt as "unconditional," and a subsequent statement describing the ensuing negotiations as a "four-power conference" in order to enhance the prestige of the NLF. The United States rejected

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15. (TS) Notes of the President's Meeting, 29 Oct 68.
16. Ibid.
17. (C) Background Press Briefing at White House by W. Rostow, 31 Oct 68, as reported in (C) Msg, State 265238 to Saigon et al, 1 Nov 68, JCS IN 80526, OCJCS File Correspondence/Messages Pertaining to 1 November 1968 Cessation of the Bombing of North Vietnam.
18. "The Bomb Halt Decision," Life, 15 Nov 68, p. 87.

for the RVNAF program. Negotiations might well lead to a "freeze" on force levels and armaments in RVN or to restrictions on postwar US military aid to the GVN. It was therefore important to bring the RVNAF to maximum strength as rapidly as possible.

Realization of these facts shaped the JCS reply to Mr. Nitze. On 15 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told him that the goal should be

> ...to bring the RVNAF to a self-sufficient posture prior to any freeze, and thus create the largest sustainable RVNAF in-being prior to a negotiated settlement.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were thinking in terms of building an RVNAF force structure capable of coping with a "residual internal insurgency threat," but not of defeating a renewed invasion from North Vietnam.

They felt confident that the 801,215 force level could be reached even before the end of FY 1970, the date originally proposed by COMUSMACV. Recognizing that the armor, artillery, transport, construction, engineer, and other special equipment could not arrive in RVN in time to arm new recruits, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested that the new personnel could be armed with available M2 carbines and assigned to existing units as light infantrymen until the equipment could be deployed. The carbines might be provided as an interim weapon until M16s became available. They also recommended that all RVNAF, including RF/PF, be provided with M16s.[19]

This JCS memorandum apparently "crossed" one from the Deputy Secretary of Defense that showed that Mr. Nitze was thinking along the same lines. As he wrote:

> We have embarked upon a course of gradually shifting the burden of the war to GVN forces. We now must support as quickly as possible and to the maximum extent feasible efforts of the GVN to enlarge, improve, and modernize their armed forces.

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19. (S-GP 4) JCSM-233-68 to SecDef, "Accelerated Expansion of the RVNAF (U)," 15 Apr 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

President Johnson opened the meeting by narrating the course of the negotiations up to that point. He then summarized the substance of the "understanding" reached with North Vietnam on 27 October:

-- Hanoi has agreed in a secret minute and in our discussions to begin serious talks toward peace in Vietnam -- talks which would include representatives of the Government of South Vietnam.

-- We have made it clear to them that a continuation of the bombing cessation was dependent, first, on respect for the DMZ, and second, upon there being no attacks on the cities.

-- The Soviet Union, which has played a part in this negotiation, knows these circumstances intimately. Their understanding has been reaffirmed at the highest level in the last few days.

-- Both Hanoi and Moscow are clear that we shall continue reconnaissance of North Vietnam. That is why we agreed to stop only <u>acts of force</u> and not <u>acts of war</u>.

"It is the universal judgment of our diplomatic authorities," continued the President, "that North Vietnam's acceptance of GVN participation is a major event -- potentially setting the stage for an honorable settlement of the war." He cautioned his hearers against public statements referring to "conditions" for ending the bombing, but indicated his belief that Hanoi realized that the bombing would be resumed if the "understanding" were violated.

After some further remarks, Mr. Johnson began an intensive cross-examination of General Abrams, during which he made it clear that Abrams' judgment would carry more weight than that of anyone else. Asked about probable enemy intentions, the General replied that he expected that the enemy would abide by the agreement to respect the DMZ, but that another attack on Saigon could eventually be expected.

"If the enemy honors our agreement, will this be an advantage militarily?" asked the President. "Will it compensate for a lack of bombing up to the 19° parallel?" General Abrams answered both questions affirmatively.

General Westmoreland's expressed desire to support the GVN's mobilization efforts and to accelerate and modernize the RVNAF received the full support of Ambassador Bunker. On 11 March, he informed the Secretary of State that it was "most urgent that we get the weapons RVNAF needs over here as expeditiously as possible, in order to maintain the momentum of the GVN's present mobilization efforts." He agreed with General Westmoreland's suggested increase in RVNAF force levels for FY 1969 and advised that the United States encourage the GVN to continue its mobilization efforts "not only to form additional units that are sorely needed and to fill up their ranks, but to deny this manpower to the Viet Cong, who are themselves in desperate need of manpower."[14]

On 19 March, General Wheeler informed the Secretary of Defense that it was important that the United States authorize expansion of the RVNAF force structure beyond the authorized FY 1968 level of 685,739 in order to permit the GVN to fill unit shortages, to sustain the momentum of RVNAF procurement and training programs, and to show US support of the GVN mobilization efforts. He recommended that this be done immediately by authorizing the addition of 31,475 personnel spaces previously authorized for expansion of the RVNAF during FY 1969.[15]

US Presidential Decision to Shift Major Portion of War Effort to GVN

President Johnson's decision to send only a limited number of US reinforcements to South Vietnam after the Tet offensive -- approximately 24,500 instead of the 206,000 requested by General Westmoreland -- has been described in an earlier chapter. In reaching this decision, the President determined to prepare the RVNAF to assume a greater share of the war effort. In his speech to the nation on 31 March 1968, Mr. Johnson applauded the GVN's recent mobilization efforts and stated:

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14. (TS) Msg, Saigon 21733 to State, 11 Mar 68, JCS IN 64635.

15. (S-NOFORN-GP 4) CM-3128-68 to SecDef, 19 Mar 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68). (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 07327 to CINCPAC, 15 Mar 68, JCS IN 72264.

Secretary Rusk had left the meeting to await a telephone call from Ambassador Bunker, who had been instructed to confer with the SVN President for the purpose. Shortly after six o'clock, Rusk called the President to report startling news from Bunker. Thieu had refused to approve the agreement. The interval between the bombing halt on 29 October and the opening of negotiations on 2 November was too short, he maintained. He wished Vice President Ky to head the SVN team, but more time would be required to enable him to assemble a delegation and to release the Vice President from his other duties.[24]

What to do? The President and his weary advisors reconvened to thrash out the alternatives: to proceed without Thieu's concurrence or to ask NVN for a delay. The first course of action, as Secretary Rusk observed, might lead to a disastrous split between Washington and Saigon, in which case the 29,000 lives and $70 billion expended by the United States in SVN would go for naught. General Wheeler pointed out that the GVN possessed the power to sabotage any agreement with Hanoi by conducting air raids on its own, since the RVNAF was not under MACV command. But any attempt to postpone the bombing halt ran the risk of angering Hanoi and upsetting the agreement reached after so many weeks of wrangling in Paris. Some suspected that Thieu was deliberately stalling in the hope that the Republican Party would capture the Presidency on 5 November, believing that he could expect stronger US support with Richard M. Nixon in the White House. They argued that Thieu had been given ample opportunity to select a delegation and to make other preparations in advance of the final agreement.

The President finally decided to seek a postponement in the effective dates of the Paris agreement. It was not of "world-shaking importance," he observed, whether substantive negotiations began on 2, 4, 6, or 8 November. "Let's see if they are serious," he said, referring to President Thieu's government. He then obtained an agreement from the NVN negotiators in Paris, resetting the bombing halt for 0800 EST on 1 November and the opening of negotiations on 6 November.[25]

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24. (TS) Notes of the President's Meeting, 29 Oct 68.

25. Ibid. The President's action in obtaining a revision of the Paris agreement of 27 October is not documented in this or other available records, but is evident from what occurred subsequently.

The level of hostilities in the urban areas had forced the GVN to supplement ARVN forces with RF/PF units redeployed from the countryside. As a result, some 96 RF companies and 388 PF platoons in II, III, and IV Corps had changed their mission or their location as of 29 February. US advisors reported that RF/PF capabilities had been degraded in 20 of the 44 provinces but felt that the units had performed better than expected. In most cases these units held their positions and fought the enemy forces.

MACV also reported that the performance of the Air Force and the Marine Brigade had been highly effective while that of the Navy had been excellent.

The Tet attacks amplified some problems in the RVNAF that the United States had been attempting to rectify prior to the offensive. Key among these were short-comings in weaponry and transportation. RVNAF forces had been equipped with less sophisticated weapons than those of the enemy, whose modern Russian AK-47 assault rifles, light and heavy machine guns, and antitank and artillery rockets had given him fire superiority. The shortage of transportation facilities had in many cases prevented RVNAF personnel on leave from rejoining their units during the offensive.[7]

On 3 February, General Westmoreland requested that the United States accelerate delivery of the M16 rifles, M60 machine guns and M29 mortars he had requested for the RVNAF prior to the Tet hostilities. He also asked that the RVNAF be provided with additional armored personnel carriers and helicopters.[8]

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7. (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 282. (S-GP 4) MACV, Report-Reassessment of RVNAF Status, as of 29 February 1968, 21 Mar 68, JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68). (S) Msg DCG USARV to CSA, 121200Z Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. (TS) CM-2973-68 to Spec Asst to Pres for National Security Affairs, 13 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam 12-29 Feb 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 20928 to State, 1 Mar 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 894 to State, 16 Jan 69, JCS IN 38225.

8. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 01586 to CJCS, 3 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68. Tab C to CM-3116-68 to SecDef, 13 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/137), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

"sellout." Occasional enemy rocket shells falling upon Saigon during these discussions gave point to their apprehensions. But the strongest objection raised by Thieu and his colleagues was to the prospect of meeting with representatives of the NLF under conditions that might imply an equality of status between that organization and the elected GVN. For Thieu, the issue was one of real substance, not a mere detail. He sought various procedural guarantees that would have insured against recognition of the NLF as a separate entity. Since these amounted to a demand that Hanoi virtually repudiate the NLF, Bunker dismissed them as unrealistic. At one point, the SVN officials urged a delay to enable them to open negotiations themselves with Hanoi concerning the status of the NLF. Bunker pointed out that the United States had done everything possible to meet the legitimate SVN demands when it arranged for talks on a two-side basis. He saw no reason why the GVN, like his own country, could not talk to the NLF on the basis of the "your side/our side" formula.

Ambassador Bunker and his aides finally left the Presidential palace at 0745 on 1 November (1845 EST, 31 October). Everyone present knew by then that President Johnson would soon go on the air to announce the bombing halt, without the concurrence of the GVN.[27]

The President's Announcement of 31 October

President Johnson planned to make a public announcement of the bombing halt on the evening of 31 October 1968, roughly twelve hours before the agreement with Hanoi would take effect. On that morning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff met and decided to send the President fresh assurance of their concurrence. They reached the following agreement (as reported by the Chairman):

> a. In the light of the understandings reached in Paris between our negotiators and those of the DRV, the military situation in Vietnam is such that cessation

27. (C) Bunker Background Press Briefing to US Correspondents, 4 Nov 68; (S) Msg, Saigon 41768 to State, 3 Nov 68; same file.

The RVNAF continued to show improvement throughout 1967. In October of that year the United States agreed to support a rise in force levels to 685,739 for FY 1968. The new RVNAF force structure would include:

ARVN	301,468
VNN	16,003
VNMC	7,321
VNAF	16,448
RF	183,546
PF	160,953
Total	685,739

GVN officials planned to support the rise in force levels by lowering the draft age to 19, extending tours of service by one year, and recalling some reservists. During FY 1969, the GVN would expand the draft to include 18-year-olds and would extend tours of service by an additional six months.[3]

In November 1967, General Westmoreland announced that his headquarters was taking further actions to improve the effectiveness of the RVNAF. Efforts were being made to improve their equipment, organization, leadership, training, morale, and management. Additional attention was also to be given to the US advisory effort.[4]

In line with these objectives, he requested delivery of ten items of equipment during 1968 to accelerate the modernization of RVNAF firepower, mobility, and communications. These items included M16 rifles, M79 grenade launchers, M60 machine guns, 81mm mortars, howitzers, trucks, radios, and additional ammunition allocations. Most of these items, including the M16s, were approved for delivery during 1968, but some were held up pending decision on the FY 1969 RVNAF force structure.[5]

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3. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History 1967, pp. 187-90.
4. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 10726 to CJCS, 9 Nov 67, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Nov 67.
5. (S) Tab C to CM-3116-68 to SecDef, 13 Mar 68 (derived from JCS 2472/137), JMF 911/535 (13 Mar 68).

the cities are being shelled and where the demilitarized zone is being abused." The President thus revealed the substance of the "understanding" reached with Hanoi, though he was careful to make no reference to "conditions" for the bombing halt.

The President pointed out that he was taking this step after receiving assurance from his military advisors that no increase in US casualties was likely. "I cannot tell you tonight specifically in all detail why there has been progress in Paris," he said. However, he suggested several "hopeful events" that might have helped to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table: the growing strength of the GVN, the steady improvement in the RVNAF, and the "superb performance" of US forces.

Referring to his renunciation of reelection ambitions on 31 March 1968, Mr. Johnson declared that he had "devoted every resource of the Presidency to the search for peace in Southeast Asia." In conclusion, he promised to continue this attempt while he remained in office:

> I do not know who will be inaugurated as the 37th President of the United States next January. But I do know that I shall do all that I can in the next few months to try to lighten his burdens. . . . I shall do everything in my power to move us toward the peace that the new President -- as well as this President and, I believe, every other American -- so deeply and urgently desires.29

The President had now taken the fateful step that had been urged upon him for months by US "doves," whose ranks included some of the most prominent members of his own political party. Among many vociferous opponents of the war, in the United States and elsewhere, it had become virtually an article of faith that only the stubborn insistence of the United States upon the necessity of dropping bombs upon a small nation prevented the conclusion of peace in Vietnam. The President's action would put this conviction to the test in the weeks to come.

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29. Dept of State Bulletin, LIX (18 Nov 68), pp. 517-519.

indication of Hanoi's lack of good faith. He warned that a NVA/VC offensive would measurably set back the possibility of talks.[55]

Only a few hours later, however, the NVN representative in Vientiane unexpectedly delivered another note to Ambassador Sullivan proposing Paris as the site for talks commencing on or about 10 May.[56] The Administration at once decided to accept Hanoi's proposal and so informed its allies. Admittedly, Paris was less than ideal, but it was acceptable for initial talks. If the French Government created difficulties, a change in the site could be arranged for the substantive negotiations to follow.[57]

After obtaining agreement from the allies, President Johnson announced on 3 May that the United States Government accepted Hanoi's proposal to meet in Paris on 10 May. The President spoke of his belief that in Paris the parties would receive fair and impartial treatment. He also expressed hope that this agreement on initial contacts would lead to peace in Southeast Asia, but added a cautionary note for those who might expect too much from the talks: "This is only the first step. There are many, many hazards and difficulties ahead."[58]

55. NY Times, 3 May 68, p. 1
56. "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 70.
57. Ibid., p. 71.
58. "The President's News Conference of May 3, 1968," Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, GPO: Washington, D.C., pp. 741-742.

Ambassador Bunker's judgment was borne out when, with the passage of time, Thieu's position softened and he eventually agreed to join the Paris talks. On 26 November the GVN announced "that it is prepared to participate in the new talks in Paris with the Hanoi Delegation to show the good will of the Republic of Viet-Nam and to test the good faith of Hanoi." The statement declared that the objections raised by the GVN "have been given satisfaction in their essential aspects" and that "the sovereignty of the Republic of Viet-Nam has been respected." At the same time, another statement put out jointly by the US and SVN governments provided assurances that were satisfactory from Thieu's viewpoint. It noted a clear understanding, accepted by Hanoi, that "our side" would be "constituted as separate delegations of the Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States." But the "persons on the other side of the table," regardless of the way they might be organized, would be regarded "as members of a single side, that of Hanoi, and for practical purposes as a single delegation." This position was "consistent with our view of the nature of the so-called National Liberation Front." The statement pointed out also that Hanoi had been told during the preceding discussions that the presence of the NLF would involve "no element of recognition whatever." Moreover, in future negotiations the GVN delegation would "play a leading role," and would "be the main spokesman on all matters which are of principal concern to South Viet-Nam."[32]

Coincident with these announcements, President Johnson released a statement hailing Saigon's decision to join the Paris talks, which, he said, "opens a new and hopeful phase in the negotiations." At the same time he warned that "we must expect both hard bargaining and hard fighting in the days ahead."[33] There seemed little reason to quarrel with this prediction. The situation in SVN could perhaps be compared with that reached during the Korean War by July 1951, when the communists had agreed to negotiations. Two years of seemingly interminable haggling had then ensued, during which the armies went on fighting.

It was perhaps worth noting that the settlement of the Korean War had involved the United States in controversies,

32. Dept of State Bulletin, LIX (16 Dec 68) pp. 621-622.
33. Ibid., p. 621.

The apparent deadlock over a talk site, coupled with this massive NVN logistical buildup indicating a pending NVA/VC offensive in SVN, prompted General Wheeler on 23 April to direct CINCPAC to make contingency plans for resuming the bombing of NVN beyond the 20th parallel. The plans were to cover three target options, each for a minimum of two days of strikes, and capable of being executed on short notice and with maximum surprise.[48]

By this time, President Johnson was also showing increased concern over the high infiltration rate. The decline in NVA/VC initiated attacks since his 31 March speech was gratifying, but the ever-increasing infiltration of men and supplies into SVN was viewed by the Administration as a clear violation of the "no advantage" conditions of the President's 1967 San Antonio formula. As Secretary of Defense Clifford interpreted the formula, infiltration was not expected to exceed "normal levels." A normal level for personnel had been estimated at around 6,000 men per month. Estimates of the infiltration rate for April, while admittedly "rougher" than usual, ran as high as 20,000--a peak rate for the entire war.[49]

By the Administration's estimate, North Vietnam was taking an intolerable military advantage of the bombing restrictions. Nevertheless, the President did not feel that he could resume the bombing above the 20th parallel, at least not as a first step. The unannounced restriction of the bombings between the 19th and 20th parallels was another matter.

On 28 April, the President indicated to General Wheeler that he was considering the possibility of resuming the bombing between these two parallels, and would probably make a decision on April 30. If he did decide to resume air strikes in this area, he wanted to make certain they would come as a surprise in order to insure maximum destruction. Accordingly, General Wheeler instructed CINCPAC to be prepared to resume strikes in this region in line with the President's suggestions.[50]

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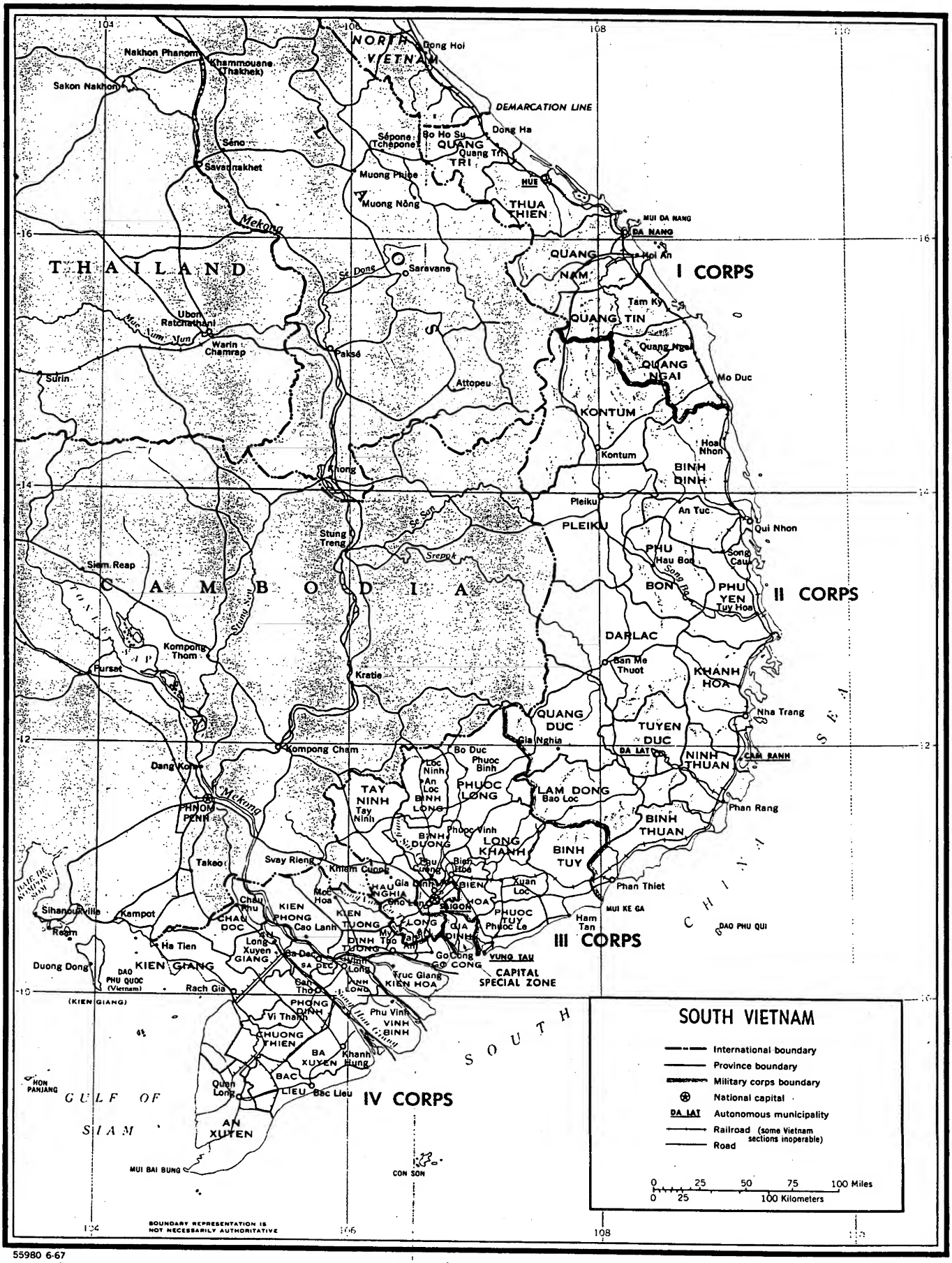
48. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7218 to CINCPAC, 23 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (16-30 Apr 68). See Ch. 52 for a detailed account of the pending NVN/VC offensive.
49. NY Times, 2 May 68, p. 1.
50. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4569 to CINCPAC, 28 Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (16-30 Apr 68).


NORTH VIETNAM
Dong Hoi
DEMARCATION LINE
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Bo Ho Su
QUANG TRI
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HUE
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Hoi An
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I CORPS
Tam Ky
QUANG TIN
Quang Ngai
QUANG NGAI
Mo Duc
KONTUM
Kontum
Hoai Nhon
BINH DINH
Qui Nhon
PLEIKU
Pleiku
An Tuc
PHU BON
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PHU YEN
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Nha Trang
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Loc Ninh
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Phuoc Vinh
BINH DUONG
LONG KHANH
BINH TUY
Xuan Loc
BIEN HOA
SAIGON
PHUOC TUY
Phuoc Le
Gia Dinh
Go Cong
VUNG TAU
CAPITAL SPECIAL ZONE
III CORPS
Tay Ninh
Khiem Cuong
Phu Cuong
Bien Hoa
Moc Hoa
Tan An
Tan Tru
Cau Tho
Ba Dec
Long Xuyen
Tuc Giang
KIEN HOA
Tri Ton
Cao Lanh
KIEN PHONG
KIEN TUONG
MY THO
GIA DINH
CHAU PHU
CHAU DOC
Takeo
Svay Rieng
Kampot
Sihanoukville
Kompong Som
Ha Tien
Duong Dong
DAO PHU QUOC (Vietnam)
KIEN GIANG
(KIEN GIANG)
Rach Gia
Kompong Cham
Dang Kor
PHNOM PENH
Kratie
Kompong Thom
Pursat
Siem Reap
Stung Treng
Sepok
Pakse
Saravane
Attopeu
Sekong
Mekong
Se Kong
Se San
Song Ba
Song Ba
Song Cau
Song Vam Co Dong
Song Vam Co Tay
Song Saigon
Song Vam Co
Song Tra Vinh
Song Hau Giang
Song Bassac
Song Mekong
Song Mekong
Song Mekong

The United States had now offered a list of fifteen possible locations. NVN, however, was quick to charge that none satisfied the two conditions that the US itself had insisted upon. Many of the countries on the list were not neutral, and most had no diplomatic relations with North Vietnam. It thus rejected all of the sites recommended by the US. North Vietnam repeated its preference for Warsaw, and charged the United States with "full responsibility for delaying the talks between the two sides." The United States replied that Warsaw was not acceptable as a site because Poland was a direct contributor to the Vietnamese war.[40]

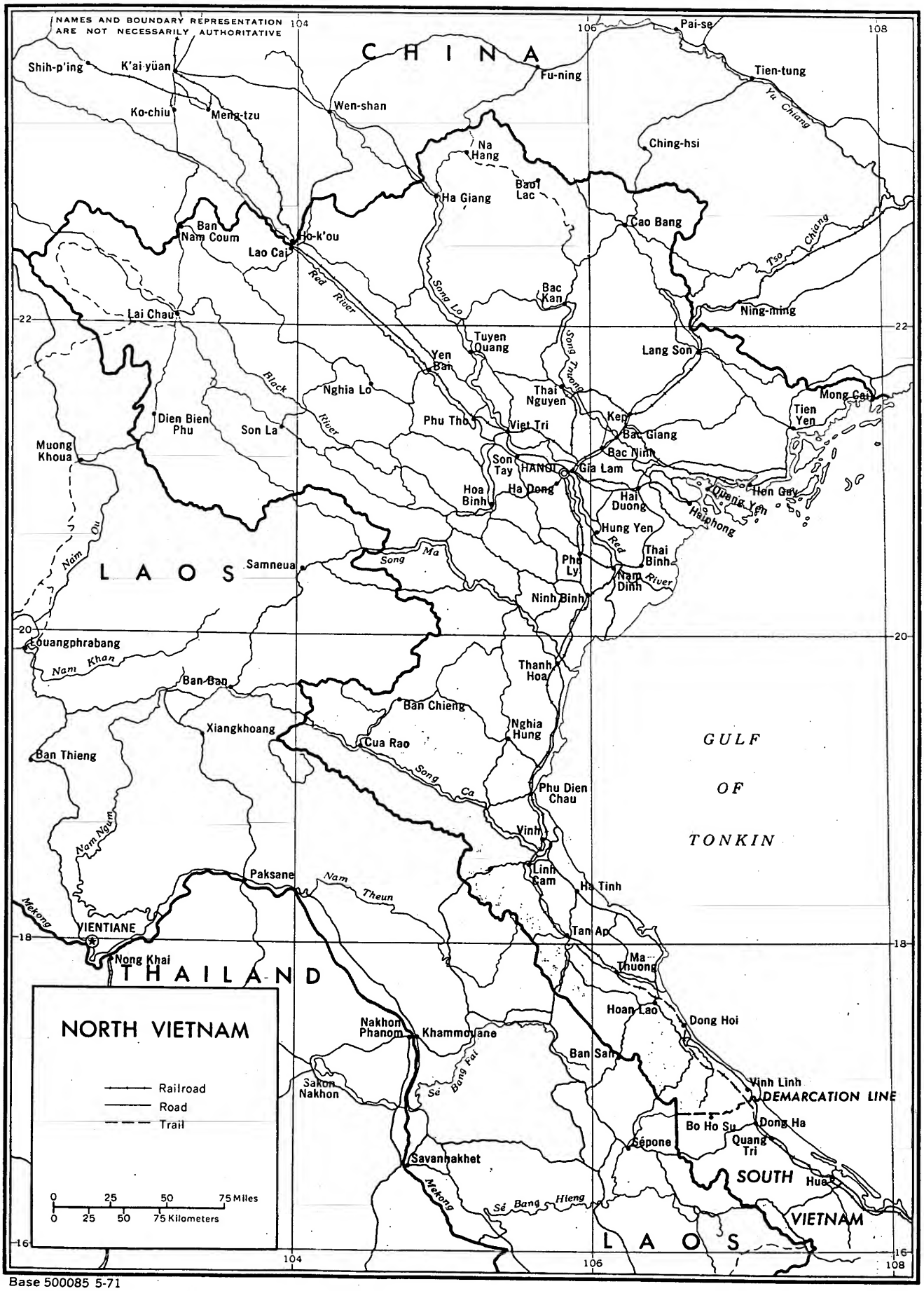
In subsequent public statements, Secretary Rusk expressed his impatience with NVN's intransigence. Almost three weeks had passed since the President had ordered a restriction on the bombardment of NVN. In this time, the United States had suggested fifteen sites while NVN had offered only two. This record, Rusk felt, showed none of the flexibility indicated in Hanoi's 3 April message. "While the US was businesslike in proposing sites, NVN engage[d] in polemics. . . . meanwhile NVN infiltration continues and is growing in face of US unilateral act of deescalation."[41]

Increasing Enemy Threat and the Question of Expanding ROLLING THUNDER

Secretary Rusk's doubts about NVN's sincerity with regard to the talks had increased with recent reports from the field. Before mid-April enemy-initiated actions had declined sharply. Some observers were inclined to view this as evidence of deescalation on the part of NVN. Others, including the allied military field commanders, believed that the decline resulted from the continuing general allied offensive, which forced the enemy to withdraw to comparatively safe sanctuaries in the border areas of Cambodia and Laos where he could regroup his forces and prepare for another offensive of his own.[42]

Evidence that the enemy was indeed preparing for a new offensive began to mount by mid-April. On 18 April a COMUSMACV intelligence survey of enemy LOCs in the DMZ area revealed a massive enemy effort underway to move large quantities of

40. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
41. Ibid., p. 39.
42. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS et al., 130212Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).



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Map II

accommodate a large number of diplomats and the world press. It was also in a neutral country. This made it the favorite choice for the US Government.[31] Still, Switzerland was a European nation, and North Vietnam did not have a mission there, which made its acceptance by NVN unlikely. For this reason, the President stated his readiness to consider "any reasonable alternative suggestions" by the DRV.[32]

For the next five days there was no official reply from Hanoi. On April 8, the day the President had proposed for the beginning of talks in Geneva, the NVN Representative in Vientiane delivered Hanoi's brief, formal reply. Hanoi pointedly ignored President Johnson's Geneva proposal, but agreed to meetings at the ambassadorial level, and suggested Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as an appropriate place. If the US was not agreeable to Phnom Penh, then it was open to "another place to be mutually agreed upon." President Johnson publicly acknowledged this message, but made no reference to its content.[33]

In his official reply on 9 April, the President ruled out Phnom Penh on the grounds that the United States did not have there a diplomatic mission, which was necessary to insure secure communications. The President repeated his preference for Geneva, but also proposed four Asian sites as possible alternatives, with the first meeting to take place on 15 April: Vientiane, Rangoon, Djakarta, or New Delhi.[34]

The NVN reply, dated 11 April, countered with a suggestion of Warsaw, with a date of 18 April for the beginning of the talks.[35] This suggestion came as a surprise, since it had been expected that NVN would insist on an Asian site. Warsaw was clearly unacceptable to the US because Poland's assistance to NVN did not qualify it as a neutral in the Vietnam war. But rather than address itself to this second suggestion in private, the United States Government decided to prod Hanoi publicly. Accordingly, the White House issued a comparatively lengthy public statement that went beyond the mere acknowledgement of Hanoi's latest response. "On serious matters of this kind," the statement read, "it is important to conduct talks in a neutral atmosphere, fair to both sides. The selection of an appropriate site in neutral territory, with adequate communications facilities, should be achieved promptly through

31. (TS) Project B, OCJCS File, Viet-Nam Negotiating Book.
32. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 2.
33. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
34. (TS-GP 3) Msg, State 143729 to Vientiane, 9 Apr 68, JCS IN 33785, OCJCS File, CROCODILE Outgoing, (1-30 Apr 68).
35. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 11.

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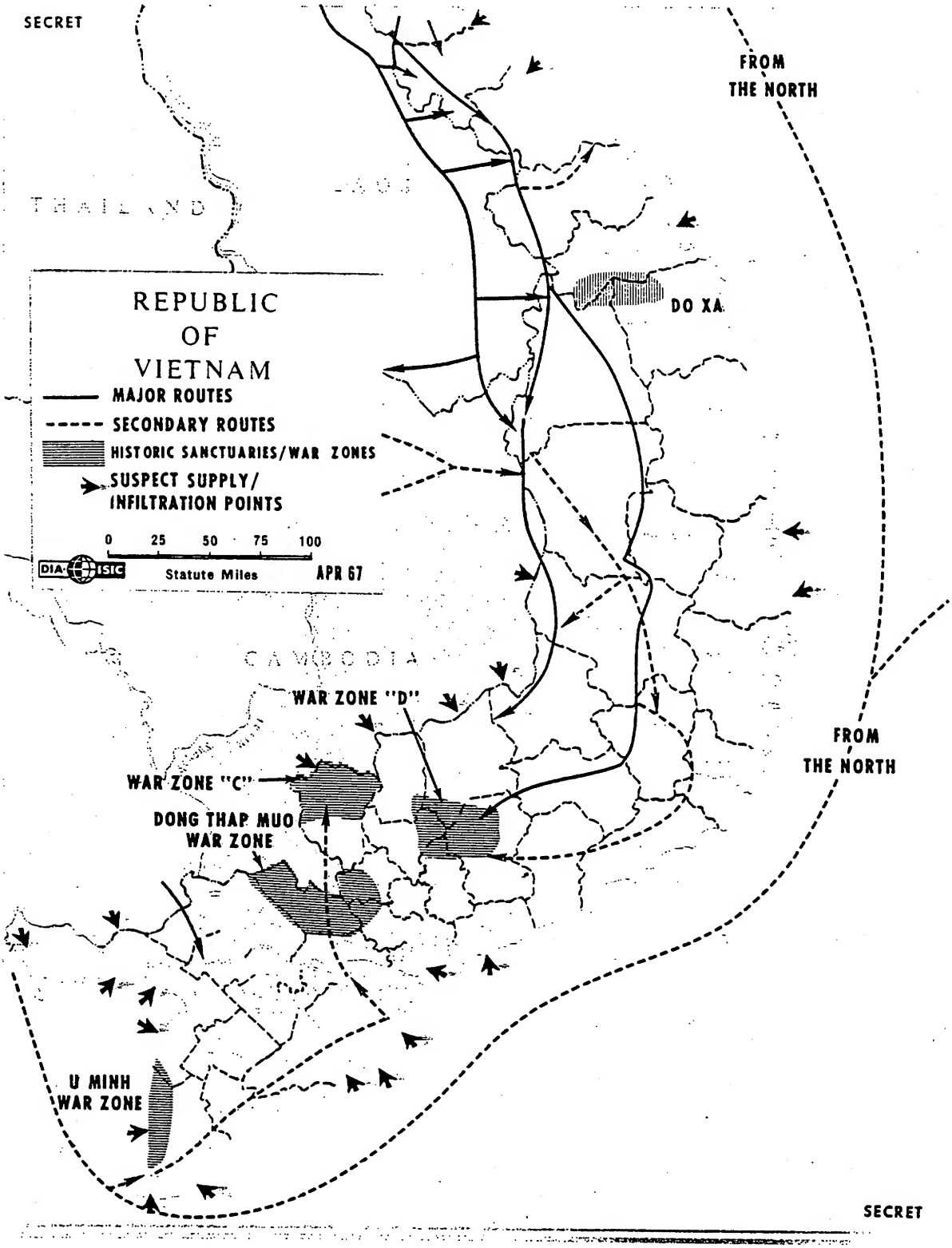
1967

VC/NVA SUPPLY AND INFILTRATION ROUTES



MAP III

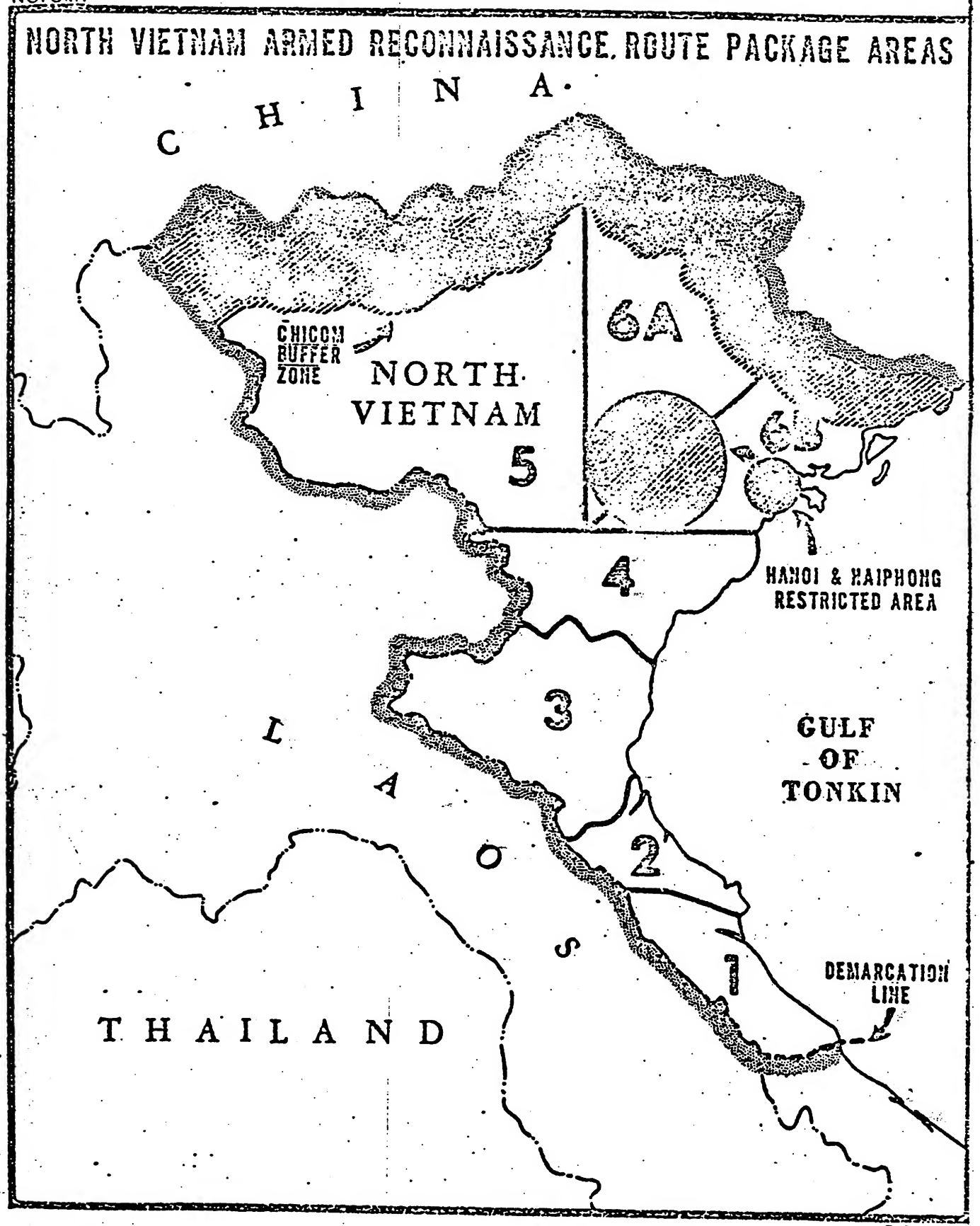
~~SECRET~~—NO FOREIGN DISSEM

Chau. It was his guess that Red China had carried out the attack with the aim of ending the US-NVN contacts that they had opposed from the beginning.[22] Choosing to forego any public speculation on the matter, Secretary Clifford merely declared US innocence in the incident in a press conference on 8 April.[23]

The Lai Chau incident, however, did prompt the US to place restrictions on its military operations in Laos. In a message sent out on the day of the Hanoi broadcast, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to discontinue, until further notice, BARREL ROLL air strikes in the ALPHA, BRAVO, and COCO areas of Laos that bordered northwest NVN.[24] BARREL ROLL operations in other areas along the Laos-NVN border above the 19th parallel were still authorized, but had to be conducted under positive forward air control (FAC).[25] These restrictions were in sharp contrast to the level of operations the US had actually intended to carry out in Laos. In fact, Ambassador Sullivan in Vientiane, on the eve of the President's speech, had been instructed to assure Prince Souvanna that air strikes in Laos would be augmented rather than curtailed.[26]

The Administration's fear of any action in NVN that might subject it to a charge of deliberately trying to sabotage the prospective talks soon affected the actions of its allies as well. General Westmoreland had been approached by the Vietnamese Air Force on 12 April about the introduction of its recently acquired F-5 squadron in the air interdiction program north of the DMZ. General Westmoreland, in a cable to General Wheeler, expressed his fear that, while such a step would mean an increase of only six sorties per day, the fact that it would mark the first use of jet aircraft by RVN might give it an escalatory connotation.[27] General Wheeler, after conferring with Secretary Clifford, agreed with General Westmoreland and asked that he take steps to get the VNAF to withdraw its request. "As you

22. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC HWA 1213 to CJCS, 13 Apr 68, same file.
23. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," p. 6
24. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5540 to CINCPAC et al., 4 Apr 68.
25. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5617 to CINCPAC et al., 5 Apr 68; JCS 5686, 6 Apr 68.
26. (TS) Msg, VIENTIANE 5814 to CINCPAC, 12 Apr 68, JCS IN 39897, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).
27. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 4893 to JCS, 12 Apr 68, same file.


NORTH VIETNAM ARMED RECONNAISSANCE ROUTE PACKAGE AREAS
C H I N A
CHICOM BUFFER ZONE
NORTH VIETNAM
6A
5
4
3
2
1
HANOI & HAIPHONG RESTRICTED AREA
GULF OF TONKIN
L A O S
THAILAND
DEMARCATION LINE

Map IV

actions in any way. Recognizing the impossibility of concealing the extent of these actions in the presence of more than six hundred reporters in SVN alone, General Wheeler could suggest only that General Westmoreland be instructed not to modify his plans, but to try to "play them in low key." Every effort, in other words, should be made by COMUSMACV to describe Operation PEGASUS and related actions as the usual run of offensive operations against the enemy in order to provoke as little adverse criticism as possible.[16]

Hanoi's Positive Response: Further Restrictions on Military Operations

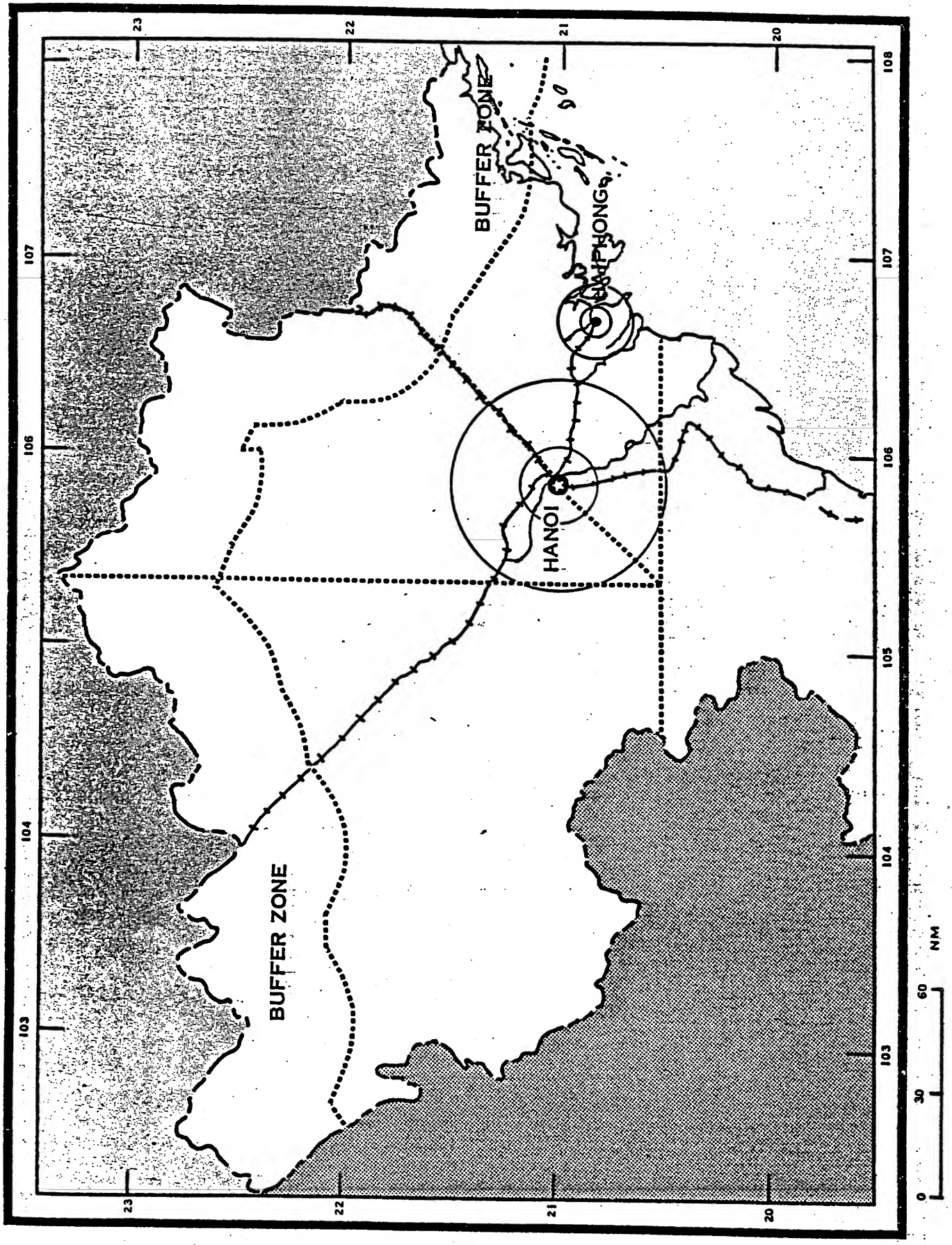
Throughout 1 and 2 April the Administration essentially was preoccupied with its critics. There was no word from Hanoi until the morning of 3 April, when Radio Hanoi relayed the North Vietnamese Government's first response to the President's speech. The text of the Hanoi statement followed its usual harsh line, but with one important exception: it was no longer insisting on a complete cessation of the bombing before contacts between the US and NVN were made. Now, as the statement read, "the DRV Government declares its readiness to send its representatives to decide with the U.S. side the unconditional cessation of bombing and all other acts by the United States against the DRV so that talks could begin."[17]

The President seized upon this brief but seemingly promising passage. In a broadcast of his own later that same day, he reiterated his willingness to send representatives "to any forum at any time" to discuss ways in which the war could be brought to an end. "Accordingly," the President went on, "we will establish contact with the representatives of North Viet-Nam."[18]

Previously, when diplomatic feelers had been put out for talks with the North Vietnamese, there had been some instances where coordination between these efforts and military actions in the field was inadequate. (See Ch 40.) This time the

16. (S) Msg, JCS 3564 to COMUSMACV, 31 Mar 68, OCJCS 091 Vietnam (14-31 Mar 68).
17. (TS) "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE," Encl to Memo, ExecSecy, Dept of State to SecDef et al., 6 Apr 68, p. 2 (hereafter cited as "Summary Chronology - Operation CROCODILE"), OCJCS File, CROCODILE, Outgoing (1-30 Apr 68).
18. Ibid.

NORTHERN NVN (with sanctuary areas)



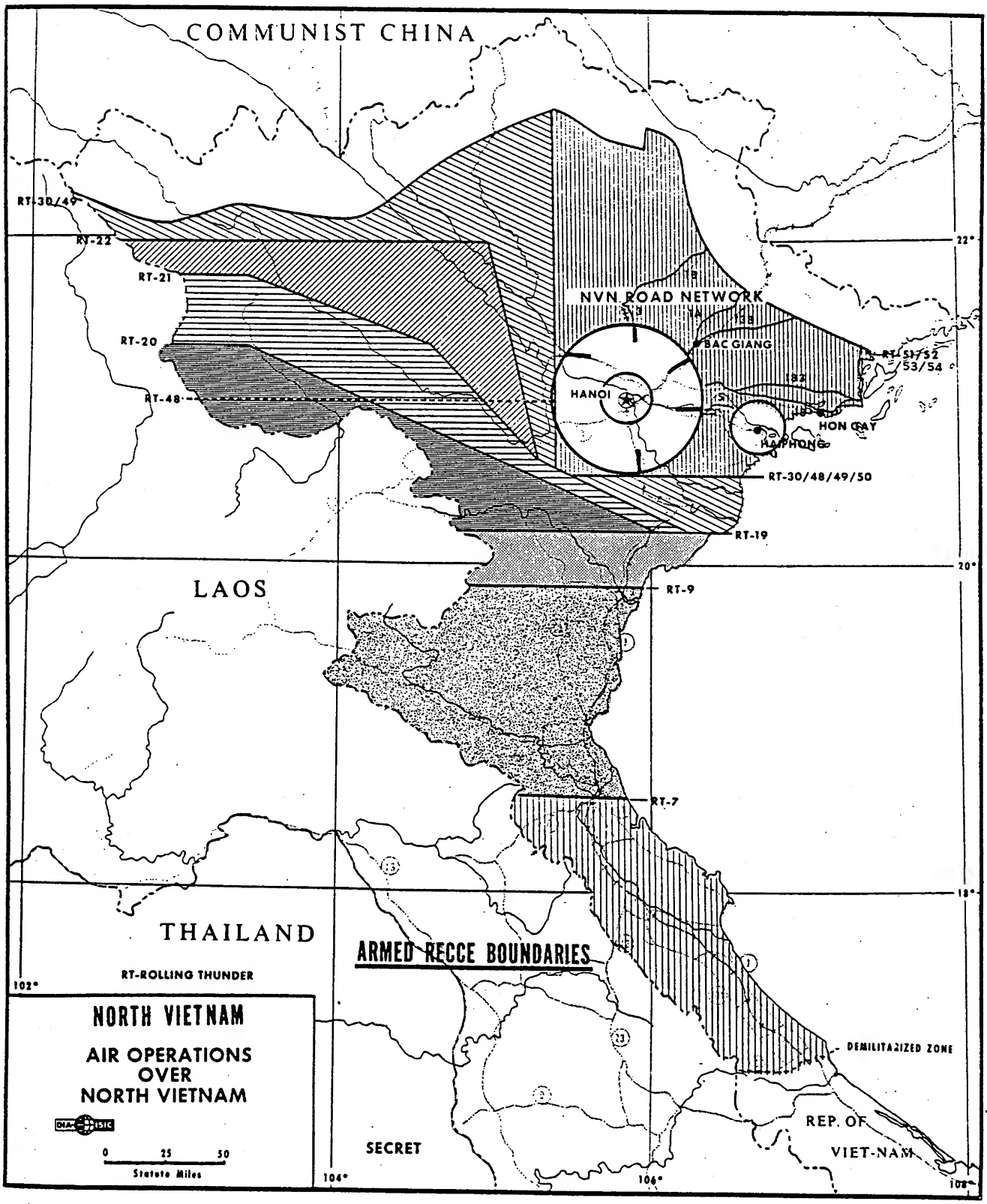
MAP V

Unfortunately the President's public vagueness on the exact limitations of the bombing curb misled many of his critics into thinking that it was much closer to the DMZ than the 20th parallel and thus a greater concession than was actually the case. Senator Fulbright, who had not been taken into the President's confidence prior to the delivery of the speech, was among these. He had called the President immediately after the speech to congratulate him on the move and the next day enthusiastically joined his like-minded colleagues on the Senate floor to praise the President for his major unilateral concession in behalf of peace.[12]

The President's critics, however, did not labor very long in their exaggerated conception of the magnitude of the bombing curb. At the very moment the Senate was praising the President for his actions on 1 April, a UPI news release from Saigon had reported a US air strike against the city of Thanh Hoa which was located more than two hundred miles north of the DMZ. In disbelief Senator Fulbright sought verification of the strike and on the following day, 2 April, ruefully observed in the Senate that he had been mistaken about the magnitude of the President's gesture and of its significance as a move towards peace. "I thought," said Fulbright, "he would in a significant way stop the bombing in an effort to stop the war." Instead, it was a "very limited step" and one "not calculated to bring a response from North Vietnam." Senator Mansfield, who had been busy at his desk plotting the position of Thanh Hoa on a map, rose to the defense of the President. Here, for the first time, Senator Mansfield publicly revealed the 20th parallel as being the demarcation line for the bombing that President Johnson had in mind when he announced the bombing curb, and pointed out that Thanh Hoa was within the prescribed area. The President's language could have been clearer, Mansfield admitted, but its vagueness stemmed from his wish to avoid giving the enemy a clear sanctuary and not from a desire to deceive his critics. Mansfield went on to say that while he had personally preferred a greater restriction on the bombing than the President had ordered it was nevertheless a substantial concession and a serious bid for a negotiated peace.[13]

12. NY Times, 3 Apr 68, pp. 1 and 14.
13. Ibid.

ROLLING THUNDER
Armed Recce Boundaries through RT 54



MAP VI

Within minutes after transmitting his orders to CINCPAC limiting operations in NVN, General Wheeler sent another message to COMUSMACV conveying the President's instructions for operations in SVN. Here, there was to be no change. General Westmoreland's efforts to regain the initiative after the Tet offensive were to continue unabated, including his planned Operation PEGASUS which was designed to eliminate the remaining threat to Khe Sanh, and which was scheduled to begin on 31 March, the same day the bombing restrictions were to take effect.[6] These instructions were in keeping with the President's intention to assume a strong fight-and-talk posture for any negotiations that might materialize with NVN.

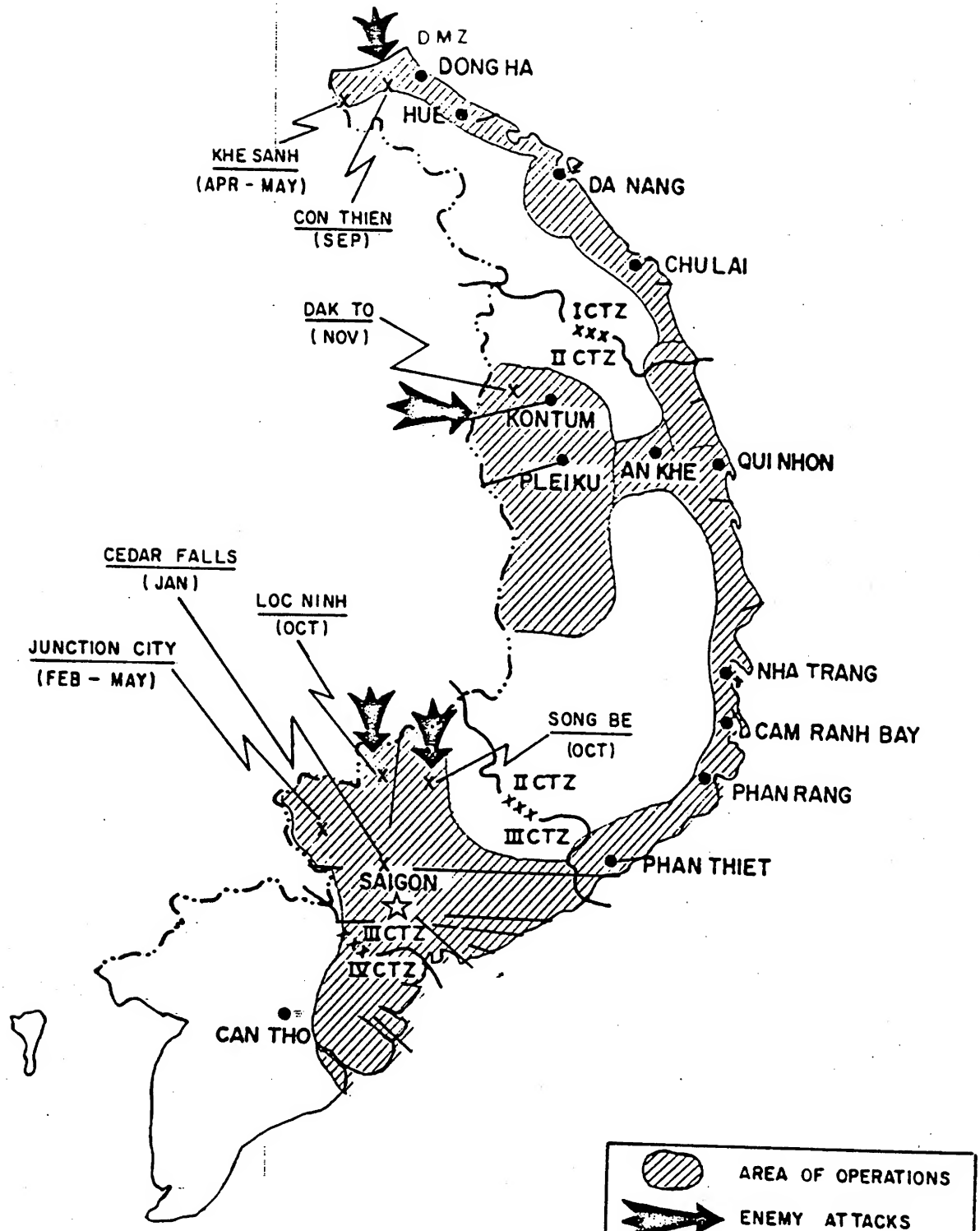
Replying to General Wheeler's order to restrict air operations, Admiral Sharp revealed some chagrin at the short notice he had been given:

> Again I have been caught completely unaware of an impending major change of policy on the air war . . . . Frankly I simply cannot understand why I am not forewarned of the possibility of such important decisions . . . . In summation, I have not been kept informed . . . . If this results from decision by higher authority then I suggest revision of this policy be urgently requested.[7]

Admiral Sharp was also concerned because the President's decision contravened his repeated recommendations that ROLLING THUNDER be expanded as the weather over NVN improved. Had these recommendations been given any consideration? Another question in his mind was whether or not the thirty-day figure mentioned by General Wheeler, in his assessment of the consequences of the restriction, was intended to indicate the actual duration of the bombing curb.[8]

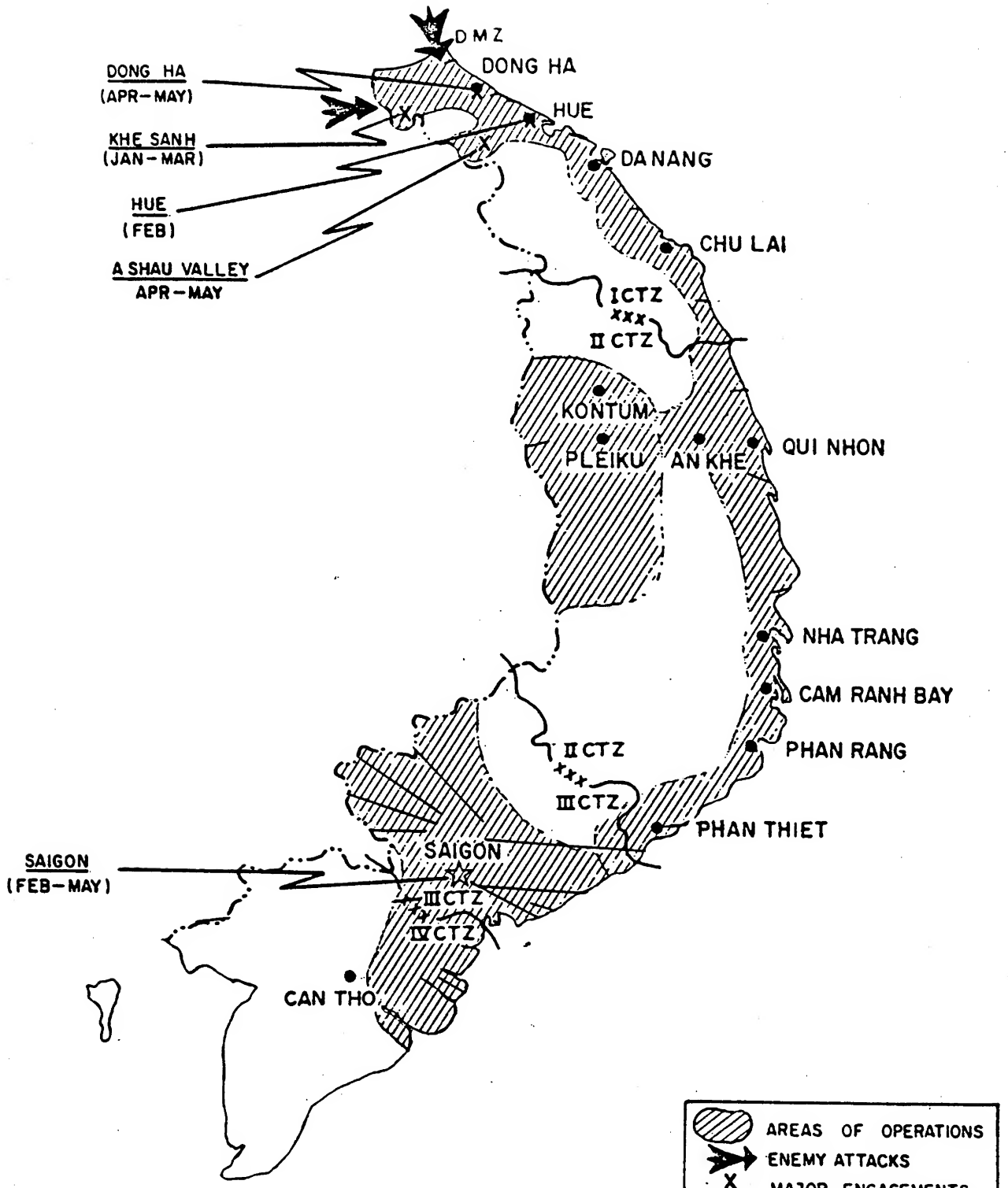
General Wheeler replied that he had informed Admiral Sharp of the President's decision as soon as he had received it himself. He went on to assure him that he and the Service

6. (S) Msg, JCS 3564 to COMUSMACV, 31 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (14-31 Mar 68). For a description of Operation PEGASUS see Ch. .
7. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 010315Z Apr 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (1-15 Apr 68).
8. Ibid.



AREAS OF OPERATION OF MAJOR US/FW UNITS 1967

Map VII



AREAS OF OPERATION OF MAJOR US/FW UNITS 1968

Map VIII

in that direction, he announced that he was "taking the first step to deescalate the conflict," by unilaterally reducing the level of hostilities:

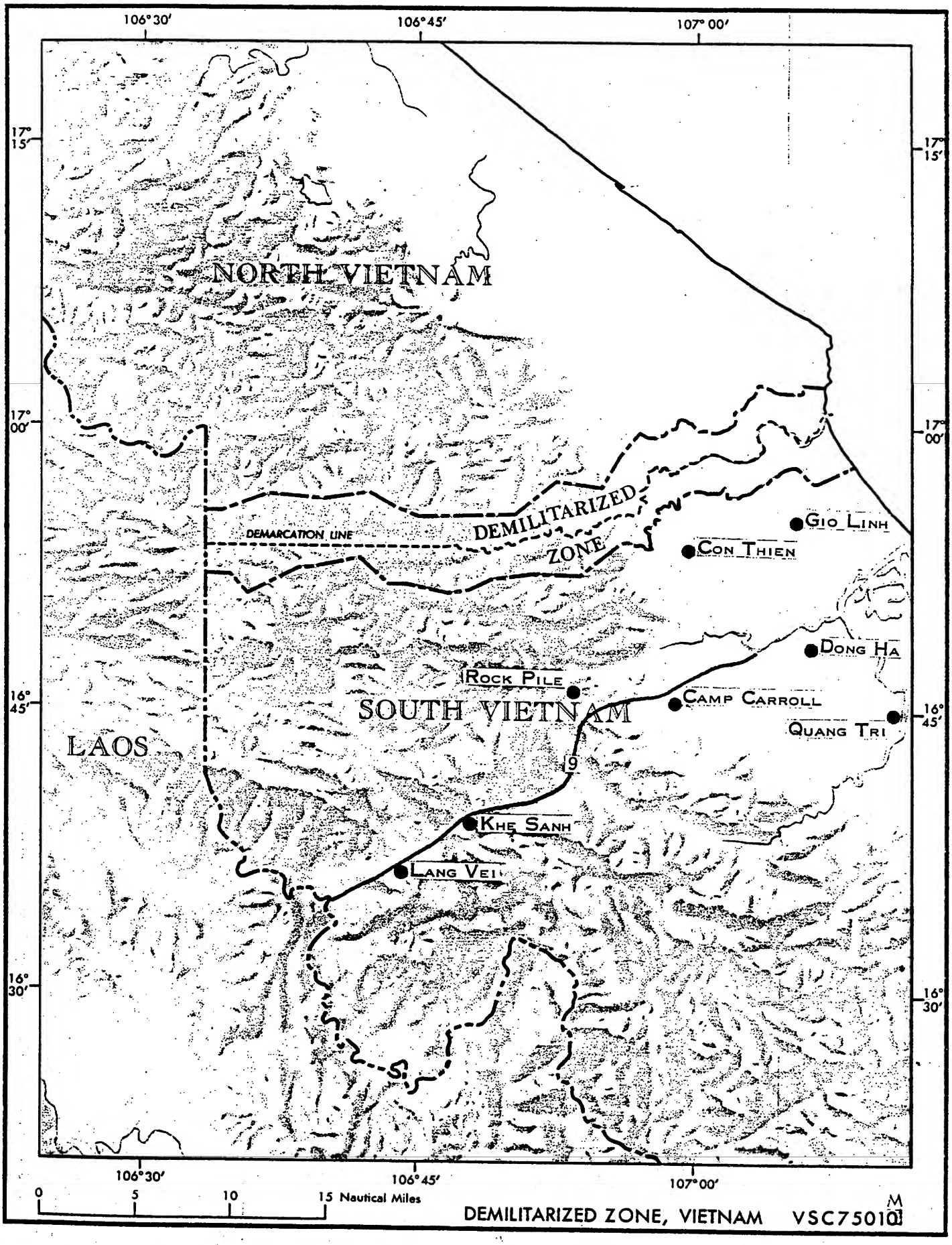
> Tonight I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam, except in the area north of the demilitarized zone where the continuing enemy buildup directly threatens Allied forward positions and where the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

Mr. Johnson did not delimit the precise area in which attacks would continue. He pointed out, however, that "the area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90 percent of North Vietnam's population and most of its territory." At the same time, he promised that "even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi."

Moving further, the President announced that the United States was "ready to send its representatives to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this ugly war to an end." For this purpose, he designated Ambassador Averell Harriman as his "personal representative for such talks." He called on Ho Chi Minh to "respond positively and favorably" to his overture. At the same time, he made it clear that the US objective in South Vietnam had not been changed. The goal was not, he said, the "annihilation of the enemy," but rather the creation of conditions that would permit the people of South Vietnam "to chart their course free of any outside domination or interference, from us or from anyone else."

The President told his hearers that approximately 11,000 men had been sent to South Vietnam on an emergency basis a few weeks earlier. Now, he continued, support forces totalling 13,500 men would be added over the next five months, in accord with JCS recommendations. Some of these men would be drawn from Reserve units that were to be called up for service. He did not indicate the number of reservists to be mobilized. He estimated that actions taken since the beginning of the year to strengthen US forces in South Vietnam (and also those in Korea), and to build up the RVNAF, would require an additional $2.5 billion in expenditures in the current fiscal year and $2.6 billion in the following year.

The DMZ and Khe Sanh Area



Map IX

areas to 3 and 1.5 nm respectively "appears to stand a good chance of approval."[51] Simultaneously the Department of State asked Ambassador Bunker's opinion of proposals that the United States discontinue or sharply limit the bombing campaign. The Ambassador replied that these proposals were most unwise; they would raise doubts about US intentions, feed the latent anti-Americanism that the Viet Cong were exploiting, and endanger the "new mood of unity and anti-Communism" in the country.[52]

A key development in the progress toward a decision within the Administration was a meeting of the President's Senior Informal Advisory Group on 25-26 March. Members of the group included Dean Acheson, George Ball, Arthur Dean, McGeorge Bundy, Cyrus Vance, and Douglas Dillon and Generals Ridgway, Taylor, and Bradley. On 25 March the group met at the State Department for a series of briefings. The meeting was also attended by a number of high government officials. General DePuy (SACSA) described the military situation in SVN and Mr. George Carver, of CIA, the state of internal security in that country. Mr. Phil Habib, of the Department of State, discussed South Vietnam's political situation, while Mr. William Bundy, of the same Department, appraised the prospects for negotiations.[53]

On the following day the members met with the President, in a meeting attended by General Wheeler. Reportedly they advised Mr. Johnson to reject any idea of military escalation and urged him instead to intensify efforts to reach a political solution. Since this verdict represented a reversal of opinion for most of the members of the group, its impact upon the President must have been striking.[54]

This advice presumably played a role in the President's decision to restrict sharply the number of reinforcements granted COMUSMACV under Program 6. Events soon showed that the President had decided also to adopt the other part of

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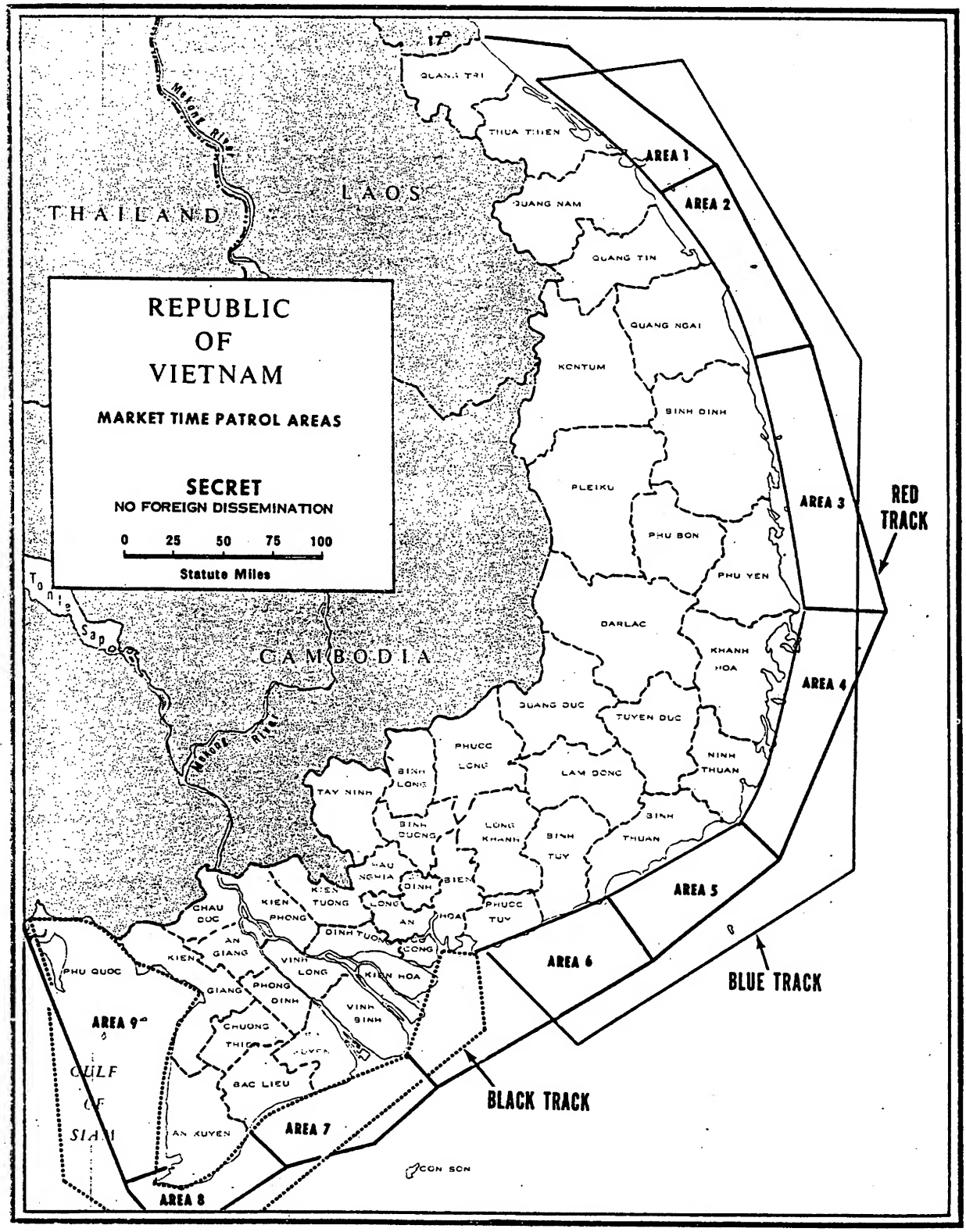
51. (TS) Msg, JCS 03023 to CINCPAC, 161657Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68.

52. (TS) Msgs, State 131732 to Saigon, 16 Mar 68; Saigon 22548 to State, 20 Mar 68.

53. (UNK) "Schedule and Participants in Special Meetings," undated, OCJCS File, 091 Vietnam Troop Build-up and Call-up, 16 Mar - (filed under date 25 Mar 68); (TS) Interv, Robert J. Watson with BGEN Robert N. Ginsburgh, Chairman's Staff Group, 24 Jan 69.

54. Washington Post, 9 Feb 69, p. A 16; NY Times, 7 Mar 69, p. 14 (The Post story erroneously dates the two-day meeting a week early, i.e., 18-19 March.)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THUA THIEN
QUANG NAM
QUANG TIN
QUANG NGAI
KONTUM
BINH DINH
PLEIKU
PHU BON
PHU YEN
DARLAC
KHANH HOA
QUANG DUC
TUYEN DUC
NINH THUAN
LAM DONG
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BINH LONG
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LAU NGHIA
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LONG CHAU
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KIEN PHONG
CHAU DOC
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KIEN GIANG
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KIEN HOA
VINH BINH
CHUONG THIEN
BAC LIEU
AN XUYEN
PHU QUOC
CON SON
AREA 1
AREA 2
AREA 3
AREA 4
AREA 5
AREA 6
AREA 7
AREA 8
AREA 9
RED TRACK
BLUE TRACK
BLACK TRACK

MAP X

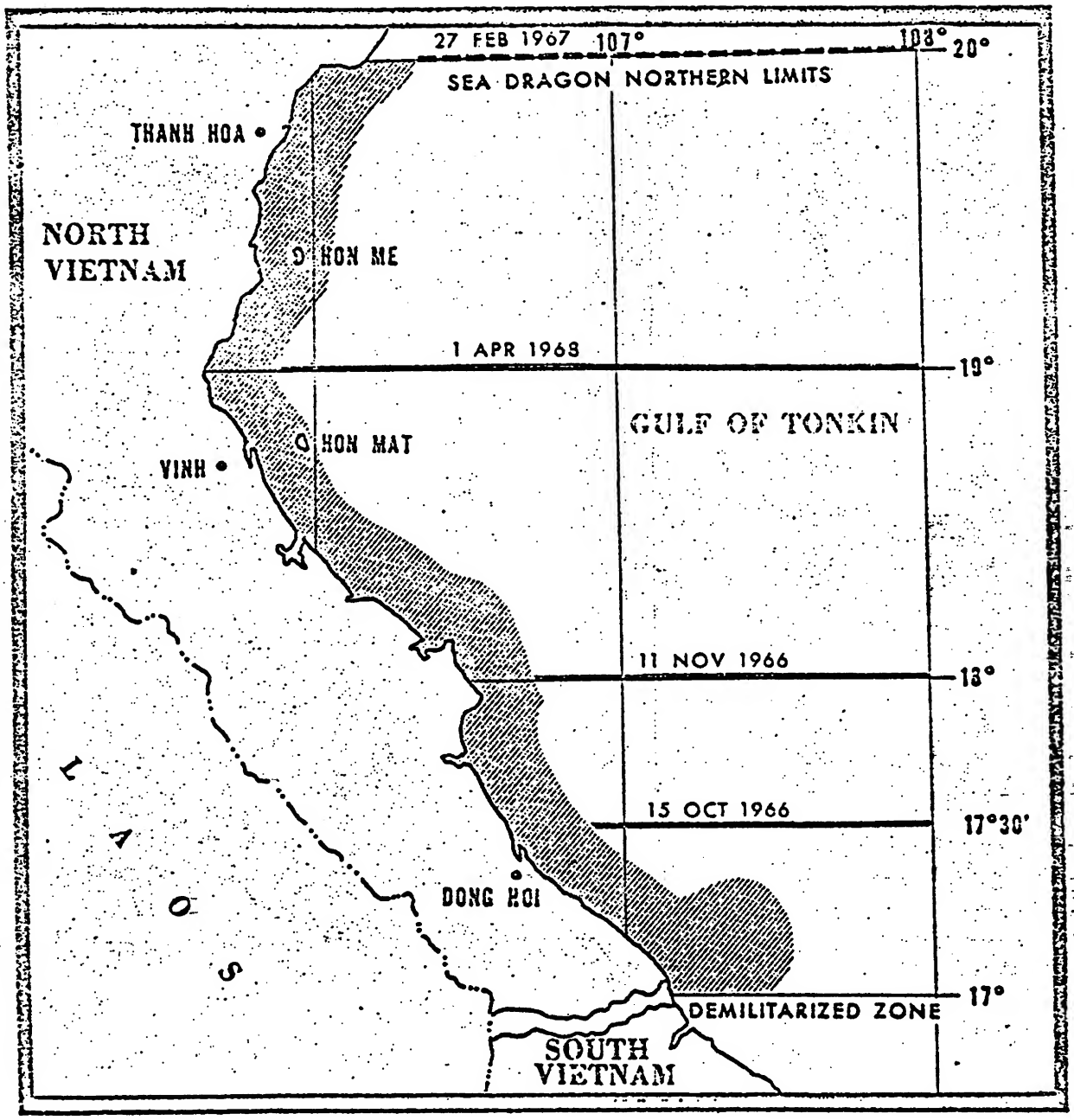
defense. The implication was that US forces in South Vietnam should go on the defensive. Major General DePuy rejected this suggestion, arguing that it was "illusory to suggest that there was some brand new, more clever way to fight in Vietnam." He believed that he succeeded in dissuading Mr. Acheson to some extent. An extremely pessimistic view was expressed by Mr. Richard C. Steadman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) for East Asia and Pacific Affairs; he judged the situation "utterly hopeless," and believed that the only solution was "to cut our losses, go on the defensive and seek the earliest possible way out." Mr. Acheson was "unprepared to accept this point of view," pointing out that "if we do make a decision in Washington that the situation is hopeless, it then automatically becomes a fact."[47]

At this juncture, a sudden financial crisis was added to the Administration's troubles. On 13 March the London gold market suspended trading amid intense speculation. The international monetary system seemingly stood on the brink of collapse, a victim of the Vietnam war and of Congress' refusal to approve a tax increase. The President had presented a $186,000,000,000 budget, in which expenditures for Vietnam totaled $25,700,000,000. Of the $2,900,000,000 increase in a $79,800,000,000 defense budget, $1,300,000,000 was directly attributable to the war. Accordingly, Tom Wicker in the New York Times ascribed the monetary crisis to "Guns, Butter and Folly"; in his opinion, fulfillment of Westmoreland's request had become "an economic impossibility."[48] Indeed, General Wheeler wrote COMUSMACV on 16 March that the fiscal crisis and the troop deployment issue together had "placed the Government in as difficult a situation as I have seen in the past five

47. (TS-GP 1) SACSA M-185-68 to CJCS, 13 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68. The strategic debate within the Administration after the Tet offensive is imperfectly documented in available records, but has since been described in various press accounts. Two noteworthy examples are in the Washington Post, 9 Feb 69, p. 1, and the NY Times, 6-7 Mar 69, p. 1. The Times story is longer and more detailed, but both generally accord with such documentary evidence as is available. It is apparent that both were based on extensive interviews with cognizant officials (most of them doubtless civilians, inasmuch as some animus toward the military viewpoint appears). Both emphasize that a major role in leading the President toward his final decision was played by Secretary Clifford, whose own position changed from "hawk" to "dove" as a result of the Tet offensive and COMUSMACV's request for reinforcements.

48. NY Times, 17 Jan 68; 17 Mar 68.

SEA DRAGON OPERATION AREAS



Map XI

Following further discussion, Program 6 was sharply reduced. General Westmoreland, accepting the impracticability of large-scale reinforcements, reviewed his requirements in the light of the improved situation after the defeat of the Tet offensive and the recovery of the RVNAF. He then cut back his estimated requirements for the immediate future to the following: permanent retention of the two units shipped in February (or their equivalents), the three TFS still due under Program 5, two more TFS, one armored cavalry squadron, and additions to the Navy Mobile Riverine Force. COMUSMACV believed that these reinforcements, with forces already available, would "provide us the means necessary to contain further enemy initiated actions while continuing forward progress in most areas." They would be adequate for any eventuality other than "heavy enemy reinforcements from the north." General Wheeler, in a hurried meeting with General Westmoreland at Clark AFB on 24 March 1968, indicated that these additional forces represented the limit of what the President would grant.[44]

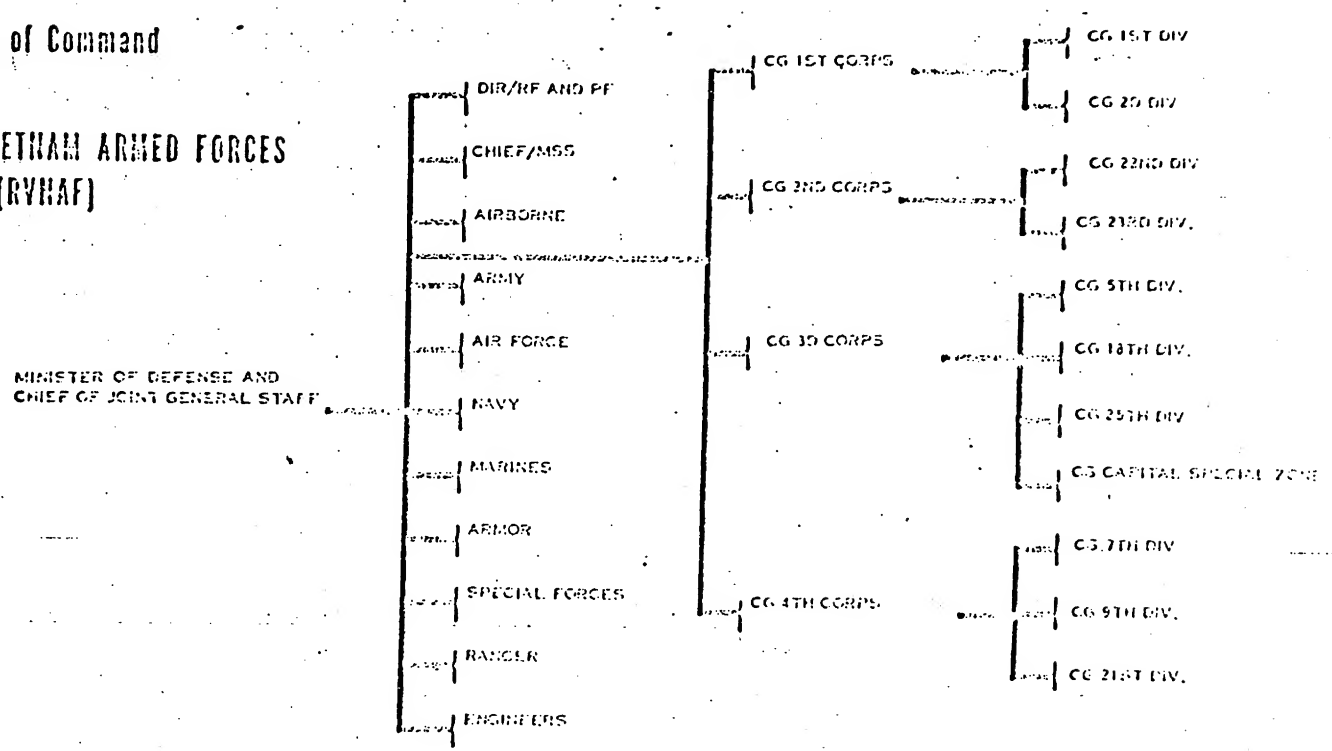
As finally approved in early April, Program 6 established a new troop ceiling of 549,500--an increase of 24,500 over Program 5. Approximately 11,250 of this increase would consist of combat troops; this figure included the reinforcements already sent (the 3d Brigade, 82nd Airborne, to be converted to a separate light infantry brigade, and the 27th Marine RLT, which was to be replaced by an Army mechanized brigade), plus an armored cavalry squadron and two TFS. The remainder consisted of engineer, artillery, and other support units, and constituted COMUSMACV's principal net gain under Program 6.

The new ceiling assumed that the "civilianization" program would go forward as originally planned, starting in September 1968. Other elements of Program 6 included the following: deployment of three TFS authorized under Program 5 but not yet sent; an increase in the B-52 sortie rate from

44. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 4192 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 271333Z Mar 68; (S) Msg, JCS 3449 to COMUSMACV, 280152Z Mar 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 16 Mar - .

Chain of Command

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM ARMED FORCES (RVNAF)



CONFIDENTIAL

Chart A

In other words, General Westmoreland would receive some reinforcements immediately but the decision on his requested addition of 205,000 men would be deferred for the time being. These measures should be accompanied, according to the committee, by an effort to galvanize the ARVN to improve its performance.

The committee noted that even COMUSMACV's full reinforcement plan would provide no truly satisfactory answer to the Vietnam problem. It would "Americanize" the war and might frustrate South Vietnam's political development. The members therefore suggested a "study in depth, to be initiated immediately, of possible new political and strategic guidance for the conduct of US operations in South Vietnam." Such an analysis might conclude that COMUSMACV should not be expected either to destroy or to expel the enemy.

On the question of ROLLING THUNDER, the committee divided. Some members, notably General Wheeler, sought a substantial expansion of targets and authority in and near Hanoi and Haiphong, including the mining of Haiphong harbor, and the extension of SEA DRAGON operations up to a Chinese buffer zone. Other members favored nothing more than a "seasonal step-up" in air operations through the spring.

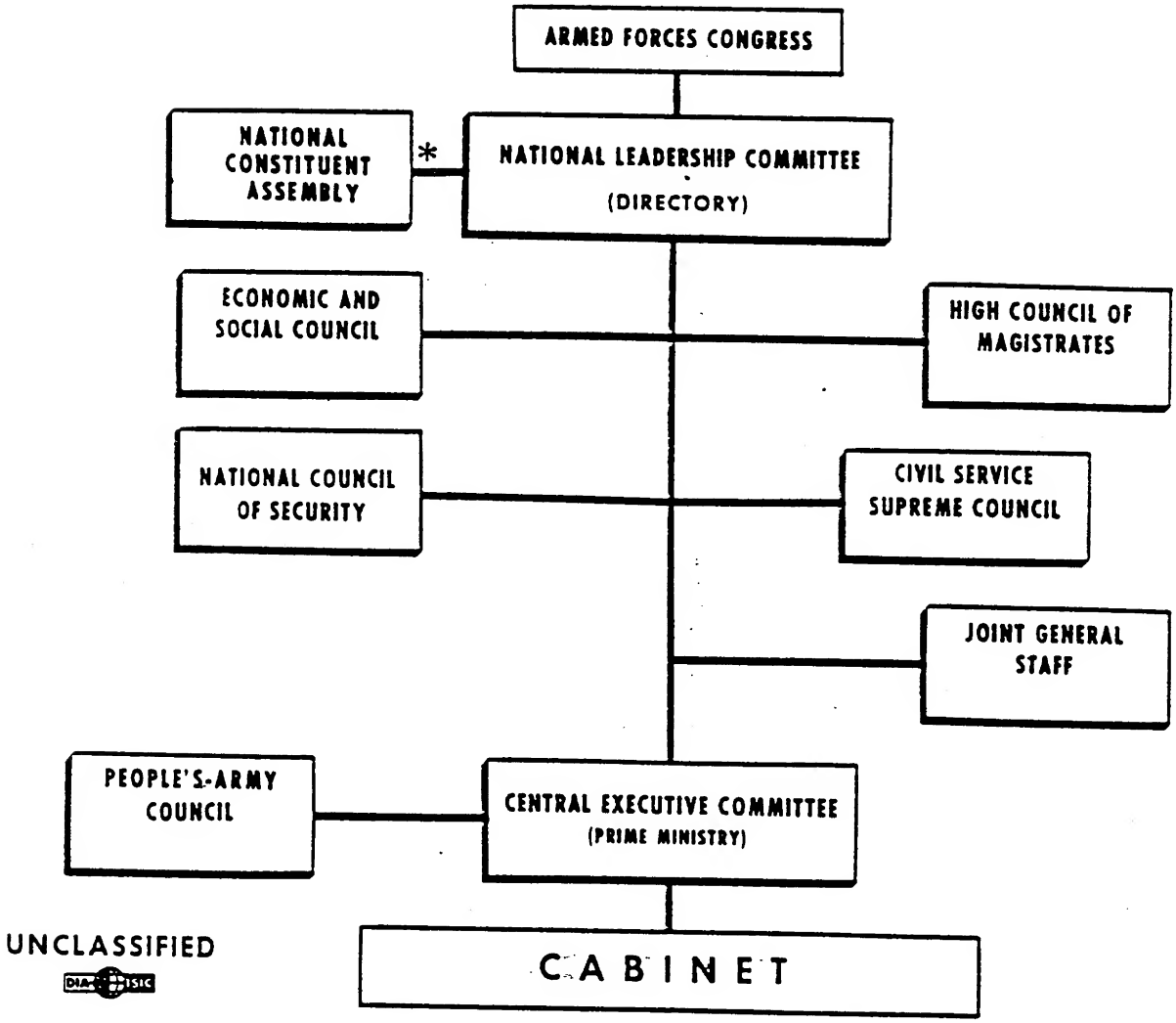
With regard to negotiating options, however, the committee agreed in doubting that Hanoi would be prepared for a "serious move toward peace" in the near future, except on its own terms. They therefore recommended that the San Antonio formula should remain as the "rock bottom" US negotiating position; any change in terms appeared to be "extremely unwise" at present.[38]

The President did not at once render a formal decision, but it soon became clear that the committee's recommendations regarding deployments would be generally followed. Indeed, there was at first a disposition to allow somewhat larger forces than those proposed by the committee. In a meeting on 8 March 1968, the President agreed to cancel the tentative decision to "civilianize" 12,545 spaces in MACV and thus at

38. (TS) Msg, JCS 02590 to COMUSMACV, 051658Z Mar 68. (TS) "Draft Memorandum Prepared by Special Committee," 4 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM

(ESTABLISHED 19 JUNE 1965 BY A PROVISIONAL CONVENTION. AMENDMENTS BY DECREE)



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NOTE: The National Constituent Assembly is an elected body established by GVN Decree-Law 21/66. Its members were elected on 11 September 1966 and drafted a constitution which was promulgated on 1 April 1967. An agreement has been reached between the Directory and the Assembly allowing it to remain as a quasi-legislative body, for the purpose of drafting such things as election procedures, until a new government can be elected.

Chart B

On 5 March, Secretary Rusk reviewed a possibility that had been discussed and discarded in mid-1967. In a memorandum to Secretary Clifford, he suggested the President might announce that bombing attacks would henceforth "be limited to those areas which are integrally related to the battlefield." ROLLING THUNDER would continue "presumably as far North as Vinh"; full bombing could resume in the event of either a major attack on Khe Sanh or a second wave of assaults against the cities. The advantage of this course of action was that it "would shift away from the logical debates about words and put the problem on the de facto level of action. If Hanoi took no corresponding military action, the bombing would be resumed."[35]

Public opinion had been shaken even far more severely than these proposed reappraisals might indicate. Speaking to General Wheeler on 7 March, Secretary Clifford warned the Chairman that "the American public cannot stand another shock such as that administered by the Tet offensive." MACV now must be "conservative in assessments of the situation and enemy capabilities," thus placing the Administration in "a strong public information position." Unless this were done, Clifford believed, Westmoreland's request for major reinforcements "will be made much harder--perhaps impossible--to sell . . . ." In a message to Westmoreland, General Wheeler observed, "I must admit that Secretary Clifford's assessment is shared by me . . . ." In a further communication to COMUSMACV on 8 March, the Chairman stated that "I feel I must tell you frankly that there is strong resistance from all quarters to putting more ground force units in South Vietnam." A call-up of reserves and concomitant actions, he declared, "will raise unshirted hell in many quarters . . . ."[36]

By mid-March, a Senatorial revolt against further escalation seemed imminent. In the course of an 8 March floor debate Robert Kennedy declared that it had become "immoral and intolerable to continue the way we are." William Fulbright demanded that the President consult Congress before making any further decisions, and announced that the Tonkin Gulf resolution was a "contract based on misrepresentation"

35. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 5 Mar 68, same file.
36. (S) Msg, CJCS to COMUSMACV, JCS 2721, 7 Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68. (TS) Msg, CJCS to COMUSMACV, JCS 2767, 8 Mar 68, JMF 911/374 (9 Mar 68).

US MILITARY CASUALTIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

As of 28 December 1968, the total number of combat-associated casualties suffered by US military personnel (USA, USN, USMC, USAF, USCG) in Southeast Asia, increased to 222,870. This figure excludes MIA and captured. The following presents the significant data:

	KIA	WIA HOSPITALIZED	WIA NOT HOSPITALIZED
1961	11	2	1
1962	31	41	37
1963	78	218	193
1964	147	522	517
1965	1,369	3,308	2,806
1966	5,008	16,526	13,567
1967	9,378	32,371	29,654
TOTALS (1961-1967)	16,022	52,988	46,775
1968 (thru 28 Dec)	14,521	46,655	45,909
TOTALS TO DATE	30,543	99,643	92,684
CURRENTLY MIA:	917		
CURRENTLY CAPTURED:	326		

(C)

(S-NOFORN-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 1-69, 2 Jan 69, p. 20.

situation necessitated a northward shift of forces).[30]

Admiral Sharp endorsed COMUSMACV's troop request, but pointed out that it could not at once affect the situation. He therefore urged a major step-up in the air campaign, to be followed by "a combined amphibious and air mobile campaign against North Vietnam as early as the weather and the current situation permits." On 9 March 1968 Admiral Sharp reported that, in accordance with his instructions, COMUSMACV had submitted plans for an amphibious/airmobile/airborne assault on North Vietnam, to be followed by a swing southward through the DMZ to destroy enemy forces and materiel. CINCPAC requested authority to conduct this operation--DURANGO CITY--on or about 1 June.[31]

This judgment in favor of an enlarged sphere of military operations was supported by staff studies undertaken within the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In two examinations made at the Chairman's direction, J-5 emphatically endorsed the first of the five options under study by the Clifford Committee. J-5's Southeast Asia Branch concluded that the initiation of a strategic ground offensive in North Vietnam, coupled with the expansion of existing strategic air and naval campaigns, "would hasten the accomplishment of U.S. objectives in South Vietnam and successfully conclude the war." Similarly, the Short Range Branch of J-5 judged that implementation of Option One "will greatly reduce risks to Free World forces in South Vietnam and will accomplish U.S. objectives more rapidly than the forces of the other options." Reviewing this latter paper, the Army Chief of Staff wrote General Wheeler that, while he supported the force levels recommended in Option One, he did not approve the implication that expanded ground operations into Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam would be allowed. "The guidance for consideration of the option did not include a change in basic national objective nor alter political guidance in any way," he pointed out. General Johnson believed that, consequently, the strategy pursued by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV must continue to

30. (TS-NOFORN) Msgs, COMUSMACV MAC 02951 to CJCS, 020947Z Mar 68; MAC 02956, 021109Z Mar 68; MAC 02962, 021223Z Mar 68; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

31. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010823Z Mar 68, JCS IN 44082. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 032253Z Mar 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Mar 68. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 092348Z Mar 68, JCS IN 62030.

[redacted]

US ARMED FORCES IN THE RVN

END OF YEAR PERSONNEL STRENGTH[a]
(In Thousands)

	1965	1966	1967	1968
TOTAL	184.3	385.3	485.6	536.7
Army[b]	116.8	239.4	319.5	360.2
Navy	8.4	23.3	31.7	36.7
Air Force	20.6	52.9	55.9	58.7
Marine Corps	38.2	69.2	78.0	80.7
Coast Guard	.3	.5	.5	.4

a. Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.
b. Excludes Army Replacements and Returnees.

Source: (S-NOFORN-GP 3) Statistical Digest of Military Developments in Southeast Asia (U), CAG Statistical Series, Vol. No. 7, 3 Feb 69, Combat Analysis Group, J-3, OJCS; (S) Southeast Asia Statistical Summary, OASD(C), Combat Analysis Group, J-3, OJCS.

[redacted]

Chart D

Harris poll taken shortly after Tet recorded a rise in war support to 74 percent, as compared with 61 percent in December. Similarly, the Gallup survey reported that "hawks" now outnumbered "doves" by 61-23 percent. But at the same time, Gallup found that support for the President's conduct of the war had fallen to 35 percent and approval of his overall performance to 41 percent.

Even clearer was the shock of the Tet offensive in the minds of minds of many of those who might be considered leaders or molders of public opinion. Thus the New York Times declared that "the facts of life about the war have finally been made unmistakeably clear to everyone in the United States, from President Johnson on down." Similarly, Senator Robert F. Kennedy proclaimed that events had "finally shattered the mask of official illusion," revealing the impossibility of a military solution.[27]

Against this backdrop, General Wheeler undertook his visit to South Vietnam on 23-25 February, as described in the last chapter. On his return, he brought with him COMUSMACV's new list of requirements. This list called for no less than three additional divisions and 15 tactical fighter squadrons--a total of 206,756 spaces over and above the current ceiling of 525,000 men. General Westmoreland wished the first increment to be deployed by 1 May; it should consist of one mechanized brigade, one armored cavalry regiment, the remaining two regiments of the Fifth Marine Division, and eight tactical fighter squadrons.[28]

For the Administration, this request, which would require large-scale mobilization and additional appropriations, was potential political dynamite. Inevitably, the response was a reexamination of current strategy in Vietnam to see if US objectives could be achieved with a smaller investment of resources. "My report on the situation in South Vietnam and your force requirements touched off an intense discussion of where we stand and where we are going in the war," reported General Wheeler to COMUSMACV on 29 February. The President had turned over COMUSMACV's request to a newly appointed committee headed by the newly designated Secretary of Defense, Mr. Clark Clifford. This committee, which included General

27. NY Times, 4 Feb 68; 9 Feb 68; 13 Feb 68; 14 Feb 68; 18 Feb 68.
28. (TS) JCS 2472/237, 28 Feb 68, JMF 911 (27 Feb 68).

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RVN ARMED FORCES

END OF YEAR PERSONNEL STRENGTH[a]
(in thousands)

	1965	1966	1967	1968
GRAND TOTAL	691.5	735.9	798.8	1010.9
Nat'l. Military Forces				
Regular Army	267.9	284.0	302.8	380.3
Navy	14.5	17.3	16.0	18.9
Marines	7.4	7.0	8.0	9.1
Air Force	12.8	14.6	16.1	18.6
Total - Regular	302.6	322.9	342.9	426.9
Regional	132.2	149.9	151.4	219.8
Popular	136.4	150.1	148.8	172.5
Total - National	571.2	622.9	643.1	819.2
Para-Military/Security Forces				
CIDG	28.4	34.7	38.3	42.3
National Police	52.3	58.3	73.4	78.4
Armed Propaganda Teams	-	-	-	3.8
Kit Carson Scouts	-	-	.3	1.5
RD Cadre	-	-	37.0	45.9
Truong Son Cadre	-	-	6.7	7.0
Total	120.3[b]	113.0[b]	155.7	178.9

a. Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.
b. Difference between total as shown and actual sum of figures is the result of an unknown distribution of the remaining personnel into the other four categories.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Chart E

The President, however, tended to favor one of Mr. McNamara's more moderate alternatives. On 16 February Mr. Walt Rostow informed General Wheeler that, while no decision had been made, Mr. Johnson was considering a call-up of 40,000 reservists in units plus a request to Congress for the necessary appropriations, but with no further action for the moment. Reporting this development to his colleagues, General Wheeler directed the Joint Staff to study further actions to improve the US posture in Southeast Asia, indicating the rationale for the recommendation for authority to extend terms of service and to call up individual reservists.[20]

Three days earlier, on 13 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed the deployment to South Vietnam by air of one airborne brigade task force of the 82d Airborne Division (at a strength of approximately 4,000) and one Marine regiment (reinforced) from the Fifth Marine Division, about 5,200 men. Both were to be deployed on a temporary basis.[21] These orders were carried out swiftly. The 27th Marine Regimental Landing Team arrived at Da Nang on 17 February 1968. Four days later the Third Brigade, 82d Airborne, reached Chu Lai.[22]

Strategy Debated

Apart from COMUSMACV's need for immediate reinforcements, a case could be made for a larger overall force in SVN to carry out the US long-range strategy there. On 8 February 1968 General Westmoreland had informed General Wheeler that his staff was restudying requirements, on the assumption that the 525,000 ceiling in Program 5 would be lifted. A preliminary estimate of additional requirements included an additional US infantry division and the ROK Light Infantry Division already under discussion, plus additional helicopter and

20. (TS) CM-2976-68 to CSA et al., 16 Feb 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-Up and Call-Up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

21. (S) Msgs, JCS 9926 to CSA et al., 130218Z Feb 68, and JCS 9929 to CMC et al., 130341Z Feb 68; JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68) sec 2.

22. (FOUO) CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam, Jun 68, p. 242.

FREE WORLD MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN THE RVN

END OF YEAR PERSONNEL STRENGTH[a]
(in thousands)

	1965	1966	1967	1968
TOTAL	22.4	52.6	59.4	65.6
Australia	1.5	4.4	6.8	7.6
Korea	20.7	45.6	47.8	49.2
New Zealand	.1	.2	.5	.5
Philippines	.072	2.1	2.0	1.6
Republic of China	.014	.030	.030	.029
Spain	-	.012	.013	.012
Thailand	.016	.2	2.2	6.0[b]

a. Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.
b. Preliminary data.

Early on 12 February the Joint Chiefs of Staff finally received from General Westmoreland an unequivocal statement that he "desperately" needed reinforcements to enable him to hold the northern I CTZ without endangering other areas. He pointed out that he was 25,000 short of the ceiling of 525,000 men that had been authorized for South Vietnam. "I need these 525,000 troops now," he declared. He urged immediate deployment of a Marine regiment package and a brigade package of the 82d Airborne, with the remaining elements of these units to be sent later. "Time is of the essence," he declared. He asked that the Secretary of Defense and the President be informed of his views, in which Ambassador Bunker had concurred.[15] In a further communication, General Westmoreland addressed himself to General Wheeler's account of the 11 February White House meeting:

> I am expressing a firm request for additional troops, not because I fear defeat if I am not reinforced, but because I do not feel that I can fully grasp the initiative from the recently reinforced enemy without them.[16]

Meeting at 0930 on 12 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the new and urgent appeal from General Westmoreland. They agreed to reconvene that afternoon, at which time the Army and Marine Corps would provide information on the impact of deployments to South Vietnam and on the minimum levels of reserve mobilization required.

Before this subsequent meeting could be held, however, General Wheeler was unexpectedly summoned to the White House. There the President announced that he had decided to approve COMUSMACV's request, that is, to deploy at once a brigade of the 82d Airborne and a Marine RLT. At 1600 that afternoon General Wheeler informed his colleagues of this decision, at the same time directing the Joint Staff to prepare a study of the necessary reserve mobilization and legislative actions.[17]

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15. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and CJCS, 120612Z Feb 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Feb 68.

16. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 02018 to CJCS, 121823Z Feb 68. OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Troop Build-up and Call-up, 1 Feb-15 Mar 68.

17. (S) Note to Control Div, "Deployments to SVN," 12 Feb 68, JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 68).

~~TOP SECRET~~

VC/NVA PERSONNEL STRENGTH IN THE RVN
(in thousands)

	1965 as of 31 Dec	1966 as of 31 Dec	1967 as of 31 Dec	1968 as of 31 Oct
TOTAL ENEMY CONFIRMED FORCES	221.2	282.9	240.3	238.7
TOTAL COMBAT FORCES	90.0	114.1	122.3	125.4
- NVA	26.6	48.9	59.2	72.2
- VC Main/Local Forces	63.4	65.2	63.1	53.2
TOTAL OTHER	131.2	168.8	118.0	113.3
- NVA Admin Svcs	-	.4	.6	1.8
- VA - Guerrilla Forces	89.9	126.8	79.9	78.0
- Admin Svcs	41.3	41.6	37.5	33.5

considered that his losses so far had been fully justified by indications that the United States was losing its will to fight. The resignation of Secretary McNamara, the reassignment of General Westmoreland, President Johnson's withdrawal from the 1968 election, the noisy controversy in the United States between "hawks" and doves," the threatened instability of the dollar, and the incessant criticism of US policy by foreign sources--all these developments, when seen from Hanoi, might be fitted together to yield a picture of a nation and its leaders approaching the situation existing in France in 1954. From this viewpoint, it would be unthinkable for the enemy to weaken his resolve or to lower his objectives.79

The month of October came and went with no enemy offensive, but a stream of intelligence continued to warn of plans for large-scale actions.80 General Abrams made only one major readjustment of his forces to meet these threats. Observing a concentration of enemy forces astride the border between Cambodia and III CTZ, he strengthened the defenses of Saigon by bringing down the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) from I CTZ. The movement began late in October and was completed by the middle of the next month.81

Whatever the enemy's military intentions, he was known to be making every effort to repair and rebuild his political and administrative apparatus in South Vietnam, perhaps in anticipation of impending negotiations. Intelligence showed that the Viet Cong were attempting to organize "liberation" or "revolutionary" committees, nominally chosen by election, at every level from district to hamlet, to replace similar groups that had been driven underground or destroyed by allied operations in previous years. This shadow hierarchy could be triumphantly unveiled as the "legitimate" governmental structure at the local level, while the "Alliance of National Democratic and Peace Forces," the "Front" organization formed

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79. (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 13146 to CJCS, 281241Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68.

80. (S-NOFORN) DIA IBs 201-68, 14 Oct 68; 202-68, 15 Oct 68; 204-68, 17 Oct 68; 214-68, 31 Oct 68.

81. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 14472 to CINCPAC, 271008Z Oct 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 68. (TS-NOFORN-GP 3) "1968 Year-End Review," II, p. 3-7. (S-GP 4) HQ USARPAC, "Highlights of USARPAC Activities," Nov 68.

NORTH VIETNAM PERSONNEL INFILTRATION INTO THE RVN[a]

	1965	1966	1967	1968
TOTAL	35,300	89,800	91,500	116,200
Accepted	26,000	58,800	60,600	78,900
Possible	9,300	31,000	30,900	37,300

a. The nature of enemy infiltration into the RVN made it difficult to detect many groups until after they had been in the country for six months or longer.

Data Definition

Accepted Confirmed: A confirmed infiltration unit/group is one which is accepted in South Vietnam on the basis of information provided by a minimum of two PWs or returnees (Hoi Chanh) from the unit/group, or two captured documents from the unit, or a combination of personnel and documents.

Accepted Probable: Probable infiltration unit/group is one which is accepted in South Vietnam on the basis of information provided by one PW or returnee (Hoi Chanh) from the unit/group, or a captured document supported by information from other sources which can be evaluated as probably true.

Possible: A possible infiltration unit/group is one which may be in South Vietnam on the basis of information which can be evaluated as possibly true even though no PW, returnee or document is available to verify the reports.

seize these caches, while at the same time destroying the politico-military structure that provided a favorable environment for enemy military operations.[84]

The President, as usual, heartily approved of COMUSMACV's aggressive strategy. Through Secretary Clifford, he directed that "constant, relentless and persistent pressure" be maintained against the enemy in SVN.[85] These instructions remained in effect after the total cessation of bombing and the beginning of peace talks.

Looking toward the onset of the northeast monsoon season, which would begin in November, General Abrams drafted plans for his own "winter-spring offensive" to take advantage of the expected weather patterns. In September he proposed an intensified air interdiction effort in southern NVN and the Laotian panhandle and a vigorous land campaign against enemy bases and infiltration routes in the Delta--the regions where the monsoon would bring favorable weather. He planned to assign additional forces to IV CTZ for this purpose. Admiral McCain and General Wheeler approved this plan, but Secretary Clifford, when apprised of it, questioned the advisability of increasing US strength in the Delta. ARVN troops were carrying most of the burden there, he pointed out, and it seemed undesirable to "Americanize" this theater of the war. General Abrams replied that the US forces involved would consist entirely of helicopter units, except for one US airmobile brigade that would be needed for the duration of the campaign (approximately 90 days) to seal off the Cambodian border. ARVN and VNMC units, assisted by elements of the US 9th Division already in IV CTZ, would sweep the Delta in search of enemy forces and bases.[86]

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84. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 13848 to CINCPAC et al., 130945Z Oct 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 68. (S) Msg, Saigon 41523 to State, 30 Oct 68, JCS IN 75427.

85. (TS) Msg, JCS 11890 to COMUSMACV, 161605Z Oct 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Oct 68.

86. (TS-NOFORN) Msg, COMUSMACV MAC 12535 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 170257Z Sep 68, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Sep 68. (TS-GP 3) CM-3662-68 to SecDef, 20 Sep 68, Att to JCS 2472/364, 21 Sep 68; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Northeast Monsoon Campaign Planning," 5 Oct 68, Att to JCS 2472/364-1, 8 Oct 68; (TS) CM-3723-68 to SecDef, 23 Oct 68, Att to N/H of JCS 2472/364-1, 25 Oct 68; JMF 911/520 (20 Sep 68).

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AUTHORITY

This volume has been prepared by historians in the Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat in accordance with professional standards of historiography. Inasmuch as the content of the volume has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is to be construed as descriptive only and not as constituting the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

G. E. COOKE
Brigadier General, USAF
Secretary, JCS

FOREWORD

This volume of the series, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, was prepared by the Special Projects Branch of the Historical Division. A senior historian, Mr. Willard J. Webb, was the principal author and coordinator of the contributions of other Branch members. The work proceeded under the general supervision of the successive Chiefs of the Special Projects Branch, Dr. Robert J. Watson and Mr. Vernon E. Davis. The latter also performed the final editing, while Mrs. Janet W. Ball directed all aspects of the preparation of the manuscript for publication.

E. H. GIUSTI
Chief, Historical Division
Joint Secretariat

NOTE ON PARAGRAPH CLASSIFICATION

The security classification of all information contained in this volume is derivative. The classification of any particular paragraph is that of the most highly classified document cited in the footnote indicating the source of the information.

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Chapter 1

DETERMINING THE POLICY JANUARY-MARCH 1969

The Setting

At the beginning of 1969, the United States had been involved in combat operations in South Vietnam for over three and a half years. A total of 30,614 Americans had lost their lives and the war had cost an estimated $52.2 billion. Yet, the United States was apparently no nearer its objective of eliminating the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese aggression in the south than when it entered the struggle. President Lyndon B. Johnson's political judgment had led him to pursue a limited war in Vietnam, but as the fighting continued, this policy satisfied neither those opposed to the war nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The latter, responsible for the strategic direction of the campaign, consistently sought expanded operations and authorities during the first three and a half years of the war. They believed that provision of more forces, enlarged operating areas, and increased authorities would bring a successful conclusion of the war, but the full extent of the JCS recommendations was never granted. On the other hand, as the conflict continued, the antiwar sentiment in the United States grew increasingly strident in demands for an immediate end to the US involvement.[1]

The first serious efforts to negotiate a settlement of the war began in 1968 when the enemy, after many refusals, finally responded to US initiatives. In February of that year, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had launched a surprise Tet offensive in South Vietnam. Although the attack resulted in a costly military failure for the enemy, this sudden show of strength and the public shock it caused in the United States and elsewhere proved a psychological victory for the Communists and increased the US public discontent with the war. President Johnson

1. The casualty figure is from (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 11-70, 14 Jan 70. The expenditure total is the estimated "full cost" as set forth in DOD (Comptroller), The Economics of Defense Spending, A Look at the Realities, July 1972, p. 149.

limited the US bombing of North Vietnam at the end of March and called for negotiations to end the war. Talks between the United States and North Vietnam commenced in Paris in mid-May, but soon deadlocked. In an effort to get the stalled discussions moving, President Johnson on 31 October, just five days before the US presidential election, announced the suspension of the US bombing of North Vietnam and the expansion of the Paris talks to include the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and the National Liberation Front (NLF). The widened negotiations began a few days later, but quickly bogged down on procedural questions.[2]

The New Administration

Despite the lack of success in the Paris talks, the year 1969 opened with an aura of expectation with regard to Vietnam. Richard M. Nixon would assume the presidency on 20 January, and his new Administration would enter office uncommitted to the Vietnam policies and decisions of the preceeding four years. In his acceptance of the Republican nomination in early August 1968, Richard Nixon had pledged that "an honorable end to the war in Vietnam" would be the first foreign policy objective of his presidency. He did not indicate precisely how he would accomplish this objective, dwelling instead on the thought that only a new administration, not tied to the past mistakes, could successfully end the hostilities. During the campaign he opposed an immediate US withdrawal or the imposition of a coalition government on South Vietnam, but he refused to elaborate further on Vietnam policy while negotiations were continuing. To do so, he said, would jeopardize the talks and lead the North Vietnamese to believe that better terms could be obtained from him than from the Johnson Administration. Mr. Nixon had won the election by a narrow margin, and the US public awaited a further exposition of his Vietnam policy.[3]

2. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Chs. 50, 53, and 54.

3. NY Times, 9 Aug 68, 1; 23 Sep 68, 31; 8 Oct 68, 1; 10 Oct 68, 50; 28 Oct 68, 1; 7 Nov 68, 1. Theodore H. White, The Making of the President, 1968 (1969), p. 372.

The public was not immediately satisfied in its desire for details of Mr. Nixon's Vietnam policy. Several days after his victory, the President-elect informed the press that he would refrain from comment on foreign affairs until Inauguration Day. He would do nothing in this field, he said, unless he had discussed it with the President and the Secretary of State. After meeting with President Johnson on 11 November to discuss arrangements for an orderly transition, Mr. Nixon announced that the Johnson Administration would speak for itself and for the incoming Administration as well during the next two months. Mr. Nixon told newsmen that progress on a Vietnam settlement could be expected only if "the parties on the other side" realized that the current Administration "is setting forth policies that would be carried forward by the next Administration." The President-elect named former Ambassador Robert D. Murphy as his representative with the Johnson Administration for the transition of foreign affairs. President Johnson made no changes in Vietnam policy during his final weeks in office.[4]

Although Mr. Nixon had on several occasions during the campaign compared the situation in Vietnam if he should win to that confronting President Eisenhower in Korea in early 1953, he did not follow the Eisenhower example and travel to the scene of the war. The President-elect declined President's Thieu's invitation to visit South Vietnam. Nor did he send a personal representative to the Paris peace talks as suggested by the US Representative, W. Averell Harriman. Mr. Nixon's announced reason for avoiding a prominent role was that he did not wish to take any action that might hinder President Johnson's peace efforts.[5]

In early December 1968, the President-elect named Henry A. Kissinger of Harvard University as his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. Dr. Kissinger headed Harvard's International Seminar and Defense Studies Program and was to become President Nixon's closest adviser on foreign affairs. It happened that he had recently completed an article dealing with the Vietnam negotiations. This piece, published in the January 1969

4. NY Times, 8 Nov 68, 1; 12 Nov 68, 1 and 34; 15 Nov 68, 1.
5. Ibid., 8 Nov 68, 1; 6 Dec 68, 1.

issue of Foreign Affairs but appearing in late 1968, gave some notion of the thinking of the incoming Administration. Dr. Kissinger believed that "the commitment of 500,000 Americans" had settled the issue of the importance of Vietnam and that the matter of confidence in American promises was now involved. He criticized the lack of US planning and preparation for negotiations, observing that: "Where Hanoi makes a fetish of planning, Washington is allergic to it." This, he said, led to rigidity in advance of formal negotiations and excessive reliance on tactical considerations once discussions began. The best way to make progress, Dr. Kissinger suggested, might be to seek agreement on ultimate goals first and then work back to the details to implement them. No matter how irrelevant its political conceptions or how inappropriate its strategy, the United States was so powerful, Dr. Kissinger wrote, that North Vietnam could not force the withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam. He quickly added that the US military strength had no political corollary and that the United States had thus far been unable to create a political structure capable of surviving a US withdrawal.

In the Foreign Affairs article Dr. Kissinger defined the limits of US commitment in two propositions: the United States could not accept a military defeat or a change in the political structure of South Vietnam brought by external military force; but once NVN forces and pressures were removed, the United States had no obligation to maintain a government in Saigon by force. Therefore US objectives should be: (1) to bring about a staged withdrawal of external forces, both North Vietnamese and US; (2) thereby to create the maximum incentive for the contending forces in South Vietnam to work out their own political agreement. Dr. Kissinger concluded by pointing out that a negotiating procedure and definition of objectives could not guarantee a settlement. If Hanoi proved intransigent and the war continued, the United States should seek as many of its objectives as possible unilaterally. Such an approach would include, he said: a strategy to reduce casualties and protect the population; continued strengthening of the South Vietnamese forces to permit a gradual withdrawal of some US forces; and encouragement of the Saigon government to broaden its base

to strengthen it for the political contest with the Communists, which it must eventually undertake.[6]

On 28 December 1968, the President-elect met with his key foreign policy and national security advisers. The meeting included Dr. Kissinger, Ambassador Murphy, Secretary of State-designate William P. Rogers, and Representative Melvin R. Laird, the prospective Secretary of Defense. General Andrew Goodpaster, Deputy COMUSMACV and Mr. Nixon's military adviser, also attended. Among other matters, the conferees considered Vietnam. Mr. Nixon directed his advisers to present him with "realistic" options on Vietnam by 20 January. He hoped, shortly thereafter, to select the course or courses to pursue in Vietnam, devising a "coherent strategy" for Vietnam early in his Administration. He assigned Dr. Kissinger the task of coordinating this effort.[7]

Reorganization of the National Security Council System

Richard M. Nixon became President on 20 January 1969. In his inaugural address he spoke only in generalities. He did not mention Vietnam directly, but with respect to the war he stated:

> Let this message be heard by strong and weak alike: The peace we seek--the peace we seek to win--is not victory over any other people, but the peace that comes "with healing in its wings"; with compassion for those who have suffered; with understanding for those who have opposed us; with the opportunity for all the peoples . . . to choose their own destiny.[8]

On the day he assumed office, President Nixon directed far-reaching changes in the organization and operation of the National Security Council. He established a National Security Council Review Group to examine papers prior to submission to the NSC to assure that: issues treated therein were worthy of NSC attention; all realistic

6. NY Times, 3 Dec 68, 1. Henry A. Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," Foreign Affairs, Jan 69, pp. 211-234.
7. NY Times, 29 Dec 68, 1.
8. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard M. Nixon, 1969 (1971), pp. 1-4. (Hereafter cited as Public Papers, Nixon, 1969.)

alternatives were presented; relevant facts, including cost implications, were included; and all departments and agency views were adequately set out. The President named his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs to chair the Review Group; other members included representatives of the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The President also instituted a NSC Under Secretaries Committee and brought the existing regional Interdepartmental Groups and the Political-Military Interdepartmental Group under the NSC structure. The Under Secretaries Committee was headed by the Under Secretary of State and consisted of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The President directed the Under Secretaries Committee to consider the following: issues referred to it by the NSC Review Group; problems of overseas operations not appropriate for NSC or presidential consideration or that could not be resolved at the Interdepartmental Group level; and such other operational matters as might be referred to it jointly by the Under Secretary of State and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The several Interdepartmental Groups would discuss and decide interdepartmental issues that could be settled at the assistant secretary level, prepare policy papers for the NSC, and produce contingency papers on potential crisis areas for NSC review. In addition, the President announced his intention to appoint ad hoc groups within the framework of the NSC system to deal with particular problems.[9]

Three weeks later, on 13 February, the President formed such an ad hoc interdepartmental group to "facilitate the orderly planning and implementation of policy on Vietnam." The Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam would prepare policy and contingency papers for the NSC Review Group and the Council itself. The President called upon the Secretary of State to designate a representative to head the Group. Additional members included representatives of the Secretary of Defense,

9. (C-GP 4) NSDM 2, 20 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2488/1, 21 Jan 69, JMF 001 (20 Jan 69) NSC.

the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence. Other agencies might be represented at the discretion of the chairman.[10]

Subsequently the President added another body, the Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG), to assist him and the National Security Council in policy formulation. This Group was created on 16 September 1969 to undertake "on a continuous basis" systematic analysis of US programs and activities in Vietnam. Dr. Kissinger chaired the VSSG and the other members were the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (the same as the Under Secretaries Committee, but with a different chairman). The President wanted the VSSG to conduct its affairs "without prejudice to the existing interdepartmental framework concerned with day-to-day operational matters on Vietnam."[11]

As a part of his 20 January reorganization of the NSC system, President Nixon also initiated two new series of documents to inform the departments and agencies of presidential action. The first of these, the National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM), would report presidential decisions, whether or not they resulted from NSC meetings. The second, the National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM), would initiate studies for NSC consideration. At this same time, the President discontinued the National Security Action Memorandums (NSAM), which had been introduced by President Kennedy.[12]

In this reorganization President Nixon discarded the "Tuesday Lunch," that informal group of advisers who had assisted President Johnson in policy decisions, and also the Senior Interdepartmental Group. The functions of those two bodies would now be carried on by the Review Group and the Under Secretaries Committee under formally defined terms of reference. These new groups would review and refine issues before they reached the NSC and the President. By this change President Nixon apparently hoped

10. (~~C~~-GP 4) NSSM 21, 13 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/438, 15 Feb 69, JMF 911/001 (12 Feb 69).
11. (~~TS~~) NSDM 23, 16 Sep 69, JMF 001 (CY 1969) NSDMs.
12. (~~C~~-GP 4) NSDM 1, 20 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2488, 21 Jan 69, JMF 001 (20 Jan 69) NSC.

to avoid some of the weaknesses that had reportedly arisen from the informal staffing and agenda procedures of the Tuesday Lunch. The new NSC document series would insure that all decisions were formally recorded, overcoming Dr. Kissinger's criticism of the Johnson Administration system (under which decisions had often been conveyed orally to the departments, with frequent uncertainty about what precisely had been decided). The NSC reorganization reflected Mr. Nixon's desire for a more structured policy-making apparatus and the restoration of the National Security Council as the principal formal channel for advice to the President.[13]

To conform with the revamped NSC organization, the Secretary of Defense called upon G. Warren Nutter, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ASD(ISA)), to serve as the representative of his office on the NSC Review Group and to provide support for the Secretary of Defense in his capacity as a NSC member. Secretary Laird also directed the Assistant Secretary (ISA) to support the Deputy Secretary of Defense in his responsibilities as a member of the NSC Under Secretaries Committee and to serve as the OSD representative on the various NSC Interdepartmental and ad hoc groups. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Earle G. Wheeler, named the Director of the Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5) of the Joint Staff as his representative on the NSC Review Group. When the President established the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, General Wheeler assigned two Joint Staff officers, the Special Assistant for Counter-insurgency and Special Activities (SACSA) and the Chief of the Far East Division, Plans and Policy Directorate, to represent him on the Group.[14]

13. (S) Memo, Henry A. Kissinger to President-elect (Nixon), "Proposal for a New National Security Council System," 3 Jan 69, same file.

14. (C-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 25 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2488/7, 28 Jan 69; (S) CM-3876-69 to Dr. Kissinger, 21 Jan 69; JMF 001 (20 Jan 69) NSC. (S) DJSM-270-69 to Dr. Kissinger, 19 Feb 69, JMF 911/001 (13 Feb 69). In June 1969 the number of JCS representatives on the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam was reduced to one. The Chief of the Far East Division, J-5, became the representative and SACSA his alternate. (C-GP 3) DJSM-879-69 to Dir J-5 and SACSA, 12 Jun 69, same file.

On the recommendation of both the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), Mr. Laird directed the maintenance of close coordination between his office and the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS) in NSC matters. To expedite and simplify this coordination, the Secretary ordered the preparation of single talking papers with a joint ISA/JCS position on issues before the Under Secretaries Committee, the Review Group, or the Council itself. In instances where a joint position could not be formulated, divergencies between the OSD and OJCS views would be clearly identified. Official communications regarding NSC matters, originating either from the Chairman's office or from the ASD(ISA), would pass through the Secretary's office. In addition, Mr. Laird approached Dr. Kissinger, asking that all communications from the White House for the Department of Defense come through the Secretary of Defense. Dr. Kissinger agreed with that procedure on the understanding that it did not affect the direct access between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the statutory role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the principal military advisers to the President and the National Security Council.[15]

A Vietnam Review

On the day following his assumption of the presidency, Richard Nixon ordered a sweeping review by the concerned government departments and agencies of every facet of the Vietnam situation. He addressed a series of searching questions, relayed by Dr. Kissinger in NSSM 1, to the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US Ambassador in Saigon, and COMUSMACV. President Nixon sought not merely answers, but any differing views, together with the

15. (U) Memo, ASD(ISA) and CJCS to SecDef, "DOD Participation in National Security Council Affairs," 23 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2488/7, 25 Jan 69; (~~C~~GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., same subj, 25 Jan 69, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2488/7, 28 Jan 69; (~~S~~GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS and ASD(ISA), "National Security Council," 22 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2488/6, 23 Jan 69; (~~S~~) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, same subj, 22 Jan 69; (U) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, same subj, 25 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2488/6-1, 30 Jan 69; JMF 001 (20 Jan 69) NSC.

reasons for the disagreements. From this analysis and information, he wanted to develop a consensus to serve as the basis for policy decisions concerning Vietnam.

The President's questions fell into six categories: the environment of negotiations, the enemy forces, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), pacification, the political situation in South Vietnam, and US military operations. With respect to the first category, the questions included the following: Why had the North Vietnamese agreed to come to Paris? Was Hanoi under active pressure from Peking and Moscow regarding the negotiations? Were there identifiable factions within the Hanoi government? In this same group was a query, prompted by a recent National Intelligence Estimate, concerning the impact of various outcomes in Vietnam on the entire Southeast Asia situation.

The President's questions about the enemy covered such diverse matters as: why North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units had quit the RVN in the previous summer and fall; why the Viet Cong (VC) forces had become relatively dormant; whether attrition would outstrip the enemy's replenishment ability; and to what extent the action of friendly forces controlled the enemy's rate of attrition. In addition, he asked if the enemy could launch a large-scale offensive within the next six months. The President also desired information on the main channel of enemy military supply.

Regarding the RVNAF, the President wanted both opinions and evidence from all parties on the extent of improvement. He requested comments on RVNAF discipline and desertion rates, and a judgment of the ability of the RVNAF to cope with the VC, with or without US support, if the NVA were withdrawn. He also asked to what extent the RVNAF could hold its own against the NVA, assuming various levels of US support. He sought views on further necessary changes in the RVNAF and how they might be brought about.

The pacification program was the subject of a number of questions, both broad and specific. The President wanted an appraisal of the security situation and of the balance of influence between the VC and the NLF at key periods since 1961. Could more improvement be expected in the countryside in the next two years than in the past? The President asked how the US and RVN forces could change their practices in order to win, and what changes the enemy

might conceivably adopt that would inadvertently play into allied hands. Addressees were asked about the proportion of the rural population under VC control, the verified numbers of Communist "infrastructure" personnel killed or arrested in the past year, and the disruptive effects on the Communist apparatus of such actions.

The political questions were intended to illuminate the attitudes of the various factions in the RVN and the pattern of existing political alignments, all against the background of US influence and interests in Vietnam. Particularly, President Nixon wanted to know how US influence could be used to attain a strong noncommunist political orientation within South Vietnam after a "compromise settlement of hostilities."

On the subject of US military operations, the President inquired about changes in force deployments and tactics during the past year and what had been the impact of the changes. This question was followed by another that revealed the direction of the President's thinking: "In what different ways (including innovations in organization) might US force levels be reduced to various levels, while minimizing the impact on combat capability?" Other questions called for evaluations of ARC LIGHT, ROLLING THUNDER, and the interdiction campaign in Laos.[16]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense all prepared separate responses to the President's questions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded their reply, incorporating the answers of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, to the Secretary of Defense on 4 February. The Secretary submitted all the views of Defense Department origin to the White House on 10 February. The responses of the Central Intelligence Agency and of the Department of State, including the US Embassy in Saigon, reached the President during the same period.[17]

16. (S-GP 3) NSSM 1, 21 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/413. 22 Jan 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 1.

17. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV 1285 to DJS, 29 Jan 69; CINCPAC to DJS, 310512Z Jan 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-58-69 to SecDef, 4 Feb 69, App to JCS 2472/413-2, 1 Feb 69, same file, sec 2. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "NSSM No. 1; Situation in Vietnam," 10 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-4, 11 Feb 69; (S-GP 1) Memo, SpecAsst for Vietnamese Affairs, CIA to CJCS, "The

The NSC staff prepared an analytical summary of the replies and circulated it to the original addressees for comment. After refinement and correction at a meeting of the NSC Review Group, a revised version of the summary was disseminated by Dr. Kissinger on 22 March, with a view to NSC consideration later in the month.[18]

Dr. Kissinger's summary indicated agreement in a number of areas. It was the general consensus that the RVN and allied position had recently been strengthened; that the Republic of Vietnam had improved its political position in certain respects, though it remained weakest--and the VC/NLF strongest--in the rural areas; and that Hanoi was attempting to chart a course basically independent of Moscow and Peking. Further, all the participants conceded the following: the RVNAF could not then, or in the foreseeable future, stand alone against the VC and sizable North Vietnamese forces; although the enemy had suffered some reverses, he had not abandoned his primary objectives and still had sufficient strength to pursue his goals; the enemy "basically" controlled the casualty rates for both sides and could still launch major offensives; and the enemy was participating in the Paris talks for a number of reasons, including a desire to pursue his objectives at lower cost, but was not there primarily out of weakness.

More prominent than the areas of agreement were the substantial differences of opinion among the participating departments and agencies. In these differences, the respondents generally divided into two main schools of thought. The first usually included COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the US Embassy in Saigon.

CIA's Response to National Security Study Memorandum 1," 10 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-2, 11 Feb 69; same file, sec 3. (S-GP 1) Memo, SecState to Pres, "National Security Study Memorandum Number 1," 18 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-5, 18 Feb 69, same file, sec 4.

18. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Members of NSC Review Gp, "NSSM 1 - Vietnam Questions," 14 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-6, 17 Mar 69; (TS-GP 1) TP for ASD(ISA) and Dir, J-5, for NSC Review Gp Mtg, 20 Mar, "NSSM 1 - Vietnam Questions," 20 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-7, 21 Mar 69; (TS-GP 3) Memo, NSC staff to Vice Pres et al., 22 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-8, 24 Mar 69; JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 5.

This group took a hopeful view of both current and future prospects. The second group was "decidedly more skeptical about the present and pessimistic about the future" and comprised the OSD, the CIA, and--to a lesser extent--the Department of State.

The optimistic school saw the enemy's presence at the Paris negotiations and his lessening of military activity as the result of allied pressures. The opposing faction attributed these developments to political motives of the enemy. Disagreements over the quality of the RVNAF and their ability eventually to assume the defense of the country were particularly acute. The military (COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff) gave great weight to the statistical evidence of RVNAF improvement, while the OSD and CIA emphasized remaining obstacles and pointed out that qualitative factors must also be considered in evaluating the RVNAF.

On the question of possible US force reductions, the COMUSMACV/JCS view was that any reduction in force levels would cause proportional reductions in combat capability. Officials of OSD, on the other hand, believed that US forces could be reduced as the RVNAF expanded and improved. Some, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, assigned much greater effectiveness to past and current bombing operations in Vietnam and Laos than did others. The COMUSMACV/JCS view was that a vigorous interdiction campaign against land and sea supply routes could compel North Vietnam to abandon the struggle; the "civilians" (State, OSD, and CIA) believed that the enemy would still be able to maintain a flow of supplies. Advances in pacification were hailed by the first school, but discounted by the second as illusory and more the result of a faulty evaluation system than of real progress. Some respondents believed there had been recent improvements in the RVN political scene, but others focused on the weaknesses that the Republic of Vietnam must overcome if it was to survive.[19]

19. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Members of NSC Review Gp, "NSSM 1 - Vietnam Questions," 14 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-6, 17 Mar 69; (~~TS~~-GP 3) NSC Staff Memo to SecState et al., 22 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/413-8, 24 Mar 69; JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 5.

The Secretary of Defense Visits Vietnam

In early March, while the above responses were still being refined, President Nixon dispatched Secretary of Defense Laird to Vietnam. As the first high-level member of the new Administration to view the situation there, Secretary Laird thought of his visit as "the beginning of a concerted and dedicated attempt . . . to come to grips with the complexities and practicalities of the Southeast Asian conflict." He described the purpose as to "determine how we could achieve our objectives in Southeast Asia, consistent with our vital national interests." In attempting to make such a determination, the Secretary used four assumptions: (1) no breakthrough in Paris was likely in the near future; (2) the United States would not "escalate" its purpose beyond the limited objective of allowing the South Vietnamese people to determine their own future; (3) such self-determination required a capability for sustained self-defense and self-reliance; (4) North Vietnam would not voluntarily abandon its aim of political control of the south.

Accompanied by General Wheeler, Secretary Laird visited South Vietnam for five days beginning 5 March 1969. There he talked with US Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and General Creighton W. Abrams, COMUSMACV, and traveled to I, II, and IV CTZ areas. He also met with RVN leaders, including President Nguyen Van Thieu, Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, and Prime Minister Tran Van Huong.

The importance of the visit lay less in the briefings Secretary Laird received in Vietnam than in the clear message he carried from the new Administration to the US military leaders and RVN officials. The American people expected the new Administration to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion, Mr. Laird told the US military commanders, and a satisfactory conclusion to most Americans meant eventual disengagement of US troops from combat. He informed his hearers that it was their task to find the means to shift the combat burden "promptly, and methodically," to the South Vietnamese.[20]

20. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, March 5-12 1969," 13 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS to SEA, Mar 69.

In a similar vein, Secretary Laird pointed out to President Thieu that the previous Administration had run out of public support on Vietnam. The new one had a breathing spell in which to seek a solution, but this was of strictly limited duration--roughly six months to a year. Mr. Laird told President Thieu that the most immediate problems were the improvement of the RVNAF and the assumption by South Vietnam of a greater share of responsibility for the fighting.

The Secretary reminded President Thieu that over the years, successive administrations had made one optimistic report on Vietnam after another to the Congress and people of the United States. The Nixon Administration, he said, hoped to avoid that pitfall. It did not want to give the impression of success either on the battlefield or at the negotiating table when there was none. Secretary Laird remarked that the Communists had succeeded in convincing many people that they were the ones who wanted peace. He asked both President Thieu and Vice President Ky what could be done about this matter, but neither had a ready answer.[21]

Returning home after stopping off to visit CINCPAC, Secretary Laird assured President Nixon that all the civilian and military leaders with whom he had conferred--US as well as South Vietnamese--agreed that the allies in South Vietnam had and could maintain enough military strength to keep the enemy from military victory. But because of operational restrictions, none of these leaders saw a military victory for US and allied forces "within the foreseeable future."

The Secretary described for the President the current military situation in Vietnam. He commended the US fighting men in Southeast Asia and stated that the course of the war in all four CTZs seemed favorable to the allies although consolidation of political control by the Republic of Vietnam was proceeding slowly. He reported increased enemy use of border sanctuaries and suggested

21. (S-GP 3) Memo of Conv, Pres Thieu, SecDef, et al., 8 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/463, 8 Apr 69; (S-GP 3) Memo of Conv, Prime Minister, SecDef, et al., 8 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/462, 8 Apr 69; JMF 911/975 (CY 69).

modification of existing rules of engagement to permit more effective action against that growing threat.

Secretary Laird brought to the President's attention the matter of Termination Day (T-Day) planning. This planning, begun in 1967, provided for the rapid removal of US personnel and the turnover of military equipment to the South Vietnamese in the event of a political settlement and a termination of hostilities. Secretary Laird noted that the US delegation in Paris continued to refer to the terms of the 1966 Manila Communique, which the United States had often cited during 1967 and 1968 with regard to peace efforts in Vietnam. Under the Communique, allied forces would begin withdrawal concurrently with the withdrawal of NVN troops; total US and allied withdrawal would be completed not later than six months after the removal of all NVN forces and the cessation of all infiltration. The Secretary had serious questions about the terms of the Manila Communique, believing that the initiation of the Paris negotiations had rendered them obsolete. The Paris talks might produce a withdrawal formula either more gradual or more precipitate than that contemplated at Manila. In any event, he said, the United States must insure that the entire Defense establishment understood the need to refine the concept of T-Day planning and develop a detailed program for withdrawal of US troops and transfer of US equipment as hostilities diminished and finally terminated.

The Secretary of Defense reported that the RVNAF modernization program had brought the South Vietnamese forces to a total strength of more than a million men. He had found, however, no indication that the current rate of improvement would ever make possible a significant reduction in the US military contribution in South Vietnam. The present program, he observed, was designed only to build a RVN force to cope with the VC insurgency. The US military authorities believed that no possible modernization program would enable the RVNAF to cope alone with a threat comparable to the present level of aggression. But Mr. Laird could not accept the proposition that substantial numbers of US forces would have to remain to contain the NVN threat, if a political settlement proved unobtainable. Neither did he accept the MACV staff premise that no US personnel reduction would be possible in the absence of total withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops. "The emphasis can and must be shifted," he recommended, "to measures through which South Vietnam can achieve a

self-defense capability that will strengthen our joint hand in Paris and prevent ultimate military defeat if political settlement proves impossible."

Secretary Laird concluded his report with a recommendation for withdrawal of some US troops from Vietnam in 1969. The qualitative and quantitative improvement of the RVNAF to date, although less than desired, should permit the redeployment of between 50,000 and 70,000 US troops from Southeast Asia during the remainder of the year. He was convinced that this redeployment would in no way jeopardize the security of the remaining US and allied forces. Further, he held that such a reduction was essential in order to enhance the support of vital US interests worldwide, to stimulate increased self-reliance on the part of the Republic of Vietnam, and to sustain the US public support for continued operations in Vietnam. Plans to accomplish this redeployment should be initiated at once. They should provide for continued substantial replacement of US with South Vietnamese forces in the following years.[22]

The NSC Meeting of 28 March

After considering Secretary Laird's report and the revised summary of answers to his questions on Vietnam, the President assembled the National Security Council on 28 March 1969 to review Vietnam policy. The participants, in addition to the statutory members, were General Wheeler, Richard Helms, the Director of Central Intelligence, Philip Habib of the US delegation to the Paris talks, and Ambassador Bunker and General Goodpaster from Saigon. The agenda for the meeting included two papers dealing with negotiations, prepared by the NSC Vietnam Ad Hoc Group, and the revised summary of responses to the President's questions on Vietnam.

The first Ad Hoc Group paper offered a general strategy for the negotiations. The overall objective of this strategy was to provide the South Vietnamese people the opportunity to determine their own future free of outside interference. As the fundamental, immediate objective, the strategy called for some form of agreement on mutual withdrawal. The paper also included a number of secondary

22. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, March 5-12 1969," 13 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS to SEA, Mar 69.

objectives, such as reunification of Vietnam, international recognition of reunification, regional economic assistance for North Vietnam, and other matters that would not arise until later in the negotiations.

The second Ad Hoc Group paper dealt exclusively with a mutual withdrawal. The objective should be the removal of North Vietnamese military forces and "other elements" from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Adequate inspection and verification machinery should be provided to make certain that enemy forces did in fact withdraw and that they returned to their own country. The Ad Hoc Group had been unable to define the US forces to be included in a mutual withdrawal, and the paper for the NSC meeting presented two alternatives. The first provided for the withdrawal of all US and allied combat and "combat related" forces, but with retention of US military advisory and logistic personnel. The second would maintain in South Vietnam, "at least for a period of time," selected combat and "directly-related combat" forces.[23]

At the 28 March meeting the President accepted the negotiations strategy and withdrawal papers as providing the general outline for a diplomatic settlement. The United States should make it clear, President Nixon said, that it would withdraw all forces from Vietnam if North Vietnam accepted a mutual withdrawal and gave guarantees of inspection and verification. With regard to the question of the timing of a mutual withdrawal, the President considered that an extended period might be required. The Ad Hoc Group paper had indicated that the United States should not invoke the Manila Communique either in public or private, but also should avoid any repudiation of it. The President now said that the United States need not commit itself to withdraw within six months after all enemy forces departed, as provided in the Manila formula. He

23. (S) Memo, AsstSecState to Chm, NSC Review Gp, "Revised Draft Paper on Over-all Negotiating Strategy and a 'Game Plan'" and "Revised Draft Paper on Mutual Withdrawal," 21 Mar 69, Tabs A and B, to (S) TP for SecDef and CJCS (NSC Mtg of 28 Mar 69), "Papers for Vietnam Negotiations," n.d., JMF 077 (21 Jan 69) (NSC Review Gp Mtg, 28 Mar 69).

thought that some US combat forces, as well as a sizable MAAG, would have to remain in Vietnam "a long time."

The participants of the meeting realized that a negotiated mutual withdrawal might not be immediately attainable, and the discussion turned to the possibility of the South Vietnamese assuming a larger combat role, with a concurrent reduction of US forces. Secretary of State Rogers raised this subject when he asked, "Can we turn over more of our functions to the GVN?" Ambassador Bunker responded that the answer depended on the further improvement of the RVNAF. The President then inquired how this "de-Americanization," as he termed it, would affect the North Vietnamese. Some felt it would incline them to hasten negotiations, but there was no consensus.

General Goodpaster observed that the RVNAF had indeed improved--"qualitative capability has not dropped while quantitative improvements have become realities." He thought the time had arrived when the United States could realistically plan to withdraw some forces, though it would not be appropriate to make the final decision until mid-year. Even then, he cautioned, any decision should depend on prevailing circumstances and the latest assessment of the RVNAF. Secretary Rogers stressed the need for "some discernable progress" toward de-Americanization. The President agreed, stating that it must occur in "a deliberate way from a position of strength, not weakness." He thought that replacement of US forces with South Vietnamese troops should begin within six to eight months. In the course of the discussion, Secretary Laird suggested the term "Vietnamization" to replace the more awkward "de-Americanization." This suggestion received de facto acceptance and the term soon passed into general use.[24]

Four days later, on 1 April 1969, the decisions reached by the President were published in NSDM 9. He approved the negotiations strategy and mutual withdrawal papers, thereby

24. (S) TP for SecDef and CJCS (NSC Mtg of 28 Mar 69), "Papers for Vietnam Negotiations," n.d.; (TS) TP for SecDef and CJCS (NSC Mtg, 28 Mar 69), "Revised Summary of Responses to NSSM 1: The Situation in Vietnam," n.d.; long-hand notes on the back of pages of these TPs, taken by CJCS in the 28 Mar 69 NSC Mtg; JMF 077 (21 Mar 69) (NSC Review Group Mtg, 28 Mar 69).

adopting a set of diplomatic objectives, together with a course of action to obtain them.[25] He directed that, in the absence of a mutually agreed withdrawal, the United States would take no action to lower the tempo of the fighting. Nor would the United States initiate any proposal along this line in the Paris negotiations. If North Vietnam suggested some form of limitation on the hostilities, the United States would consider it, the President instructed, only in the context of mutual troop reduction. With regard to the definition of US forces for withdrawal, the President decided that "all combat forces" could be withdrawn from South Vietnam if North Vietnam met specific conditions for removal of its forces from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and gave guarantees on verification and maintenance of the agreement. As to the timing of a mutual withdrawal, he stated that there would be no public repudiation of the Manila formula. In practice the United States could control the timing of the completion of its withdrawal, based on its own determination of whether or not Hanoi had fully met the conditions of the agreement. The key point, the President stressed, was not the timetable but the securing of North Vietnam's compliance with the withdrawal conditions.

In furtherance of the decisions stemming from the 28 March NSC meeting, the President directed preparation of a number of papers on various aspects of negotiations and the terms of a settlement in Vietnam. He wanted a study of phased withdrawal under conditions of either mutual withdrawal or a unilateral US withdrawal with RVNAF troops assuming the combat role. In addition, he asked for study of the means of verifying a mutual withdrawal and for a detailed analysis of a political settlement for South Vietnam, accompanied by a separate paper on international guarantees for such a settlement. In light of the consensus at the NSC meeting that it was appropriate to begin planning the substitution of South Vietnamese for US forces without awaiting other developments, the President also ordered the preparation of a "specific plan timetable for Vietnamizing the war."[26]

25. For the development of the US negotiating position, see Ch. 12.

26. (~~TS~~-GP 1) NSDM 9, 1 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/459, 2 Apr 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1.

The 28 March NSC meeting and the subsequent presidential decisions marked the first step in the development of the Nixon Administration's Vietnam policy. In continuing to seek a negotiated mutual withdrawal, and in rejecting any reduction in the level of fighting except as a part of a mutual withdrawal, President Nixon in effect reaffirmed the basic policy of the Johnson Administration. But the decisions of 1 April 1969 went beyond the Johnson policy in one important respect. President Nixon had determined that the time was right to begin reducing the US involvement in Vietnam, regardless of the progress in negotiations. This would be done by shifting the combat role to the South Vietnamese forces and progressively withdrawing US forces--"Vietnamization," as Secretary Laird had labeled it. The President did not actually begin the process in April, nor did he fix the extent or schedule for it, but he did initiate specific planning for Vietnamization, indicating that it should begin within six to eight months. Now, for the first time since its involvement in the Vietnam war, the United States was moving toward a reduction of its effort. This reduction, the President apparently hoped, would dampen domestic opposition to the war and allow his Administration more time to find a diplomatic solution.

Chapter 2

MILITARY STRATEGY AND TACTICS JANUARY-MARCH 1969

President Nixon assumed office at a time when the US military forces in Vietnam were at their peak of strength and effectiveness. Following the repulse of the 1968 Tet offensive, allied troops had regained the initiative and had held it ever since. The enemy had been unable or unwilling to mount another massive attack. This favorable military situation afforded the new President a breathing spell for his re-examination of Vietnam policy, as described in the preceding chapter. Nevertheless the danger of a new flareup of enemy effort was ever present and was very much in the minds of President Nixon and his advisers. They were compelled to follow the tactical situation in Vietnam as closely and carefully as had President Johnson.

Friendly Forces

United States forces in Vietnam at the beginning of 1969 totaled 536,040.[1] The bulk of this total consisted of ground combat troops, including nine divisions (seven Army and two Marine) plus four Army brigades and various other units. All US forces, of whatever Service, were under the operational control of General Creighton W. Abrams, USA, who held three titles: Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV); Commanding General, US Army Vietnam; and Senior Adviser to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF).

Other Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF), or Third Country Forces as they were also called, served under General Abrams' operational control. They consisted of 7,661 Australians, 516 New Zealanders, and 6,005 Thai troops. The Republic of Korea had almost 50,000 troops in South Vietnam

1. For a tabulation of allied strength figures and a list of major US ground combat units in Vietnam at the beginning of 1969, see Tables I, II, and IV following this chapter. Slightly different strength figures for the end of 1968, taken from other sources, are given in The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part III, Charts D, E, and F.

but had not placed them under COMUSMACV. Their relationship to the US forces was one of coordination and cooperation. Also serving in Vietnam, but classed as noncombatants, were a Philippine civic action group, a small military advisory group from the Repulbic of China (Taiwan), and a Spanish medical mission.

The RVNAF, including both the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF), had attained a strength of 819,209 as 1969 began. South Vietnamese paramilitary forces included the National Police (NP) with 80,000, the Rural Development (RD) cadre of 46,750, and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) with 43,000.[2] (For detailed strength figures, see Table I following this chapter.)

The US command organization in the field was based on a geographic division of the country into four corps tactical zones (CTZs). In I CTZ all US forces were under the Commandng General, III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF). The I and II Field Force Commanders controlled US troops in the II and III CTZs, respectively. Each of these three commanders acted as senior adviser to the GVN commander in his zone. In IV CTZ, the US commander bore only the title of "Senior Adviser," since the number of US troops was too small to justify a "field force" designation. Two of the Service component commanders of MACV--the Commanding General, Seventh Air Force, and the Commander, US Naval Forces Vietnam--similarly acted as advisers to their GVN counterparts.[3] (See Table III following this chapter for identification of these officers.)

Allied Strategy and Deployment

The allied strategy developed for 1969 provided for a "one-war" concept with all allied elements--RVNAF, US, and FWMAF--joining in a round-the-clock attack against the enemy. Combat operations, pacification, and RVNAF improvement received equal priority. This politico-military strategy was embodied in a Combined Campaign Plan, developed jointly by COMUSMACV

2. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. IV-8, IV-28, VI-2. (S) Briefing Notes for GEN McConnell, "Vietnam Situation," 14 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.
3. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. IV-1 - IV-8.

and the RVNAF Joint General Staff (JGS) and approved by the other FWMA commanders. Under it, the RVNAF and the FWMAF were given the mission of defeating the NVA/VC forces and assisting the Republic of Vietnam to extend control throughout South Vietnam. To combat the enemy, the Plan called for sustained, combined ground, air, and naval operations against VC/NVA forces, base areas, and lines of communication. For the extension of RVN control, the Plan envisioned the securing of towns, cities, and military bases, along with measures to prevent infiltration, "clear and hold" military operations, and support of pacification.

The Combined Campaign Plan made no functional separation of responsibilities between the RVNAF and the FWMAF. The RVNAF, in preparation for the time when it would assume the entire responsibility for the fighting, was expected to participate as fully as possible in all types of operations. The Plan specified the employment of the RVNAF and FWMAF in the following interdependent roles: (1) offensive operations against enemy forces and base areas in South Vietnam; (2) surveillance and reaction operations along the DMZ and the Laotian and Cambodian borders and in coastal waters; (3) protection of towns, provincial capitals, and cities; (4) territorial security operations. Air forces would conduct close air support and interdiction operations, carry out aerial reconnaissance of operational areas and infiltration routes, and identify enemy troop concentrations. Naval forces would continue to patrol coastal and inland waterways.

Territorial security was a major aspect of the allied strategy. The Combined Campaign Plan called for the regular RVNAF troops and the FWMAF to expand security around the cities and towns. Once areas were secured, the South Vietnamese territorial forces, the RF and PF, would maintain the areas. The PF would provide "local security" for hamlets and villages; the RF would maintain "territorial security" and defend lines of communications, political and economic centers, and governmental installations. This arrangement, it was planned, would relieve regular units of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) of these security missions. Other RVN internal security forces would perform regular police functions, attack the enemy's political organizations and the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI), and take preventive measures against sabotage, terrorism, and banditry.

The overall mission assigned allied forces was to destroy the enemy, but emphasis varied from one zone to another in accord with local conditions. Forces in I CTZ would operate against enemy troops coming across the DMZ and the Laotian border. In addition, they would protect Hue and Da Nang and the main lines of communication--Routes 1 and 9. In II CTZ, attention was to be placed on destruction of enemy forces in the highlands and protection of the populated coastal lowlands. The primary efforts in III CTZ would be to counter infiltration from Cambodia and to protect and extend the security area around Saigon and Gia Dinh. Destruction of enemy bases and the clearance and defense of land and water LOCs were the primary tasks in IV CTZ. Allied forces were deployed in accordance with this scheme, with priorities being given in the following order: first, the area around Saigon--the western portion of III CTZ and the northern part of IV CTZ as far south as the mouth of the Mekong Delta; second, I CTZ from the DMZ to Quang Ngai; third, the highlands area of II CTZ, to be held by minimum forces, backed by ARVN and ROK units. The deployment of allied maneuver battalions is shown in the following table:[4]

	US	FW/ARVN	Total
I CTZ	46	40	86
II CTZ	17	48	65
III CTZ	41	64	105
IV CTZ	7	42	49
Total	111	194	305

(For a listing of the major US units in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1969, see Table IV following this chapter.)

4. (S) RVNAF/FWMAF 1969 Combined Campaign Plan, 30 Sep 68, JMF 911/350 (30 Sep 68) sec 1A. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. II-5 - II-22. (TS) MACV Fact Book-Supplemental Data (Item ID), n.d., JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 1B. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM, 1-69, 2 Jan 69.

The protection of major population centers was an integral part of the allied strategy for 1969. Particular significance was attached to Saigon, Hue, and Da Nang. Not only were these cities thickly populated, but they had great psychological importance. This fact had been underscored by the worldwide impact of the 1968 enemy Tet offensive.

Protection of Saigon was the responsibility of the Capital Military District, a joint US/RVNAF headquarters. Under its command were 19 battalions (6 US and 13 RVNAF), disposed in three concentric rings about the city. Their mission was to search out enemy forces approaching Saigon and engage them as far from the city as possible. Particular attention was given to the corridors northwest of the city that ran to the main VC/NVA concentrations along the Cambodian border.

The inner and outer defense rings had 24-hour aerial surveillance; armed helicopters, together with AC-47 and AC-119 gunships using airborne forward air controllers, provided close air support. In addition, eight 60-foot towers provided "flash-ranging" for counterartillery fire, and night patrols roved the area to ambush enemy units. Within the city, COMUSMACV and the RVNAF conducted training in street fighting. Similar preparations, on a smaller scale, had been made for Hue and Da Nang[5]

The Enemy

Enemy forces in South Vietnam consisted of NVA troops, VC regulars and guerrillas, and the so-called "administrative services." At the beginning of 1969, the strengths of these forces were estimated as follows:

NVA	121,000
VC	37,000
Guerrillas	59,000
Admin Services	42,000
Total	259,000

5. (S) CM-3896-69 to SecDef, 29 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

These figures included not only the enemy troops within the territorial boundaries of South Vietnam but also those in the contiguous areas of Laos, Cambodia, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), and in North Vietnam immediately above the DMZ.[6]

Among the major NVA units above the DMZ were the 304th and 320th Divisions and the 88th, 90th, and 102d Regiments. The Joint Staff put the enemy maneuver battalion strength in South Vietnam in mid-January at:[7]

	NVA	VC	Total
I CTZ	51	22	73
II CTZ	30	17	47
III CTZ	34	43	77
IV CTZ	___	33	33
Total	115	115	230

The Tet and post-Tet offensives of 1968 had inflicted severe losses on the VC/NVA, and an aggressive allied counteroffensive had spoiled enemy plans for a third attack in August and September 1968. As a result, the enemy had withdrawn major forces to border area sanctuaries and remote base areas to refit and retrain. Simultaneously, he had undertaken an examination of plans and tactics for future operations. This evaluation resulted in a shift from a strategy of immediate all-out military victory to a longer term political one. The enemy would still mount large unit

6. Estimates of enemy strength in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1969 showed the usual variations. A Joint Staff estimate in mid-January 1969 gave the enemy strength in South Vietnam and the sanctuary areas along the borders at about 300,000. This included an estimated 30-40,000 NVA troops withdrawn into North Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, of whom 18-20,000 were still considered a threat to South Vietnam. (S) Briefing Notes for GEN McConnell, "Vietnam Situation," 14 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

7. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1968, vol I, p. 89. (S) Briefing Notes for GEN McConnell, "Vietnam Situation," 14 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

attacks when opportunities presented themselves, but he would rely primarily on small unit actions, particularly sapper attacks, and extensive use of guerrillas. The new strategy provided for continued infliction of US casualties, which North Vietnam believed the US public would find prohibitive, and for the defeat of the pacification program. All this would be accomplished, the enemy planned, while reducing losses and conserving military strength. This new concept would be accomplished in two stages, the first consisting of intensified military and political activity to create "favorable conditions" for a more widespread offensive during the second. The revised strategy was issued by the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) as Resolution 8 of October 1968, which served as the basic directive for the approaching winter-spring campaign.[8]

Although US officials were unaware of the existence of COSVN Resolution 8 at the beginning of 1969, they did sense a change in enemy intentions. A Joint Staff briefing for the Acting Chairman, General John P. McConnell, on 14 January 1969 noted that allied operations in 1968 had forced the enemy to withdraw significant numbers of troops into North Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian sanctuaries. It was expected that the enemy would shift major emphasis from military to political objectives to secure domination of South Vietnam and would combine political, psychological, and military actions to attain his goals both in South Vietnam and at the Paris talks. The Joint Staff also warned of possible attacks on cities in South Vietnam to begin the winter-spring offensive as part of a fight-and-talk strategy.[9]

A CIA review of the situation in Vietnam, circulated during the latter part of January, reached similar conclusions. The CIA paper reported considerable debate in Hanoi over the correct strategic line and its proper tactical execution. The choice was between an "offensive strategy," looking once again for dramatic military results, and the adoption of a more flexible combination of political and military tactics. The CIA believed that the latter had been chosen and forecast the possibility of stepped-up enemy military actions at any time, including terrorist attacks on urban areas.[10]

8. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. III-116 - III-117, E-5.

9. (S) Briefing Notes for GEN McConnell, "Vietnam Situation," 14 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

10. (S) CIA Report, "The Situation in Vietnam: Overview and Outlook," 24 Jan 69, same file.

General Abrams had also observed the change in enemy tactics and activities. In early January, he reported to CINCPAC that the enemy was building up logistic support north of the DMZ, in the Laotian Panhandle, and in the border areas of Cambodia. He predicted a strong enemy attack on the pacification program. Several days later, on 17 January, COMUSMACV reminded his subordinate commanders that the Paris peace talks were moving into a new phase and warned that the enemy would stage attacks at times calculated to influence the negotiations.[11]

The Nixon Administration Takes Over

On the day following his inauguration, President Nixon discussed the military situation in Vietnam with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Expressing the view that the US negotiating position would best be served by maintaining maximum pressure on the enemy, the President asked if there were any additional ways of doing so (within the current ground rules). General Wheeler replied that, as far as he knew, the only possibility would be through the continuing improvement of the RVNAF. At the direction of the President, however, he referred the question to the two responsible commanders, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC.[12]

Both commanders assured General Wheeler that everything possible was being done within existing authorities to maintain the maximum pressure on the enemy. They reminded him of their previous recommendations for authority to operate in the DMZ[13] and the border areas of Cambodia. Consequently,

11. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, COMUSMACV 509 to CINCPAC, 12 Jan 69; (S-GP 4) COMUSMACV 760 to CDR 7th AF et al., 17 Jan 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

12. (TS) Msg, CJCS 0885 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 22 Jan 69, same file.

13. Authority for US forces to operate in the DMZ between North and South Vietnam had been severely limited at the time of the 1 November 1968 bombing halt over North Vietnam. At that time, the United States had discontinued all offensive operations in the Zone with certain exceptions: COMUSMACV could send small, squad-sized patrols into the DMZ south of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL); he could react if enemy forces attacked across the DMZ; he could attack identified enemy forces or installations in the DMZ below the PMDL with either artillery or tactical air; and he could respond to enemy fire from within the DMZ with either gunfire or air attack. But US ground forces could not enter the DMZ

on 29 January 1969, General Wheeler recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he seek presidential approval for expanded authorities in both the DMZ and Cambodian border areas. Included were: (1) conduct of ground operations in the DMZ south of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL) as required to counter enemy activity; (2) employment of artillery, air, and naval gunfire in the DMZ, both north and south of the PMDL to counter enemy forces attacking through or from the DMZ; (3) pursuit of VC/NVA forces in contact into Cambodia to a depth of 5 kilometers by ground forces and 10 kilometers by air; (4) employment in Cambodia of long-range reconnaissance patrols consisting entirely of US personnel organic to US field forces; (5) use of artillery and air strikes on an on-call basis against observed enemy targets and forces in Cambodia to a depth of 10 kilometers south and 20 kilometers north of Route 13.[14]

The President did not authorize operations in the DMZ or the Cambodian border area. Rather, he still hoped to increase pressure on enemy forces within South Vietnam. On 1 February, Dr. Kissinger relayed the President's wishes to General Wheeler. Following further discussions, during which the President's intentions were clarified, General Wheeler on 2 February transmitted the following questions to COMUSMACV: Had the enemy stepped up his efforts since 1 January, or since 20 January? If so, what actions could be taken by the allied forces to counteract those efforts? With regard to the latter question, the President wanted to know: "Do we have a capability in-country or elsewhere to counteract with guerrilla attacks against North Vietnam? What assets could be used? Against what targets?" General Wheeler told COMUSMACV that he had already partially answered the last query by informing the President that the allies had no assets in North Vietnam. He suggested that General Abrams' reply consider the use of partisan groups smuggled into the north by sea or air.[15]

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without authorization from the "highest authority." See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, pp. 52-34 - 52-36.

14. (S-GP 3) Msgs, COMUSMACV 1102 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 24 Jan 69; (TS) Actg CINCPAC to CJCS 262243Z Jan 69; (TS) CM-3895-69 to SecDef, 29 Jan 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

15. (TS) Memo, COL D.P. McAuliffe, OCJCS to Actg CJCS, GEN McConnell, n.d.; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 1414 to COMUSMACV, 2 Feb 69, same file.

Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC responded to the President's queries, and the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John P. McConnell, forwarded a summary of their views to the President on 6 February. There had been only a slight upward trend in enemy aggressiveness in South Vietnam since 1 January, and no significant change in the level of observed activity in North Vietnam. What General McConnell pointed to particularly was a marked upsurge in enemy actions in Laos. Not only had the enemy increased his logistical activity there, but he was also taking steps to protect his lines of communication by bringing in more antiaircraft artillery. Some 134 artillery positions had been added since the initiation of the bombing halt on 1 November.

Responding to the President's question concerning actions to counteract the enemy buildup, General McConnell reiterated that there was no way of increasing pressure on the enemy if operations were strictly limited to South Vietnam. He mentioned General Wheeler's request of 29 January for increased authorities for the DMZ and Cambodia. He added that COMUSMACV was already attempting to counter the threat in Laos with strikes against specific road segments, using variable tactics to prevent the enemy from concentrating his road repair crews and air defense.

As for guerrilla attacks within North Vietnam, General McConnell said that neither the United States nor the Republic of Vietnam had such a capability. These operations could only be conducted by an active resistance movement in North Vietnam, the establsihment of which would require a long time. Harassing actions could be taken, he believed, if authorization were granted. Patrol boats could be used to strike NVN shipping or to mount cross-beach raids against undefended lines of communication. Helicopter-borne raiding parties of indigenous forces operating out of Laos could raid enemy lines of communication and other targets and could mine highways or carry out ambushes on them. Of these measures, however, both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC felt that only the harassment of shipping would be effective enough to justify the risks.[16]

16. (~~TS~~) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 041050Z Feb 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69. The MACV reply (MACV 1510, 3 Feb 69) has not been seen. (~~TS~~-GP 3) CM-3914-69 to SecDef, 6 Feb 69, same file.

Since early January indications had been mounting that the enemy was preparing to reintensify his military activities in South Vietnam. Photo reconnaissance and sensor reports revealed an upsurge in supply movements through Laos. Captured enemy documents referred to a forthcoming winter-spring campaign, and US units seized large caches of recently hidden munitions and rice. Agents, enemy prisoners, and ralliers all told of enemy plans to attack Saigon and other cities in South Vietnam during the approaching Tet season. A resumption of large-scale infiltration and the movement of main-force units from peripheral areas toward known objectives were detected. A CIA assessment of 24 January warned that terrorist and sapper attacks on Saigon and other major South Vietnamese cities could come at any time.[17]

The possibility that the enemy would shortly reintensify the hostilities confronted President Nixon and his advisers with difficult decisions. In choosing the US response the President had to consider a number of factors, including the degree of dissatisfaction with US involvement among the American people and their hopes for consistent progress toward its termination. Should he order strong counteractions, accepting the likelihood that this would set off a new wave of protest in the United States, or should he restrict the fighting by US forces to a defense of their own security, at the risk of seeing the enemy reverse the allied gains of the past several years? Or was there some intermediate course that would yield a more favorable overall result?

The choice of response to an enemy offensive would depend in part on how it was judged to relate to the conditions of the 1 November 1968 bombing halt. In late October 1968, the United States had agreed to stop all bombardment of North Vietnam; in return, North Vietnam in a secret minute consented to begin serious talks, with South Vietnamese representatives included in the negotiations. At that time, the United States made clear to the leaders

17. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 509 to CINCPAC, 12 Jan 69; (S) Briefing Notes for GEN McConnell, "Vietnam Situation," 14 Jan 69; (TS-GP 2) Msg, COMUSMACV 766 to CJCS, 17 Jan 69; (S) CIA Report, "The Situation in Vietnam: Overview and Outlook," 24 Jan 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

in Hanoi that continuation of the bombing cessation depended on their respecting the DMZ and refraining from attacks on the South Vietnamese cities. When President Johnson announced the bombing halt on 31 October, he revealed the substance of the US expectations but did not state them as specific conditions. Later, the United States insisted that these expectations were, in fact, conditions and part of the understanding, but the North Vietnamese denied this interpretation. Sould an attack on the South Vietnamese cities occur, President Nixon would have to decide whether or not to treat it as a violation of the 1968 understanding.[18]

The President and his advisers took up these questions at once, and consideration of various responses to enemy initiatives continued for the next two months. As the initial step of this consideration, Dr. Kissinger told the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence on 25 Janury 1969 that the President wished to see "as soon as possible" the US plans for reacting to an assault on Saigon. He cited reports than enemy infiltrators were assembling for such an attack to be carried out "in the next two weeks."[19]

On the basis of recommendations from CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already reached conclusions on the measures that should be executed in the event of a step-up in enemy activity, including attack on Saigon. After obtaining confirmation that the views of the two commanders were unchanged, General Wheeler on 28 January sent the Secretary of Defense a recommendation for reprisals consisting of air and naval bombardment of NVN military, industrial, and communications installations south of 19 degrees north latitude. The actions should be conducted for a minimum of 48 hours, and perhaps longer if necessary. Their effect, General Wheeler believed, would be to demonstrate the seriousness with which the United States viewed attacks on cities, besides impairing the enemy's capability to support sustained operations in South Vietnam. He asked that these recommendations be forwarded

18. For a detailed account of the agreement on the 1968 bombing halt agreement, see The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, pp. 54-9 - 54-15.

19. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecState et al., 25 Jan 69, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/419, 29 Jan 69, JMF 911/520 (25 Jan 69).

to the President, accompanied by a suggestion that Mr. Nixon might wish to discuss them with the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense. On the following day, General Wheeler provided the Secretary with a detailed description of the defensive arrangements for Saigon and other cities.[20]

General Wheeler's recommendations assumed enemy attacks of considerable intensity. In reply to an oral query from Dr. Kissinger, General McConnell, as Acting Chairman, submitted separate proposals applicable in case of "minor" enemy assaults. They consisted of limited naval bombardment and air strikes against various ports and military targets in the southern portion of North Vietnam.[21]

After considering these responses, President Nixon on 13 February directed the preparation of an integrated politico-military plan for joint US-GVN response to attacks of any scale. He also desired a plan for use in the event of President Thieu's assassination. These plans were to be prepared by the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam and submitted to the NSC Review Group by 17 February.[22]

Both plans were completed on schedule. For an attack on South Vietnam's cities, the Ad Hoc Group envisioned four broad options: to ignore the attack completely; to register diplomatic protests while issuing a warning to the enemy; to station US naval units off North Vietnam as a stronger warning; and to retaliate militarily. Twenty-three retaliatory actions were listed, of which 21 were various forms of attack on North Vietnam, ranging from naval harassment to full resumption of air and naval operations throughout the country. The other two were attacks on enemy forces in the DMZ (north of the PMDL) or in

20. (TS) Msgs, CJCS 1087 to Actg CINCPAC, 26 Jan 69; Actg CINCPAC to CJCS, 270537Z Jan 69; (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV 1208 to CJCS, 27 Jan 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69. (TS-GP 3) CM-3892-69 to SecDef, 28 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/419, 29 Jan 69; (S-GP 1) CM-3896-69 to SecDef, 29 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/419-1, 29 Jan 69; JMF 911/520 (25 Jan 69).

21. (TS-GP 3) CM-3903-69 to SecDef, 3 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/419-2, 4 Feb 69, same file.

22. (S-GP 3) NSSM 22, 13 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/419-3, 15 Feb 69, same file.

Cambodia. In dealing with the possibility of assassination, the Ad Hoc Group outlined measures varying from complete "hands off" to direct intervention aimed at insuring a regime favorable to US interests. The preferred alternative was a limited US reaction to prevent violence and bring about an orderly succession.[23]

The NSC Review Group considered these two papers, but did not act on them. The Group intended to use them as "a common frame of reference for analyzing the situation in Vietnam" and as the "framework" for recommendations to the President.[24]

Meanwhile, apprehension over an approaching enemy offensive had continued. On 6 February 1969, General McConnell, as the Acting Chairman, informed the Secretary of Defense of intelligence warnings of an enemy attack during the Tet period, which would begin on 17 February. Allied forces were ready for such an attack, General McConnell reported. But he reminded the Secretary that despite a clear-cut allied military victory in the 1968 Tet offensive, the enemy had achieved a major psychological coup in the United States and throughout the world. General McConnell was concerned that the same thing might occur in 1969. Recognizing that this matter was outside the purview of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General McConnell urged Secretary Laird and his colleagues in the Administration to "maintain the initiative in the psychological area" by preparing the public for a possible enemy offensive.[25]

23. (~~S~~-GP 3) Memo, NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to Chm NSC Review Grp, "Contingency Plans for Viet-Nam," 17 Feb 69, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/419-4, 18 Feb 69, same file. A talking paper, prepared jointly by representatives of ISA and the Joint Staff, commented on the plan for response to Thieu's assassination. The representatives of the two staffs saw in this plan an undesirably large degree of US involvement and warned that any US intervention "should take into account the limits of our knowledge of Vietnamese politics." See Att to JCS 2472/419-5, 20 Feb 69, same file.

24. (~~TS~~) Draft State/Def msg to COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and Paris, n.d. (with buck slip for the CJCS dated 21 Feb 69), OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69 (loose).

25. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-3919-69 to SecDef, 6 Feb 69, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/430, 19 Feb 69, JMF 911/320 (6 Feb 69).

The Secretary of Defense replied on 14 February expressing appreciation and assuring the Chairman that the Administration was aware of this problem. Not only Defense spokesmen, but also MACV, the Department of State, and the White House were emphasizing to the press the enemy's capability to launch an offensive. They would continue to do so, Mr. Laird added.[26]

Meanwhile, enemy preparations continued. A COMUSMACV assessment in mid-February reported 250 indications during the previous 30 days of an impending offensive. Intelligence revealed that the enemy, although not yet positioned for attacks on Hue, Da Nang, or Saigon, was ready for major attacks on Tay Ninh and the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex. General Abrams predicted a two-phased enemy offensive: an increase in small-scale activity and armed propaganda, especially in Saigon, accompanied by political agitation; a second phase of extensive coordinated attacks by fire on Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, and district capitals near Saigon. He believed that the offensive would begin during Tet or shortly thereafter.[27]

Tet came and went, however, without an enemy offensive. Allied forces observed a 24-hour cease-fire from 161800 to 171800 (local time) February 1969. In light of enemy violations during previous holiday truces, General Abrams, Ambassador Bunker, and President Thieu had agreed that the Tet truce should be as short as possible. During the actual cease-fire, both US and RVNAF troops remained on full alert and RVNAF personnel were granted a minimum of special leave. The enemy initiated 197 incidents during the standdown, of which 84 were judged significant. Eight US troops were killed and 94 wounded; enemy losses were estimated at 151 killed with 19 suspects detained.[28]

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26. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Responses to a Possible 1969 Tet Offensive in South Vietnam," 14 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/430, 19 Feb 69, same file.

27. (~~S~~) Point Paper for General Wheeler, "Possible Major Enemy Offensive," n.d. (based on COMUSMACV assessment of 14 Feb 69). OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69.

28. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-8 - V-9.

On 22 February, COMUSMACV and Ambassador Bunker warned Washington that large-scale attacks were expected that day or the following. All US and RVN forces had been placed on full alert. The enemy would undoubtedly pay a heavy price, but fighting might last for several days or even weeks in some areas. "We think that the main purpose of these attacks," Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams said, "is to try to produce another shock in the United States such as took place last year at Tet. The enemy would like to show how tough, determined, and capable they are, show their omnipresence, and produce heavy US casualties in order to further alienate American support for the war." Another object was to set back the Accelerated Pacification Program. By relating the timing of attacks to President Nixon's trip to Europe, the two US officials commented, Hanoi probably hoped to find the President unprepared to focus on events in Vietnam and reluctant to order retaliatory attacks against North Vietnam from abroad. Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams considered retaliation imperative if the enemy attacked on the scale indicated by current intelligence.[29]

The Post-Tet Enemy Offensive

This prediction from Saigon proved accurate, and in the early morning hours of 23 February, the enemy launched his widely anticipated offensive. It began with a series of over 100 country-wide indirect fire attacks, including the first rocket attack on Saigon in over three months. The enemy also attacked Da Nang, as well as 17 provincial and 28 district capitals. The attack focused predominantly on military forces and installations. There were several concurrent ground attacks in remote areas of I and III CTZ, but most of the enemy main force regiments avoided contact. United States casualties during the first 48 hours of the offensive totaled 56 killed and 373 wounded. Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and other FWMAF casualties for the same period were 98 killed with 250 wounded. Nineteen South Vietnamese civilians were killed and 22 wounded; enemy casualties were placed at 320 killed with 24 detained.[30]

29. (S) Msg, Amb Bunker and COMUSMACV (Saigon 3402) to State, 22 Feb 69, JCS IN 17609.

30. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 2372 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 23 Feb 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 44-69, 24 Feb 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-41, V-49 - V-50.

Assessing the enemy offensive on 24 February, General Abrams advised Washington that the objectives of the attacks seemed to be to present an appearance of strength throughout South Vietnam while conserving men and munitions, to confuse the allies as to future enemy intentions, and to force the revelation of allied positions and plans. General Abrams concluded that the enemy had accomplished "very little" by this initial flurry of attacks. No major Government-held objective, he pointed out to General Wheeler, had been seized. He added a caveat, however:

> We have as yet seen only the first phase of the enemy's offensive. Major attacks by strong enemy units in critical areas in the next 48 hours appears to be the enemy's most likely course of action.[31]

On the following day, 25 February, Secretary Laird cabled a report of the offensive to the President in Europe. His message included the substance of a Defense Intelligence Agency assessment, which suggested that the purpose of the attacks was to show that the allies could not neutralize the enemy military strength and viability. The "scale and intensity" of the offensive, according to DIA, was much lower than the 1968 Tet attack. The enemy still had not committed main force units to any appreciable extent, and preliminary information indicated that enemy activity was already declining. "It is noteworthy," concluded DIA, "that the enemy has still not mounted ground attacks across the DMZ or launched significant ground attacks against population centers."[32]

General Abrams' prediction of a second phase of the offensive by main force enemy units was not fulfilled. The slackening of enemy activity, noted by Secretary Laird in his report to the President, continued. There were scattered indirect fire attacks on allied installations and forces and on villages and towns throughout South Vietnam, but on a gradually declining scale. Sporadic rocket firings on Saigon continued into early March. The

31. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 2385 to CJCS, CINCPAC, and Amb Bunker, 24 Feb 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69.

32. (~~TS~~) Msg, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, 251754Z Feb 69, same file.

ground fighting in I and III CTZs lasted for a week and then dropped to "a relatively low level."[33]

Consideration of Retaliation

With the launching of the enemy offensive, US officials immediately began considering appropriate retaliation. Early on 23 February, General Wheeler cabled COMUSMACV and CINCPAC that it might be "expedient" for General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker to recommend a response by allied forces, "particularly in view of the rocket attack on Saigon." General Wheeler suggested naval fire or air strikes against North Vietnam below 19 degrees north. General Wheeler told CINCPAC that it would be "desirable" to alert fleet units for appropriat selected targets.[34]

Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC replied the same day, recommending a 96-hour naval gunfire and air strike reprisal against North Vietnam between 17 and 19 degrees north, to begin on 24 or 25 February. Ambassador Bunker supported their views. If US forces did not respond promptly, he told the Secretary of State, the enemy would be encouraged to continue the attacks, some of which clearly violated the understandings made with Hanoi at the time of the bombing halt three and a half months earlier.[35]

A CIA assessment the following day, 24 February, presented several arguments against such a retaliatory strike. The CIA noted that the enemy attack on the cities to date had been of a moderate scale as compared with those of the previous year. To retaliate by bombing North Vietnam, the CIA stated, would appear to many to be "disproportionate to the provocation" and might renew both domestic and international criticism of the US Government. The CIA also

33. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-41, V-49 - V-50, V-82. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 50-69, 3 Mar 69, 43-69, 6 Mar 69.

34. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2253 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC (info SecState, SecDef, and Dr. Kissinger) 230541Z Feb 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69.

35. (TS-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 2372 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 231110Z Feb 69; (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC to CJCS and COMUSMACV, 231047Z Feb 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69. (S) Msg, Saigon 3429 to State, 231000Z Feb 69, JCS IN 18666.

doubted that the bombing would cause the enemy to suspend or modify the offensive. In fact, it might persuade him that he could intensify his action without prejudicing world opinion. Such a bombing of North Vietnam, the CIA added, might cause Hanoi to suspend the Paris talks. On the other hand, failure by the United States to respond to the offensive might strain US relations with South Vietnam.[36]

Available sources provide no evidence that the COMUSMACV/CINCPAC proposal was considered at the policy level. In any event, the reprisal was not initiated.

On 26 February, COMUSMACV reported significant enemy initiatives in northern I CTZ. He added that several NVA regiments were just north of the DMZ prepared to attack allied forces. He urged the removal of restrictions on operations in the southern half of the DMZ, together with authorization to react to enemy operations there. There would be no necessity, he added, for ground forces to cross the PMDL. General Wheeler passed this information to the Secretary of Defense on the same day, supporting General Abrams' request. General Wheeler proposed that the recommendation be forwarded by message to the President in Europe.[37]

The Secretary of Defense did not forward the recommendation for DMZ authorities to the President while he was in Europe. Rather, he waited and talked with President Nixon upon his return to Washington on 2 March. Secretary Laird replied to General Wheeler on 4 March. Although sharing the Chairman's concern, he wished, if possible, to hold down the level of violence in the DMZ area. He noted that North Vietnam's performance in regard to the understanding on operations across the DMZ had substantially decreased military activity and allied casualties in northern I CTZ. He was concerned that unlimited employment of allied forces might increase military action there, and he asked General Wheeler for other alternatives to meet the threat in the DMZ. In the interim, Mr. Laird directed the

36. (~~TS~~) CIA Memo for the Director of Central Intelligence, "Reactions to US Retaliatory Air and Naval Strike Against North Vietnam Between the DMZ and the 19th Parallel," 24 Feb 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69.

37. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 2500 to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 26 Feb 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-3969-69 to SecDef, 26 Feb 69, same file.

exercise of maximum restraint in allied incursions. He reminded General Wheeler that COMUSMACV already had authority to operate in the DMZ to preserve allied forces and, when actually in contact with the enemy, to maneuver into the DMZ up to the PMDL for this purpose.[38]

The failure of the allies to respond to the enemy offensive aroused some comment in the United States. The President was asked about it at his news conference on 4 March. There was speculation, a reporter said, that the Nixon Administration was being tested, particularly as to the understanding reached the previous November 1 on the bombing halt. What, the reporter inquired, was the President's opinion?

The President replied that, although the current offensive was comparable to the previous year's in terms of the number of attacks, its intensity was less. He speculated on the enemy's motives and concluded that, whatever they were, the offensive had failed. As to the understanding, the President said:

> we are examining this particular offensive, examining it very carefully, to see whether its magnitude is in violation of that understanding. Technically, it could be said that it is in violation. Whether we reach the conclusion that the violation is so significant that it requires action on our part is a decision we will be reaching very soon if these attacks continue at their present magnitude.

The President remarked that the Secretary of Defense was traveling to South Vietnam the next day and would look into this matter.[39]

Secretary Laird, accompanied by General Wheeler, reached Saigon on the morning of 6 March. Several hours before their arrival, enemy rockets struck the city. Commenting on these attacks at an airport newsconference, Mr. Laird

38. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam Demilitarized Zone (U)," 4 Mar 69, same file. (In this memo, Secretary Laird appeared to be speaking for himself and gave no indication that he was relaying guidance from the President.)

39. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 182-184.

said: "Such sadistic attacks against the civilian population are, in my view as Secretary of Defense, a violation of the understanding between the United States and North Vietnam." He cautioned that no one should mistake US patience and forbearance as a sign of weakness. The United States would not tolerate continued enemy acceleration of the war and attacks against the people of South Vietnam. He concluded by stating:

> I do not want to issue warnings nor make threats. I do want, however, to state unequivocally that if these attacks continue unabated, an appropriate response will be made.[40]

While the Secretary of Defense and General Wheeler were in South Vietnam, consideration of reprisals continued in Washington. Two actions under discussion were northward movement of certain fleet elements in the Gulf of Tonkin and increased air reconnaissance over North Vietnam. Both were designed for psychological effect to test North Vietnamese reaction to a possible resumption of air and naval bombardment. As General Wheeler had explained to CINCPAC just before departing from South Vietnam, the fleet movement was "an action lying at the lower end of the spectrum" of possible reactions. On 7 March 1969, both of these actions received higher approval, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the necessary instructions. They directed the stationing of naval units farther north and closer to North Vietnamese territory for a "short period." Existing restrictions on naval operations north of 20 degrees were rescinded, but US forces were not permitted to enter into the 12-mile territorial sea claimed by North Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed an immediate increase in air reconnaissance of North Vietnam. On 15 March, they ordered another movement of naval units farther north into the Gulf of Tonkin and extended the increased air reconnaissance for another week. Following this extension, both naval operations off Vietnam and air reconnaissance of North Vietnam returned to the level existing prior to 7 March.[41]

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40. (~~TS~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 53-69, 6 Mar 69. (U) Msg, COMUSMACV 13830 to SecDef et al., 6 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS to SEA, Mar 69.

41. (S) Msgs, CJCS 2624 to CINCPAC, 4 Mar 69; (TS-GP 3) JCS 4184 to CINCPAC, 8 Mar 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCS 4162 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and COMUSMACV, 7 Mar 69; (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCS 4785

On 10 March, when the enemy offensive was visibly declining in intensity, General Abrams submitted to Washington a detailed assessment of the situation in South Vietnam. In his opinion the enemy offensive had failed. It had caused no adverse effect on either the RVNAF or the popular confidence in the RVNAF. Nor had it harmed pacification to any significant extent. It had, however, produced a measurable impact on enemy strength. During the first two weeks, the enemy had suffered nearly 19,000 permanent losses: 12,000 killed; probably 4,200 dead of wounds or permanently disabled; 1,000 captured; and 1,400 Hoi Chanh ralliers.

After reviewing the offensive to date, COMUSMACV assessed probable enemy strategy and tactics for the coming months. The enemy realized that he could not win militarily and had, therefore, turned to neogitiations. His objectives were US withdrawal and a coalition government in South Vietnam. The enemy saw an opportunity to achieve both in what he read as growing US impatience and haste to settle the war. To speed withdrawal, the enemy would attempt to erode US determination by projecting the impression of an endless war with continuing casualties and high costs. The enemy's military efforts for the near future, COMUSMACV said, would most likely be "a cyclical continuation of the post-Tet formula"--widespread, coordinated activity, consisting largely of stand-off attacks by fire to hold down his personnel losses, with selected ground attacks on secondary targets. These actions would be accompanied by an effort to expand operations in rural areas.

General Abrams viewed the enemy sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia as the "key element" of the operations in South Vietnam. It was through their use, he explained, that the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were able to sustain a prolonged war against a superior allied force. To increase pressure on the enemy, COMUSMACV asked for a number of additional authorities. None of them was newly conceived. They included: (1) resumption of air and naval attacks against military targets in North Vietnam, below 19 degrees

to CINCPAC, 15 Mar 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCS 4784 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and COMUSMACV, 15 Mar 69; (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCS 5703 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and COMUSMACV, 27 Mar 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 69.

north, in reprisal for the post-Tet bombardment of South Vietnamese cities; (2) conduct of operations in the southern part of the DMZ; (3) limited ground and air attack of selected enemy base areas along the South Vietnamese border with Cambodia and Laos; (4) expanded air and guerrilla operations in Laos; (5) tactical air and artillery support for covert activities in Cambodia (DANIEL BOONE operations).[42]

Secretary Laird and General Wheeler returned to Washington on 12 March, and the Chairman immediately provided the Secretary with his thoughts and observations resulting from the trip. He concluded that the "current series of enemy attacks" had failed militarily and psychologically. He believed, however, that, if attacks on the cities persisted, the United States must respond. He based this opinion on two reasons: the Republic of Vietnam would be under great pressure to retaliate in kind; and beyond a certain point, US restraint would be interpreted as confirmation of the North Vietnamese contention that the US bombing halt was unconditional and that the United States had misled the South Vietnamese Government regarding the circumstances leading to the cessation. General Wheeler saw the enemy troop and logistic buildup in the DMZ and in the border areas of Cambodia and Laos as "most striking and dangerous situations." Enemy operations from these areas, he told Secretary Laird, were the "prime cause" of US casualties.

General Wheeler concluded his report with several recommendations in line with his observations: (1) the next rocket attack on Saigon, Hue, or Da Nang must be met with an appropriate retaliation--preferably naval and/or air attacks on North Vietnam; (2) COMUSMACV should receive immediate authorization to conduct offensive operations in the southern half of the DMZ; (3) COMUSMACV should be tasked with the preparation of plans to destroy enemy base areas and sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos.[43]

42. (TS-GP 3) COMUSMACV Rpt, "Situation in South Vietnam," 10 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/447, 13 Mar 69; (TS-GP 1) Subpar IID (Additional Authorities Required) to above COMUSMACV Rpt, Att to JCS 2472/447-1, 14 Mar 69; JMF 911/399 (10 Mar 69).

43. (TS-GP 3) CM-4001-69 to SecDef, 12 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/445, 13 Mar 69, JMF 911/399 (12 Mar 69).

The following day, 13 March, the Secretary of Defense reported to President Nixon on the trip. Like COMUSMACV and General Wheeler, he believed that the current enemy offensive was destined for failure. The enemy's efforts would gain no territory, he said, nor would they bring any permanent reduction in pacification. The offensive had had little impact on the morale of the South Vietnamese people or on their support for the government. Secretary Laird surmised that the enemy's objectives were not primarily military, but rather psychological and political. Perhaps, he said, the enemy's desire was to demonstrate that he retained control of the level of fighting in South Vietnam and, by doing so, to gain a stronger negotiating position in Paris.

While assuring the President that the offensive would be contained, Secretary Laird conceded that the enemy retained the ability to conduct similar campaigns in the future, at least intermittently. This ability stemmed, Mr. Laird said, from continued Soviet and Chinese Communist resupply of North Vietnam and from enemy use of border sanctuaries in Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam. Consideration should be given, he believed, to "border area operations" that would, at least temporarily, "diminish the advantage to the enemy of our self-imposed geographical restrictions."

Secretary Laird also discussed the enemy attacks on the civilian population in relation to the "understanding" with North Vietnam, on the basis of which the bombing of NVN territory had been stopped. He viewed the assaults as "clearly inconsistent" with that understanding, but also pointed out that they were "not significant militarily." They had not added to the jeopardy of US forces, nor had they adversely affected South Vietnamese morale. He observed that there had been no rocket attacks on Saigon since the morning of 6 March. He concluded that any further "significant" shelling or rocketing of the major South Vietnamese cities should bring an appropriate US response.

But what kind of response would be appropriate? Secretary Laird believed that bombing of North Vietnam would accomplish little of military value. Although it might demonstrate continued commitment to South Vietnam, it would probably revive criticism both at home and abroad, placing the Administration in the same position as the

Johnson Administration had found itself a year previously. Consequently, he favored a political or diplomatic retaliation, such as a temporary suspension of attendance at the plenary Paris sessions. If a military action was decided upon, he suggested "a well-considered and effective operation" against an enemy target in the border areas. This, he felt, would provide an appropriate signal to the enemy and would achieve some military benefit.[44]

In addition to the reprisals suggested by Secretary Laird, the President was also considering various other possibilities. The White House staff had requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider possible responses to the VC/NVA actions in South Vietnam, to include specific plans for a "surgical" strike on the Haiphong area; mining of the Haiphong Harbor; and the sinking of a ship in the Haiphong Channel. General Wheeler forwarded the requested plans to the Secretary of Defense on 13 and 14 March. The "surgical" plan provided for an air and naval strike against five targets of military significance in the Haiphong complex, including two airfields, a power plant, a railroad bridge, and a rail yard. When giving this plan to the Secretary, General Wheeler advised that a sustained bombardment would be preferable to such a selective retaliatory attack. The aerial seeding of three deepwater areas in the approach to the channel, the channel itself, and the narrow passage through the Canal Maritime were the main features of the mining plan for Haiphong port. General Wheeler found this plan feasible, but believed North Vietnam would be able to accommodate to such mining unless it was combined with an intensive air campaign. To block the Haiphong Channel, using a submarine for the purpose, would be feasible; the required forces and munition were already available in the Pacific area. General Wheeler emphasized, however, that the plan would require ten weeks to execute. Before sinking the submarine, it would be necessary to make a clandestine hydrographic survey of the Channel, to seed the shallow waterway approaches to the port, and to notify foreign governments of the action.[45]

44. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC March 5-12, 1969," 13 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS to SEA, Mar 69.

45. (TS-GP 2) Fact Sheet prepared by J-3, "Additional Actions Against NVN (PS)," 8 Mar 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 69. (TS-GP 1) CM-3994-69 to SecDef, 14 Mar 69;

While these measures were under review in Washington, the enemy provided an additional incentive for reprisal. On 15 March, Washington Time (16 March local time), four enemy 122-mm rockets struck Saigon, wounding one civilian and damaging a building. Apparently hoping to keep the situation under control, the President ordered that "there be absolutely no comment by any Government official or military commander" on this incident. What reprisals, if any, were considered in response to this attack are not indicated in the available record. Presumably, the shelling was not deemed significant enough to warrant a reaction, for there was no US response.[46]

On the day of the Saigon rocket attack, General Wheeler again raised with the Secretary of Defense the question of operations in the DMZ. Intelligence continued to indicate considerable enemy activity there. The Chairman believed that the enemy was exploiting the current operational restrictions in the DMZ to inflict maximum US casualties while avoiding large military actions, which might prompt resumption of US operations against North Vietnam. He also thought that North Vietnam was taking advantage of the restrictions to tie down allied military power near the DMZ, thereby diverting it from enemy targets in I CTZ. When, earlier in March, the Secretary had turned down the Chairman's request for unlimited authorities for ground operations in the southern DMZ, he had asked for appropriate alternatives. General Wheeler still supported his original request, but assessed for the Secretary four other possibilities: (1) continuation of current authorities; (2) reinforcement of friendly forces to offset the enemy buildup above the DMZ, but without added authorities; (3) consideration of COMUSMACV's recommendations for ground action south of the PMDL on a case-by-case basis; (4) authorization of ground actions in the DMZ below the PMDL with time and force limits as well as prior notification requirements. He favored the last alternative, requesting approval to conduct ground operations below the PMDL with forces as large as a brigade and for not longer than five

(TS-GP 1) CM-4006-69 to SecDef, 13 Mar 69; (TS-GP 1) CM-4000-69 to SecDef, 13 Mar 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Bulky), Mar 69.

46. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 62-69, 17 Mar 69. (S) Memo, Pres to SecState and SecDef, "March 16 Rocket Attack on Saigon," 15 Mar 69, same file.

days. This authority would allow General Abrams to conduct limited sweeps to counter enemy activity.[47]

Authorization for such action had been sought earlier and had drawn the objection that heavy preliminary bombardment would be required in order to avoid severe casualties from NVN artillery north of the PMDL. General Wheeler consulted COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, who expressed the view that any US forces sent into the DMZ would be protected in large part by their mobility and that counterbattery fire or tactical airpower, used in accordance with existing rules of engagement, could suppress the hostile artillery.[48]

Another possible retaliatory action considered by the United States was a VNAF strike in North Vietnam supported by US air units. This possibility had been raised during Secretary Laird's visit to South Vietnam. On 22 March, General Abrams submitted such a plan to Washington. Because of the limted VNAF capability, the plan provided for only initial token VNAF participation with the USAF carrying the main burden of the strike. Neither General Abrams nor CINCPAC recommended the plan for execution. Rather, they suggested it only as a contingency plan for the future.[49]

The enemy pursued his offensive throughout the remainder of March, but at a rapidly decreasing rate of activity. After the 15 March rocket firing on Saigon, there were scattered attacks on various cities, towns, and hamlets throughout South Vietnam, including one each on Da Nang, Quang Ngai, Quang Tri, and Bien Hoa Base as well as a final attack of three rockets on Saigon on 30 March. After the initial week of the offensive, ground action had dropped off significantly, and this low level continued throughout the remainder of the month. Some ground assaults

47. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-4010-69 to SecDef, 15 Mar 69 same file.

48. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msgs, CJCS 3512 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 21 Mar 69; CINCPAC to CJCS, 230318Z Mar 69; COMUSMACV 3797 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 25 Mar 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 69.

49. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msgs, COMUSMACV 3701 to CINCPAC, 22 Mar 69; CINCPAC to CJCS, 230154Z Mar 69; same file.

and convoy ambushes were attempted, but failed to produce any decisive results.[50]

As the enemy offensive dwindled, so did the occasion for consideration of reprisals. The National Security Council formed an ad hoc committee to study the possibility of limiting maritime imports into North Vietnam. This committee reviewed possible aerial mining and scuttling operations in Haiphong Harbor, using the JCS plans, and also considered a naval blockade of the north. But none of these actions was implemented.[51]

By the beginning of April the enemy post-Tet offensive had ended. United States officials, in Vietnam and in Washington, agreed that the offensive had failed. The enemy had not achieved a significant military victory, nor had he captured world attention as he did a year earlier. Neither had he goaded the United States into abandoning its restraints--if that had been one of his intentions. The United States had considered reprisals throughout the post-Tet attacks. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, COMUSMACV, and CINCPAC had all favored military retaliation in the form of air and naval strikes against North Vietnam, as well as expanded DMZ operations. But the United States limited its response to two low-key actions--fleet movements in international waters off North Vietnam and two weeks of increased air reconnaissance over the country.

The degree to which the recommendations for strong action were seriously considered by the Administration is not indicated in available records. It seems clear that the President and the Secretary of Defense were reluctant at that time to take any action that might reverse the declining tempo of military activity in Vietnam. The President was doubtless hoping that the negotiations in Paris would begin to yield substantive results. Throughout the remainder of 1969, as the succeeding chapters show, the

50. (TS-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 64-69, 19 Mar 69; 65-69, 20 Mar 69; 66-69, 21 Mar 69; 67-69, 22 Mar 69; 68-69, 24 Mar 69; 69-69, 25 Mar 69; 71-69, 27 Mar 69; 73-69, 29 Mar 69; 74-69, 31 Mar 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-49 - V-50.

51. (TS-GP 1) Memo, LTG John B. McPherson (Asst to CJCS) to NSC Ad Hoc Committee on Limiting Maritime Imports into NVN, 28 Mar 69, OCJCS File 091-Vietnam, Mar 69.

Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to press for liberalization of the rules binding General Abrams' tactical initiative. But it was not until near the end of the year, when the enemy's diplomatic intransigence had exhausted the President's patience, that the JCS recommendations for a wider range of action began to receive a sympathetic hearing.

TABLE I

US Forces in South Vietnam 1969

	1 Jan 69	31 Dec 69
Army	359,313	330,648
Air Force	58,029	58,463
Navy	37,541	30,236
Marine Corps	80,716	55,039
Coast Guard	441	433
	536,040	474,819

Third Country Forces in South Vietnam 1969

	1 Jan 69	31 Dec 69
Australia	7,661	7,672
Republic of China	29	29
Republic of Korea	50,003	48,869
New Zealand	516	552
Philippines	1,576	189
Spain	12	10
Thailand	6,005	11,568
	65,802	68,889

(~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. IV-28.

TABLE II

RVNAF 1969

	1 Jan 69	31 Mar 69
ARVN	380,270	380,625
VNN	18,882	22,524
VNAF	18,625	20,583
VNMC	9,134	8,716
RF	219,762	237,814
PF	172,536	174,367
	819,209	844,629

	30 Jun 69	30 Sep 69	31 Dec 69
ARVN	392,686	401,595	416,278
NVN	24,635	26,401	30,143
VNAF	24,527	29,385	36,469
VNMC	9,314	10,504	11,528
RF	249,553	254,800	260,455
PF	175,118	206,998	214,383
	875,833	929,683	969,256

(TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VI-2, VI-52.

TABLE III

US Commanders in Vietnam 1969

COMUSMACV	GEN Creighton W. Abrams, USA	
DEPCOMUSMACV	GEN Andrew J. Goodpaster, USA GEN William B. Rosson, USA	from May 69
DEPCOMUSMACV for Air Opns/ Commander, 7th Air Force	GEN George S. Brown, USAF	
DEPCOMUSMACV for CORDS	AMB William E. Colby	
Chief, USAF Advisory Group	BG Charles W. Carson, USAF BG Kendall S. Young, USAF	from Aug 69
Chief, Naval Advisory Group/ COMNAVFORV	VADM Elmo R. Zumwalt, USN	
Senior Advisor I CTZ/ CG III MAF	LTG Robert Cushman, USMC LTG Herman Nickerson, Jr., USMC	from Mar 69
Senior Advisor II CTZ/ CG I FORCEV	LTG William R. Peers, USA LTG Charles A. Corcoran, USA	from Mar 69
Senior Advisor III CTZ/ CG II FORCEV	LTG Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., USA LTG Julian J. Ewell, USA	from Apr 69
CG DMAC/SA USAAG IV CTZ*	MG George S. Eckhardt, USA MG Roderick Wetherill, USA	from Jun 69

*Senior Advisor, IV CTZ was redesignated as CG, Delta Military Assistance Command/SA, US Army Advisory Group, IV CTZ in April 1969.

TABLE IV

Major US Ground Combat Units in Vietnam,
1 January 1969

Army

1st Cav Div (Ambl)
101st Abn Div (Ambl)
1st Inf Div
4th Inf Div
9th Inf Div
23rd Inf (Americal) Div
25th Inf Div
1st Bde, 5th Inf Div (Mech)
199th Inf Bde
3d Bde, 82d Abn Div
173d Abn Bde
11th Armd Cav Regt
1st Sqdn, 1st Cav
2d Sqdn, 1st Cav
1st Bn (Mech), 50th Inf

Marines

1st Mar Div
3d Mar Div

Chapter 3

MILITARY POLICY AND ACTIONS APRIL-JULY 1969

By the beginning of April 1969, President Richard M. Nixon had completed his Vietnam review and decided upon the policy for his Administration. The United States would seek a negotiated settlement in Vietnam while simultaneously keeping strong military pressure on the enemy. If the diplomatic approach proved unsuccessful, the United States would transfer an expanding share of the combat to the Republic of Vietnam and begin withdrawal of US forces as the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) grew stronger.

But, during 1969, several factors arose that worked against the decision to maintain firm military pressure on the enemy. The first factor was budgetary constraints. Mr. Nixon had campaigned for the presidency calling for reductions in Federal expenditures, and he entered office committed to pruning the budget. This meant reductions in all departments, including the Department of Defense, and Defense cuts--no matter how carefully managed--affected the war in Vietnam.

Another factor was a change in the actual conduct of the war. After the failure of his post-Tet offensive in March 1969, the enemy turned to a strategy intended to conserve his forces while inflicting increasing US casualties. Consequently, he avoided large battles, relying instead on terrorism and brief pushes against populated areas and US installations. Some, both within and without the US Government, saw in this change in strategy an enemy signal that should be met by a corresponding lowering of US military action in South Vietnam. The debate spilled over into the public press and helped to rekindle public opposition to the war in the United States. Opponents of the war, quieted by the bombing halt in November 1968 and the assumption of office by the new Administration in January 1969, began to grow impatient with President Nixon's lack of progress in ending the war. Opposition revived in the spring of 1969 and increased throughout the remainder of the year. The anti-war movement pressed the Administration to end the war or, at least, to reduce US casualties and involvement.

Throughout these developments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to maintain pressure on the enemy in Vietnam. With this end in view, they strove to retain the resources available to field commanders and to widen, or at least to maintain, the freedom of action of US forces. In submitting their advice and requests to Melvin R. Laird, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found a Secretary of Defense finely attuned to the political and fiscal aspects of the Vietnam conflict--one who continually urged them toward lines of action that would result in a reduction of US effort. This division within the Defense establishment reflected the problem facing the President in Vietnam: to strike a balance between keeping maximum pressure on the enemy and meeting the public demand for evidence that the war was truly "winding down."

Budget Considerations

The most imminent pressures on the Joint Chiefs of Staff in April 1969 were budget considerations and the requirement to reduce military costs and their effect on military operations in Vietnam. Just five days before he left office, on 15 January 1969, President Lyndon B. Johnson has sent his FY 1970 budget to the Congress. He proposed expenditures of $195.3 billion, including a Defense budget of $81.5 billion (or $79.0 billion exclusive of atomic energy matters and certain Defense-related activities such as the Selective Service System). President Nixon had initiated an immediate budget review upon entering office on 20 January, in fulfillment of his campaign pledge to reduce Federal spending. In compliance with the President's directive, the Secretary of Defense on 28 January ordered the Military Departments to review the FY 1970 budget proposal submitted by the previous Administration to assure consistency with the objectives of the President.[1]

1. Annual Budget Message to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1970, 15 Jan 69, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968-69, II, pp. 1273-1306. The Budget of the United States Government, 1970, p. 73. (S-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, "Pilot Studies of Alternative Military Objectives and Budgets," 24 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2458/501, 27 Jan 69, JMF 557 (24 Jan 69) sec 1. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, "Revision of FY 1969 and FY 1970 Programs," 28 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2458/504, 30 Jan 69, JMF 570 (28 Jan 69).

As a result of the Defense review, Secretary Laird told the House Committee on Armed Services on 1 April 1969 that Defense expenditures in the "January budget" had been reduced by $1.1 billion to a new estimated total of $77.9 billion. (The Secretary, obviously, was subtracting the reduction from the $79.0 billion figure in the Defense estimate of the Johnson budget rather than from the total Defense figure of $81.5 billion.) President Nixon publicly announced on 12 April total reductions of $4.0 billion, including the $1.1 billion in Defense outlays, in the FY 1970 budget. These cuts, the President believed, would "enhance our economic security without risk to our national security."[2]

ARC LIGHT Sortie Reductions

An immediate effect of the new budget restrictions was to reduce the intensity of the B-52 bombing campaign (ARC LIGHT). Throughout most of 1968, COMUSMACV had been authorized to employ a maximum of 1,800 B-52 sorties per month. In December of that year, however, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, over the objections of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had ordered a cutback.[3] Effective 1 January 1969, he had decided, a variable rate of between 1,400 and 1,800 monthly, or an average of 1,600 sorties per month, would be flown instead of the 1,800 monthly authorized throughout most of 1968. Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC objected to this decision, and the 1,800 monthly rate was continued while the new Administration reviewed Vietnam operations and costs.[4]

Concerned that the sortie rate might be reduced, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 18 February 1969 a CINCPAC/COMUSMACV appraisal of ARC LIGHT requirements. Both commanders considered the ARC

2. Hearings, Military Posture, H. Com on Armed Services, 91st Cong, 1st sess, H-3-14, pp. 1744-1745 (hereafter cited as H. Hrgs, Military Posture). Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 278-280.

3. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, p. 52-39.

4. H. Hrgs, Military Posture, pp. 1749-1750. (TS-GP 3) Encl (p. 27-1) to Memo, SecDef to Pres, "NSSM No. 1, Situation in Vietnam," 10 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-4, 11 Feb 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 3.

LIGHT program essential to the achievement of US objectives in Southeast Asia and an important factor in preventing the enemy from mounting offensives. General Abrams used the B-52 force as a highly mobile reserve to respond to tactical emergencies. The 1,800 sortie rate provided the "equivalent punching power" of several ground divisions and afforded COMUSMACV a degree of tactical flexibility without constantly moving major troop units. There was no weapon in the conventional arsenal, COMUSMACV believed, to substitute for the B-52. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that it would be "militarily inadvisable" to reduce the ARC LIGHT monthly rate below 1,800 until there was a major strategic or tactical change to warrant such action.[5]

Secretary Laird took no immediate action, but he told the House Committee on Armed Services on 1 April 1969 that budget stringencies would not allow continuation of the 1,800 monthly rate beyond June 1969. While noting the military objection, he pointed out that to continue the 1,800 rate through June 1969 would require an additional $25.1 million in FY 1969 funds. Even a 1,600 monthly rate, if maintained through FY 1970, would cost $27.4 million above the original budget amount; however, Secretary Laird believed that this level of B-52 activity was necessary.[6]

The same day, General Wheeler notified CINCPAC and COMUSMACV of the Secretary's testimony and warned that the B-52 sortie level would be cut to 1,600 beginning in July 1969. "I think this is indicative," he told the two field commanders, "of the seriousness of the budgetary situation, for I know the SecDef is aware of the value you attach to the B-52 capability."[7]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not content to let the decision on ARC LIGHT levels pass without further objection. On 26 April, they reiterated to the Secretary of Defense the importance of the B-52 operations. Even the existing 1,800 monthly rate was not adequate; there were already more than five times as many profitable targets as could be attacked.

5. (S-GP 3) JCSM-97-69 to SecDef, 18 Feb 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/389-5, 7 Feb 69, JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68) sec 2.
6. H. Hrgs, Military Posture, pp. 1749-1750.
7. (TS) Msg, CJCS 3939 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 1 Apr 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 69.

On 16 May, they again argued against reduction in the B-52 effort, citing to the Secretary of Defense an impending reduction of tactical air assets[8] as an additional reason for not cutting back on ARC LIGHT.[9]

Finally, on 18 June 1969, the Secretary of Defense responded to the JCS pleas. Maintenance of the 1,800 level would cost about $100 million in added FY 1969 and 1970 funds and would have to be offset by reductions in some part of the air effort in Southeast Asia. "Considering the large number of sorties that have been made available by the halt in bombing in North Vietnam," he hoped some reduction in air action could be made without significant impact on combat operations in South Vietnam or Laos. He put a choice to the Joint Chiefs of Staff: ARC LIGHT sorties could be maintained at 1,800 per month through FY 1970 with a $100 million reduction in tactical air operations, or ARC LIGHT could be reduced to 1,600 sorties a month with no reduction in currently planned tactical air activity.[10]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were hesitant to make such a choice. After consulting CINCPAC, they advised the Secretary on 27 June that both air capabilities, tactical and B-52, were essential at the present levels. This was especially true, they said, in light of the President's recent announcement of the withdrawal of the first US troops from Vietnam.[11] If forced to choose, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would reluctantly support the ARC LIGHT reduction as the less undesirable alternative. Presumably they accepted the reasoning of CINPAC, who had justified such a preference on two grounds: a cutback of tactical air capability would mean withdrawal of some fighter squadrons, and if the war took a sudden turn for the worse, upward adjustment of the B-52 sortie rate would be easier to achieve than sending fighter aircraft back to South Vietnam;

8. See below, pp. 66-69.

9. (S-GP 3) JCSM-253-69 to SecDef, 26 Apr 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/389-7, 22 Apr 69; (S-GP 3) JCSM-308-69 to SecDef, 16 May 69, Encl to JCS 2472/389-8, 15 May 69; JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68) sec 2.

10. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "ARC LIGHT Sortie Rate (U)," 18 Jun 69, Encl to JCS 2472/389-9, 19 Jun 69, same file.

11. See Ch. 4.

and for the ARVN, as it assumed increased responsibility for ground operations, direct and immediate tactical air support would be more beneficial than B-52 operations.[12]

The Secretary of Defense replied on 15 July 1969 that some reduction in air activity was unavoidable; the only alternative would be a supplementary appropriations request, which had been ruled out. He therefore approved the 1,600 monthly rate for ARC LIGHT, in preference to reducing the tactical air effort in South Vietnam or Laos. The Secretary added that he was willing to reconsider alternative air allocations as long as they were within the budget limits. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not pursue any other alternatives; they directed implementation of the 1,600 rate on 18 July 1969. Even that rate remained in effect only two and a half months; in October 1969, budget strictures were to force a further reduction to 1,400 sorties per month.[13] (See Chapter V.)

Tactical Air Reduction

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff chose to lower the B-52 monthly sortie rate in preference to cuts in tactical air capability in Vietnam, that decision did not spare tactical air resources in Southeast Asia from reductions brought on by the budget tightening. During the preparation of replies to the presidential questionnaire on Vietnam, analysts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense observed that it was reasonable to expect some force reduction as a consequence of the 1 November 1968 bombing halt in North Vietnam. Specifically, they suggested the withdrawal of an attack carrier from Vietnam action. Two weeks later, on

12. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 221818Z Jun 69; (S-GP 3) JCSM-401-69 to SecDef, 27 Jun 69, Encl to JCS 2472/289-10, 25 Jun 69; JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68) sec 2.

13. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "ARC LIGHT (B-52) Sortie Rate," 15 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/389-11, 17 Jul 69; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4891 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, COMUSMACV, and CSAF, 18 Jul 69; same file. There is no evidence in JCS files to support the statement in COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. I-4, that: "In April, B-52 raids in-country were curtailed as a further demonstration of US willingness to de-escalate the conflict."

26 February 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense that the Navy could not maintain the current attack carrier posture within FY 1970 resources and recommended the reduction of WESTPAC attack carriers from five to four, effective 1 July 1969. The Deputy Secretary of Defense approved the recommendation on 25 March 1969.[14]

The question of withdrawing tactical fighter squadrons from South Vietnam also arose at this time. A year earlier, in March 1968, the United States had deployed six Air National Guard squadrons of F-100 tactical fighters to PACOM--two to the Republic of Korea and four to South Vietnam. These units were scheduled to return to the United States by late spring 1969 and to be replaced with F-4 squadrons. On 24 March 1969, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force suggested to the Joint Chiefs of Staff the replacement of the four squadrons in South Vietnam with only two F-4 squadrons as a means of reducing forces and, hence, costs. The resulting degradation of combat capability would, he believed, be acceptable. The following day, the Director of the Joint Staff, Vice Admiral Nels C. Johnson, relayed this proposal to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV. He added that, should the proposal be implemented, two additional F-4 squadrons would be kept in a high state of readiness in the United States for rapid movement to Southeast Asia if the situation required.[15]

Both commanders objected vehemently. They saw nothing in the current military situation to warrant a unilateral reduction in combat power and stressed the importance of tactical air to counter the continuing enemy efforts to build up logistic bases and troops in Laos and border areas. General Abrams, particularly, complained of Service actions to curtail his combat capability without consulting him, and CINCPAC concurred with General Abrams' objection.[16]

14. (TS-GP 3) Encl (pp. 26-2 - 26-3) to Memo, SecDef to Pres, "NSSM No. 1, Situation in Vietnam," 10 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-4, 11 Feb 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 3. (S-GP 4) JCSM-110-69 to SecDef, 26 Feb 69, Encl to JCS 2147/490-1, 20 Feb 69; (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "CVA Force Levels (U)," 25 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2147/490-3, 26 Mar 69; JMF 466 (12 Feb 69).

15. (TS-GP 1) CSAFM C-29-69 to JCS, 24 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2147/492, 25 Mar 69, JMF 907/376 (24 Mar 69). (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3648 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 25 Mar 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 69.

16. (TS-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 4016 to CINCPAC and 4036 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 30 Mar 69; CINCPAC to CJCS, 302318Z Mar 69 and 010255Z Apr 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 69.

General Wheeler assured the two field commanders on 1 April 1969 that "the Chiefs share your concern and are trying to make the best of a very difficult situation." The proposed cutbacks, he explained, stemmed from "the demands of the White House, in concert with Treasury and BOB, that the Federal budget be reduced as part of a Government-wide, determined effort to cool the economy." The Department of Defense had been required to take "expenditure cuts in excess of $1 billion below the FY 70 budget of the previous Administration." General Wheeler went on to relate that there had recently been a series of high-level meetings within the Department of Defense on this problem. The meetings had generated "considerable in-house review," but there had not been time to consult with the field. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not happy with this procedure, General Wheeler said, since what had resulted might best be described as a selection of the "least unacceptable" alternatives.17

On 9 April, the Secretary of Defense suggested a variation in the original proposal. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider the possibility of withdrawing two tactical fighter squadrons from Thailand instead of from South Vietnam. General Wheeler passed this request to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV for comment. He advised the two commanders that the Joint Chiefs of Staff remained firm in the view that it was militarily unsound to reduce forces in Southeast Asia unless the enemy showed some sign of reciprocating. Nevertheless, General Wheeler warned them to be prepared to accept a cut of two tactical fighter squadrons in Southeast Asia.18

After receiving the views of COMUSMACV and CINCPAC the Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed to the Secretary of Defense on 18 April their opposition to any reduction of air assets in Southeast Asia until there was positive evidence of a significant reduction in the enemy threat. If for reasons other than military a decision was made to withdraw two fighter squadrons without replacement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred that the reduction be made in South Vietnam rather than Thailand. All the Thailand-based squadrons, as well as 25 percent of the South Vietnamese-based tactical sorties, were fully committed to missions outside of Vietnam.

17. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 3939 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 1 Apr 69, same file.

18. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Tactical Aircraft Withdrawals (~~C~~)," 9 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2147/494, 9 Apr 69, JMF 376 (9 Apr 69). (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, CJCS 4502 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 12 Apr 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 69.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff could see, therefore, no operational advantage in withdrawing tactical air forces from Thailand since such action would only raise the probability of more South Vietnam-based sorties being flown outside the country. In addition, the Thailand-based squadrons were used in the essential task of disrupting infiltration through Laos and for that reason should not be reduced.[19]

The Secretary of Defense carried out the reduction of tactical air resources in Southeast Asia, but he did accept the JCS view on where the reduction should occur. On 8 May 1969, he ordered two F-4 squadrons from the United States to replace the four Air National Guard squadrons being withdrawn from South Vietnam; two other F-4 squadrons would be retained in the United States at least until 1 July, and might or might not be sent after that date.[20]

But the matter of the replacement of the tactical fighter squadrons in South Vietnam was still not settled. Of the two F-4 squadrons ordered to Vietnam by the Secretary of Defense, one was temporarily diverted to the Republic of Korea. On 16 May 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary for authority to move this squadron to Vietnam and to deploy the two F-4 squadrons being held in the United States. Eventually, on 14 June 1969, the Deputy Secretary approved the first request, but the two additional squadrons in the United States were never sent to Vietnam. The spaces were eliminated from the complement of the Seventh Air Force, and US air assets in South Vietnam were reduced by two squadrons.[21]

19. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-236-69 to SecDef, 18 Apr 69, Encl to JCS 2147/494-1, 16 Apr 69, JMF 376 (9 Apr 69).

20. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-692-69 to JCS, 8 May 69, Att to JCS 2147/492-1, 8 May 69, JMF 907/376 (24 Mar 69).

21. (S-GP 3) JCSM-308-69 to SecDef, 16 May 69, Encl to JCS 2472/389-8, 15 May 69, JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68) sec 2. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2538 to CSAF, CINCPAC, and CINCSAC, 14 Jun 69. (Draft of the msg had notation of Mr. Packard's approval.) Both the draft and the msg are in JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. IV-13.

The Conduct of the War

With the subsiding of the enemy's post-Tet offensive in March 1969, the course of the war underwent a marked change during the ensuing three months. The enemy abandoned large battles and offensives for local actions and terrorist activities, and the intensity of the fighting declined considerably. He paused to regroup and refit, limiting operations during April and early May to attacks-by-fire on allied military installations and population centers. Ground contact was restricted to small unit engagements, the only exceptions being two regimental-sized attacks in III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ). [22]

During this lull, the United States obtained information from prisoners and captured documents of an enemy plan for a summer campaign. Set forth in Directives 81 and 88, the plan continued the strategy, adopted in the fall of 1968, of seeking a long-range political victory in the place of an immediate military one. Scheduled for the period May through July, the summer offensive would combine military and political action. The plan placed emphasis on "economy of force" tactics and on harassment of US forces in order to increase US casualties. By concentrating on US troops, the enemy hoped to increase American dissatisfaction with the war and thus gain his political objectives. The plan also provided for political activity in rural areas to prepare for a possible settlement involving coalition government.[23]

To implement this strategy, the enemy plan called for country-wide "high points" of military activity each month as opposed to the general offensive strategy pursued in 1968 and the early months of 1969. High points would consist of attacks-by-fire coupled with sapper and terrorist actions against US facilities and RVN-controlled population centers; main and local forces would attack ARVN and allied field positions. The new tactics were designed to support political goals and did not require a sustained level of military activity. The resulting monthly peaks of military action, the enemy believed, would refocus world attention

22. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. III-177 - III-178.
23. Ibid., p. III-120. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 5636 to CINCPAC, 3 May 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 69.

on the war, renewing anti-war sentiment in the United States and countering US and GVN assertions that the Communist forces were losing their effectiveness. In addition, the enemy anticipated that the change would improve the morale of his troops and strengthen his bargaining position at the Paris talks.[24]

General Vo Nguyen Giap indirectly acknowledged the shift in Communist strategy and tactics to the North Vietnamese public several months later. In a speech before an NVN Air Force Congress on 22 June, General Giap stressed conservation of force and protracted war, stating that North Vietnam would use "minimal force to oppose an overpowerful enemy" and "ordinary weapons" against the much better equipment of the other side. The implication was that the enemy would avoid frontal clashes involving large troop units.[25]

The first high point of the enemy summer campaign occurred during the night of 11-12 May, when the enemy launched a country-wide series of attacks-by-fire and limited ground actions. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops shelled Saigon, Hue, and more than 30 allied positions during the night. The most intense fighting took place in the A Shau area of I CTZ, in the western highlands of II CTZ, and in Tay Ninh Province in III CTZ. There was also a series of terrorist attacks in Saigon that killed at least 13 persons and wounded about 100. By 13 May, the high point had ended. More than 200 attacks had been noted, the largest number in a comparable span of time since the 1968 Tet offensive. But their intensity and severity were far below the level of the 1968 attack; only 49 were deemed "major," and friendly casualties were relatively light. The allies regarded the enemy activity as motivated, at least in part, by a desire to show that a 10-point peace plan issued by the Viet Cong the previous week was not a sign of military exhaustion.[26]

24. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. III-120. (C) CM-4620-69 to SecDef, 8 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69. NY Times, 10 May 69, p. 31.

25. The text of the speech was not available, but it was discussed and quoted in (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Military Strategy in Southeast Asia," 2 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2339/302, 3 Jul 69, JMF 907/520 (2 Jul 69).

26. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 6018 to CJCS, 12 May 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam May 69. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 110-69 (Supp), 12 May 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. III-123 - III-124; III-181; V-41. NY Times, 12 May 69, 1; 13 May 69, 1.

On the day before the May high point began, allied forces launched Operation APACHE SNOW in the sparsely inhabited A Shau Valley, in the western part of I CTZ, 43 miles south-southwest of Quang Tri City. This multi-regiment operation included two battalions of the 9th Marine Regiment and four each from the 101st Airborne and the 1st ARVN Infantry Divisions. The objective was to destroy enemy caches, forces, and installations and to prevent the escape of enemy forces into nearby Laotian sanctuaries.

The operation began with a heliborne assault into the thickly jungled mountains along the Laotian border west of the valley in an attempt to trap enemy forces. The friendly forces then swept eastward, but for the first two days made little contact with the enemy. On 12 May US airborne troops encountered heavy enemy fire from bunkers deep within Aphia Mountain, which overlooked the A Shau Valley, and which was designated Hill 937 in allied operations. After calling in artillery and tactical air strikes, US troops made no less than five attempts to capture the hill. They finally succeeded on 20 May, but at a heavy cost: 45 Americans killed and 290 wounded.[27]

Major General Melvin Zais, USA, Commander of the 101st Airborne, termed the capture of the hill "a great victory by a gutty bunch of guys." "Real victories," he said, "don't come easily." The struggle for Hill 937, however, had received worldwide attention, and some were uncertain how "real" the victory was. During the operation, the troops had complained of the difficulty of the battle, nicknaming the mountain "Hamburger Hill" because it "chewed men up like meat." There was also considerable press speculation during the battle over the reasons for both the dogged enemy defense and the tenacious allied assaults.[28]

On the day the US forces took Hamburger Hill, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts rose in the US Senate to

27. (~~TS~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 110-69, 12 May 69; 113-69, 15 May 69; 114-69, 16 May; 115-69, 17 May 69; 118-69, 21 May 69. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-56 - V-57. NY Times, 20 May 69, 1; 21 May 69, 1.

28. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. V-57. NY Times, 20 May 69, 1; 21 May 69, 1.

to question the operation. It was "senseless," he charged, "to send our young men to their deaths to capture hills and positions that have no relation to this conflict." He believed "American lives were too valuable to be sacrificed for military pride." Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania immediately rebutted Senator Kennedy's charge, urging his colleagues not to "second guess" the battlefield tactics, "because we are not there."

This exchange and the extensive press coverage given the Hamburger Hill battle and the resulting combat deaths generated further discussion by editorial writers and columnists, drawing attention more pointedly than before to the relationship between casualties and military strategy. The Hamburger Hill losses, combined with those incurred during the 11-12 May enemy high point, caused concern at some levels within the US Government that the military commanders in Vietnam were operating without sufficient regard for the impact of casualty figures on public opinion.[29]

On 21 May, in anticipation of questioning on Hamburger Hill, General Wheeler provided Secretary Laird with a report on the battle, in the form of a draft memorandum for the President. The action had been directed against two enemy battalions entrenched on the hill, since in that position they had dominated the local area, protecting an important infiltration route from Laos into South Vietnam and preventing allied disruption of enemy logistics activity in the A Shau Valley. The larger purpose was to preempt new enemy initiatives and to protect the gains represented by "the accelerating progress of the pacification program, the rebuilding of Hue and the decline of VC/NVA influence on the population in northern I CTZ."[30]

On the following day, the US Command in Saigon issued a statement defending the Hamburger Hill battle. According to the Command spokesman: "We were not fighting for terrain as such. We did not attack the hill for the purpose of taking a hill. We were going after the enemy." The attack on the enemy in this remote mountain area, it was said, prevented him from massing for an intended attack on Hue, some 30 miles to the east.[31]

29. NY Times, 21 May 69, 1.
30. ~~JCS~~ GP 3) CM-4247-69 to SecDef, 21 May 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 69.
31. NY Times, 22 May 69, 1.

On 23 May, White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler defended both the Hamburger Hill battle and allied tactics in Vietnam. The action had been undertaken in response to enemy activity and represented no change in US tactics or military strategy. He claimed that enemy initiatives, rather than those of the United States, determined the US casualty rate. "Our activity and our actions in South Vietnam in the previous weeks have not increased, in terms of the initiatives we have taken," he said. "Our studies confirm that casualty rates are largely the result of enemy-initiated action." The US objective was to maintain "a level of military activity which would meet the objectives of security of the population and our allied forces and deprive the enemy of the expectation of imposing a political solution there." Three days later, Mr. Ziegler again denied that the recent rise in US casualties in South Vietnam resulted from changes in allied tactics.[32]

United States casualties for the next week dropped sharply, and the controversy subsided. Meanwhile, US troops withdrew from Hamburger Hill on 28 May. A spokesman for the 101st Airborne announced that the allied forces had completed their search of the mountain and were continuing their "reconnaissance-in-force" mission through the A Shau Valley. Operation APACHE SNOW, of which Hamburger Hill was the most significant battle, ended on 7 June. Casualties for the operation were 113 US killed and 627 wounded; 22 ARVN killed and 106 wounded. Reported enemy casualties totalled 977 killed and 7 detained.[33]

While attention was focused on Hamburger Hill, a more important battle, the ARVN Ben Het-Dak To Campaign, was being waged in northern Kontum Province in II CTZ. It was the first major independent RVNAF operation of the war and was anxiously watched by US military advisers as a test of RVNAF effectiveness. For a month, from early May until early June, ARVN and CIDG forces engaged two NVA regiments in the rugged area just east of the Cambodian, Laotian, and RVN tri-border area. In a series of actions, beginning with the May high point and continuing through 5 June, the ARVN and CIDG forces successfully defended the Ben Het CIDG Camp, located on Route 512, and drove the enemy from the

32. Ibid., 24 May 69, 1; 27 May 69, 4.
33. Ibid., 28 May 69, 8; 30 May 69, 2. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 133-69, 9 Jun 69.

area. The RVNAF forces acquitted themselves well in heavy combat against strong NVA main force elements. The enemy lost over 1,200 men killed in action while RVNAF casualties amounted to less than 200. Although US advisers and combat support elements assisted in the campaign, Vietnamese commanders held sole tactical responsibility and no US ground troops participated in the operations.[34]

Except for the Hamburger Hill and Ben Het battles, enemy activity dropped to a low level following the May high point. For a 24-hour period from 0600, 30 May to 0600, 31 May, local time, US and RVNAF troops observed a "temporary cessation of offensive operations" in commemoration of Buddha's birthday. During the night of 5-6 June, however, the enemy unleashed the second high point of his summer campaign with over 200 shellings on allied installations and populated areas in South Vietnam. He relied heavily on attacks-by-fire through the lower half of South Vietnam, though activity also increased slightly in I and II CTZs. The enemy also launched a few ground assaults. The most significant occurred in Tay Ninh Province against a Fire Support Base of the 25th Infantry Division, where 401 enemy soldiers were killed. The intensity of the enemy shellings was generally low; enemy losses, however, were higher than in the May high point. General Abrams reported that enemy activity during the 5-6 June period was about three-quarters that of the previous month's peak while enemy casualties were 90 percent of those of the May attacks. By 7 June, the level of enemy action had returned to that existing prior to the 5-6 June attacks, and enemy activity declined noticeably during the remainder of June and continued at a low level throughout July. Main force units avoided major contact and many moved to border and base areas to regroup and refit. Enemy infiltration into South Vietnam also declined during the summer.[35]

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34. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 110-69, 12 May 69; 112-69, 14 May 69; 117-69, 20 May 69; 118-69, 21 May 69; 119-69, 22 May 69; 121-69, 24 May 69; 123-69, 27 May 69; 128-69, 3 Jun 69; 131-69, 6 Jun 69; 134-69, 10 Jun 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-72 -V-73, H-1 - H-4.

35. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 5806 to Actg CJCS and CINCPAC, 7 May 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 69. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 126-69, 31 May 69. (C) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV 7827 to CINCPAC, 9 Jun 69; (S-GP 4) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV 7322 to CINCPAC, 10 Jun 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 69. [Over]

Allied operations in the spring and early summer of 1969 continued in much the same pattern as in late 1968 and early 1969. United States troops, assisted by the RVNAF, exerted heavy pressure on the enemy, seeking to draw him into combat. Multi-battalion actions throughout South Vietnam sought to find, fix, and eliminate VC/NVA main force units and deny them an opportunity to reorganize and redistribute their men and resources. Within the four CTZs, the allied military commanders shifted their units in response to intelligence indications of enemy concentrations. Allied forces also conducted operations to extend security, protect population areas, and support pacification, and US forces carried out daily reconnaissance and training exercises with the Rural and Popular Force units defending the cities and towns.

The allies placed particular emphasis on the protection of Saigon. The Capital Military Assistance Command (CMAC), composed of US and RVNAF troops, carried out offensive actions in Gia Dinh Province and adjacent areas to counter ground and rocket attacks against Saigon. These operations attempted to locate enemy caches and to interdict infiltration routes, thereby denying the enemy the resources and staging areas needed for attacks on the capital.[36]

The Search for Expanded Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) Authorities

When the United States halted bombing operations in North Vietnam on 1 November 1968, it also suspended all military operations in the DMZ, and no ground forces were permitted to enter the Zone without presidential approval. This prohibition, in the opinion of the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, allowed the enemy a sanctuary for staging operations in the northern part of I CTZ and resulted in increased allied casualties there. Consequently, the spring and summer of 1969 saw a continuing effort by COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to regain authority for operations in the DMZ. In response to the

(TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. III-43; III-124, III-184, III-187 - III-188, V-41. NY Times, 6 Jun 69, 9.

36. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-41 - V-42, V-96.

enemy post-Tet offensive in late February, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had sought the removal of restrictions on operations in the DMZ, but the Secretary of Defense, desiring to hold down the "level of violence," had not granted the request. General Wheeler had raised the question again in mid-March, but no action was taken.[37]

On 3 April 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC and COMUSMACV of their intention to ask again for modification of the DMZ rules of engagement. Specifically, they wanted authority to send units, up to brigade-size, into the Zone below the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL). Such operations would not exceed five days in length and would require a 48-hour notification to Washington prior to initiation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned the two field commanders that these modifications were proposals only and did not change the current rules. There had been no indication in "discussions with higher authority" that approval was likely soon.[38]

Perhaps because the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not expect early action, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC did not comment on the proposed rules for over a month; General Abrams submitted his comments on 11 May and Admiral McCain the following day. Both supported the JCS proposals, but felt they did not go far enough. They objected to the five-day limitation and urged removal of the current prohibition on B-52 strikes in the DMZ, a stipulation not included in the JCS proposals.[39]

General Wheeler submitted the proposal for increased DMZ authority to the Secretary of Defense on 13 May 1969. Following the suggestions of COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, the proposed rules now incorporated authority for B-52 strikes in the DMZ and contained no time restrictions on operations or size limitations on the use of ground forces. Citing his previous requests for augmented authorities in February and March, General Wheeler told the Secretary that the enemy

37. See Ch. 2.

38. (~~PS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6069 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 3 Apr 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 69.

39. The COMUSMACV reply is not found in the JCS files, but it was referenced, discussed, and concurred in by CINCPAC in (~~PS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 120544Z May 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 69.

now had twelve infantry and four artillery regiments in or near the DMZ. Current restrictions handicapped friendly forces in responding to this threat. In addition, it was apparent from the experience of the past six months that the enemy had used the DMZ as an infiltration route and supply base for activities in northern I CTZ and would probably continue to do so. Consequently, General Wheeler considered the situation in the DMZ sufficiently changed from early February to warrant approval of the new request.[40]

The Secretary of Defense presented the Chairman's proposals to Dr. Kissinger the following day. Secretary Laird did not believe that current intelligence or enemy actions justified either ground or B-52 strikes in the DMZ at that time. Suitable targets did not exist or, at least, had not been identified. He did believe, however, that COMUSMACV should have authority to use B-52s against specific targets south of the PMDL (though not, he added, in the period immediately following the President's forthcoming speech[41] on Vietnam).[42]

Dr. Kissinger and the President agreed with the Secretary, and on 16 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the conduct of B-52 strikes on "selected, clearly identified significant enemy targets" in the DMZ south of the PMDL. Normally, 24 hours advance notice to Washington would be required; however, the Chairman was empowered to waive this requirement in cases of fleeting targets constituting an immediate threat to allied forces.[43]

This enlarged authority only partially fulfilled the military requirements for DMZ operations, and both the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to seek modification of the rules. On 18 May 1969, CINCPAC pointed out that B-52 aircraft attacking targets adjacent to the DMZ might on occasion find it necessary to fly over North

40. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-4217-69 to SecDef, 13 May 69, same file.
41. See below, pp. 85-86.
42. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, "Operations in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)," 14 May 69, Encl to (~~TS~~-GP 1) J3M-964-69 to CJCS, 16 May 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 69.
43. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, CJCS 9473 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 16 Mar 69, same file.

Vietnamese territory and requested that they be allowed to do so. Apparently without referring this request to higher authority, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told CINCPAC the following day that the overflight authority could not be granted.[44]

In late June, COMUSMACV asked permission to use artillery and mortars for unobserved suppressive fire against enemy activity and lines of communication in the southern half of the DMZ. General Abrams explained that, during the past six weeks, his forces had been taking increased casualties from enemy fire originating in the DMZ. Current rules allowed US forces to fire into the DMZ only at visually sighted targets and active weapon positions. The enemy took advantage of this situation, fighting close to the DMZ during the day and resupplying his forces through the Zone in relative safety at night. General Abrams realized that ground action would be the most effective means of eliminating enemy artillery from the DMZ, but, in view of the "present political atmosphere," he was asking only for authority to use his artillery and mortars against targets detected by intelligence reports or by electronic means. CINCPAC concurred with COMUSMACV's request, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded it to the Secretary of Defense on 7 July 1969.[45]

The Secretary of Defense disapproved the request on 23 July. Although the enemy continued to violate the DMZ, Mr Laird did not consider the violation as flagrant as before the November bombing halt. Until a more direct threat developed, he wanted to avoid actions that could invite increased enemy action.[46]

While the COMUSMACV request for authority to shell enemy targets in the DMZ was under Washington review, the question of overflight of North Vietnam by IRON HAND (fighter)

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44. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 180300Z May 69, JCS IN 94770; CJCS 9520 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 19 May 69, same file.

45. (TS-GP 3) Msgs, COMUSMACV 8088 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 24 Jun 69; CINCPAC to CJCS, 252358Z Jun 69; same file, Jun 69. (TS-GP 3) CM-4397-69 to SecDef, 7 Jul 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69.

46. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operational Authorities in the Demilitarized Zone South of the Permanent Military Demarcation Line (S)," 23 Jul 69, same file.

aircraft arose. On 23 June 1969, COMUSMACV requested this authority from CINCPAC in order to protect ARC LIGHT operations near the border of North Vietnam. CINCPAC granted the authority three days later with the caveat that such penetrations must be limited to the area and time needed to support the B-52 force.[47]

In Washington, the Director of the Joint Staff thought aporoval of this authority should be obtained from the Secretary of Defense because of the political sensitivity of operations involving NVN territory, as well as previous precedents for sanction of such operations by higher authority. Accordingly, on 14 July 1969, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified the Secretary of Defense of the CINCPAC authorization and requested the Secretary's concurrence. General Wheeler found the CINCPAC action "prudent" and in accord with the rules of engagement issued at the time of the 1 November bombing halt, which permitted commanders the "inherent right" of self-defense for their forces. But the Secretary did not agree, stating that he did not wish to extend such contingency authority at that time, and General Wheeler directed CINCPAC to rescind the authority.[48]

By the end of July 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had obtained only authority for selected ARC LIGHT strikes against established targets in the southern half of the DMZ. They had been unsuccessful in securing approval for either ground action in the DMZ or unobserved firing into the Zone, but they were to continue to press for enlarged authorities in the DMZ in the months ahead. The Secretary of Defense had disapproved most of the JCS requests for more lenient rules, hoping to avoid intensification of the fighting. Concerned with public opinion and knowing that adherents of the anti-war movement in the United States were already becoming restive over the deliberate pace of President Nixon's progress toward ending the war, he wished to avoid fueling their protests.

47. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUCMACV 36920 to CINCPAC, 23 Jun 69; (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 261915Z Jun 69; same file.

48. (S-GP 3) DJSM-1079-69 to CJCS, 10 Jul 69; (S-GP 3) CM-4428-69 to SecDef, 14 Jul 69; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "IRON HAND ARC LIGHT Support (U)," 7 Aug 69; same file. (S-GP 3) Msg, CJCS 9994 to CINCPAC, 13 Aug 69, OCJCS file 091 Vietnam, Aug 69.

The Effects of Casualty Rates on Military Policy

President Nixon entered office conscious that opposition to the Vietnam war had been a factor in preventing his predecessor from seeking another term and fully aware of the importance of retaining public support. One sensitive factor affecting public opinion was the US casualty rate in Vietnam, and the new Administration realized that continuing high casualties would increase pressure for a precipitate settlement of the conflict. Some public and private figures in the United States believed that aggressive US action in Vietnam resulted in high US casualties; they favored curtailment of US offensives in favor of less costly operations.

The question of casualties came up at one of the earliest NSC meetings in the new Administration. In late January, Dr. Kissinger asked General Wheeler for an analysis of the casualties of both sides that would show the effect of actions initiated by friendly forces as compared with those begun by the enemy. General Wheeler passed this request to COMUSMACV, who replied on 2 February, explaining that efforts over the past two years had established how difficult it was to develop a valid basis for such assessments. For instance, the comparison became almost meaningless if it included data from the many standoff attacks initiated by the enemy, in which no troop assault occurred. General Abrams was able to present figures and ratios for a number of engagements, comparable in scope, in which the originator of the action could be clearly identified. Based on these examples, he concluded that the enemy had the ability to influence the level of casualties, both friendly and enemy, by choosing whether to attack or to avoid contact. Whatever the level of activity, however, the enemy had been unable to make any appreciable reduction in the overall casualty ratio, so unfavorable to him. General Abrams believed the ratio of five to one in favor of friendly forces, established during several months of 1968, was "fairly" accurate.[49]

49. (S) Msg, JCS 1204 to COMUSMACV, 28 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 1469 to CJCS, 2 Feb 69, same file, Feb 69. (Indication of the NSC consideration is contained in a handwritten notation on the COMUSMACV msg.)

General Wheeler passed on these statistics to the Secretary of Defense, supplemented with graphs to illustrate trends in overall casualties since 1965. He believed they demonstrated that in any action involving troop contact (whether initiated by friendly or by enemy forces), superior allied firepower resulted in very high casualties for the enemy. In the enemy's standoff attacks by fire, the enemy had time to remove many of his casualties before a body count could be made, so that the ratio appeared less unfavorable to him. General Wheeler concluded that, while ratios varied for specific operations, the overall trend continued to run in favor of friendly forces.[50]

In late March, General Abrams submitted to General Wheeler "a deeper analysis" of the casualty ratio problem. His principal conclusion was that "the actions with most favorable results, from a standpoint of casualties, are those initiated by friendly forces." General Abrams found that both friendly and enemy forces suffered fewer losses when they attacked than when they stood on the defensive. For example, during two periods of activity in February and March 1969, enemy-to-friendly "kill ratios" had amounted to 22.0:1 and 15.5:1 in actions initiated by the allies, compared with only 1.4:1 and 2.8:1 when the enemy attacked. Only harassment, terrorism, and attacks-by-fire gave the enemy consistently favorable casualty ratios.[51]

General Abrams' analysis arrived in Washington at a time when the casualty issue was particularly sensitive. There had been growing public speculation that expanded US operations were causing the high US losses. Mr. W. Averell Harriman, the former chief US negotiator at the Paris talks, contended that the enmy post-Tet offensive had been preceded by a sharp increase in US ground activity. On 23 March 1969, the New York Times charged that US forces had stepped up ground patrols and engagements following the 1 November 1968 bombing halt, thus bringing about increased fatalities on both sides during the four-month lull preceding the post-Tet offensive. At the end of March, total US combat deaths in Vietnam had reached 33,641, surpassing the figure for the Korean War.[52]

50. (S) CM-3945-69 to SecDef, 17 Feb 69, same file.
51. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 3806 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 25 Mar 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 69.
52. Time, 11 Apr 69, 18. NY Times, 23 Mar 69, 1.

By late March, many were growing impatient with President Nixon's lack of progress in ending the war. The leaders of the anti-war movement had been willing to give the new President time to take effective control, but after two months it was apparent to them that he was not meeting their demands for an immediate US withdrawal from Southeast Asia. As a consequence, they began preparations for renewed agitation against the war, and the first public demonstrations since President Nixon took office occurred on 5 April. In marches in cities across the country, including New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, demonstrators demanded an end to the war and the return of US troops from Vietnam.[53]

The increasing public concern over US casualties, as well as a belief by some within the Administration that US combat deaths might be reduced by a lowering of US effort in Vietnam, generated considerable pressure for a change in strategy. General Wheeler gave an indication of the pressure in a message to COMUSMACV on 3 April 1969:

> The subject of US casualties is being thrown at me at every juncture: in the press, by the Secretary of Defense, at the White House and on the Hill. I am concerned that decisions could be made in response to strong pressure inside and on the Administration to seek a settlement of the war which could be detrimental to our objectives or to adopt a defensive strategy in South Vietnam.

The situation was made worse by the fact that figures for the period 1 February through 29 March ostensibly showed US casualties to be higher than those of the RVNAF. General Wheeler did not believe that these figures represented the actual situation, but rather were the result of slow and faulty RVNAF reporting. He did not want COMUSMACV to limit his operations, but he did ask General Abrams to explore the matter of casualty reporting with the RVNAF Joint General Staff.[54]

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53. NY Times, 6 Apr 69, p. 1.

54. (S) Msg, CJCS 4092 to COMUSMACV, 3 Apr 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 69. COMUSMACV did bring the matter to the attention of the South Vietnamese, and an improved RVNAF reporting system was adopted. As a result, by early June 1969, casualty reports showed RVNAF losses much above those of the United States. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 7579 to CJCS, 14 Jun 69, same file, Jun 69.

To counterbalance the growing demand on the Administration for adoption of "a purely defensive posture" as a way to reduce US casualties in South Vietnam, General Wheeler decided to present his views to the Secretary of Defense. On 28 March 1969, he dispatched to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV a draft of the memorandum he proposed to use. After considering the replies of the two commanders, the Chairman circulated the draft to his colleagues, seeking united support for its presentation as an expression of JCS views. The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on 14 April 1969.[55]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff firmly opposed any change in strategy in Vietnam. They repeated COMUSMACV's conviction that attacks initiated by friendly forces resulted in lower casualties for the United States than those launched by the enemy. They observed that harassment, terrorism, and attacks-by-fire were the only actions consistently giving the enemy a favorable casualty ratio. Therefore adoption of defensive posture by US forces would only provide the enemy easy targets for his most effective type of action and would forfeit the advantages of superior mobility and firepower--advantages that could best be exploited by exercise of the initiative. To surrender the initiative now, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, would repeat the tragedy of the French forces in Indochina, who, having abandoned the offensive, were:

> strangled in their bunkers by an ill-fed, ill-equipped force which, armed with initiative and freedom of action, killed and captured 15 percent of the French Army in Indo-China--and broke the spirit of the French forces in the field and the Government of France at home.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also thought that a defensive strategy would harm the morale of both US and RVNAF troops.

They pointed out to the Secretary that enemy troops and munitions coming from Laos and Cambodia were largely responsible for current US and RVNAF casualties. "How long

55. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 3805 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 28 Mar 69, same file, Mar 69. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-4063-69 to Service Chiefs, 4 Apr 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-224-69 to SecDef, 14 Apr 69; JMF 911/175 (11 Apr 69).

we must continue to sustain . . . casualties from the enemy's unimpeded use of these sanctuaries," they said, "involves questions of significant international and national importance." They and the field commanders all believed destruction of such areas would reduce friendly losses and "go far toward making a US force reduction feasible."

It was the professional judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, fully supported by CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and their commanders, "that to change the pattern of our operations in South Vietnam from offensive to defensive would increase, rather than decrease, casualties," jeopardizing US objectives in Vietnam. The importance that the Joint Chiefs of Staff attached to this matter was evident in the fact that they requested the Secretary of Defense to forward their memorandum to the President.[56]

There is no evidence of a formal action by the Secretary of Defense forwarding the memorandum to the White House. At his 18 April news conference, however, the President was asked about casualties and his reply indicated a familiarity with the JCS position. The President said that he had studied the question to determine whether US or enemy action increased friendly losses. What he found was that US casualties increased substantially during enemy attacks. He added that he had not and did not intend to order any reduction in US action.[57]

Although the lull in combat operations in April brought reduced US casualties in South Vietnam, public dissatisfaction over the lack of measurable progress in ending the war continued. In an attempt to enlist public opinion in support of more positive goals, President Nixon addressed the nation on 14 May 1969. After noting the intensive review by his Administration of "every aspect" of the Vietnam policy, he turned to the US objective in Vietnam. The United States would not withdraw unilaterally from Vietnam nor accept a settlement in Paris amounting to "a disguised American defeat." Then, in what amounted to a subtle change in US policy, the President discussed what was acceptable. The United States had ruled out "attempting to impose a

56. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-224-69 to SecDef, 14 Apr 69, same file.
57. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, p. 300.

purely military solution on the battlefield . . . . What we want is very little, but very fundamental. We seek the opportunity for the South Vietnamese people to determine their own political future without outside interference." In elaboration, the President said that the United States sought no bases or military ties in Vietnam.

Although the President did not explicitly so state, it was clear from his remarks that policy no longer demanded a democratic government in South Vietnam or the defeat of the Communist insurgency. What the President did say was that the United States would accept any government in South Vietnam resulting from the "free choice of the South Vietnamese people themselves." The United States had no intention, President Nixon continued, of imposing any form of government on South Vietnam, nor would it be a party to such coercion. In addition, the United States did not object to reunification, if that was the "free choice of the Vietnamese people." The President then went on to spell out a proposal for a negotiated settlement based on mutual withdrawal.[58]

The President's speech failed to allay dissatisfaction with the war. The following day, six Democratic Congressmen introduced a resolution that asked the President to withdraw 100,000 US troops unconditionally and to call for a cease-fire. A long-time opponent of US involvement, Senator Frank Church, expressed bitter disappointment that the Nixon plan for ending the war was "the same as the Johnson plan."[59]

As described earlier in this chapter, the battle for Hamburger Hill in late May again raised the question of strategy and casualties and unleashed a torrent of criticism against military operations in South Vietnam. Mr. W. Averell Harriman disputed the Administration's justification that US forces had to keep the enemy off balance and spoil his attacks before they were launched. He argued that US actions were responsible for continued enemy activity. If the United States would take the lead in scaling down the war, he said, the enemy would follow suit.[60]

58. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 369-375. See Ch. 12 for a discussion of the President's mutual withdrawal proposal.
59. NY Times, 16 May 69, 9.
60. Ibid., 1 Jun 69, IV 1.

The Hamburger Hill battle also raised questions in the mind of Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The battle, together with the sharp increase in US casualties and recent statements by "some United States officials" on military strategy, caused the Senator to question whether US military action was consistent with overall US objectives. In order to assist his Committee in evaluating developments in Vietnam, Senator Fulbright asked the Secretary of Defense on 24 May 1969 for the precise text of the order for the conduct of operations in Vietnam prior to the bombing halt and subsequent changes including the order currently in force.[61]

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, G. Warren Nutter, asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide an answer for the Senator, since the information desired seemed to be "primarily of a military command nature." General Wheeler replied on 10 June that the broad guidance for military operations in Vietnam had not changed either before or after the November bombing halt. The objectives were to make North Vietnamese support of the Viet Cong as costly as possible, to defeat the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam and force withdrawal of the North Vietnamese forces from the south, and to extend the Republic of Vietnam's control over all of South Vietnam. The language supplied by General Wheeler was taken directly from the CINCPAC mission statement in the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan for FY 1970 (JSCP-70), issued in late December 1968.[62]

The Secretary of Defense couched his reply to Senator Fulbright on 26 June in more careful language than that suggested by General Wheeler. He told the Senator that US objectives in Vietnam had not changed. In broad terms, COMUSMACV's mission, both before and after 1 November 1968, was to assist the Government of Vietnam and its armed forces in defeating externally directed and supported aggression and to attain "a stable and independent noncommunist government." The conduct of the war, Secretary

61. (U) Ltr, Senator J. William Fulbright to SecDef, 24 May 69, Att to (TS-GP 1) JCS 2472/496, 27 Jun 69, JMF 911/079 (CY 69).

62. (U) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Request for Information by Sen. Fulbright," 3 Jun 69; (TS-GP 3) CM-4312-69 to ASD(ISA), 10 Jun 69; Atts to JCS 2472/496, 27 Jun 69; same file. For JSCP-70 see (TS-GP 3) SM-827-69 to Distribution list, 31 Dec 68 (derived from JCS 1844/507), JMF 510 (7 Dec 68) sec 2A.

Laird continued, consisted of a multitude of day-to-day decisions, "requiring that military commanders be vested with the authority as well as responsibility to accomplish the mission in accordance with national policy directives."

The Secretary also explained to Senator Fulbright why a defensive strategy in Vietnam was unrealistic. Intelligence revealed that enemy plans continued to concentrate on inflicting US casualties. To adopt a defensive posture, withdrawing into fixed cantonments, the Secretary said, would only make it easier for the enemy to conduct mortar, rocket, and artillery attacks against US forces. Commanders in the field must have "the latitude to find, fix, and destroy enemy positions."

In addition, Secretary Laird furnished Senator Fulbright detailed figures on US and RVNAF troop strengths, ground and air operations, and casualties. These statistics documented the expansion of the ARVN and the cutback of US air support (as measured in numbers of sorties, though with no decrease in tonnage of munitions expended.)[63]

Combat action in Vietnam entered another lull following the 5-6 June enemy high point, and US casualties again dropped. This, combined with the presidential announcement on 8 June[64] of the first US troop withdrawals from Vietnam, tended to lessen the public clamor for definite action to end the war.

But the President's withdrawal announcement did not satisfy all the critics. Former Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford, in an article in Foreign Affairs appearing in mid-June, called for larger and faster troop withdrawals than those indicated by President Nixon.[65] Mr. Clifford also supported the Harriman thesis--if the United States reduced its military action in South Vietnam, the enemy would do likewise. He suggested that, concurrently with troop withdrawals, the United States order its commanders to discontinue applying "maximum military pressure"

63. (TS-GP 1) Ltr, SecDef to Senator J. William Fulbright, 26 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/496, 27 Jun 69, JMF 911/079 (CY 69).

64. See Ch. 4.

65. For a discussion of the Clifford proposal on withdrawal see Ch. 4, p. 114.

on the enemy and seek instead to lower the level of fighting. The public statements of US officials, Mr. Clifford asserted, showed that there had been no change in the policy of "maximum military effort." He concluded that the result had been "a continuation of the high level of American casualties, without any discernible impact on the peace negotiations in Paris."[66]

At a news conference on 19 June 1969, a reporter referred to the Clifford article and asked President Nixon if he intended to instruct US commanders in Vietnam to lower the military pressure. In reply, the President repeated his statement that US casualties were in direct ratio to the level of enemy attacks. "We have not escalated our attacks. We have only responded to what the enemy has done." It took two to reduce the level of fighting, the President observed, suggesting that, if the enemy followed the US example of withdrawing one-tenth of its forces, a reduction in the level of fighting would occur. As for orders to military commanders, Mr. Nixon stated that General Abrams was expected to conduct the war with a minimum of American casualties, and the President believed he was carrying out that order "with great effectiveness."[67]

The decline in enemy action in South Vietnam, which followed the early June high point, continued into July, and the low level of hostile action became the basis for new demands that US operations be scaled down. Secretary of State William Rogers mentioned the decrease in enemy attacks and infiltration at a press conference on 2 July and was immediately and aggressively questioned on whether or not these developments would bring a change in orders to US forces to relax the pressure on the enemy. Later the same day, Senator George McGovern spoke on the Senate floor, charging that the Administration's policy of maximum pressure on the enemy obstructed the Paris talks. On 5 July, Mr. Harriman again urged the United States to seize "the opportunity of a new lull" in the war to arrange a mutual reduction in forces. Believing that previous opportunities had been missed, he added: "I don't think we'll make much

66. Clark M. Clifford, "A Vietnam Reappraisal," Foreign Affairs, Jul 69, pp. 601-622.
67. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 471-472.

progress on a political solution until we find a way to reduce the fighting and violence."[68]

A Review of the US Mission and Strategy in Vietnam

The Secretary of Defense also had reservations about the mission of US forces in South Vietnam and the resulting military operations, and on 2 July 1969, he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he considered it desirable to review military strategy in Vietnam. In recent weeks the Secretary had been impressed by a number of factors affecting the war: the 22 June speech by General Giap stressing conservation of force and protracted war; the lull in the war and, particularly, the decline in enemy infiltration as described in a recent estimate by COMUSMACV; the progress in strengthening the RVNAF; and the stringent US budgetary guidelines, coupled with the unlikelihood of supplemental appropriations, which required reductions in Defense activities. He also mentioned the President's 14 May speech, which had ruled out both a military solution in Vietnam and a US commitment to insure any particular political outcome there, as well as the President's hope, expressed at his 19 June news conference, that the United States could withdraw 100,000 troops from Vietnam in 1969. These developments, the Secretary found, confronted the United States with a series of "unique and important trends" in the war and made mandatory "a broad and deep reassessment of our military strategy and the employment of our land, sea, and air forces in Southeast Asia." He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare such a reassessment.[69]

On the evening of 7 July the President met with his key advisers to review Vietnam policy. The available record does not indicate the attendance, but General Wheeler, who was present, said that it was "small" and at the "highest level" and that the discussion was thorough and wide-ranging. The political climate was considered at some length, and General Wheeler later told CINCPAC and COMUSMACV that

68. Secretary Rogers' News Conference, 2 Jul 69, State Dept Bulletin, 21 Jul 69, pp. 41-49. NY Times, 6 Jul 69, 3; 7 Jul 69, 2.

69. (JCS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Military Strategy in Southeast Asia," 2 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2339/302, 3 Jul 69, JMF 907/520 (2 Jul 69).

"the political situation here is not good." The President considered that public opinion would hold "until about October," when some further action on his part would be required.

Attention then turned to the lull. Some of the participants, not including General Wheeler, believed that if the present low level of enemy activity continued, a decision on further US troop withdrawals, with suitable announcement, could and should be accelerated.[70] As an indication of the pressure on the President, General Wheeler reported to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV that "people in opposition here" were "very vociferous" in support of the Harriman thesis. They argued that the enemy was trying to reduce the level of combat, but that the United States, constantly increasing the pressure, would not cooperate. Hence the continuing casualties were the fault of the United States.

As a consequence of this discussion, General Wheeler was instructed to determine if COMUSMACV's directive could be rephrased. The object was to rewrite the mission statement in a manner that would not change the nature of the operations, but would indicate that the objective was different. General Wheeler had not agreed that the directive should be modified. He explained to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC that there was no intention to change the pattern of operations in Vietnam, which must still allow for maximum pressure on the enemy. What was involved, he said, was "semantics," adding: "I think we will come up with words having to do with Vietnamization, protection of population, and GVN stability." General Wheeler stressed the extreme sensitivity of this matter. "Obviously, this is an area wherein your public affairs people would have to be most discreet," he told COMUSMACV and CINCPAC.[71]

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70. For coverage of the discussion of troop withdrawal at this July meeting, see Ch. 4, pp. 114-115.

71. (TS) Msg, CJCS 8357 to Dep COMUSMACV and C/S PACOM, 9 Jul 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69. Because General Abrams and Admiral McCain happened to be absent from their headquarters at that time, General Wheeler sent the message to their subordinates with instructions to relay it "under secure conditions."

The directive in question was part of the overall mission assigned CINCPAC in JSCP-70, issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 31 December 1968. It provided for assistance to the Republic of Vietnam and its armed forces "to defeat the externally directed and supported communist subversion and aggression" and to attain "a stable and independent noncommunist government" there. In addition, the JSCP assigned the following subordinate undertakings:

> (1) make as difficult and costly as possible the continued support of the Viet Cong by North Vietnam, and cause North Vietnam to cease its direction of the Viet Cong insurgency . . . ;
> (2) defeat the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Armed Forces in South Vietnam and force withdrawal of the North Vietnamese Armed Forces;
> (3) extend Government of Vietnam dominion, direction, and control over all of South Vietnam;
> (4) deter CPR intervention and defeat such intervention if it occurred.[72]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed this mission statement at a meeting on 14 July. On the same day, General Wheeler talked with Secretary Laird, who asked him to visit Vietnam to assess the current situation and consult with the field commanders on military strategy.[73]

General Wheeler arrived in Vietnam on 16 July 1969 and conferred with both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV. Subsequently, he despatched a summary of this discussion to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. It had been agreed that a change in the mission statement would entail "substantial dangers." There was the matter of credibility, not only for COMUSMACV, but also for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and even the President. Any change in the mission statement might well create the impression that the Government was

72. (~~TS~~-GP 3) SM-827-68 to Distribution List, 31 Dec 68 (derived from JCS 1844/507), JMF 510 (7 Dec 68).

73. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Ann F to JCSM-443-69 to SecDef, 18 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2339/306, 29 Jul 69, JMF 911/305 (28 Jul 69) refers to draft papers considered by the JCS on 14 Jul 69 on the subject of an updated mission statement for US forces in Southeast Asia. (~~TS~~) CM-441-69 to SecDef, 21 Jun 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69.

misleading the public, since the field commanders would find it "difficult, if not impossible," to identify for newsmen any resulting changes in operations. In addition, any mission change would bring serious problems with the Republic of Vietnam and the governments of the other troop-contributing countries, all of whom might interpret it as the beginning of an early, wholesale US withdrawal. Such a revision could also weaken the morale of both US and RVNAF troops while at the same time encouraging the enemy to persist in his struggle.

With reference to the US casualty rate, General Wheeler and the US commanders he consulted thought a change in the mission could have the opposite effect of the one expected. The Chairman reported General Abrams' conviction that he must continue to conduct "mobile, offensive-type operations," since to do otherwise would give the enemy the initiative, "with an inevitable rise in US casualties" and a setback in the pacification process. "We would expect the press to watch the casualty figures very closely and to interpret any increase, or indeed any lack of diminution, as evidence that General Abrams is not carrying out the instructions of higher authority." Finally, it seemed doubtful that the contemplated change in the mission statement would be sufficient to further the negotiations in Paris or satisfy the critics in the United States.[74]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also received separate views from General Abrams, who saw no grounds for a revolutionary change in either US strategy or tactics in Vietnam. Pressure was put on the enemy wherever and whenever he was found, using the tactics best suited to the situation. "To do less would only increase the intensity and duration of his recurring offensives," raising friendly casualties and disrupting pacification.[75]

On 18 July 1969, while General Wheeler was still in Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary

74. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS to JCS, n.d. [ca. 17 Jul 69]. The original msg is not available in the JCS files, but a copy was forwarded to SecDef as Ann F to JCSM-443-69, 18 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2339/306, 29 Jul 69, JMF 911/305 (28 Jul 69).

75. (~~TS~~) "General Abrams' Views on Strategy and Tactics," Ann E to JCSM-443-69 to SecDef, 18 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2339/306, 29 Jul 69, same file.

of Defense their views on the subject. Passing on to the Secretary the arguments set forth by General Wheeler, they stressed the inherent danger in revising COMUSMACV's mission and urged that the current statement be retained. But, recognizing the "political pressures" involved, they submitted two alternatives. The first made no change in the "mission" proper, but amended the related "undertakings" to stress improvement of the RVNAF and transfer of the combat effort to the South Vietnamese. The second restated the objectives in South Vietnam in a less sweeping way, making clear that the purpose of the war was merely to assist the Republic of Vietnam; it made no reference to defeat of Communist aggression or establishment of a non-communist government. This latter alternative assumed a change in political goals, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that it be rejected. If a change in the mission was required, they preferred adoption of their first alternative.[76]

General Wheeler returned from Vietnam on 20 July. Just prior to his departure from Saigon, he told reporters that he saw no evidence of any enemy peace signal in the month-long lull in enemy combat activity. The US battlefield tactic of relentlessly pursuing enemy forces remained unchanged, he declared, adding that he approved that style of fighting.[77]

On 21 July, General Wheeler reported to the Secretary of Defense on his trip. After reviewing the current military scene, which he described as better than at any time since he began visiting Vietnam, he discussed military strategy. He opposed any change in COMUSMACV's concept of operations and supported the JCS position forwarded to the Secretary on 18 July. The pattern of operations, he pointed out, had in fact already changed, in response to the other side's shifting tactics. The enemy was holding most of his larger formations in remote sanctuaries in South Vietnam or just across the borders, while smaller guerrilla units carried out attacks by fire, ambushes, or terrorist acts. Major allied forces were accordingly seeking to maintain contact with the larger enemy elements and disrupt their movements, leaving the South Vietnamese troops to cope with the small

76. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-443-69 to SecDef, 18 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2339/307, 29 Jul 69, JMF 911/305 (28 Jul 69).
77. NY Times, 22 Jul 69, 1.

enemy units still active in the country. Considering these changes, together with the misunderstanding arising from references to "maximum pressure on the enemy" and the erroneous belief that mobile operations cost more casualties than static defense, General Wheeler had suggested that COMUSMACV discontinue use of the phrases "search and destroy" and "reconnaissance in force." General Abrams had agreed, and General Wheeler anticipated the use of a phrase such as "pre-emptive operations" or words to that effect.

General Wheeler concluded with praise for the concept being followed by General Abrams. The field commander had "consistently" frustrated enemy objectives and had "incurred the lowest level of casualties consistent with achieving our minimum stated objectives in Southeast Asia." To adopt tactics allowing the enemy to move men and supplies at will, General Wheeler said, would only increase friendly casualties and permit renewed enemy attacks against South Vietnamese cities.[78]

On the following afternoon, 22 July, General Wheeler and the Secretary of Defense discussed COMUSMACV's mission statement. Mr. Laird maintained that there had been a change in political goals as evidenced by the statement in the President's 14 May speech that the United States did not seek a military victory in South Vietnam. He believed that the guidance in the JSCP was not in accord with the President's speech. The political objective set forth there--the attainment of an independent noncommunist government in South Vietnam--was contrary to offers by both President Nixon and President Thieu to accept the result of a free election in South Vietnam. General Wheeler countered that he saw no conflict. Surely the United States did not desire a Communist government in South Vietnam, and military superiority would be required to achieve even the minimum US objectives. The Secretary assured him that there was no desire or intent to change the pattern of operations in South Vietnam, which both he and the President felt were "being carried out in the most efficient and effective manner" and in a fashion that kept casualties to a minimum.

The Secretary continued that he could find no basis for the argument that a change in the mission statement would

78. (TS) CM-4441-69 to SecDef, 21 Jul 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69.

jeopardize COMUSMACV's credibility. If such a problem arose--and he discounted the possibility--the onus would be on US political leaders rather than the military commander. General Wheeler, not entirely convinced, foresaw problems arising when inquisitive newspaper reporters in South Vietnam probed to find out the practical effects of the change in COMUSMACV's instructions. The Secretary also indicated that he favored the second alternative mission statement recently proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but added that a decision could await the President's return from his trip to Asia and Europe in early August.[79]

Meantime, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were preparing their reassessment of strategy for Southeast Asia that the Secretary of Defense had requested on 2 July. After obtaining the comments of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, they submitted their reassessment to the Secretary of Defense on 26 July 1969. The Joint Chiefs of Staff examined US military strategy in Southeast Asia as a whole and specifically in South Vietnam. They concluded that the enemy's fundamental objective had not changed. He sought to extend his influence, unifying all of Vietnam under Communist control. To achieve this objective, the enemy had to defeat US forces or cause them to withdraw. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also considered recent indications of possible changes in US political goals in Vietnam, including the President's 14 May speech, but considered them to be "not of such a nature as to require any change in US military strategy . . . ." In sum, neither side had changed its objectives, and the present US military strategy thus remained valid. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did note that the enemy had reduced his level of activity, but they doubted that this change was permanent. Consequently, they saw no reason to revise the mission of US forces in South Vietnam.[80]

Meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 28 July 1969, Secretary Laird gave them his decision, confirming it in a memorandum of the same date to General Wheeler. The mission derived from JSCP-70 must be revised, the Secretary said, to conform with recent presidential statements and to reflect COMUSMACV's current tactics. Inverting an argument

79. (TS) Msg, CJCS 9134 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 23 Jul 69, same file.

80. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3957 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 3 Jul 69. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2339/302-1, 23 Jul 69; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-459-69 to SecDef, 26 Jul 69, Encl to JCS 2339/302-1, 23 Jul 69; JMF 907/520 (2 Jul 69).

put forth earlier by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary said that the failure to make such a change might injure the credibility of both the President and General Abrams. He presented the Joint Chiefs of Staff a draft statement of mission that he believed more adequately met "current and anticipated" conditions in Vietnam. This draft resembled the second and less-favored alternative submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 18 July. It omitted the commitment to a noncommunist government, stating the US objective as assistance to the South Vietnamese in preserving the opportunity to decide their own political future free of outside interference.[81]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were still not convinced that a change in the mission statement was needed, and they told the Secretary on 30 July that his draft was "suitable" only if the President insisted on a change. They again invited attention to a possible loss of credibility if the change was not accompanied by a substantial difference in the pattern of operations.[82]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not dissuade Secretary Laird. On 7 August he submitted a copy of the current statement, together with his updated draft, to President Nixon. He explained that the revision more accurately reflected presidential guidance as well as what US forces in Southeast Asia were actually doing. In an apparent attempt to meet the JCS concern over loss of credibility, Mr. Laird told the President that the Department of Defense would make no public announcement of the change, treating it instead "in a low-key manner."[83]

81. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Statement of Mission of U.S. Forces in Southeast Asia," 28 Jul 69, Encl to JCS 2339/306, 29 Jul 69, JMF 911/305 (28 Jul 69). In (TS-GP 1) JCSM-474-69 to SecDef, 30 Jul 69, Encl to JCS 2339/306-1, 30 Jul 69, same file, the JCS referred to their discussion with SecDef on 28 Jul 69 concerning the mission statement.

82. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-474-69 to SecDef, 30 Jul 69, Encl to JCS 2339/306-1, 30 Jul 69, same file.

83. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Statement of Mission of U.S. Forces in Southeast Asia," 7 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2339/306-2, 8 Aug 69, same file.

After a discussion with the President and Dr. Kissinger, the Secretary of Defense on 15 August directed the use of the following mission statement, which was nearly identical to the draft he had presented to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 28 July:

> The objective is to allow the people of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) to determine their future without outside interference. To that end, and as directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV should assist the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) to take over an increasing share of combat operations. The tactical goal of the combat operations is to defeat the subverion and aggression which is intended to deny self-determination to the RVN people. The overall mission encompasses the following undertakings:
>
> (a) Provide maximum assistance in developing, training, and equipping the RVNAF as rapidly as possible.
>
> (b) Continue military support for accelerated pacification, civic action and security programs.
>
> (c) Conduct military operations designed to accelerate improvement in the RVNAF and to continue to provide security for US forces.
>
> (d) Conduct military operations to reduce the flow of materiel and manpower support for enemy forces in SVN.
>
> (e) Maintain plans for a comprehensive air and naval campaign in Vietnam.

In accordance with what he had told the President, the Secretary of Defense said that there would be no public announcement of the revised statement, and he directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to handle the matter "as low-key as possible." Subsequently, on 21 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed the new statement to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV. Two weeks later, on 5 September, they issued a change to JSCP-70 to bring it into conformance.[84]

84. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Statement of Mission of United States Forces in Southeast Asia," 15 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2339/306-3, 18 Aug 69; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7303 to CINCPAC AND COMUSMACV, 21 Aug 69; JMF 911/305 (28 Jul 69). (TS-GP 3) Dec On JCS 1844/507-1, 5 Sep 69, JMF 510 (7 Dec 68) sec 2.

In restating the mission of US forces, the Administration was seeking only to reflect its revised political goals, not to alter in any way the pattern of combat operations. Nevertheless, the new statement came at a time when other actions were having the effect of lowering the level of US effort in Vietnam. Budget considerations had brought reductions in both B-52 sorties and tactical air squadrons. Additionally, the resources available to the field commanders were further limited with the beginning in July 1969 of the long and carefully planned US troops withdrawals from Vietnam.

Chapter 4

REDUCTION OF UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT

Initial Consideration

The Nixon Administration entered office committed to finding a solution for the vital question of Vietnam. To maintain public support, as well as achieve budgetary savings needed to finance promised domestic programs, it was essential for the new Administration to end or reduce substantially the US involvement in Vietnam. Ideally, President Nixon hoped to achieve a negotiated settlement and the mutual withdrawal of all outside troops from South Vietnam. Failing this, there was the option of orderly, progressive withdrawal, to be accomplished by replacing US forces with South Vietnamese troops. While the new Administration proceeded with efforts toward a negotiated mutual withdrawal,[1] President Nixon and his advisers also began consideration of unilateral US force reductions should the negotiations prove unproductive.

The substitution of RVN forces for US combat troops in Vietnam was not a new idea. When President Johnson launched the RVNAF improvement and modernization program in mid-1968, it was with the intent that the RVNAF would eventually assume all of the combat role in South Vietnam. President Thieu, in a New Year's address on 31 December 1968, had also raised such a prospect, and on 15 January the Republic of Vietnam approached Ambassador Bunker in Saigon concerning early consideration of the RVNAF "relieving" a limited number of US and allied forces during 1969. Two days later General Abrams discussed this matter with President Thieu. If the momentum of pacification continued, and if the planned acceleration of RVNAF improvement took place, it was only logical, the US commander told the South Vietnamese President, to remove some US combat units from South Vietnam.[2]

1. See Ch. 12.

2. NY Times, 1 Jan 69, 4. (S) Msg, Saigon 845 to State, 15 Jan 69, OCJCS File HARVAN-DOUBLE PLUS. (S-GP 2) Msg, COMUSMACV 766 to CJCS, 17 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

In Washington, the possible replacement of US troops in Vietnam was considered at a meeting of the National Security Council on 25 January. At that meeting President Nixon approved continuation of the US-RVN discussions on such a possibility, but with the stipulation that the talks be on a "strictly close-hold, need-to-know basis." The President and his advisers took up this question again in a February NSC meeting. They agreed that the United States should "envisage" the replacement of US troops with Vietnamese forces as soon as possible. But, confronted at this time with the threat of an enemy offensive similar to the one of the previous year, the new Administration chose to defer action on the actual replacement until after the Secretary of Defense visited Vietnam the following month.[3]

As related in Chapter 1, Secretary Laird traveled to South Vietnam in early March. One of his actions while observing the situation there was to tell both the US military commanders and the officials of the Republic of Vietnam that the new Administration in Washington wanted the RVNAF to assume a greater share of the fighting. Assured by both General Abrams and President Thieu that the RVNAF was, indeed, improving, the Secretary returned home encouraged in the belief that the United States could prepare to replace US combat troops with RVNAF units. Accordingly, he recommended to the President that the United States draw up plans for redeployment of 50,000 to 70,000 troops from South Vietnam in 1969 and develop further plans for continuing replacement of US forces in the following years.[4]

In accord with the Secretary's recommendations, General Abrams set his staff the task of planning a tentative US force reduction of two divisions, or about 50,000 men,

3. (TS) Msgs, CJCS 1081 and 1184 to Actg CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 24 and 28 Jan 69, same file. (U) Background Briefing for the Press by Ron Ziegler and Dr. Henry Kissinger, Laguna Beach, Calif., 9 Jun 69, OCJCS File 337 Midway Conference, Jun 69.

4. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, 5-12 March 1969," 15 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS Trip to SEA, Mar 69. (S) Memo of Conv, SecDef et al., with Pres Nguyen Van Thieu et al., 8 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/463, 8 Apr 69, JMF 911/075 (CY 69).

during the latter half of 1969. General Wheeler approved the field commander's action, telling him on 24 March, "I am delighted that your thinking is proceeding along these lines." Subsequently, General Wheeler established a "small and select" group within the Joint Staff to give detailed consideration to the matter of unilateral US withdrawals. "We would be less than realistic," he told the Director of the Joint Staff, "if we failed to recognize the internal pressures toward withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam, without regard to the progress in the negotiations."[5]

At a 28 March NSC meeting the President and his advisers, including General Wheeler and General Goodpaster, the Deputy COMUSMACV, again considered the question of Vietnam.[6] With regard to the withdrawal of US forces, it was the consensus that there had been sufficient improvement in the RVNAF to justify initiation of planning for the redeployment of some US forces, although the actual decision would be delayed until mid-year. It was in the discussions at this meeting that the term "Vietnamization" was coined to describe the replacement of US troops with RVNAF forces. Four days later, on 1 April 1969, President Nixon promulgated the decisions of the 28 March meeting in National Security Decision Memorandum No. 9. Among other things, he directed the development of a "specific plan timetable" for Vietnamization of the war, adding that an appropriate directive would be forthcoming.[7]

5. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to GEN Goodpaster (at San Clemente), 231709Z Mar 69; (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 3596 to COMUSMACV, 24 Mar 69; (~~TS~~) CM-4050-69 to DJS, 28 Mar 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 69. (The wording of CM-4050-69 indicates that it was prepared prior to the 28 Mar 69 NSC meeting, where the consensus was reached that planning for withdrawal of US forces should begin.)

6. See Ch. 1, pp. 17-19 for a discussion of the other Vietnam issues reviewed.

7. (~~TS~~) Longhand notes by CJCS taken at 28 Mar 69 NSC Mtg on back of pages of TP for SecDef and CJCS (NSC Mtg 28 Mar), "Revised Summary of Responses to NSSM 1: The Situation in Vietnam," n.d., JMF 077 (21 Mar 69) (NSC Review Group Mtg, 28 Mar 69). (~~TS~~-GP 1) NSDM 9, 1 Apr 70, Att to JCS 2472/459, 2 Apr 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1.

NSSM 36 Planning

The directive, NSSM 36, was issued on 10 April 1969 by Dr. Henry Kissinger. Under its terms the Secretary of Defense was given responsibility for the overall planning. He would coordinate with the Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence. The planning would cover all aspects of US military, paramilitary, and civilian involvement in Vietnam, including combat and combat-support forces, advisory personnel, and all types of equipment. It would be based on the following assumptions: a starting date of 1 July 1969; continuation of current NVN and VC force levels; use of current projections of RVNAF force levels; continuation of the current level of allied military effort, except for de-escalation resulting from phased withdrawals of US and other third-country forces that were not fully compensated for by the South Vietnamese; and assignment of the highest national priorities to equipping and training of the South Vietnamese forces.

Based on these assumptions, the Secretary of Defense was to draw up timetables for the transfer of the US combat role to the Republic of Vietnam and the restriction of the US effort to combat-support and advisory missions, with alternative completion dates of 31 December 1970 (18 months), 30 June 1971 (24 months), 31 December 1971 (30 months), and 31 December 1972 (42 months). Dr. Kissinger requested that each alternative schedule include any possible degradation in combat capability and treat budget and balance-of-payments implications. The President wanted by 1 June 1969 an initial overall report, as well as recommended alternatives for the first six months (1 July-31 December 1969), and a complete report by 1 September 1969. Within the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff received responsibility for preparation of the plan, and they assigned it to the Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5) of the Joint Staff.[8]

Although there was neither official announcement nor any comment by US Government officials that the United States was considering a troop reduction in Vietnam, there was growing public speculation over such a possibility

8. (~~TS~~ GP 1) NSSM 36, 10 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/467, 11 Apr 69; JCS 2472/467-2, 24 Aug 69; JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1.

throughout the late winter and spring. In response to a statement by President Thieu that the RVNAF was capable of relieving a "sizable number" of US troops, President Nixon told a press conference on 6 February 1969 that, as his field commanders determined the readiness of South Vietnamese forces to assume "a greater portion of the responsibility for the defense of their own territory," US forces would be brought home. He quickly added that he had no such announcement to make at that time, but that reduction of forces was "high on the agenda of priorities."[9]

By mid-March speculation had become so prevalent that the President apparently felt called upon to dampen it. On 14 March he publicly stated that there was "no prospect for a reduction of American forces in the foreseeable future." He listed three factors that had to be considered and that would have to develop in a way that yielded a more favorable "combination of circumstances" before a decision to reduce the troop commitment could be made--the ability of the South Vietnamese to handle their own defenses, the level of hostilities imposed by the enemy, and the progress of the Paris talks. A month later, at his press conference on 18 April, Mr. Nixon said that he saw "good prospects that American forces can be reduced" when he looked to the future. At the present time, however, "we have no plans to reduce our forces until there is more progress on one or all of the three fronts that I have mentioned."[10]

On 14 May 1969, the President gave the nation his assessment of the Vietnam situation and explained his plans for future US action. While the main thrust of the speech was a call for a "peace program" based on a negotiated settlement and phased mutual withdrawal of both US and NVN forces, the President did indicate that a unilateral reduction of US forces might be feasible. He noted that there had been excellent progress in training the South Vietnamese forces and that, apart from any developments in the Paris negotiations, the time was approaching when the RVNAF might be able "to take over some of the fighting fronts now being manned by Americans."[11]

9. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 67-68.
10. Ibid., pp. 215, 300.
11. Ibid., pp. 369-375.

Meanwhile, the actual planning for Vietnamization progressed. The Secretary of Defense on 21 May furnished additional guidance and clarifications. He understood that there was "some feeling" that the planning for the return of units in 1969 was a separate exercise from NSSM 36 planning. It was not, he stated. An initial overall timetable for Vietnamizing the war as well as specific withdrawal alternatives for the latter half of 1969 must be ready by 1 June. "It is absolutely essential," he said, "that we fulfill the requirements specified by the President." Secretary Laird stressed that the July-December 1969 period must be treated in sufficient detail "for the highest level decisions and for possible implementation." He also directed that the options considered be balanced "slices" of all types of units in Vietnam rather than predominantly combat units. In addition, he wanted the plan to include "out-of-country" forces (those US forces in other areas of Southeast Asia that supported the war) as well as the air effort.[12]

As they did for all Vietnamization planning during 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought inputs from COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the US Embassy in Saigon for the initial report. They also consulted with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of State, and the Central Intelligence Agency. The Joint Staff submitted an initial plan on 24 May 1969. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved it and forwarded it, together with their comments, to the Secretary of Defense on 31 May. Dissenting comments by the various coordinating agencies were identified in footnotes.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that, in accordance with his direction, they had considered balanced "slices" and the inclusion of all US forces in Southeast Asia in their review, though these aspects would be treated in more detail in the final report. They observed, however, that balanced slices would be "support-heavy" and would thus remove units essential to the RVNAF as the latter assumed an increasing burden of combat. They commented also that reduction of out-of-country forces would incur serious risks of increased infiltration by the enemy in Laos and northeast Thailand, and would reduce

12. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., "Progress on NSSM 36," 21 May 69, Att to JCS 2472/467-1, 22 May 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1.

combat support at a time when the RVNAF and remaining allied forces might need more support, rather than less.

The concept of the Vietnamization plan was that the current acceleration of the improvement and modernization of the RVNAF would enable these forces to assume progressively more of the burden of the war. Thus there would be a transfer of the US combat role and, to the maximum extent possible, the US supporting roles to the RVNAF. As the RVNAF took over the combat role, the United States and troop-contributing countries would gradually reorient their mission to encompass only reserve, support, and advisory functions. Possibly, as US forces in South Vietnam were reduced, it might be feasible to cut back "selected" US forces outside of Vietnam.

To implement this concept, the plan included outline timetables to meet the four alternative schedules of 18, 24, 30, and 42 months. All four timetables provided for a cumulative reduction of about 244,000 personnel from the current authorization of 549,500, leaving a US strength of approximately 306,000 in South Vietnam. As pointed out in a footnote, analysts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense considered that a reduction of 325,000 with a residual balance of about 225,000 was attainable.

Recognizing that the success of the program would depend on developments in Vietnam, as well as reaction in the United States, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw both favorable and unfavorable consequences from Vietnamization. On the negative side, they did not believe that an improved RVNAF, even with US support, would wholly fill the vacuum created by a withdrawal of US combat forces unless there was a substantial reduction in the enemy threat. In addition, they believed the shorter the timetable for the transfer, the greater the risk. On the positive side, the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt that Vietnamization would save US lives, improve the negotiating climate, encourage mutual withdrawals of NVA forces, stimulate the RVNAF to greater effort, and strengthen US public support for the commitment in Vietnam.

For reductions in the last six months of 1969, the plan provided four alternatives:

A. 50,000 - 2 divisions (1 Marine, 1 Army) plus limited support;

B. 50,000 - 1 division (Marine) plus support;

C. 100,000 - 3 divisions (1 Marine, 2 Army) plus limited support;

D. 100,000 - 2 divisions (1 Marine, 1 Army) plus support.

In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested consideration of a fifth alternative--a variation of the 50,000 package that involved withdrawal of 22,000 combat and 28,000 support personnel in order to "thin-out" combat forces countrywide and thus avoid redeployment of a major combat element in the northern area where the enemy threat was greatest. In a dissenting footnote, the OSD staff favored another alternative that called for the withdrawal of a Marine division, two Army brigades, two tactical fighter squadrons, and various support units totaling 82,000 men.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the first of the above alternatives be adopted if any forces were to be withdrawn in 1969. In addition they urged that any reduction in 1969 be in two increments, with a pause between them to assess the results. This procedure of assessment of each increment before a decision on further redeployments the Joint Chiefs of Staff called "cut-and-try," and they were to insist on it throughout 1969. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also favored the reconstitution of the redeployed combat forces as reserves in the Pacific, though they recognized the political pressures for redeployment of these forces to the United States and their partial demobilization. The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed any reduction in 1969 of out-of-country US forces supporting the war, including those conducting B-52 sorties and interdicting land and sea infiltration. But the Office of the Secretary of Defense thought that, if domestic political pressures demanded it, a reduction was possible; four out-of-country redeployment options ranging from 8,770 to 30,300 men were suggested.[13]

The Secretary of Defense forwarded the JCS report and plan for Vietnamizing the war, less the dissenting footnotes, to the President on 2 June 1969. He recommended an initial withdrawal of 20,000-25,000 troops beginning in July with the

13. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-342-69 to SecDef, 31 May 69, Encl to JCS 2472/467-2, 24 May 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1.

total reduction in 1969 limited to 50,000. The composition of this redeployment, he proposed, would be determined by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in coordination with CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, the US Mission in Saigon, and the Republic of Vietnam. Like the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary Laird advocated a cautious approach, with no absolute commitment to proceed beyond the first step.[14]

The President made no immediate decision on these proposals. He took them with him to Midway on 8 June, when he met with President Nguyen Van Thieu to assess the progress of the war.[15]

President Thieu came to the Midway meeting aware of the US plans for Vietnamization. Throughout the spring of 1969, the United States had kept the Republic of Vietnam informed of its thinking on reduction of forces. Secretary Laird had talked with President Thieu on this matter during his visit in March, and Ambassador Bunker had relayed in April President Nixon's conviction that some US reduction should take place before the end of the year. During the preparation of the initial plan for Vietnamization, both Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams had discussed it with President Thieu and his principal advisers, including General Vien, Chief of the RVNAF Joint General Staff.[16]

At Midway, the two Presidents discussed the troop reduction issue in a two-hour private meeting. At the conclusion of this session, Mr. Nixon announced to the press that President Thieu had informed him the RVNAF was ready to begin the process of replacing US forces. Consequently, Mr. Nixon had decided to order "the immediate redeployment from Vietnam of a division equivalent of approximately 25,000 men." The

14. (TS-GP 3) Extract from Memo, SecDef to Pres, 2 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/491-1, 11 Jun 69, JMF 911/374 (9 Jun 69). (TS) Msg, JCS 6730 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 31 May 69, OCJCS File 337 Midway Conference, Jun 69.

15. (U) Background Briefing for the Press by Dr. Henry Kissinger, Laguna Beach, Calif., 9 Jun 69, same file.

16. (S-GP 3) Memo of Conv, SecDef et al., with Pres Nguyen Van Thieu et al., 8 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/463, 8 Apr 69, JMF 911/075 (CY 69). (S) Msg, Saigon 7461 to State, 18 Apr 69, JCS IN 37648. (TS) Msg, Saigon 9723 to State, 19 May 69. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2472/467-2, 24 May 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1.

redeployment would begin within the next 30 days and would be completed by the end of August. The President added that during August, and periodically thereafter, he would review the question of further US troop replacement on the basis of the improvement of the RVNAF, the level of enemy hostility, and the progress of the Paris talks. He stressed, however, that no action would be taken that might threaten the safety of US or allied troops or endanger the attainment of the US objective--"the right of self-determination for the people of South Vietnam."[17]

President Nixon returned home pleased with the results of the Midway meeting. He had gained President Thieu's approval and support for his program for Vietnam--not only the troop reduction plans but also the peace program he had announced on 14 May.[18] President Nixon told the press that now, after five years during which more and more Americans had been sent to Vietnam, the United States had finally reached the point where it could begin to bring troops home. He hastened to add that this did not mean that the war was over. "There are negotiations still to be undertaken. There is fighting still to be borne until we reach the point that we can have peace."[19]

President Thieu, for his part, termed the conference "useful and successful," though he carefully pointed out to the South Vietnamese people that there was a clear distinction between troop replacement and troop withdrawal. United States forces were being replaced, he said, because the RVNAF was capable of assuming a larger burden of the war.[20]

Phase 1 Redeployment

Once the President had decided the number of troops to be redeployed in the first phase of the US reduction, the only problem remaining was to determine the units to be withdrawn and their relocation sites. General Abrams had suggested leading off with "first-rate" combat units, such as the 3d Marine and 9th Army Divisions, in order to make the

17. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 443-444.
18. See Ch. 12, "Negotiations."
19. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 450-451.
20. (U) Msg, Saigon 5522 to State, 9 Jun 69, JCS IN 45821.

reduction credible both to the enemy and to the US and Vietnamese publics. On 9 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense the following redeployment: one Army brigade to CONUS; a Marine regimental landing team plus elements of the 1st Marine Air Wing to Okinawa/Japan as part of the PACOM reserve; the 9th Division (minus two brigades) to Hawaii as part of the PACOM reserve. They opposed any force inactivations at this stage, except reserve components scheduled for release in 1969.[21]

The Secretary of Defense received this package with "some concern," since it provided for the return of only one Army brigade to CONUS and contained provision for no force inactivations. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reconsider the package with a view to redeploying a higher proportion of the troops to CONUS and deactivating some of them, since the psychological benefits that would accrue from these measures were an important consideration.[22]

On 11 June the Joint Chiefs of Staff replied that, while they recognized the importance of returning troops to CONUS, it was essential to reconstitute the PACOM reserve. They stated that their 9 June package addressed only the major combat units and did not include accompanying support elements, some of which could be returned to CONUS. Indentification of particular units in this category, they said, must await the decision on major units. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff repeated their recommendations of 9 June, with the additional provision that the returning Army brigade should be deactivated and various support elements, as yet unidentified, should also be returned to CONUS for deactivation. The Secretary of Defense approved this revised package on 12 June 1969.[23]

A conference at CINCPAC headquarters worked out a movement program and schedule, giving the operation the nickname KEYSTONE EAGLE. The first redeployment of US troops from South Vietnam began on 8 July, when the 802 men of the 3d Battalion, 60th Infantry, departed Tan Son Nhut for McChord

21. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 7021 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 2 Jun 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 69; (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-360-69 to SecDef, 9 Jun 69, Encl to JCS 2472/491, 9 Jun 69, JMF 911/374 (9 Jun 69).

22. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Force Planning," 11 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/491-1, 11 Jun 69, same file.

23. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-365-69 to SecDef, 11 Jun 69, Encl to JCS 2472/491-2, 11 Jun 69; (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Force Planning (U)," 12 Jun 69, Encl to JCS 2472/491-3, 12 Jun 69; same file.

Air Force Base. By the end of July, 7,507 men, together with 5,202 short tons of equipment, had left South Vietnam.[24]

During the first stages of withdrawal there was some uncertainty over what the authorized US space/strength ceiling for South Vietnam would be at the end of August.[25] When the President announced the 25,000 withdrawal at Midway on 8 June, the US force authorization for South Vietnam was 549,500 spaces, but actual strength stood at approximately 537,000 personnel, and the statement did not specify whether the 25,000 would be subtracted from the first or the second of these figures. Shortly after the Midway announcement, the Secretary of Defense told the press that approximately 25,000 US personnel would be redeployed from South Vietnam based on the in-country strength at the time of the President's announcement, resulting in a new strength "in the neighborhood of 515,000." COMUSMACV and CINCPAC feared that, upon the completion of the redeployment on 31 August, a strict 515,000 ceiling might be imposed, seriously limiting COMUSMACV's flexibility in managing his strength levels and requiring him to operate at less than 515,000 in order to avoid breaching the limit. Consequently, they urged General Wheeler to support a ceiling of 524,000 for both authorized and actual strength.

The Secretary of Defense resolved this matter on 15 July when he approved a new authorization of 524,500 US military spaces in South Vietnam and instructed that this new authorization be used for "budget and program planning." But since he believed that the United States must reduce "the actual number of US personnel in Vietnam approximately 25,000 below the number in the country at the time of the President's announcement," he also directed the maintenance of actual strength in South Vietnam "at about 515,000."[26]

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24. (S-GP 4) DJSM-1017-69 to CJCS, 2 Jul 69; (S-GP 4) DJSM-1081-69 to CJCS, 10 Jul 69; (S-GP 4) DJSM-1190-69 to CJCS, 1 Aug 69; JMF 911/374 (CY 1969). (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts et al., "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #7 (U)," 15 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/504, 16 Jul 69, JMF 907/374 (15 Jul 69).

25. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV 7794 to CINCPAC, 181101Z Jun 69; CINCPAC to CJCS, 181110Z Jun 69; (S-GP 4) Draft CM to SecDef, n.d., Att to DJSM-945-69 to CJCS, 20 Jun 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Force Planning), Jun-Jul 69.

26. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts et al., "Southeast Asia Deployment Program #7 (U)," 15 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/504, 16 Jul 69, JMF 907/374 (15 Jul 69). (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, "Strength Authorization for South Vietnam (U)," 15 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/491-8, 17 Jul 69, JMF 911/374 (9 Jun 69).

In early August the Secretary of Defense expressed concern over the fact that, while some 7,500 men had been withdrawn, the actual US strength in South Vietnam then stood at 300 more than at the time of the Midway announcement. (Apparently, the number of replacements being sent to South Vietnam had not been scaled down to meet the reduced personnel strength.) The Secretary directed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Secretaries to give this matter "their immediate personal attention" in order to insure that by 31 August 1969 US personnel in South Vietnam had been reduced by 25,000 as announced by President Nixon.[27]

Appropriate measures were taken, and by 28 August, when the last of the first increment left South Vietnam, 25,097 US troops and 15,284 tons of cargo had been moved. Besides the 3d Battalion of the 60th Infantry, already mentioned, major units included in the redeployment were the 9th Marine Regimental Landing Team, moved from I CTZ to Japan/Okinawa, and two brigades of the 9th Division, one going to Hawaii and the other to CONUS. In all, approximately 15,400 Army, 8,400 Marine, and some 1,200 Naval personnel (a 1,000-man Riverine Task Force and 200 men with Marine units) were redeployed from South Vietnam. On 31 August, COMUSMACV reported that US strength in South Vietnam stood at 509,600.[28]

Phase 2 Redeployment

As the United States withdrew the first troops from South Vietnam, the Nixon Administration was considering further

27. (S) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, "Redeployment of the First Increment from South Vietnam," 5 Aug 69, JMF 911/374 (9 Aug 69).

28. (S) Msgs, JCS 9799 to CINCPAC, 8 Aug 69; COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 10 Aug 69; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 22 Aug 69; OJCS File 091 Vietnam (Force Planning), Aug 69. (C-GP 4) DJSM-1361-69 to CJCS, 2 Sep 69; (S-GP 4) "Background Paper for CJCS for Mtg with SecDef on 11 Aug 69," prepared by Current Ops Br, SASM, n.d.; JMF 911/374 (CY 69). (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secy of MilDepts et al., 15 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/504, 16 Jul 69, JMF 907/374 (15 Jul 69). (U) Memo, CJCS Staff Gp to CJCS, 2 Sep 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Force Planning), Sep-Oct 69.

force reductions. In the Midway announcement President Nixon had intimated that the next decision would come in August or shortly thereafter.

Some thought that the reduction should come faster. In an article in the summer issue of Foreign Affairs, former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford proposed that the United States withdraw 100,000 troops from Vietnam by the end of the year and all ground combat troops by the end of 1970. In commenting on this proposal on 19 June, President Nixon stated:

> We have started to withdraw forces. We will withdraw more. Another decision will be made in August.

The President refused to indicate the numbers involved since that depended on the factors he had previously mentioned. But "as far as how many will be withdrawn by the end of this year, or the end of next year," the President hoped that "we could beat Mr. Clifford's timetable." On 2 July, Secretary Laird referred to the President's comment and told General Wheeler that "our goal" in 1969 was to exceed the Clifford figure of 100,000 men.[29]

On the evening of 7 July 1969, Mr. Nixon assembled his principal advisers aboard the presidential yacht for a review of the Vietnam situation. The President heard briefings on military operations, the progress of Vietnamization, and the Paris negotiations. Also he accepted the following with respect to additional troop withdrawals: preparation of an assessment by COMUSMACV of further reductions, together with a detailed troop list on or shortly before 10 August; a presidential announcement around 15 August; and withdrawal of a second increment in September-October.

29. Clifford, "A Vietnam Reappraisal," Foreign Affairs, Jul 69, pp. 601-622. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, p. 472. (PS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Military Strategy in Southeast Asia," 2 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2339/302, 3 Jul 69, JMF 907/520 (2 Jul 69).

In reporting this meeting to the field commanders, General Wheeler said he assumed that the second withdrawal would be 25,000.[30]

In mid-July General Wheeler visited South Vietnam and found encouraging progress. He reported to the Secretary of Defense and the President that the military situation was the best that he had observed during any of his trips over the last five years. He brought back to Washington the following observations on further troop reduction: (1) COMUSMACV believed that an additional increment should be limited to 25,000 since both civilian and military RVN officials were "conditioned" to such a figure and had planned accordingly; (2) President Thieu was "highly" apprehensive that 1969 withdrawals would go beyond the level discussed at Midway (presumably 50,000) and, while he expected additional withdrawals in 1970, he wanted further exchanges with President Nixon on this matter; (3) the Vietnamization program could not be completed by either 31 December 1970 or 30 June 1971. General Wheeler thought that it might be possible to withdraw all ground and naval forces included in current Vietnamization planning by those dates, but that the Air Force withdrawals could not be completed until 1972. Unless North Vietnam withdrew all its forces from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, there remained "the strong probability," General Wheeler said, that the United States would have to maintain a residual support in South Vietnam "for some years to come."[31]

At the end of July President Nixon had an opportunity to view firsthand the Vietnam scene and discuss US troop reductions with both General Abrams and President Thieu. During the course of a trip to the Pacific, to Southeast Asia, and subsequently to Europe, President Nixon made an unscheduled visit to South Vietnam on 30 July 1969. He talked with President Thieu for two hours. The two Presidents reviewed developments since Midway; they noted the continuing improvement of the RVNAF and discussed further US reductions. What conclusions they reached are not

30. (S) Memo, SpecAsst to Pres for NSA to SecState et al., 3 Jul 69; (TS) J-5 PP 10-69 for CJCS, 5 Jul 69; JMF 077 (CY 1969) (NSC Mtg 7 Jul 69). (TS)Msg, CJCS 8357 to C/S PACOM and DepCOMUSMACV, 9 Jul 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69.

31. (TS) CM-4441-69 to SecDef, 21 Jul 69, same file.

indicated in available records, and they made no announcements on the size, composition, or timing of further US redeployments.[32]

In his conversations with President Nixon, General Abrams said that a second withdrawal of 25,000 was feasible, but he firmly opposed any larger figure. Nevertheless, President Nixon returned to Washington believing that the next US reduction should be more than 25,000. He mentioned to the Secretary of Defense the figure of 37,000, suggesting headquarters and support forces as sources for increased redeployments above 25,000.[33]

In compliance with the tentative schedule adopted by President Nixon on 7 July, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC submitted to Washington in early August their assessments of the first phase reductions and their views on future reductions. The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 12 August 1969 their own views regarding current US force reductions and possible further withdrawals. They offered two general observations: the enemy remained disposed in strength within and adjacent to South Vietnam but had reacted to the initial redeployment with only minor harassment and propaganda; although displaying increased confidence, the RVNAF was beset by "a serious lack of qualified leaders" and remained "critically dependent" on extensive US support.[34]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that, barring a significant change in the enemy situation, a redeployment of approximately 25,000 US troops could begin in late September and be completed about 30 November. They listed the following forces in this second package:

3,604 Army - combat and service support elements

1,688 Navy - Navy elements supporting Marine units and one mobile construction battalion

32. NY Times, 31 Jul 69, 1. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 585-586.

33. (TS) Msg, CJCS 9803 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 8 Aug 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Force Planning), Aug 69.

34. (TS) Msgs, COMUSMACV 9967 to CINCPAC, 2 Aug 69 (forwarded to CJCS 6 Aug 69); CINCPAC to CJCS, 092200Z Aug 69; same file. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-499-69 to SecDef, 12 Aug 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/517, 9 Aug 69, JMF 911/374 (9 Aug 69).

18,395 Marine - 3d Marine Division plus support and the 1st Marine Air Wing

1,325 Air Force - One tactical fighter squadron and two special operations squadrons

This plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, had been coordinated with the Republic of Vietnam. They advised the Secretary of Defense that they had also examined the possibility of redeploying 30,000 personnel but had found that neither the military situation nor the RVN capabilities justified moving to this higher level. It was evident that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not felt bound by the President's suggested figure of 37,000.

On the matter of setting the new manpower space authorization for Vietnam following this second redeployment, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not adopt COMUSMACV's recommended firgure of 499,500, which resulted from simple subtraction of 25,000 from the existing strength authorization. Actual strength in Vietnam would fall to about 490,000 and, as always, would be subject to constant variation. To the Secretary of Defense the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a manpower floor of 490,000 with acceptance of a two percent excess. Thus the upper limit would be approximately the same as COMUSMACV's figure of 499,500.[35]

Some of Secretary Laird's advisers did not concur with the JCS recommendations, arguing that there were other alternatives. One was a reduction in actual strength from 515,000 to a new ceiling of 490,000. This would entail a reduction of 34,500 spaces from the present authorization of 524,500. This solution, they said, would remove the confusion regarding strength accountability--authorized and actual strength would be effectively the same. In a talking paper for the Chairman's use, the Joint Staff countered that the establishment of a 490,000 hard ceiling would mean that in-country strength would have to vary below it, thus imposing a larger reduction than the JCS recommendation of 25,000. Other possible options seen by the OSD advisers were a 40,000 reduction in actual strength, to a ceiling of 475,000, and certain out-of-country redeployments, including

35. (~~PS~~-GP 3) JCSM-499-69 to SecDef, 12 Aug 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/517, 9 Aug 69, same file.

7,200 personnel from Thailand and 2,500 from naval elements offshore.[36]

President Nixon discussed troop reductions with the Secretary of Defense, General Wheeler, and Dr. Kissinger at the San Clemente White House on 14 August. He stated that: since the enemy was increasing the tempo of operations, he would defer any announcement of troop reductions for about ten days; he was unwilling to limit the reduction to 25,000--"it must be more than that"; the next reduction should be an uneven number and stretched out over a longer period than two months. The President was still interested in force reductions in Thailand, recalling that he had discussed the subject with Prime Minister Thanom of that country and had not received an adverse reaction.[37]

In the light of the discussions with the President, Secretary Laird asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider a revised Phase 2 redeployment package reducing COMUSMACV's ceiling to 486,000 and withdrawal of either 7,000 or 10,000 US personnel from Thailand. The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 21 August that a reduction of 38,500 US spaces would be required to meet such a ceiling. This was 13,500 beyond what they had considered expedient in their earlier recommendations. If the 486,000 ceiling was adopted, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the approval of a one percent variation from the established ceiling. Otherwise COMUSMAVC would be required to operate at about one percent below the ceiling--or about 482,000.

In response to the Secretary's request for redeployment alternatives for Thailand, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided four packages. Package I was limited to 2,593 spaces already planned for redeployment in FY 1970. Adding Packages II and III to Package I would produce a total of 7,000, and adding Package IV would bring the number to 10,000. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that anything beyond Package I would have serious impact on the air strike capability in Laos; that Packages II and III should not be implemented

36. (TS) TP for CJCS for Mtg of 14 Aug 69, "Phase Two US Redeployments (Ø)," 14 Aug 69, JMF 077 (CY 69).
37. (TS) CM-4502-69 to CNO, CSA, CSAF, CMC, and DJS, 15 Aug 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Force Planning), Aug 69.

until the military situation in Southeast Asia was reassessed later in the year; and that Package IV should be rejected.[38]

The following day, 22 August 1969, Rear Admiral William Lemos, Director of Policy Plans and NSC Affairs, OASD(ISA), briefed Dr. Kissinger at San Clemete on the JCS views on a reduction to a 486,000 authorization. Dr. Kissinger was not satisfied. He was willing to accept a manpower authorization of 486,000, but with the stipulation of an operating strength of 480,000. After talking with the President by telephone on 23 August, Secretary Laird reported to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the 480,000 figure was not a rigid limit but that the President did desire a reduction in actual strength "of something over 20,000," perhaps 30,000. In any event, the President had decided to withhold the decision and announcement of further reductions until he returned to Washington in early September.[39]

Pending the return of the President, the Secretary of Defense requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider a further revised package of about 40,500, reducing the Vietnam authorization to 484,000 by 15 December 1969. The Joint Chiefs of Staff revised the Phase 2 package to include 40,500 spaces and submitted it to the Secretary of Defense on 30 August. Since 9,500 of the spaces were not filled, the package meant reduction in actual strength of approximately 31,000. By proposing a tentative redeployment of 40,500 in authorized strength, but only 31,000 in actual strength, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would bring the two ceilings into phase. They recommended to the Secretary of Defense that, if the President directed a 484,000 authorization, it should be a single strength figure with COMUSMACV maintaining his personnel strength "as close to that ceiling as practicable."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff warned the Secretary of Defense, however, that to reach the 484,000 authorization by mid-December would mean the acceptance of serious risks. They

38. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JSCM-518-69 to SecDef, 21 Aug 69, Encl to JCS 2472/521, 20 Aug 69, JMF 911/374 (9 Aug 69).

39. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 10420 to COMUSMACV, 22 Aug 69; (~~S~~) Msg, CJCS 10431 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 23 Aug 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 10489 to COMUSMACV, 25 Aug 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Force Planning), Aug 69.

stated that total reductions in 1969 beyond 50,000, without a substantial decline in the enemy threat, would be "clearly without justification on military grounds and beyond the threshold of prudent risk." Such a reduction would require withdrawal of an additional Army brigade, reducing allied flexibility to respond rapidly and forcefully to enemy initiatives. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also objected to a Phase 2 package of the size now contemplated on the ground that it would exceed the "expectations" of the Republic of Vietnam.[40]

Final Vietnamization Plan

While the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reviewing the various redeployment packages, they were also preparing the overall Vietnamization plan, which NSSM 36 had directed be submitted to the President by 1 September. They approved and forwarded the final interagency plan to the Secretary of Defense on 25 August 1969. This completed the planning exercise that had begun with the preparation of the initial plan in May.[41]

As directed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had surveyed all US forces in Southeast Asia for possible redeployment. They reiterated to the Secretary of Defense the view submitted with the initial plan, that out-of-country and offshore forces were essential to counter the interrelated enemy threats in South Vietnam, Laos, and northeast Thailand and to support the RVNAF and remaining allied forces in South Vietnam. Further the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought that withdrawal of out-of-country and offshore forces in conjunction with the withdrawals from South Vietnam could

40. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-540-69 to SecDef, 30 Aug 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/523, 27 Aug 69, JMF 911/374 (9 Aug 69).

41. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-522-69 to SecDef, 25 Aug 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/467-4, 19 Aug 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 4. Materials on which the plan was based included (~~TS~~) MACV/Embassy Plan, "Vietnamizing the War(C)," 20 Jul 69, Encl to JCS 2472/467-3, 28 Jul 69, same file. A closely held US effort, the planning had not involved coordination with RVN officials, but combined planning had been initiated with the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff on certain practical aspects of future US troop redeployments.

be interpreted as "a general US disengagement from Southeast Asia" rather than Vietnamization, which was the proper subject of the current planning.

The plan also examined, but rejected, the possibility of withdrawing as many as 100,000 US personnel during 1969. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that, without a drastic decline in the enemy threat, further redeployments beyond those being carried out in Phase 1 would involve "significant risks"; as they had stated in discussions on Phase 2 withdrawals, any redeployment greater than 50,000 in 1969 was beyond "the threshold of prudent risk." The Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to advocate Vietnamization on a "cut-and-try" approach based on periodic reassessment.

The plan contained the same objective and means to achieve the objective as set forth in the initial plan. In addition, it included the following military guidelines for Vietnamization: (1) in accordance with a "one-war" concept, emphasis would be placed on combined military operations, protection of populated areas, pacification, and improvement of the RVNAF; (2) combined US-RVNAF operations would continue because of military necessity and in order to improve RVNAF operational effectiveness; (3) as feasible, US units would be thinned out or withdrawn from selected areas and replaced by RVNAF units, and, when specific areas became "relatively secure," RVNAF as well as US units would be withdrawn, allowing Regional and Popular Forces and eventually RVN internal security forces to assume responsibility; (4) units of the US residual support force would furnish combat and combat service support to the RVNAF, relieve RVNAF units of pacification and security missions when necessary, and be prepared for emergency reinforcement; (5) as combat tasks were progressively transferred to the RVNAF, US forces not required for the residual support force could be redeployed; (6) current programs to expand South Vietnamese forces would be continued and increased as practicable.

To complete the process of Vietnamization, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented four timetables for planning purposes, with time spans of 18, 24, 30, and 42 months, respectively. Each would involve six troop withdrawals, including Phase 1 as already approved. The overall figures ranged from a 264,400 reduction with a residual strength of 285,000 for the 18-month timetable to a 282,000 reduction and a residual force of 267,000 for the 42-month one. The larger reduction and smaller residual forces under the

42-month plan resulted from the fact that certain US personnel engaged in turning over equipment to the RVNAF or in various construction programs would have completed their work by December 1972, while under the shorter timetables, many would still be required in South Vietnam. If budgetary reasons required a still larger reduction, analysts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense thought that a withdrawal of 319,700 with a resulting residual force of 229,880 could be accomplished. The Joint Chiefs of Staff included estimated budget and balance of payment implications for each withdrawal alternative, though they cautioned that these estimates had limited validity because of the many variables involved.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also reviewed possible reductions in FWMA forces in South Vietnam. They concluded, however, that the future roles of these forces should be determined by the Republic of Vietnam and the other countries involved.

As in the initial plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff listed the same dangers and possible advantages of Vietnamization. Their conclusion was that Vietnamization should proceed on a "cut-and-try" basis, with its pace governed by the results of periodic assessments of the Vietnam situation. Accordingly the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not favor establishing an overall schedule with a set completion date.[42]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Secretary of Defense forward the plan to the National Security Council, omitting several dissenting footnotes and alternative concepts that represented the thought of the OSD staff. Secretary Laird accepted this recommendation.[43]

The Secretary of State reviewed the plan and agreed that the effects of US withdrawal must be evaluated during the process. He felt that the United States should preserve the flexibility to adjust both the pace and scope in accordance with events, being prepared to re-examine not only the increments of the timetables but also the size of the residual force. Secretary Rogers found the JCS conclusions regarding

42. (~~PS~~-GP 3) JCSM-522-69 to SecDef, 25 Aug 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/467-4, 19 Aug 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 4.
43. (~~PS~~-GP 3) CM-4536-69 to SecDef, 29 Aug 69, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/467-4, 2 Sep 69, same file.

the political and military risks of a withdrawal in 1969 in excess of 50,000 "unduly pessimistic." He pointed out to Secretary Laird that the Phase 1 increment of 25,000 had occasioned only "relatively modest concern" in South Vietnam, and he believed the RVN leaders and public were prepared to accept further 1969 withdrawals. In addition, Secretary Rogers favored the initiation of out-of-country withdrawals and stated that the United States should adopt the 18-month timetable as its target, accepting that adjustments might later have to be made.[44]

At the beginning of September, President Nixon had before him both the final plan for Vietnamizing the war and recommendations for Phase 2 redeployment. On 12 September he met with his top political and military advisers, including the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Central Intelligence, his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and Ambassador Bunker, to review the entire Vietnam situation. At the meeting, the President announced his decision on Phase 2 withdrawals--a decision that he had made several days earlier. The President had accepted the JCS revised Phase 2 package of 30 August, providing for a reduction of 40,500 US spaces and a new authorization of 484,000. President Nixon told the participants of the meeting that he would delay announcement of the withdrawal until 16 September in order to allow time for General Abrams to brief President Thieu on the reduction and to coordinate the announcement with the Republic of Vietnam.[45]

The President made no decision on the final plan for Vietnamizing the war or its accompanying timetables, but he did specify that further decisions on US troop withdrawals would be based on full consideration of the three criteria he had previously set forth--progress of the RVNAF, level of enemy action, and status of the Paris negotiations--and that future decisions on troop withdrawals would be made "on an incremental basis as the situation dictated." By this decision, the President substantially adoped the JCS "cut-and-try" approach. But in approving a 484,000

44. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecState to SecDef, 3 Sep 69, Att to JCS 2472/467-5, 8 Sep 69, same file.

45. NY Times, 13 Sep 69, 3; 15 Sep 69, 1. (~~TS~~) NSDM 24, 17 Sep 69, JMF 001 (CY 69) NSDMs.

authorized ceiling, the President accepted a second redeployment of 40,500--one that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had termed "clearly without justification on military grounds and beyond the threshold of prudent risk."[46]

General Abrams returned to Saigon on 14 September and briefed both President Thieu and General Vien on President Nixon's decision and the details of the troop reduction figures. All was now ready for the public announcement by President Nixon on 16 September. But the mischievous Vice President Ky jumped the gun, leaking word of the US withdrawal to the press on 15 September.[47]

In Washington the White House refused to comment on the Ky statement, and on the following evening, 16 September, President Nixon made his planned announcement. He told the US public in a televised speech that, after "careful consideration with my senior civilian and military advisers and in full consultation with the Government of Vietnam," he had decided to reduce the authorized troop ceiling in Vietnam to 484,000 by 15 December. Under the newly authorized ceiling, he said, a minimum of 60,000 troops would be withdrawn by mid-December. The printed version of his statement had a footnote explaining that the total reduction in authorized ceiling strengths amounted to 65,500, but that in practice actual strengths normally were less than the authorized figure by 1 or 2 percent.[48]

In the week following the President's announcement, a conference at PACOM headquarters developed the necessary movement program, which was designated KEYSTONE CARDINAL. The actual redeployment began shortly thereafter.[49]

The Phase 2 withdrawal proceeded without interruption. It comprised approximately 14,000 Army personnel, including the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, which returned to

46. (TS) NSDM 24, 17 Sep 69, same file.
47. NY Times, 15 Sep 69, 1; 16 Sep 69, 1. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 13029 to CJCS, 14 Sep 69; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 12096 to CJCS, 15 Sep 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Force Planning), Sep-Oct 69.
48. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, p. 718.
49. (U) Msg, Admin CINCPAC to COMUSMACV et al., 200409Z Sep 69, JCS IN 50389. (C) Msg, Admin CINCPAC to COMUSMACV et al., 200431Z Sep 69, JCS IN 50406.

CONUS; 18,500 Marines of the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Marine Air Wing, some of whom were moved to Okinawa/Japan, some to WESTPAC, and others to CONUS; about 2,600 Air Force personnel, including a tactical bomber squadron and a special operations squadron, both of which were deactivated; and a total of approximately 5,400 Navy personnel, consisting of support elements with the 3d Marine Division and five mobile construction battalions. By mid-December, US strength stood at 472,442--well below the goal of 484,000.[50]

Although the planning in August for the Phase 2 reduction had considered withdrawal of US forces from Thailand, the President's 16 September announcement made no mention of that country. But in a conversation with the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary Laird stated that President Nixon desired to initiate early discussions with the Royal Thai Government on this subject. The President visualized a reduction of between 5,000 and 7,000 US personnel and wished the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare an appropriate redeployment package.[51]

Accordingly, on 17 September the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted to the Secretary of Defense a proposal for withdrawing about 6,000 men from Thailand. They explained that the package included 2,319 men already scheduled for redeployment in FY 1970. As they had in August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed any redeployments from Thailand in FY 1970 (beyond the 2,319 already scheduled to leave) until the military and political situation in Southeast Asia and the Pacific could be assessed.[52]

Nevertheless, the United States undertook talks with the Royal Thai Government on the reduction of US forces, and on 30 September the two Governments announced that approximately 6,000 US Army and US Air Force personnel would be withdrawn from Thailand. The withdrawal would be as expeditious as was consistent with "operational requirements related to the Vietnam conflict," and would begin in a few weeks, with completion planned by 1 July 1970. Since US

50. (C-GP 4) Memos for SASM, "Operation KEYSTONE CARDINAL," 15 Oct 69, 23 Oct 69, and 15 Dec 69, SASM files.
51. (TS-GO 3) JCS 2353/181, 16 Sep 69, JMF 910/374 (25 Aug 69).
52. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-575-69 to SecDef, 17 Sep 69, Encl A to JCS 2353/181, 16 Sep 69, same file.

forces in Thailand stood at about 48,500, the reduction would lower this figure to approximately 42,500 by mid-1970.[53]

At the request of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 8 October two tentative follow-on packages of approximately 6,000 spaces each, for future redeployments from Thailand above the announced 6,000 reduction. They had been asked to devise proposals that would leave a balanced force in Thailand, able to resume the bombing of North Vietnam or the interdiction of NVA supply efforts if necessary and also to provide support for Thai and Royal Laotian forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the two packages responsive to the Assistant Secretary's request, but they again opposed any further redeployments beyond the 6,000 already directed for FY 1970 prior to a reassessment of the situation. Apparently the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was heeded, for there was no further consideration during 1969 of US reductions in Thailand.[54]

Phase 3 Redeployment

On the evening of 3 November, President Nixon reported to the American people on his efforts to end the Vietnam war. After describing unsuccessful US peace initiatives and noting that 60,000 US forces--20 percent of all US combat forces--would have departed from South Vietnam by mid-December, the President turned to his future program.

> We have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable. This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater.

53. "Announcement of Agreement between the United States Government and the Royal Thai Government," 30 Sep 69, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, p. 1350.

54. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-620-69 to SecDef, 8 Oct 69, Encl A to JCS 2353/180-3, 7 Oct 69, JMF 910/374 (25 Aug 69).

For the obvious reason that publication of a timetable would remove any incentive for the enemy to negotiate, the President did not announce one. The timing was flexible, he said, and depended on the three factors previously mentioned--progress of the Paris talks, the level of enemy activity in South Vietnam, and the improvement of the RVNAF. The President warned North Vietnam not to misinterpret the US intentions:

> Hanoi could made no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in violence will be to its advantage. If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with the situation.

President Nixon concluded that the United States had two choices to end the war: immediate precipitate withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam; or persistence in the search for "a just peace through a negotiated settlement," if possible, and continued implementation of the plan for Vietnamization if necessary. Because of his belief that immediate withdrawal would not bring peace but would rather enhance the danger of wider war, the President had rejected that course in favor of continued efforts along the lines of negotiation and orderly withdrawal.[55]

During November the Joint Chiefs of Staff undertook to review the military situation in Vietnam and consider alternative Phase 3 redeployment packages in preparation for the presidential decision on further US reductions in Vietnam that would come in mid-December. They submitted their conclusions to the Secretary of Defense on 29 November 1969. They reported that the enemy retained the capability of initiating a major offensive on relatively short notice, though he could not sustain such an attack for an extended time. The Joint Chiefs of Staff saw the greatest enemy threats in III CTZ and the northern I CTZ, but added that there was also a "significant threat" in the southwest II CTZ and an increasing enemy presence in IV CTZ. The allied situation was one of "continued progress in pacification and Vietnamization," but one as yet untested by determined enemy action. They found that RVNAF improvement and modernization

55. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 901-909.

programs were generally on or ahead of schedule with qualitative improvements being made at varying rates.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that they had considered two Phase 3 alternatives--a 50,000 reduction by mid-March or April 1970 or a 100,000 reduction by mid-July 1970--but they counseled, "on military grounds," against a decision at that time. They believed that a redeployment during the next several months would risk a shortfall in allied capability to meet the enemy threat. Thus an extra burden would fall on the RVNAF at a time when the prime US objective should be to insure that the RVNAF maintained momentum and suffered no major defeats. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said that their recommendation did not arise from any mistrust of the progress of Vietnamization. It was simply that the weeks through the Tet holiday (7-9 February 1970) would be a period of maximum threat, during which the question of additional troop reductions should be deferred. They noted that, with the recent increase in enemy activity and the continuing lack of progress at Paris, RVNAF improvement was the only one of the President's three criteria offering a credible basis for further reductions. Hence they urged caution in deciding upon additional withdrawals at this time.

Nevertheless the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized that "other considerations" might require a redeployment in the near future. If so, a redeployment of 35,000 spaces could be initiated. Even a reduction of this size, they believed, exceeded "prudent military risks" but could be scheduled in such a way so as to reduce the hazard.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff held firm views on the course to follow if the enemy should escalate military operations in South Vietnam. They strongly recommended, in that event, that any announced troop redeployments be cancelled and, if necessary, reversed. In addition, a US air and naval campaign should be initiated promptly against North Vietnam "in order to reduce North Vietnamese military capabilities and to preserve progress being made in the overall Vietnamization program and prevent a setback to the pacification of the country side."[56]

56. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-735-69 to SecDef, 29 Nov 69, Encl to JCS 2472/556, 26 Nov 69, JMF 911/374 (26 Nov 69).

Apparently the "other considerations" that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had mentioned proved compelling in the higher councils of government. On 15 December 1969, President Nixon announced that 50,000 more US troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam by 15 April 1970, bringing the total reduction in force authorization to 115,500. The President acknowledged that enemy infiltration had increased substantially, but he added, in apparent disregard of the JCS opinion, that it had not reached the point where "our military leaders believe the enemy has developed the capability to mount a major offensive." He stated that he was watching the situation closely, and he again cautioned Hanoi against misinterpreting the US action. The President repeated his 3 November warning that he would not hesitate to take strong and effective measures against any increased enemy activity threatening the remaining US forces in Vietnam.[57]

Once the President had announced the withdrawal of the additional 50,000 US troops, the composition of the forces to be redeployed came under question. In planning, COMUSMACV had prepared "Marine-heavy" and "Army-heavy" options. Both he and CINCPAC favored the former, which provided for the withdrawal of 25,000 Army and 18,000 Marine Corps personnel, with the Navy and the Air Force filling out the remainder of the 50,000 package. This option would have withdrawn all major Marine combat elements from South Vietnam, reducing Marine Corps forces to a "low residual level." The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, wanted to retain some combat elements of all the Services in South Vietnam until a transition force level was reached. In addition, there was currently a shortfall in Army personnel strength in units in South Vietnam. While this shortfall would be rectified in any event, the Joint Chiefs of Staff feared that maintenance of the larger Army force level in South Vietnam required by the "Marine-heavy" option would result in "considerably increased personnel turbulence and adverse impact on readiness for Army units worldwide." They were concerned, also, that the Marine Corps would have difficulty in relocating "long term personnel" into other units that were already up to strength. Consequently, they requested COMUSMACV and CINCPAC to consider a "middle

57. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 1025-1028.

position," which would have redeployed 31,600 Army, 10,800 Marine Corps, and 7,600 Navy-Air Force personnel from South Vietnam.[58]

The two commanders reviewed the "middle position," but still preferred the "Marine-heavy" option. Subsequently the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed a modification of the "middle postion" that CINCPAC and COMUSMACV found more acceptable. On 27 December the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the execution of this plan, embracing the following elements:

Service	Elements	Approx. Spaces
US Army	Inf div, inf bde & support	29,470
US Navy	support	2,050
US Air Force	3 TFS, 1 TRS & support	5,580
US Marine Corps	1 RLT and support	12,900
Total		50,000[59]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense of their action, stating that a detailed troop list and time phasing of the redeployment would be developed as the planning progressed. They expected to schedule the "major parts" of the withdrawal late in the redeployment period in order to maintain maximum combat strength in South Vietnam during the Tet period. Thus as 1969 drew to an end the major planning to accomplish the withdrawal of 50,000 additional US forces from South Vietnam was complete, with the actual movement yet to occur.[60]

The year 1969 brought a significant change in the US involvement in South Vietnam. Whereas the years 1965 through 1968 had witnessed the deployment of an ever increasing number of US forces to Vietnam, 1969 saw the trend reversed. The President's decision to Vietnamize the war, by

58. (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/556-1, 17 Dec 69; (TS) J-5 PP 26-69, "Force Planning Options (U)," 24 Dec 69; (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 15940 to CINCPAC, 17 Dec 69 (derived from JCS 2472/556-1); JMF 911/374 (26 Nov 69).

59. (TS-GP 4) JCS 2472/556-2, "Force Planning (U)," 27 Dec 69; (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6983 to CINCPAC, 27 Dec 69 (derived from JCS 2472/556-2); (TS-GP 4) JCSM-777-69 to Sec Def, 27 Dec 69, App A to JCS 2472/556-2, 27 Dec 69, same file.

60. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-777-69 to SecDef, 27 Dec 69, App A to JCS 2472/556-2, 27 Dec 69; same file.

progressively transferring the combat burden from US to South Vietnamese forces, had made it possible to begin reducing the US troop commitment. In considering the Vietnamization plan, US policymakers had reviewed various schedules. The most optimistic and expeditious called for withdrawal of all US combat forces by the end of 1970, while the longest would have spread the withdrawal out to the end of 1972. In the end, President Nixon avoided a firm timetable, choosing instead to key the rate of Vietnamization to the developing situation in Vietnam. Eventually, however, the United States expected to reduce its strength in South Vietnam to a residual force of between 200,000 and 300,000.

By the close of 1969, the United States was firmly committed to the Vietnamization program. It had already withdrawn over 60,000 troops and had announced the redeployment of an additional 50,000 in the early months of 1970, bringing the total projected reduction to at least 115,000. Both US and world opinion expected the reduction to continue, and only a disastrous deterioration of the situation in South Vietnam could now stem, much less reverse, the Vietnamization process.

Chapter 5

MILITARY POLICY AND ACTIONS AUGUST-DECEMBER 1969

During the last five months of 1969, President Nixon continued to seek a negotiated settlement in Vietnam while maintaining military pressure on the enemy in the field. But, since the diplomatic approach produced no success, the President proceeded with his alternative policy of transferring the burden of the combat to the South Vietnamese, still intending to keep the same level of action against the enemy. In the latter months of 1969, however, just as in the earlier part of the year, the Nixon Administration was faced with a number of pressures to reduce US military involvement in the war. Budget restrictions continued to require reductions in military expenditures, and despite careful planning, these cuts affected the war in Vietnam. Some elements of the public, who had grown impatient in the late spring of 1969 with the Nixon Administration's slow progress in ending the conflict, became more strident during the final months of the year. Their agitation culminated in massive demonstrations in October and November, the largest to date in the history of the Vietnam war.

The course of the war itself also increased the demand for a scaling down of US action and a faster withdrawal of US troops. Both fighting and infiltration by the enemy declined in the last months of the year, and many in the United States wanted to respond with a corresponding reduction of US action. As a result there were growing calls from the Congress, the press, and the academic community for a speedier US troop pull-out from Vietnam. Aware of these pressures, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to avoid further erosion of resources and authorities, the loss of which would restrict the actions of the field commanders in Vietnam.

Further Budget Reductions--Project 703

At the beginning of August 1969, the Military Services again faced budget cuts that would ultimately have an impact on the war in Vietnam. In late July, President Nixon signed the final supplemental appropriations bill for FY 1969, and at that time he announced that the "budget

picture has worsened." Expenditures had risen because of uncontrollable items such as interest on the public debt, Medicare, social security, Civil Service retirement benefits, and the like. In addition, Congress had failed to take various recommended actions to reduce expenditures and raise extra revenue. As a consequence, the President was directing the various Federal departments and agencies to reduce spending by another $3.5 billion in FY 1970 beyond the $4 billion he had announced the previous April.[1] He did not specify where the cuts would be made, adding only that "No Federal program is above scrutiny."

In the end, the Department of Defense bore the largest share of this additional budget retrenchment. The Secretary of Defense called on each of the three Military Departments to reduce FY 1970 expenditures by $1 billion. This $3 billion reduction in the Defense budget for FY 1970 was nicknamed Project 703. It was publicly announced by the Secretary of Defense on 21 August 1969. He stated that every precaution would be taken to alleviate the adverse impact of the cut, but he gave no indication of how the reduction would be apportioned within the Department of Defense.[2]

In the meantime, Service plans to implement Project 703 had been submitted to the Secretary of Defense and were forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for comment. They included a number of provisions that affected the war in Vietnam. The Air Force plan called for: the phase-out of 25 B-52 aircraft; the reduction of monthly B-52 sorties from 1,600 to 1,500 by 1 September; reduction of tactical air strength with a cutback of monthly sorties from 18,000 to 14,000; and a lower rate of utilization of C-130 transports in the Pacific. The Navy projected the inactivation of 131 ships of various types, including the one battleship then in service, two heavy cruisers, two aircraft carriers, 29 destroyers (types DD and DL), five submarines, and various other craft. The remainder of the 3d Marine

1. See Ch. 3, p. 63.
2. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "The FY 1970 Expenditure Reduction Project," 5 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2458/582, 6 Aug 69, JMF 580 (5 Aug 69) sec 1. News Conference, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, 21 Aug 69, Public Statements of the Secretary of Defense, 1969, Office of the Historian, OSD (hereafter cited as Public Statements, 1969).

Division would be redeployed to Okinawa (in addition to the redeployments already approved), reducing Marine strength in Vietnam from six to four regiments; the 5th Marine Division would be deactivated. To meet its $1 billion cut, the Army planned to inactivate both the 9th Infantry Division, which was currently redeploying from Vietnam, and the 1st Armored Division, and to reduce the strength of the 2d Armored Division.[3]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the Service plans and gave the Secretary of Defense their comments on 16 August 1969. With respect to the war, they pointed out that the proposed action would reduce monthly B-52 sorties an additional 13 percent beyond the July reductions[4] and monthly tactical air sorties by approximately 23 percent. They also expected the Marine tactical air capability to be reduced and noted that naval gunfire support would decrease from an average of eight ships on the gunline to four, with no heavy gunfire support ship available in the Seventh Fleet for about five months out of the year. These restrictions would come at a time when the United States was withdrawing ground combat troops and when air strikes and naval bombardment would play an increasingly important role. In addition, the reductions would result in inadequate PACOM reserve reinforcements for Southeast Asia as well as degraded amphibious shipping and airlift support for operations in Vietnam. Such considerations were especially critical, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, since the enemy had given no indication that he would decrease his activity. Consequently, they recommended that no further reduction be ordered pending a settlement of the war and the resolution of various other national security matters affecting military commitments.[5]

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3. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "The FY 1970 Expenditure Reduction Project," 5 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2458/582, 6 Aug 69 (Air Force and Navy submissions); (S-GP 3) Memo, DASD(C) to CJCS, same subj, 6 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2458/582-1, 7 Aug 69 (revised Air Force submission); Memo, DASD(C) to CJCS, same subj, 11 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2458/582-2, 11 Aug 69 (Army submission); JMF 580 (5 Aug 69) secs 1 and 2.

4. See Ch. 3, p. 66.

5. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-511-69 to SecDef, 16 Aug 69, Encl to JCS 2458/582-4, 13 Aug 69, same file, sec 2.

Subsequently the Services made minor adjustments in their plans, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff maintained their earlier stand. They believed that the Service cutbacks would seriously harm the US position in Southeast Asia, and they opposed further budget reduction until the war ended.[6]

General Wheeler met with the President and the Secretary of Defense on 26 September to discuss the Project 703 cuts. He was particularly concerned with the proposed reductions in B-52 and tactical air sorties and in naval gunfire support. He believed these reductions, combined with the second phase of US troop withdrawals from Vietnam, would degrade the US ability to respond to enemy initiatives. But General Wheeler was unable to dissuade his superiors, and on his return from the meeting, he alerted COMUSMACV and CINCPAC to expect instructions to reduce air and naval support in the "near future."[7]

General Wheeler's apprehension was well founded, for despite the objections of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense directed implementation of Project 703. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) issued the required Program Change Decision memorandums in the succeeding weeks.[8]

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6. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Navy Force Reductions Proposed under Project 703," 3 Sep 69, Att to JCS 2458/598, 5 Sep 69; (S-GP 3) JCSM-559-69 to SecDef, 8 Sep 69, Encl A to JCS 2458/598-1, 8 Sep 69; JMF 580 (5 Sep 69). (S-GP 3) Memo,ASD(C) to CJCS, 4 Sep 69, Att to JCS 2458/597, 4 Sep 69; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-570-69 to SecDef, 12 Sep 69, Encl to JCS 2458/597-1, 10 Sep 69; JMF 580 (4 Sep 69). (S-GP 3) CSAM 222-69, 17 Sep 69, Att to JCS 2458/606, 18 Sep 69; (S-GP 3) JCSM-678-69 to SecDef, 29 Oct 69, Encl to JCS 2458/606-1, 20 Oct 69; JMF 580 (17 Sep 69).

7. (TS) Msg, CJCS 11895 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 26 Sep 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 69.

8. For Army program reductions, see Program Change Decision (PCD) A-9-301, 10 Sep 69, JMF 580 (17 Sep 69). For Navy program reductions see PCDs N-9-303, 1 Oct 69; N-9-305, 22 Sep 69; N-9-307, 1 Oct 69; N-9-309, 20 Nov 69; all in JMF 580 (5 Sep 69). For Air Force program reductions, see PCDs F-9-304, 2 Oct 69; F-9-305, 19 Sep 69; F-9-306, 28 Oct 69; F-9-307, 24 Oct 69; F-9-309, 8 Nov 69; F-9-310, 23 Oct 69, F-9-311, 21 Nov 69; F-9-312, 23 Oct 69; F-9-314; all in JMF 580 (4 Sep 69).

The decision on air activity levels in Southeast Asia was more immediate. On 26 September, shortly after the despatch of his message alerting the field commanders to expect reductions, General Wheeler gave COMUSMACV and CINCPAC advance notice that the Secretary of Defense had directed a reduction in B-52 and tactical air monthly sortie rates to 1,400 and 14,000 respectively. General Wheeler assured the two commanders that he appreciated the effect of this order, but he thought that careful sortie scheduling could alleviate some of the harmful impact. The field commanders retained authority to exceed monthly sortie levels to meet emergencies so long as they remained within expenditure limits for the fiscal year. This would allow surges during periods of increased combat activity, with retrenchment in "less active periods." Five days later, on 1 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff formally directed the reductions of B-52 and tactical air sorties in Southeast Asia, and the reduced levels went into effect on 2 October.[9]

On 27 September, the day following his notice to the field of the decision on air activity levels, General Wheeler relayed to CINCPAC and CINCSAC a request by the President for the preparation of a plan for a surge of B-52 operations. The plan should provide for stepping up sorties to the maximum within authorized rates, using only B-52 and tanker assets currently in WESTPAC, for a 30-day period. This option would be held for possible execution in the event of continued North Vietnamese intransigence at the Paris talks or increased enemy action in South Vietnam. In a separate message to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, General Wheeler recognized the "seeming inconsistencies" between the budget cuts on the one hand and such contingency planning on the other. "As you may expect," he explained, "we are proceeding down several alternative paths, with decisions to be made ultimately on the basis of developments we cannot yet forecast." Subsequently, CINCPAC and CINCSAC developed and forwarded

9. (S) Msg, CJCS 11896 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 26 Sep 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 69. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 1243 and 1290 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 1 Oct 69. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, "SEAsia Tactical Air Force Programming (U)," 28 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2458/649, 1 Dec 69, JMF 580 (4 Sep 69).

the plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff; General Wheeler notified the Secretary of Defense that it was ready, but no further action resulted.[10]

On 6 October, Secretary Laird informed the President of the reduction of B-52 sortie levels in Southeast Asia. Noting that recent combat action was significantly lower than the 1967 average, when US B-52s flew only 800 sorties monthly, he considered the current 1,400 rate "more than adequate." He acknowledged the commanders' concern over the reduced sorties but assured the President that he would monitor the military situation closely. If additional air strikes, either tactical or B-52, were required, they could be supplied "on relatively short notice." The President agreed, directing that support facilities for B-52 operations be maintained to allow rapid restoration of higher sortie rates in case the enemy stepped up his combat activity.[11]

The reduced air activity levels brought about by Project 703 continued in force throughout the remainder of 1969. There was no announcement of the reduction. Secretary Laird publicly confirmed in late October that the $3 billion cut in the FY 1970 Defense budget, announced in August, had been made, but he gave no details.[12]

In an assessment on 19 October, COMUSMACV questioned whether the lowered rates for B-52 and tactical air strikes would be adequate in the event of expanded operations. He cited the fact that reductions in effective air strength were occuring precisely at the time when US troops, who had borne most of the combat burden, were being withdrawn.

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10. (TS-GP 3) Msg, JCS 1016 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 27 Sep 69; (S) Msg, CJCS 11896 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 26 Sep 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 69. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 100350Z Oct 69; (TS-GP 3) CM-4661-69 to SecDef, 25 Oct 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69.

11. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "B-52 ARC LIGHT Sorties (U)," 6 Oct 69, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/389-12, 21 Oct 69; (S-GP 4) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 17 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/389-12, 21 Oct 69; JMF 911/323 (26 Nov 68) sec 2.

12. News Conference, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, 20 Oct 69, Public Statements, 1969.

"The budget limitations," he noted, "reduce B-52 and tactical air/strike sorties to September 1969 experience levels, which supported operations against a reduced level of enemy combat activity." In addition, the drawdown in air capabilities had reduced allied ability to respond to multiple contingencies with massed firepower. General Abrams observed that "massed air strikes have in the past been the only real allied reserve."[13]

Project 703 also reduced naval gunfire support in Vietnam. Whereas, in January 1969, there averaged 11 ships on the gunline firing 41,200 rounds, by December the average had fallen to 5.5 ships firing only 23,049 rounds. Moreover, the ships that remained were generally types with guns of shorter range.[14]

Public Opinion

Even as budget restraints were having a direct and measurable effect on the war in Vietnam, the less tangible influence of protest and outspoken public discussion at home came to bear more fully on US policy in Southeast Asia during the latter half of 1969. As Secretary Laird had predicted, the Nixon Administration was the beneficiary of at least a partial suspension of criticism while results from the application of new thought and leadership were awaited. The beginning of actual withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam, coupled with the combat lull that lasted from early June into August, helped extend the respite to the full six months that Mr. Laird had foreseen. But the relative calm could not continue in the face of growing public dissatisfaction with US involvement and the emotional commitment to seeing its end.

In late June a newly organized antiwar group, the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, opened a national office in Washington. Its leaders planned a massive demonstration, or "moratorium," on college campuses throughout the country on 15 October. Their fundamental demand was for a quickly negotiated peace or a "firm public commitment" by the

13. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 13589 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 19 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69.
14. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. V-181.

President to the "total withdrawal of American troops in a short period of time."[15]

The first unit returning from Vietnam, the 3d Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, arrived in the United States on 9 July 1969 at McChord Air Force Base and was welcomed the next day at a ceremony in nearby Seattle. The troops paraded and Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor extended official greetings, stating that their presence gave "tangible evidence" of the progress being made in Vietnam. But antiwar demonstrators interrupted Secretary Resor's remarks with shouts of: "Bring them all home now!"[16]

In terms of public protest August was uneventful, but September saw more strident criticism of President Nixon and his war policy. With the return of students to the campuses for the fall term the preparations and publicity for the October Moratorium were stepped up. In addition, there was increasing concern in Congress over the war. On 25 September, Republican Senator Charles E. Goodell of New York proposed legislation to require the withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam by the end of 1970. Reflecting the sentiment of the "dove" group in Congress, Senator Goodell wanted a definite timetable as the means of putting the South Vietnamese Government on notice that it must assume the responsibility for combat and make necessary internal reforms. His purpose, Senator Goodell said, was to help the President and Congress develop a workable plan for ending US participation in the war, since there was "no visible plan of this kind" at present. To assure referral to the Foreign Relations Committee rather than the less sympathetic Armed Services or Appropriations Committees, Senator Goodell introduced his proposal as an amendment to the foreign aid bill. Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and a prominent Senate dove, welcomed the Goodell suggestion, but Secretary of Defense Laird called it "a grave error." He warned that the proposed cutoff of funds for maintaining US personnel in Vietnam after 1 December 1970 would impose a commitment that it might not be possible to meet.[17]

15. NY Times, 1 Jul 69, 14.
16. Ibid., 11 Jul 69, 1.
17. Ibid., 26 Sep 69, 1.

The Goodell proposal was followed in rapid succession by other actions indicative of growing impatience in the Congress. Representatives Donald W. Riegle, Jr., of Michigan and Paul N. McCloskey, Jr., of California offered a resolution to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964--the basic authority for US combat action in Southeast Asia. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield suggested a US cease-fire followed by all-Vietnamese elections and a coalition government in Saigon.[18]

Several days later, on 3 October, Republican Senator Charles H. Percy urged President Nixon to respond to the current pause in the fighting by suspending all bombing, shelling, and offensive ground operations in South Vietnam and continuing the suspension as long as the enemy took no advantage of the situation. His proposal, the Illinois Senator said, would leave US troops free to defend themselves while not missing an opportunity to curtail the hostilities; he believed that similar opportunities had been missed in the past. Senator Percy did not agree, however, with the Goodell proposal, stating that it might lead to a hasty pullout that could jeopardize the remaining US forces.[19]

President Nixon was fully aware of the mounting opposition to the war, and the actions of high Administration officials had already taken on the appearance of a concerted countereffort. On 16 September, the President had announced a second US troop withdrawal of 35,000.[20] At a press conference the next day, Secretary Laird suggested that the troop reduction might have "a very significant effect" on Selective Service requirements. Two days later, on 19 September, President Nixon cancelled the draft calls for the months of November and December, totaling 50,000 inductees. Instead, the previously announced quota for October would be spread out over the last three months of the year.[21]

President Nixon held a news conference on 26 September and was asked about a cutoff date for US military action in

18. Ibid., 26 Sep 69, 1; 4 Oct 69, 14; 5 Oct 69, IV 1.
19. Ibid., 4 Oct 69, 14.
20. See Ch. 4, p. 124.
21. News Conference, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, Pentagon, 17 Sep 69, Public Statements, 1969, pp. 2133-2134, Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 731-732.

Vietnam, specifically the Goodell suggestion of the previous day. He replied that he had considered a number of proposals along this line within the Executive Branch, besides noting the suggestions advanced with "the best of intentions" by members of Congress. But to impose an arbitrary limit for the complete withdrawal of US forces would undercut the US negotiating position and insure the continuation of the war until the stipulated deadline. It would thus eliminate the hope that he still entertained (despite the lack of progress in the Paris talks) of ending the war before the close of 1970 or the middle of 1971. "Any incentive for the enemy to negotiate," said the President, "is destroyed if he is told in advance that if he just waits for 18 months we will be out anyway."

A reporter also asked the President about the approaching student moratorium. Mr. Nixon responded that he was aware of the antiwar activity and expected it, but stated "under no circumstances will I be affected whatever by it."[22]

Four days later, on the morning of 30 September, President Nixon met with the Republican leaders of Congress, Senator Hugh Scott and Representative Gerald Ford, to discuss the Vietnam situation. Emerging from the White House meeting, Senator Scott and Congressman Ford criticized both the forthcoming demonstrations and congressional proposals for predetermined deadlines, rebuking those who would settle for less than "a firm peace." They also appealed for a 60-day suspension of war criticism to allow the President time to pursue a negotiated solution.[23]

Following the meeting with the congressional leaders, the President presented a unit citation to the 1st Marine Regiment of the 1st Marine Division, recently returned from Vietnam. In a White House rose garden ceremony, he commended the Marines for their conduct in a difficult war, adding that it was hard for men to fight day after day when the nation appeared divided. Then, in remarks obviously directed at the war critics, he stated:

22. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 748-749, 753.
23. NY Times, 10 Oct 69, p. 1.

> We think we can bring peace. We will bring peace. The peace that we will be able to achieve will be due to the fact that Americans, when it really counted, did not buckle, did not run away, but stood fast so that the enemy knew that it had no choice except to negotiate--negotiate a fair peace . . . .[24]

The calls of the President and the Republican congressional leaders for support of the Administration's Vietnam policy did not allay criticism of the war. A Gallup Poll released on 4 October showed that only a slight majority of 52 percent--a small decline since the previous poll in July--approved the President's handling of the war. Moreover, the latest poll indicated that disillusionment over the war had reached a new high, with six out of ten people considering US involvement in Vietnam a mistake.[25]

On the same day that this poll was released, the Vietnam Moratorium Committee announced that it was joining with the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, a coalition of peace, black, women's, student, welfare, labor, and religious groups, for a fall offensive against the war. Together they pledged massive and continuing demonstrations, including the 15 October moratorium and a march on Washington in mid-November.[26]

On 6 October, a bipartisan group of nine Senators and Congressmen called a news conference at the Capitol to endorse the 15 October moratorium, which they called a "positive, constructive, and nonviolent" demonstration of opposition to the war. Simultaneously, at another press conference at the Rayburn House Office Building, sponsors unveiled a resolution endorsing the President's announced troop withdrawal and encouraging further force reductions. Co-sponsored by 108 Representatives, the resolution was stated broadly enough to attract support from both supporters and critics of the Administration.[27]

24. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 765-767.
25. NY Times, 5 Oct 69, 9; 31 Jul 69, 11.
26. Ibid., 5 Oct 69, 70.
27. Ibid., 5 Oct 69, 8.

In a further effort to rally support for the Administration, Secretary of Defense Laird publicly confirmed the August change in the mission of US forces in Vietnam.[28] There had been no public announcement of the change at the time it was approved, but at a 9 October press conference, Mr. Laird revealed that revised instructions, issued two months previously, gave the "highest" priority to Vietnamization of the war. While refusing to go into detail, he acknowledged that the new instructions contained no provision for the maintenance of "maximum military pressure" on the enemy. He hastened to add that the old instructions had not done so either; the phrase had been employed by President Johnson.

The Secretary was questioned about the decrease in enemy infiltration and the lower level of enemy action. Mr. Laird replied that he was encouraged by this situation and the resulting drop in US casualties, although the Nixon Administration was unwilling to interpret such developments as a conclusive sign of enemy willingness to wind down the war. "The best place to give signals," he said, "is in Paris."[29]

On the same day, General Wheeler returned from an inspection trip in Vietnam. On his arrival in Saigon several days before, he had predicted a new round of enemy fighting in the near future. During his stay he heard various reports and briefings but made no further public statements. Nor did he have anything to tell reporters on his return, and his assessment for the Secretary of Defense was oral. His conclusion, relayed to the press by Secretary Laird, was that the field commanders had achieved "a real momentum" in Vietnam under their new orders.[30]

Even before his news conference, Secretary Laird had drawn the attention of his advisers, including the Joint

28. See Ch. 3, pp. 97-99.
29. News Conference, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, Pentagon, 9 Oct 69, Public Statements, 1969, pp. 2252-2266.
30. Ibid. NY Times, 5 Oct 69, 1; 10 Oct 69, 1. Interview, Willard J. Webb with Mr. Paul M. Kearney, Admin. Asst. to CJCS, 14 Jun 73. (Mr. Kearney accompanied General Wheeler to Vietnam on this trip.)

Chiefs of Staff, to the drop in the enemy movement of men and materiel into South Vietnam. He asked their views regarding the US response either to a continuation of the current situation or to an upsurge in the rate of enemy infiltration.[31]

On 13 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the matter and approved a reply for the Secretary of Defense, which General Wheeler forwarded the following day. He cautioned the Secretary against any action that did not recognize two facts: such lulls in infiltration had been experienced before; the enemy retained the capacity to resume quickly the movement of men and materiel into South Vietnam. With these points in mind, General Wheeler then discussed the alternative of continued reduced infiltration. Until there was "clear evidence" that North Vietnam intended a positive signal, the United States should continue to apply the level of pressure that had initially produced the decrease. But at the same time, the United States should publicly acknowledge the reduction and, if it continued, should respond with a third troop withdrawal "keyed to the reduced enemy troop movement."

For use in the event the enemy increased the rate of infiltration, General Wheeler presented the Secretary of Defense a whole spectrum of actions ranging from continuation of operations at current levels to launching unlimited air and naval attacks against North Vietnam. He selected the following five as the most practical: continuation of present operations, inflicting the heaviest punishment on the enemy possible within current resources and policy limitations; suspension of present US troop withdrawals with announcement of reasons for such action; publication of the facts regarding increased enemy infiltration, to make clear the enemy responsibility for prolonging the war; use of the Paris talks as a forum to expose enemy bad faith; and increased military pressures on North Vietnam through a range of options already identified by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Wheeler endorsed the first of these choices as the most feasible.[32]

31. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., "North Vietnamese Infiltration," 8 Oct 69, JMF 912/309 (13 Oct 69).

32. (TS-GP 3) CM-4629-69 to SecDef, 14 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/539, 14 Oct 69, same file. Secretary Laird made no formal reply; presumably he noted the JCS views for possible future use.

Meanwhile, public expectation mounted as the 15 October moratorium neared. To remove one target of student resentment, President Nixon arranged for the retirement of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Hershey from his post as Director of the Selective Service System on 10 October. The 76-year old general had served in that capacity since 1941, and the current generation of students had come to regard him as a symbol of the draft system and the continuing war.[33]

On the following day, 11 October, President Nixon met with the Chairman and the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary Laird, and Dr. Kissinger to hear an oral report of General Wheeler's visit to Vietnam. General Wheeler described the current military situation but did not reveal any startingly new developments in Vietnam. Nor did he make any significant recommendations concerning the war. It is likely, although not apparent from the available record, that the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the approaching moratorium. A White House spokesman merely announced that the meeting took place and lasted nearly three hours, but gave no details of the discussion; the files of the Joint Chiefs of Staff contain no record of the meeting.[34]

On the same day, 11 October, the presidents of 79 private colleges and universities, including five of the prestigious Ivy League schools, denounced the war. Speaking as individuals and not for their institutions, they appealed to President Nixon for a stepped-up withdrawal from the Vietnam conflict, which stood "as a denial of so much that is best in our society."[35]

President Nixon's statement at his 26 September news conference that he would not be affected by the October moratorium had rankled the antiwar critics and brought a loud public outcry. On 13 October, just two days before the

33. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, p. 788. NY Times, 11 Oct 69, 1.

34. NY Times, 12 Oct 69, 3. Interview, Willard J. Webb with Mr. Paul M. Kearney, Admin. Asst. to CJCS, 14 Jun 73. Mr Kearney, who accompanied General Wheeler to Vietnam in October 1969, remembered only the general tenor of General Wheeler's report, which was given orally.

35. NY Times, 12 Oct 69, 1.

demonstration, the President sought to explain his position. He did so through a letter, released to the press, that was in response to one from a Georgetown University student criticizing the 26 September statement. There was a clear distinction, the President pointed out, between public opinion and a public demonstration. To listen to public opinion was one thing, but to be swayed by a public demonstration was another. He recognized that the planned moratorium would indicate a great concern about the war, but he was already aware of and shared that concern. Consequently, the question was whether, in the absence of any new evidence or arguments, he should turn aside from "a carefully considered course." He answered that his current policy resulted from exhaustive study and "our own best judgment." "To abandon that policy merely because of a public demonstration would therefore be an act of gross irresponsibility on my part."[36]

In a further effort to divert attention from the moratorium, White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler announced on 13 October that President Nixon would address the nation on the Vietnam situation on the evening of 3 November. The timing was keyed, Mr. Ziegler said, to the anniversary of announcement of the November 1968 bombing halt over North Vietnam.[37]

The long-promised moratorium of 15 October 1969 was the largest demonstration to date against the Vietnam war. Protests, expressed in noisy street rallies, teach-ins, forums, candlelight processions, and prayer vigils, took place across the country, and what was originally planned as a student activity spilled over to include people of all ages, from various strata of society. Although it was impossible to measure the number of participants, estimates ranged from one to several million. The largest protest occurred in the northeastern United States, where over 100,000 jamed the Boston Common, and in California, where several cities were the scene of spirited rallies. The demonstrations were peaceful for the most part, although occasional violence did occur.[38]

36. Ltr, Pres to Mr. Randy J. Hicks, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 13 Oct 69, Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 798-799.
37. NY Times, 13 Oct 69, 1.
38. Ibid., 15 Oct 69, 1; 16 Oct 69, 1; 19 Oct 69, IV 1.

There were also attempts at counterdemonstrations, though these were less well organized. Veterans' organizations, many fire and police departments, and municipalities across the country flew the flag at full staff, in contrast to the half-staff flags of the moratorium, to indicate support for the President. Opposition to the moratorium was also shown by motorists driving during the day with their headlights on, and estimates placed about 10 percent of the cars on 15 October in that category.[39]

In accordance with his expressed position, President Nixon took no notice of the moratorium. He remained at the White House on 15 October conferring with advisers on Vietnam, working on Latin American policy, and hearing an urban affairs subcommittee report on education. Despite the lack of presidential notice, the organizers expressed satisfaction with the moratorium. Terming it "a good start," they looked forward to the next demonstration planned for 15 November. They were convinced that these "massive" outpourings of opposition to the war would force the President to alter his Vietnam policy.[40]

The President's 3 November Speech

With the moratorium over, attention turned to the announced presidential speech on 3 November. Many anticipated a dramatic announcement concerning the settlement of the war, but they were disappointed. In the speech, President Nixon reaffirmed the Vietnam policy set forth in his 14 May address.[41] The United States would not unilaterally or precipitately withdraw from Vietnam, Mr. Nixon said. Rather, he had put forward comprehensive new peace proposals at the negotiating table and had pursued other initiatives through private channels.

The President also had a plan to end the war regardless of developments in the negotiations. This was Vietnamization--the strengthening of the RVNAF to assume the combat operations and the progressive withdrawal of US troops. Vietnamization had been launched following Secretary Laird's visit to Vietnam the preceding March. "Under the plan," the President said,

39. Ibid., 16 Oct 69, 1.
40. Ibid., 16 Oct 69, 1; 17 Oct 69, 1 and 20; 19 Oct 69, IV 1.
41. See Ch. 3, pp. 85-86.

"I ordered first a substantial increase in the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces."

> In July, on my visit to Vietnam, I changed General Abrams' orders to that they were consistent with the objectives of our new policies. Under the new orders, the primary mission of our troops is to enable the South Vietnamese forces to assume the full responsibility for the security of South Vietnam.

The President said that the complete withdrawal of US combat ground forces had been worked out with the South Vietnamese. The withdrawal would be made from strength, not weakness, and would follow an orderly timetable. He did not intend to announce the timetale in advance, and he warned the leaders in Hanoi against seeking advantage through an increase in violence. The President would not hesitate to take "strong and effective measures" to deal with any enemy action that threatened the US forces remaining in Vietnam.

In sum, the President saw only two choices for ending the war: an immediate withdrawal or a continued search for a negotiated settlement while proceeding with Vietnamization. Since he had already rejected the first alternative, President Nixon chose the second and asked public support for that decision.[42]

At a briefing for the press just before the President's broadcast, Dr. Kissinger distributed the text of the address. Indicating the importance that the President attached to this policy statement, Dr. Kissinger told the reporters: "Nothing that we have done since we came into office has been done with as much seriousness, I may say with as much anguish, as this speech." He was asked about the change in orders to COMUSMACV, but he refused elaboration, stating that the President had treated the matter as well as could be.[43]

The reference in the address to modification of General Abrams' orders was not a fresh revelation, since Secretary

42. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 901-909.

43. (U) Background Briefing by Dr. Kissinger, "President's Vietnam Speech," White House, 8:20 PM, 3 Nov 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 69 (President's 4 [3?] Nov Speech Folder).

Laird had spoken on the subject nearly a month earlier, but it caught the attention of newsmen. Both the Secretary and General Wheeler were concerned that the President's remarks might be misinterpreted as indicating a reduction in US military action, and General Wheeler alerted CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to this possibility. He suggested that, in any discussions with the press, the two commanders place primary emphasis on the improvement of South Vietnamese combat capabilities through the accelerated provision of equipment and training. In fact, General Wheeler told them, the President's own words constituted "an adequate response to the questions regarding what changes have been made over the past several months."[44]

In a late evening newscast on 4 November, CBS reported that General Abrams would resign because of the change in his orders. The following morning, the Department of Defense denied this report. General Wheeler characterized it as a "rather obvious fishing expedition" and cautioned General Abrams to expect more such efforts. He reiterated that the field commanders should stress the "primacy of the program to modernize and improve the RVNAF."[45]

President Nixon's Vietnam address received a mixed reaction. Administration supporters, both in Congress and across the country, applauded the speech, congressional doves expressed disappointment over the lack of anything new, and the leaders of the approaching 15 November demonstration saw that feature of the address as giving added impetus to their protest. A White House spokesman, however, said the speech had evoked the largest mail response in over 30 years, and a new Gallup poll revealed a 77 percent favorable response.[46]

As the 15 November event drew closer, other citizen groups sought to demonstrate that the student mobilization was not representative of the views of the American people at large. They held meetings throughout the country on 11 November, using the Veterans' Day ceremonies to express support for the President and his Vietnam policy. General of the Army Omar N. Bradley urged a Los Angeles rally to "keep the faith," and Congressman Mendel Rivers, Chairman of the House

44. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 13762 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 4 Nov 69, same file.
45. (~~TS~~) Msgs, CJCS 13789 and 13830 to COMUSMACV, 5 and 6 Nov 69, same file.
46. NY Times, 4 Nov 69, 1; 5 Nov 69, 1.

Armed Services Committee, spoke in a similar vein to a gathering at the Washington Monument.[47]

President Nixon lunched with congressional leaders at the Capitol on 13 November and visited both houses of Congress. He thanked the House of Representatives for the resolution passed the previous day that supported a "just peace" in Vietnam along the lines of his 3 November speech, and he expressed appreciation to the more than 60 members of the Senate who had signed a letter to Ambassador Lodge in Paris, similarly pledging support for a negotiated settlement. In addition, the President appealed to both chambers for "continued support and understanding."[48]

The Mobilization against the War in Vietnam--"the Mobe"--began with various activities in Washington on 14 November, including a "march against death" from Arlington Cemetery past the White House and a demonstration at the South Vietnamese Embassy, which had to be dispersed with tear gas. But the major events were the march and rally at the Washington Monument the following day, 15 November, where the protestors heard various speakers, including Senators Eugene McCarthy, Charles Goodell, and George McGovern. It was the largest mass demonstration in Washington's history; police estimated that 250,000 persons attended while press reports claimed crowds in excess of 300,000. The "Mobe" was peaceful until the rally broke up at dusk, when radical splinter groups clashed with police and were repelled with tear gas.[49]

President Nixon adhered to his position of not being swayed by demonstrations and took no public notice of the Mobilization. The protest leaders claimed success, but what they had accomplished was not clear, beyond demonstrating again that many in the United States opposed the war. In fact, it appeared that the "Mobe" also rallied public support for the President. A Gallup poll conducted during the Mobilization weekend showed a sharp increase in confidence in the President, with 68 percent of those polled approving President Nixon's handling of his job.[50]

The "Mobe" was the high point of dissent during 1969, and public pressure against the Vietnam war eased during the

47. Ibid., 12 Nov 69, 1.
48. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 930-935.
49. NY Times, 15 Nov 69, 1; 16 Nov 69, 1 and IV 1.
50. Ibid., 23 Nov 69. 1.

remainder of the year. Immediately following the 14-15 November demonstration, the Vietnam Moratorium Committee scheduled three days of protest in December. But these proved to be insignificant affairs, receiving scant public notice.[51] The "Mobe," combined with the 15 October Moratorium, did mark the end of the relative immunity from war criticism that the Nixon Administration had enjoyed during its early months in office. Opponents were no longer reticent in charging that "Johnson's war" had become "Nixon's war," and the President and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would have to give even greater regard to public opinion in their deliberations and decisions on Vietnam.

Atrocities

In 1969 two events came to light that further decreased popular support for the war. One was the so-called "Green Beret Case," in which officers of the 5th Special Forces Group were accused of murdering one of their own Vietnamese agents. The Officers, commanded by Colonel Robert B. Rheault, insisted in their defense that they had been following oral orders given by CIA representatives in Vietnam. Public announcement of the affair was made on 6 August 1969, and formal charges were lodged against the six officers on 18 September. Throughout the investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency denied having ordered the agent's execution. However, with presidential approval, the agency refused to allow any of its personnel to participate in the court-martial proceedings. Without CIA testimony the accused men could not obtain a fair trial, and Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor announced on 29 September that the court-martial would be terminated without a definitive resolution of the charges before it.[52]

The second occurrence had a much larger impact on public opinion. It began to be revealed in March 1969 when Ronald Ridenhour, an ex-soldier who had served with members of Task Force Barker, wrote to high-ranking members of Congress, Administration officials, and military leaders

51. Ibid., 18 Nov 69, 23; 10 Dec 69, 12; 13 Dec 69, 16.
52. (S) Msgs, COMUSMACV 9072, 9433, and 10247 to CJCS, CINCPAC, and CSA, 14 and 22 Jul 69 and 8 Aug 69, OCJCS Files 091 Vietnam, Jul and Aug 69. NY Times, 6 Aug 69, 1; 29 Aug 69, 1; 19 Sep 69, 1; 30 Sep 69, 1; 24 Oct 69, 15.

alleging that a massacre had taken place in the village of My Lai He described the slaughter of hundreds of innocent civilians by US troops in the spring of 1968. In April 1969, the Army began an investigation that ultimately charged Lieutenant William L. Calley, Jr., with killing 109 "Oriental human beings, occupants of the village of My Lai 4," on 16 March 1968.53

Despite the large number of people who had knowledge of the incident, the story was not told in the press until November 1969. When the details were revealed, news commentators and other major opinionmakers for the most part expressed shock and moral revulsion. While some spokesmen thought the judgment should be tempered by a greater "realism" about the nature of war, particularly in the unusual circumstances of the Vietnam conflict, the disclosure of morally indefensible action by Americans had a permanent effect on the tone of public discussion.

On 24 November 1969, Secretary Resor and General William C. Westmoreland appointed Lieutenant General Willaim R. Peers to head a panel to examine the investigation of My Lai originally conducted in the Americal Divison. The Peers Commission interviewed almost 400 witnesses from December 1969 to March 1970 and recommended that charges be preferred against 14 officers, including the former Americal Division commander and then West Point commandant, Major General Samuel W. Koster. He was subsequently reduced in grade to Brigadier General for failure to mount an adequate investigation. Ultimately the only officer to face court-martial as a result of the Peers inquiry was Colonel Oran K. Henderson, who was acquitted of all charges in December 1971.54

The trial of Lieutenant William L. Calley had begun more than a year earlier, in November 1970. It proved to be the longest in US military history, with day-by-day press coverage keeping the matter constantly before the public. On 29 March 1971 Lieutenant Calley was found guilty of the premeditated murder of not fewer than 22 Vietnamese civilians. His company commander, Captain Ernest L. Medina,

53. Seymour M. Hersh, My Lai 4 (1971), pp. 104-143.
54. Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident, vol. I. NY Times, 18 Dec 71, 1.

was tried and acquitted of all charges in connection with My Lai in September 1971.[55]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not directly participate in the investigations surrounding either the Green Beret case or My Lai, but General Wheeler did assure the Secretary of Defense in December 1969 "that all practical means have been taken to insure that our forces in SVN comply with rules of engagement and the Geneva Conventions with regard to the treatment of non-combatants." In March 1970, in a message that reviewed the findings of the Peers Commission regarding deficiencies in the Army's procedures for reporting war crimes, the Chairman counseled COMUSMACV on possible remedial measures.[56]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff Oppose a Cease-fire

During the latter half of 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, fully aware of the growing public dissatisfaction with US involvement, were mindful of its potential effect on both policy and operations in the Vietnam war. On 29 October 1969, the Chief of Staff, Army, brought to the attention of his colleagues the "very heavy pressure" on the Administration to seek an early cease-fire, unilateral if necessary, in Vietnam. General Westmoreland expected this pressure to be intensified during the next few days, while the President's 3 November speech was reaching final form, and he thought it appropriate for the Joint Chiefs of Staff to furnish the Secretary of Defense their views.[57]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense on 31 October that they opposed any unilateral US cease-fire or a more general one that was "obviously" forced on the Republic of Vietnam. While recognizing that most of the proposals for a cease-fire in Vietnam were well-intentioned, they thought the promoters of such action failed to foresee the probable consequences. "As long as the North

55. Richard Hammer, The Court-Martial of Lt. Calley (1971), pp. 363, 364. NY Times, 23 Sep 71, 1.

56. (S) CM-4778-69 to SecDef, 11 Dec 69; (S) Msg, CJCS 3793 to COMUSMACV, "Peers Report and Reporting Procedures Relating to War Crimes," 18 Mar 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 69.

57. (TS-GP 3) CSAM 268-69 to JCS, 29 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/546, 29 Oct 69, JMF 911/305 (29 Oct 69).

Vietnamese pursue their objectives by military means and remain intransigent at the negotiating table, there is little to suggest that a cease-fire would lead to a permanent cessation of hostilities and an enemy withdrawal from the Republic of Vietnam and adjacent sanctuaries." The Joint Chiefs of Staff also opposed any cease-fire without the prior concurrence of the Republic of Vietnam. Although the present government in Saigon had made substantial progress in achieving public support, they doubted that it could survive a settlement dictated by Washington. In addition, a cease-fire forced upon the Vietnamese ally could damage the pacification program, RVNAF morale, and US-RVN relations, and could bring into question US resolve to fulfill its commitments throughout the world. They asked the Secretary to forward their views to the President.58

Perhaps because he had seen an initial draft of the President's speech and knew that it contained no proposal for an immediate cease-fire, the Secretary of Defense did not submit the JCS views to the White House before the 3 November address. Instead, after a careful review, Secretary Laird forwarded the JCS memorandum to the President on 22 November 1969. He agreed with his military advisers on some points but differed with them in two areas where he believed the JCS position would unduly restrict US flexibility. First, the Secretary considered that it bordered on subordination of US interests to those of the Republic of Vietnam to tie action on a cease-fire to full RVN concurrence. "We must retain the right to make or accept cease-fire proposals on our own," he believed, "although preferably with GVN agreement." In his second point, Mr. Laird suggested that a "unilateral cease-fire by US ground combat units, as distinct from US military personnel attached to, or supporting, RVNAF units," might become both desirable and feasible in the future. It would be a logical step in the Vietnamization process, providing a test of RVNAF ability, South Vietnamese morale, and enemy reaction. At the same time, it would not restrict the freedom of action of US forces to defend themselves.59

58. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-690-69 to SecDef, 31 Oct 69, App to JCS 2472/546-1, 30 Oct 69, same file.

59. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Cease-Fire in the Republic of Vietnam," 22 Nov 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on a US Cease-fire Initiative (U)," 22 Nov 69; Atts to JCS 2472/546-2, 24 Nov 69, same file.

On 3 December, the Deputy Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review alternative military responses to back up the statement in the President's 3 November address that any increased action threatening US forces in South Vietnam would be met with "strong and effective" measures. The Director of the Joint Staff notified CINCPAC of this requirement on 5 December, reviewing for him some 24 possible options that had already been considered at various levels in Washington. Nineteen of these were some form of attack on North Vietnam, ranging from naval gunfire on a selected port to a full resumption of air and naval operations. The remaining options provided for: increased operations in the lower portion of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), including strike of observed enemy targets, pursuit of attacking enemy forces, and ground operations; air, naval, and artillery strike of targets in the DMZ above the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL); pursuit of attacking enemy troops into Laos and Cambodia; and strike of targets in Cambodia supporting enemy efforts in South Vietnam. The Director requested CINCPAC to provide comments on these options or furnish suggestions of his own.60

Admiral McCain replied on 7 December:

> Peacemeal application of military power neither reduces the enemy's capability to increase his activity in RVN or his will to continue the conflict. Our experience over the past few years clearly indicates that gradualism only hardens the enemy's will to resist and elicits the same outraged denouncements from certain quarters in the United States and overseas as would follow a professional military effort against the enemy's capability. Since all options have a common political liability, any US response should be designed to accrue both maximum political and military advantages. Therefore, any option that does not meet the President's guidance of "strong and effective action" will not meet the objective of reducing the jeopardy of our forces and should be summarily eliminated from further consideration.

60. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS (DJS) 15289 to C/S PACOM, 5 Dec 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 69.

As his first choice, CINCPAC recommended the resumption of air and naval operations against North Vietnam, "subject to minimum operational restraints." This action should begin without warning and continue for as long as necessary. In conjunction with this campaign, CINCPAC also recommended an increase in monthly B-52 sorties from 1,400 to 1,800; authority for allied ground and air forces to pursue attacking enemy forces into Cambodia, Laos, and the DMZ; the conduct of ground operations in the southern half of the DMZ; and suspension of the planned redeployment of US forces.[61]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 17 December their proposals for responses to increased enemy action. They included most of CINCPAC's recommendations and divided their suggestions into three categories: actions in North Vietnam, responses in South Vietnam, and options outside of Vietnam. Seven possible actions in North Vietnam ranged in increasing scale of severity from naval harassment of shipping to resumption of air and naval operations throughout the country, except for the Hanoi, Haiphong, and Chinese buffer zone areas. Proposed options within South Vietnam provided for: ground operations in the DMZ below the PMDL to counter enemy activity; authorization to pursue the enemy into the DMZ south of the Demarcation Line; increased operations by B-52 and tactical aircraft; revision of COMUSMACV's mission to allow exertion of "maximum pressure" on the enemy in South Vietnam, using all available forces; and deferral of any planned troop withdrawals. For actions elsewhere, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested artillery and air strikes on enemy targets in Cambodia, authority to pursue enemy forces into both Cambodia and Laos for limited distances, increased air operations in Laos, and quarantine of Cambodia.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that it was impossible to select the most desirable option, or combination of options, in advance of the actual situation. They were convinced, however, that the United States must respond to any increased enemy activity with effective action. To do otherwise might set back the Vietnamization program, undermine South Vietnamese confidence, and produce further adverse reaction at home if US casualties increased. The Joint Chiefs of Staff presented the argument CINCPAC had advanced concerning the ineffectiveness of a gradual

61. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 072303Z Dec 69, same file.

or incremental application of military power as the means of achieving a "strong and effective" response. They repeated the recommendation submitted on 29 November[62] in connection with troops withdrawals: any expansion of enemy action in South Vietnam should be met with a cancellation and, if necessary, a reversal of planned US redeployments and the initiation of an air and naval campaign against North Vietnam.[63]

Combat Operations, August-December 1969

In the end, there was no occasion to carry out any of the options suggested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Combat action during the last weeks of December reflected the generally low level of activity that had prevailed for some months. Allied operations in the last five months of 1969 continued in the pattern of the earlier months of the year. United States and RVN forces maintained pressure on the enemy, seeking out main force units and disrupting enemy base areas and infiltration routes. The scale of combat actions dwindled; allied operations consisted primarily of small unit ambushes, reconnaissance in force, and detailed searches, using waterborne and air assets as appropriate. Night ambushes were also employed extensively to detect and prevent enemy movement in the hours of darkness.

The last five months of 1969 also saw the first withdrawal of US combat forces from South Vietnam and expanded participation of the RVNAF in combat. Redeployment of the 3d Marine Division from I CTZ began in July and was completed during the late fall. In all, 18,483 US Marines left the northern provinces of South Vietnam. Their operating area was taken over by the US 101st Airborne Division (Ambl) and the 1st ARVN Division. The latter was considered by US military commanders to be one of the best RVNAF divisions, and it performed well throughout the remainder of the year.[64]

62. See Ch. 4, p. 128.
63. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-764-69 to SecDef, 17 Dec 69, Encl to JCS 2472/559-1, 12 Dec 69, JMF 907/520 (3 Dec 69).
64. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-60 - V-62.

The US 9th Infantry Division redeployed from the Delta, beginning in early July. With the departure of its last troops by the end of August, no US forces remained in IV CTZ except for advisers and air support units. For the rest of 1969, ground operations in IV CTZ consisted of small unit patrols and ambushes. There were a few contacts each day, as ARVN forces supporting pacification sought to disrupt the enemy lines of communication and to penetrate enemy base areas. Apprehension that the RVNAF takeover of the Delta might bring a regression in security proved unfounded. and progress in both security and pacification continued.[65]

Commenting on the US redeployments, General Abrams noted in mid-October that, prior to the beginning of the withdrawals, US maneuver battalions had constituted one-third of the total allied combat force in South Vietnam. In the first six months of 1969, they had accounted for over two-thirds of the enemy's losses in men and materiel. But, he continued, by 15 December, if planned redeployments were carried out, allied maneuver battalions would be reduced to about 82 percent of their pre-July 1969 levels. This reduction, combined with the lowered tactical air and B-52 sorties stemming from recent budget cuts, would significantly restrict allied flexibility to meet enemy initiatives.[66]

Enemy activity in South Vietnam during the latter half of 1969 was at a low level. The pause in enemy action that followed the June high point continued throughout July and into early August and was accompanied by a similar decline in enemy infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam. But the lull ended abruptly on 11-12 August when the enemy launched one of his high points, or countrywide offensives. Another occurred in early September. These two late summer high points followed the pattern of those of May and June. The enemy undertook countrywide shellings of allied military installations and population centers together with limited ground attacks. The enemy effort in the second round of incidents, however, was of lesser intensity. That of August consisted of some 145 attacks-by-fire, including a shelling of the US Naval Support Activities Hospital at Da Nang that

65. Ibid., pp. V-108 - V-112.
66. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 13589 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 19 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69.

injured 18 US personnel, and of nearly 40 ground assaults. In contrast, only 97 fire attacks and 10 ground assaults were reported for the offensive of 4-6 September 1969.[67]

On 4 September, in the midst of the enemy offensive, Radio Hanoi announced the death of President Ho Chi Minh the previous day. He had served as President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam since its creation, and the North Vietnamese revered him as a great patriot and father image. He enjoyed a tremendous respect throughout all of Vietnam, not only in the north, but in the noncommunist south as well. Vice President Ton Duc Thang succeeded Ho as President, but, at 81, Ton was likely to be only a figurehead until a stronger leader emerged. Ho's death touched off considerable speculation both within the US Government and in the press over who would succeed to the effective leadership of North Vietnam. The principal contenders were thought to be Premier Pham Van Dong, Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, Party First Secretary Le Duan, and Troung Chinh, a Politburo member and Chairman of the National Assembly. The passage of Ho Chi Minh from the scene, however, brought no change in the enemy conduct of the war.[68]

The enemy did commemorate Ho's death with a cease-fire announced by the Viet Cong on 5 September. This memorial truce was to begin on 8 September and last for three days. United States officials left it to the Republic of Vietnam to decide the response to this enemy initiative. President Thieu declined to accept the cease-fire, citing previous instances when the Communists had failed to honor their own proposed truces. Despite the RVN decision, US military commanders instructed their troops to keep casualties to "an absolute minimum" during the designated cease-fire and to conduct no offensive ground operations except for the protection of forces. The RVNAF continued normal operations, however, and the enemy violated his own truce within an

67. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 187-69, 12 Aug 69; 188-69, 13 Aug 69; 207-69, 5 Sep 69; 208-69, 6 Sep 69; 209-69, 8 Sep 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. II-43, III-187 - III-194.

68. NY Times, 4 Sep 69, 1 and 17; 5 Sep 69, 10; 7 Sep 69, IV 1. (S) CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "North Vietnam after Ho Chi Minh: The Policy and Leadership Implications," 24 Sep 69, OCJCS File 091, Sep 69 (loose).

hour after it began. During the three-day period, US/RVNAF forces reported a total of 52 major and 25 minor enemy attacks and 119 "incidents"; 14 US and 17 ARVN soldiers were killed.[69]

During the late summer and early fall, the United States and the Republic of Vietnam learned of enemy plans for the approaching winter/dry season, set forth in COSVN Resolutions 9 and 14. Resolution 9, which had been issued in July but did not fall into allied hands until early October, was the principal guidance for operations for the coming months. It continued the basic policy adopted earlier in the year. Recognizing that the VC/NVA could not win an immediate military victory, it set forth a strategy designed to bring an eventual military-political victory. Resolution 9 called for a scaling down of operations to conserve manpower and material, while maintaining the objective of inflicting high casualties on US troops to force larger US withdrawals. Other continuing goals included disruption of the pacification program and control of jungle and mountain bases and rural lowlands, particularly in the Mekong Delta. Deployment of main, regional, and guerrilla forces was to be coordinated so that allied units would be tied down in the cities and stretched thin in rural areas; VC/NVA forces would attempt to draw allied troops away from their base areas, engaging them in locations where the enemy advantage would be increased.[70]

Resolution 14 of 14 October 1969 reinforced the policy in Resolution 9. It declared that guerrilla warfare must be intensifed, since this offered a means of coping with a vastly superior enemy, and a strong guerrilla base would be necessary to support future large-scale operations. Resolution 14 defined the organization and mission of guerrilla

69. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMS 210-69, 9 Sep 69; 211-69, 10 Sep 69; 212-69, 11 Sep 69. (S-GP 4) Msgs, COMUSMACV 11576, 11685, and 11637 to CJCS, 5, 7, and 6 Sep 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. V-10 - V-12.

70. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, III-127 - III-131.

forces, assigning them the primary task of subverting the pacification program and attacking the local RVN security forces.[71]

In his mid-October assessment of the military situation in Vietnam, which has already been cited, General Abrams reported about 230,000 enemy troops disposed in and about South Vietnam, capable of attempting a major offensive on relatively short notice, with the greatest threat occurring in III CTZ and northern I CTZ. Enemy losses for the first half of 1969, both in number of killed and number of ralliers to the Republic of Vietnam, had been higher than the average monthly losses in earlier years. Nevertheless, COMUSMACV said, the enemy had made no visible response to the US bombing halt begun the previous November or the US troop withdrawals made since July. All current signs indicated that the enemy retained his combat organization and continued to develop infiltration routes and support facilities. In addition, he had maintained and improved field logistics, stockpiling supplies in North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Despite heavy losses, the enemy sustained a force structure capable of absorbing replacement personnel rapidly and retained a command and control capability to direct large formations in battle. In summary, General Abrams said, "the 'system' required to achieve another operational high early in 1970 has been retained intact." But COMUSMACV was uncertain what the next move would be, believing that the enemy had two options in South Vietnam: to return to his previous pattern of operations with periods of intensified action followed by periods of relative lull; or to continue his current emphasis on attacks-by-fire, sapper tactics, and terrorism designed to increase allied casualties while reducing his own losses.[72]

As indicated above, the enemy had already chosen the latter option--the policy set forth in Resolution 9. Enemy activity in the last months of 1969 followed that document closely. The decline in the intensity of enemy actions, initiated in the spring with the shift from general offensives to periodic high points, continued and became more pronounced. In the fall of 1969, the enemy abandoned

71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-95 - III-97.

72. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 13589 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 19 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69.

countrywide high points for a program of corps-wide surges of activity. The first such surge occurred in IV CTZ in early October, followed by another in II CTZ in mid-October.[73]

The surge in IV CTZ reflected a growing enemy presence and interest in the Mekong Delta. The first major NVA unit, Regiment 18B, had been identified there during the summer, and NVA infiltration into VC units increased in the last months of the year. Not only did the enemy want to reassert his influence in the rice-rich Delta, but he apparently hoped to challenge the ARVN now that US ground troops had withdrawn from the area.[74]

United States officials in Washington followed the enemy activity in the Delta with careful attention, and on 10 November 1969, Dr. Kissinger relayed to General Wheeler the President's concern over the situation. President Nixon wanted an estimate of both North Vietnamese and Viet Cong capabilities and intentions to launch major attacks in IV Corps, the possible scale of such operations, and the allied recourses and plans for counteraction. Admiral Moorer, as Acting Chairman, passed this request to COMUSMACV on 11 November, and General Abrams provided complete information the same day. His assessment was endorsed by Admiral McCain, who thought that "the movement of NVA troops into the Delta has long term implications." The Viet Minh effort had begun there, he recalled, and reassertion of enemy strength in that area was an "important threat" to be guarded against. The Republic of Vietnam could not risk reversal of the current favorable trend in the Delta.[75]

73. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. III-135, III-198 - III-200.

74. Ibid., pp. III-191, V-109 - V-112.

75. (~~TS~~) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to CJCS, "Report on Situation in the Delta," 10 Nov 69; (~~TS~~) Msg, Actg CJCS 14043 to COMUSMACV 11 Nov 69; (~~TS~~) CM-4710-69 to Dr. Kissinger, 11 Nov 69; (~~S~~) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 160456Z Nov 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 69. The COMUSMACV assessment (Msg, MAC 14613, 11 Nov 69) contains SI material and was not used in preparing the above account.

Despite the enemy buildup in IV CTZ, no major action occurred there during the remainder of 1969. Enemy activity was directed primarily against the successful pacification program, and combat operations in the Delta continued at a low level during the last months of 1969 with the exception of the "surge" early in October and two others in November and December.[76]

The last major battle of 1969 occurred in the highlands of II CTZ around the Bu Prang and Duc Lap CIDG camps. The enemy launched an attack there on 28 October, and the action continued until he withdrew in early December. Two NVA regiments appeared to be testing the local ARVN forces in a pattern of attack resembling the Ben Het campaign earlier in the year. The battle was a prime example of implementation of the Resolution 9 strategy to engage the opponents at locations removed from allied base areas and advantageous to the VC/NVA. Despite the loss of some fire bases at the beginning of the campaign, the ARVN thwarted the enemy attack.[77]

There was a surge of enemy attacks in III and IV CTZs on the night of 2-3 December and a similar one in III CTZ on 7-8 December. Thereafter the volume and intensity of enemy actions dropped substantially throughout the remainder of the month, with enemy initiatives consisting largely of sporadic attacks-by-fire and small-scale ground probes.[78]

In an article appearing in late December 1969, General Vo Nguyen Giap summed up the North Vietnamese position on strategy for the war. He restated some of the principles he had enunciated in his speech of 22 June 1969: reliance on protracted war; careful coordination of forces; use of smaller units to oppose larger ones; and exploitation of allied weaknesses, military and political. But he placed new emphasis on the need for caution in the commitment of forces and on the importance of securing rear areas and bases. "If we succeed in gaining mastery over the rural areas," he said, "the revolution will acquire a firm basis for

76. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. III-203 - III-204, V-109 - V-112.
77. Ibid., pp. III-199 - III-205.
78. Ibid., pp. III-205, V-44.

mobilizing human and material resources in order to develop its forces for protracted combat."[79]

United States and South Vietnamese forces again observed 24-hour cease-fires for both Christmas and New Year's. After considerable debate, the allied refused to extend their cease-fires to match the three-day truces announced by the Viet Cong for both holidays. The two truces were no better observed than earlier ones, and allied forces reported over 100 enemy violations during the Christmas period and a similar number for New Year's the following week. Total US casualties for both truce periods were 6 killed and 17 wounded, considerably lower than the figures for similar cease-fires the previous year.[80]

The Continuing Search for Expanded DMZ Authorities

Despite the decline in enemy action, the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff remained concerned about the enemy threat from across the Demilitarized Zone. They had attempted, without success,[81] during the earlier half of the year to secure broader operating authority in the DMZ, and they persisted in these efforts throughout the second half. In July 1969, the first withdrawals of US troops from Vietnam began, and redeployment plans called for the complete removal of the 3d Marine Division from the northern provinces of I CTZ. This prospect caused General Wheeler to question the adequacy of the current rules of engagement to protect the remaining US and ARVN forces in I CTZ against enemy attack from across the DMZ, and he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 24 July to review the DMZ rules in light of the changed situation. He suggested consideration of additions permitting engagement of enemy forces in both halves of the DMZ as well as attack on enemy artillery sites, troops assembly areas, and logistics points in the area five to ten miles north of the DMZ in North Vietnam.[82]

79. Ibid., p. III-25. NY Times, 4 Jan 70, IV-2.

80. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 300-69, 27 Dec 69; 1-70, 2 Jan 70. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 15358 to CINCPAC, 27 Nov 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. V-12.

81. See Ch. 3, pp. 76-80.

82. (TS-GP 3) CM-4442-69 to DJS, 22 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2084/144, 24 Jul 69, JMF 333 (22 Jul 69).

The Joint Staff drew up a list of possible changes and submitted them to the field for comment. The Joint Staff assumed continuation of the existing provisions to counter enemy fire from within or north of the DMZ with heavy ground or naval gunfire and to destroy SAM and AAA installations firing at US aircraft from across or within the DMZ, both of which were among the authorities granted at the time of the 1 November 1968 bombing halt.[83] The new rules proposed by the Joint Staff provided for: (1) "timely and adequate" counteractions against small enemy ground operations in the DMZ below the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL) if necessary for the preservation of a force under attack; (2) operations in the DMZ south of the PMDL and employment of artillery, naval gunfire, tactical air, and B-52 aircraft against enemy targets in North Vietnam below 17 degrees 10 minutes north in the event of "a sudden or immediate major attack" seriously endangering friendly forces in northern I CTZ. Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC strongly endorsed the suggested additions to the rules, but thought that they did not go far enough. The commanders wanted authority to react to enemy threats, as well as to actual attacks.[84]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the rules drafted by the Joint Staff and forwarded them to the Secretary of Defense on 2 August 1969. They did not incorporate the amendment sought by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, judging that its inclusion might jeopardize the approval of any new rules at all. In arguing in favor of liberalization, the Joint Chiefs of Staff explained to Secretary Laird that the enemy had increased his forces in and immediately above the DMZ. In addition, the cessation of bombing against North Vietnam left these forces secure from allied attack and free to reconstruct lines of communication for the rapid reinforcement of the troops in the DMZ area. These factors, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, seriously increased the threat to US forces in I CTZ. Moreover, US forces were

83. See (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Pt. III, p. 52 -35.

84. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS (J-3) 9356 to C/S PACOM and C/S MACV, 29 Jul 69; Msg, C/S PACOM to JCS, 310338Z Jul 69; Msg, C/S MACV (MAC 9886) to JCS, 31 Jul 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69. (TS-GP 1) Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "JCS 2084/144-1 - Rules of Engagement (U)," 31 Jul 69, JMF 333 (22 Jul 69).

being withdrawn from that area, further compounding the need for strengthened authorities.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also pointed out that, under the current rules, COMUSMACV had to obtain JCS approval for counteractions against substantial or general enemy attack across the DMZ. The resulting delay, in the present circumstances, could have serious consequences. Rather, General Abrams needed authority to react immediately to any major attack near the DMZ in order to protect his forces.[85]

The Secretary of Defense had not responded to this JCS request when COMUSMACV reported on 11 August 1969 that enemy activity in and around the DMZ had markedly increased. Sensors and aerial observation had revealed substantial movement of enemy troops and materiel into the DMZ. General Abrams wanted to disrupt this activity with "a powerful and well integrated and coordinated artillery, tactical air, and B-52 effort." Further, he proposed to send a ground probe of regimental size or less into the southern half of the DMZ.[86]

General Wheeler discussed this request with the President at San Clemente on 14 August. President Nixon did not object to the use of artillery, naval gunfire, tactical air, and B-52s in the southern portion of the DMZ, and he dispensed with the requirement for a 24-hour advance notification to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of B-52 strikes in that area. But, for political reasons, the President withheld authority to use ground forces in the DMZ. He assured General Wheeler, however, that he would reconsider the matter should the situation demand such action. In addition, the President wanted a maximum number of B-52 strikes during the next two to three weeks against worthwhile targets in the southern part of the DMZ and in Cambodia. (The strikes in Cambodia were to be conducted as part of the MENU operation, a secret B-52 bombing campaign in Cambodia that is discussed in Chapter 7.) Although General Wheeler informed

85. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-479-69 to SecDef, 2 Aug 69, Encl to JCS 2084/144-1, 30 Jul 69; (TS-GP 1) Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "JCS 2084/144-1 - Rules of Engagement (U)," 31 Jul 69; JMF 333 (22 Jul 69).

86. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 10435 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 11 Aug 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 69.

COMUSMACV of the President's decision the following day, the revised DMZ authorities were not formally promulgated until 25 August, eleven days after the President's decision.[87]

Meanwhile, on 20 August, the Secretary of Defense replied to the JCS request of 2 August. Before approving any new rules of engagement, he wanted a comprehensive review of the existing rules and the manner in which they operated, together with an appraisal of the risks that would result if no changes were made. He did confirm the President's decision that B-52 strikes in the southern part of the DMZ no longer required approval from Washington.[88]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded their review to the Secretary of Defense on 13 September 1969. They assessed the enemy situation and found that the threat in the DMZ area had remained "relatively constant" since November 1968. The enemy could launch attacks in the area at the time and place of his choosing and could move as many as 13 NVA infantry and four NVA artillery regiments into the DMZ within five days. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff were still convinced of the need for augmented DMZ authorities and again submitted revised rules for the Secretary's approval. The principal additions sought by the Joint Chiefs of Staff were those that had been requested on 2 August but not yet approved: the right of US forces, in response to enemy actions, to operate in the southern half of the DMZ and on occasion to bombard North Vietnam as far north as 17 degrees 15 minutes north.[89]

The Secretary of Defense answered the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 17 October 1969. He found the present rules, with minor modification, adequate to protect friendly forces in northern I CTZ, even with additional redeployment of US forces from that area. He went so far as to authorize US troop operations in the lower half of the DMZ in response to small unit enemy attacks there, but he would not authorize

87. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, CJCS 9975 and 10102 to COMUSMACV, 12 and 15 Aug 69; (S-GP 3) Msg, CJCS 7466 to CINCPAC, 25 Aug 69; same file.

88. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam Demilitarized Zone," 20 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2084/144-2, 22 Aug 69, JMF 333 (22 Jul 69).

89. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-566-69 to SecDef, 13 Sep 69, Encl to JCS 2084/144-3, 6 Sep 69, same file.

action against NVN territory even in the event of a major enemy offensive. Rather, he retained the current rule, which required JCS approval for counteraction to any major enemy ground attack across the DMZ or enemy air attack requiring action beyond that specified in the existing rules. The Secretary of Defense provided his decision on the revised DMZ rules in the form of a message, consolidating into one document all amended and supplemental DMZ rules of engagement issued since the 1 November 1968 bombing halt, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff dispatched the message to the field on 20 October 1969.[90]

The approach of the Vietnamese dry season in the fall of 1969 and the accompanying possibility of increased military action brought a renewed attempt by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to obtain expanded authorities in the DMZ area. On 30 October 1969, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Westmoreland, asked the Secretary of Defense for approval of maneuvering overflight authority of North Vietnam and the DMZ when required for effective ordnance delivery on enemy infiltration routes in Laos near North Vietnam and the DMZ. General Westmoreland explained that North Vietnam was expanding the movement of supplies into the Republic of Vietnam through Laos, relying primarily on the natural entry points at Nape, Mu Gia, and Ban Karai Passes and the Route 1036/1039 area in the vicinity of the DMZ. Allied interdiction plans called for the creation of "strategic choke points" in Laos as close to the NVN border as possible. Current air operating instructions, prohibiting overflight of North Vietnam, restriced the maneuverability of aircraft both in attack and in evading NVN aircraft defenses, besides imposing limits on the selection of weapons.[91]

The Secretary of Defense had reservations about this request and asked the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) a number of questions about the risks involved and the possible alternatives to such overflight authority. The Assistant Secretary provided detailed

90. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam Demilitarized Zone (U)," 17 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2084/144-4, 20 Oct 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2865 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 20 Oct 69; JMF 333 (22 Jul 69).

91. (~~S~~-GP 3) CM-4680-69 to SecDef, 30 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 69.

answers, whose substance was that the added risk would be minimal for the most part.[92]

Still not convinced, the Secretary of Defense on 12 November 1969 requested JCS views on "the key questions": whether the added effectiveness of allowing aircraft to fly over NVN territory would justify the added risk. In reply, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured the Secretary of Defense that the additional political risks would be "negligible" and would be far outweighed by the military benefits. Moreover, he added, the overflight authority would be employed in a manner to hold the chance of ordnance delivery in North Vietnam to a minimum. The Secretary of Defense took no action, but the question of overflight of the DMZ and North Vietnam and of greater freedom to operate in the DMZ continued to be discussed in 1970 (see Chapter 9).[93]

Sensor Operations

United States troops relied increasingly during 1969 on sensors for support in combat operations. Use of sensors as a means of impeding infiltration in the DMZ area began in 1967 and was greatly expanded in 1968 as a result of the valuable tactical intelligence the system provided during the Battle of Khe Sanh. During 1969 there were four major sensor programs in South Vietnam: DUEL BLADE, DUFFEL BAG, IGLOO WHITE and TIGHT JAW.

DUEL BLADE, the anti-infiltration system begun in 1967, was used throughout 1969. It consisted of a strong point obstacle system combined with sensor strings along known enemy routes in Quang Tri Province to check infiltration across the DMZ. Original plans to augment the program with a strong point obstacle system on the eastern coastal plain were abandoned early in the year. Otherwise, there were no

92. (TS) Memo, SecDef to ASD(ISA), "Maneuvering Overflights of North Vietnam," 6 Nov 69; (TS-GP 3) ISA Doc., same subj, n.d.; same file.

93. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Maneuvering Overflight of North Vietnam-Laos Border (S)," 12 Nov 69; (TS) CM-4722-69 to SecDef, 17 Nov 69; same file.

major changes in DUEL BLADE during the year, nor was there any appreciable increase in the number of sensors available.[94]

The DUFFEL BAG program grew out of the successful use of sensors at Khe Sanh. Initiated in mid-1968, DUFFEL BAG employed both attended and unattended sensors in support of tactical operations. Sensors were used for intelligence gathering, battlefield surveillance, direction of air and artillery strikes, ambushes, surveillance of enemy base areas, and many other purposes. The limited number of sensors available at the beginning of the year restricted the DUFFEL BAG program. But the inventory increased steadily, and by the end of 1969 sensors were used both within and along the DMZ and throughout all four CTZs. In assessing the program in May 1969, Genera Abrams stated that "DUFFEL BAG sensor technology may be one of the more important developments to come out of the Vietnam War."[95]

An example of the use of DUFFEL BAG was Operation PURPLE MARTIN in western Quang Tri Province in late February and early March 1969. There sensors provided the initial indication of renewed enemy presence in the area. Making use of that and other intelligence, elements of the 4th Marine Regiment undertook a 15-day battle that killed 250 enemy personnel and detained six. The enemy, of course, quickly adopted measures to counter the sensor operations. For instance, in October 1969, US artillery killed eight water buffalo herded into an area by the enemy to determine the degree of surveillance.[96]

The portion of the overall sensor program administered by the 7th Air Force was designated IGLOO WHITE. It was implemented in December 1967 and consisted of an all-weather, full-time surveillance network of acoustic and seismic sensors to impede vehicular infiltration in the western DMZ and eastern Laos. Throughout 1969, IGLOO WHITE resources were used primarily to support the interdiction campaign in Laos.[97]

94. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VII-1 - VII-5.
95. Ibid., pp. VII-5 - VII-10.
96. Ibid., pp. V-50, VII-8 - VII-10
97. Ibid., pp. VII-10 - VII-13.

In 1969, the United States began equipping and training the RVNAF with sensors in preparation for the time when US forces would be withdrawn from Vietnam. The Deputy Secretary of Defense directed this program, and COMUSMACV developed the required plan, designating it TIGHT JAW. The plan called for acceleration of sensor introduction into the ARVN and set forth a border surveillance program using the operational concept of the DUEL BLADE system. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the TIGHT JAW plan on 29 July 1969, and training of the ARVN began in August. The first ARVN unit achieved an initial sensor capability in September. By the end of the year, ARVN units in all four CTZs had some degree of sensor training and assets. In I CTZ alone, the ARVN monitored over 200 sensors.[98]

The Situation at the Year's End

Assessing the situation in January 1970, General Abrams drew attention to the declining scope and intensity of enemy activity in the year just past. He attributed the shifting tactics to several difficulties confronting North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. During 1969, approximately 172,000 of the enemy had been killed, and although this figure was lower than in 1968, it was considerably greater than losses for any other previous year. In addition, more than 47,000 enemy personnel rallied to the Republic of Vietnam during 1969. Enemy infiltration into South Vietnam for the latter part of the year seemed to follow the usual cyclic pattern, but there was little evidence of any significant increase of personnel in the pipeline.

Nevertheless, General Abrams reported, the enemy retained approximately 226,000 troops in South Vietnam and adjacent areas of Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam, posing a direct threat to allied forces. He said specifically that the enemy was moving large NVA units toward the Delta--units that might transform the nature of the conflict there. In

98. (S-GP 4) Ltr, MACV to CINCPAC, "Ground Surveillance Plan for ARVN," 11 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/471, 21 Apr 69; (S-GP 4) JCS 2472/471-1, 5 Jun 69; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5553 to CINCPAC, 29 Jul 69; JMF 911/653 (7 Apr 69). (S-GP 4) CM-4663-69 to SecDef, 23 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VII-13 - VII-15.

addition, the enemy was restoring and improving supply areas and infiltration routes in both Cambodia and Laos. The enemy possessed, General Abrams said, the capability to initiate "offensive activity" on relatively short notice, but the US commander doubted that the Communists could sustain such an attack for any extended time.

General Abrams also pointed out that, while overall enemy strength declined during the year, the number of enemy maneuver and combat support battalions had increased by 66. The enemy had also increased the number of sapper and reconnaissance units and these increases, General Abrams believed, reflected growing emphasis on the expansion and improvement of small unit attacks. He added that, even though the number of battalions had increased, manning levels of many of the units was low. He also reported a "decided" shift in the distribution of enemy effort during the last three months of 1969, with the South Vietnamese territorial security forces bearing the brunt of the enemy attacks. This differed from the first half of 1969 when the regular ARVN forces received the largest share of enemy attacks.[99]

At the close of 1969, US officials in Washington also had another, and independent, evaluation of the South Vietnamese situation. Earlier in the fall, President Nixon had asked Sir Robert Thompson, the British expert on counterinsurgency and guerrilla warfare, to visit Vietnam and prepare an assessment. Sir Robert arrived in Saigon in late October and, after a month's stay, submitted an optimistic report to President Nixon. He found both the military and political situations, especially the security in Saigon and in the rural areas, significantly improved. "The position of the GVN," he said, "is undoubtedly more stable and its performance increasingly effective." While the North Vietnamese Army still had the manpower and means of infiltration, there had "unquestionably" been a loss of experienced and dedicated leaders and trained regular forces. "Much of the cream has gone," he reported to the President. In addition, the loss of caches and local support had reduced the enemy's flexibility. The North Vietnamese Army was now much more

99. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 1285 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 28 Jan 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 70.

dependent on outside supply, particularly for ammunition but in some areas even for food. Sir Robert Thompson agreed fully with the policy followed by the United States in Vietnam during 1969, concluding:

> a winning position in the sense of obtaining a just peace (whether negotiated or not) and of maintaining an independent non-Communist South Vietnam, had been achieved but we are not yet through. We are in a psychological period where the greatest need is confidence. A steady application of the "do-it-yourself" concept, with continuing US support in the background will increase the confidence already shown by many GVN leaders.100

In early 1970 the US Intelligence Board issued a Special National Intelligence Estimate addressing North Vietnamese policy at the beginning of the new year. The US intelligence community believed North Vietnam still intended to extend its control over the south. Hanoi still considered it had the will and the basic strength to prevail, and the Special Estimate presented three possible courses available to Hanoi. The first was an all-out military effort, but this involved heavier losses and risks than Hanoi was apt to assume at present. As more US forces departed South Vietnam, and as North Vietnam had more time to repair deficiencies, strong offensive action would become more likely. A second course was a negotiated settlement to hasten the US withdrawal from Vietnam, but to date, Hanoi had apparently found the advantages of such a solution outweighed by the risks. The third and most fesible possibility for North Vietnam in 1970, the estimate continued, was the pursuit of a prolonged war along the lines of that conducted throughout most of 1969. Under this approach, North Vietnam would attempt to inflict setbacks on Vietnamization and pacification, impose casualties on US troops, and keep pressure on the RVNAF. There could be "fairly sharp fighting" in the spring of 1970 or thereafter. Even this option had disadvantages for the enemy, however. It would prolong the strains of war in North Vietnam, and it offered no certain hope of "decisive success" in the future.

100. (S) Report by Sir Robert Thompson to President Nixon, "Visit to Vietnam - October 28-November 25, 1969," n.d. Att to Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 15 Dec 69, OSD Files.

The Special Estimate concluded that the enemy was "in trouble" in South Vietnam, irrespective of the option selected. His casualties exceeded both infiltration and local recruitment rates, and the quality of his forces was declining. Viet Cong forces depended heavily on NVA support, and the morale of the Communist cadres was low. There were also troublesome supply problems now that large areas of the South Vietnamese countryside were denied the enemy, limiting access to manpower and resources. In addition, the South Vietnamese people, although still politically apathetic, seemed less inclined to cooperate with the Communists. The estimate cautioned, however, that this was a US assessment and "the question is whether the communists see their situation in the same way."[101]

United States policy in Vietnam at the conclusion of 1969 remained what it had been since late spring of the year. President Nixon had publicly announced this policy in May and reiterated it in his 3 November speech. The United States would seek a negotiated settlement in Vietnam but, in the absence of a dramatic political breakthrough, the United States would continue military operations, transferring an increasing portion of the combat responsibility to the RVNAF and gradually reducing its own forces. No political settlement came in the second half of 1969, and the President began the withdrawal of US troops. This action, he anticipated, would reduce US expenditures and public demands for a settlement in Vietnam. The ultimate success of the policy, however, depended in large part on the ability of the South Vietnamese forces to assume the combat burden as US troops withdrew.

101. (S) SNIE 14.3-70, 5 Feb 70, DIA Files.

Chapter 6

STRENGTHENING THE RVNAF, 1969

The Beginning of the Improvement and Modernization Program

The United States had included the strengthening of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) among its objectives since the beginning of its involvement in South Vietnam, but in the period 1965 through early 1968, major US attention was devoted primarily to the conduct of combat operations. It was only after the 1968 Tet offensive, when President Johnson ruled out a further US troop increase in South Vietnam, that the United States undertook serious preparations for eventual South Vietnamese assumption of the combat effort. In line with this decision, and at the direction of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed in 1968 a two-phased plan to "improve and modernize" the RVNAF. The first phase was designed to increase the ground combat power of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) while US participation in the war continued at the current level (approximately 500,000). Phase II would build a balanced, self-sufficient RVNAF by the end of FY 1974, capable of coping with a residual insurgency after US and other free world forces, as well as the North Vietnamese troops, had withdrawn. But planning in 1968 did not envisage the development of the RVNAF to meet a combined Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army (NVA) force.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense approved the Phase I plan on 23 October 1968, providing for an RVNAF force structure of 850,000 by the end of FY 1973.[1] Shortly thereafter, General Abrams recommended that Phase II be accelerated to permit its completion by FY 1972 and that the RVNAF personnel ceiling be raised to 877,090. On 18 December 1968, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul H. Nitze approved the Phase II plan, as amended by General Abrams, with the exception of the Vietnamese Navy (VNN) portion and certain ammunition requirements. The VNN exception would reduce the RVNAF force level to 866,434. He requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to submit detailed proposals for putting the plan into effect.

1. See (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Ch. 51.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted an accelerated Phase II plan to the Secretary of Defense on 4 January 1969. They based this plan on a total RVNAF strength of 877,090. All ARVN units would be activated by mid-1970, with the buildup of air and naval forces completed by the end of FY 1972. The costs involved were only slightly more than those of the original Phase II plan, to cover an increase in ARVN logistic units and certain additional naval craft.[2]

When Mr. Nitze approved the Phase II plan on 18 December 1968, he had noted that the proposed force structure stressed conventional combat power. Such a force was appropriate for the current situation in South Vietnam, but he questioned whether it would be the optimum for "an extensive pacification effort following a significant reduction in the level of hostilities." Consequently, he had asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare a plan, which he designated Phase III, for a postwar RVNAF force to meet only "an internal insurgency threat from indigenous VC forces."[3]

This third plan was forwarded to the new Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird, on 21 January 1969. The Joint Chiefs of Staff termed it "an appropriate basis for further discussion concerning a postwar RVNAF force structure." What they actually presented to Mr. Laird was two plans--Phase III and Phase IIIA. Both were designed to cope with less intensive degrees of insurgency than had been assumed in earlier planning. The Phase III plan would reduce RVNAF strength to 804,300 personnel, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered adequate to cope with a reduced enemy threat of 84 VC battalions without NVA forces, fillers, or regroupees from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Phase IIIA would build a force of 858,400 to deal with a somewhat more serious threat of as many as 112 VC battalions, with NVA fillers and support. Both plans provided for large paramilitary forces costing appreciably less than regular

2. (S-GP 3) JCSM-6-69 to SecDef, 4 Jan 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/272-28, 31 Dec 68, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 11.
3. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, "RVNAF Phase II Force Structure (U)," 18 Dec 68, Att to JCS 2472/272-27, 19 Dec 68, same file, sec 10.

forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not convinced, however, that the security situations on which both the III and IIIA plans were premised would be achieved, and they advised the Secretary of Defense that the "prudent course" was to continue with the accelerated Phase II plan until there was "unequivocal" proof that the "worst security situation" would not ensue from the negotiations.[4]

During February and early March 1969, Secretary Laird and his Deputy, Mr. David Packard, reviewed the RVNAF improvement plans initiated by the previous administration. On 12 February, Deputy Secretary Packard notified General Wheeler and the Secretary of the Navy of his decision on the VNN portion of the Phase II plan, which Deputy Secretary Nitze had deferred in his decision on Phase II on 18 December 1968. Mr. Packard approved a VNN force structure of 28,700 rather than the 30,805 recommended in the accelerated plan, judging the smaller number to be adequate to man the equipment scheduled for the VNN. He deferred the transfer of two destroyer escorts to the VNN, though he subsequently reversed this decision on 30 April 1969, directing that the costs be absorbed within currently available Navy funds. On 10 March 1969, Mr. Packard acted on Phase II ammunition requirements, which Mr. Nitze had also deferred. Mr. Packard saw no need for the increased procurement of artillery ammunition proposed in the plan. Only a few additional weapons were called for, and the necessary ammunition could be provided within currently planned procurement.[5]

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4. (S-GP 4) JCSM-40-69 to SecDef, 21 Jan 69, Encl to JCS 2472/272-30, 13 Jan 69, same file, sec 12.

5. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to SecN and CJCS, "Vietnamese Navy Phase II Plan for Improvement and Modernization (U)," 12 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/272-31, 14 Feb 69; (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, "RVNAF Phase II Force Structure," 10 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/272-34, 12 Mar 69; same file. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to SecN and CJCS, "Vietnamese Navy Improvement and Modernization," 30 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/272-39, 1 May 69, same file, sec 13.

The Nixon Administration Reviews RVNAF Improvement and Modernization

While the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense were examining the existing plans for the RVNAF, they were also participating in an Administration-wide assessment of the Vietnam war, including the status of the RVNAF. As related in Chapter 1, on the day after Richard Nixon assumed the presidency, he ordered a thorough examination of every aspect of the Vietnam situation, directing a series of questions to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence. The new President and his advisers were particularly interested in the RVNAF, and four of his questions dealt with the RVNAF and its ability to carry a larger share of the war. What were the differing opinions within the US Government, the President inquired, on the progress in RVNAF improvement, as well as the evidence underlying these views? He asked about the ability of the RVNAF to handle the VC, with or without US support, as well as to cope with sizable NVA forces under varying levels of US support. He also sought views on changes in RVNAF command, organization, equipment, and training and on the time necessary to ready the RVNAF to cope with either the VC alone or a combined VC/NVA force.[6]

The preparation of the replies to the presidential questions on Vietnam has been described in Chapter 1. By late March the replies were complete, and Dr. Kissinger's staff circulated a summary of the various answers to the National Security Council on 22 March 1969. With regard to the RVNAF, the respondents were in general agreement that capabilities and effectiveness had increased during 1968 and that the South Vietnamese forces were larger, better equipped, and better trained than in previous years. But they were also convinced that the RVNAF could not, in the foreseeable future, deal with both VC and NVA forces without US assistance in the form of air, helicopter, artillery, logistic, and major ground support, and they pointed out the severe leadership and morale problems facing the RVNAF. More numerous than the areas of agreement were the disagreements. On the subject of the RVNAF, as on most of the other questions, the participants divided into two groups: Those in the "military community," including COMUSMACV,

6. (S-GP 3) NSSM 1, 21 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/413, 22 Jan 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 1.

CINCPAC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and others comprising the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of State, and the Central Intelligence Agency. The military community gave much greater weight to the RVNAF improvement as shown in available statistics. Paradoxically, however, the military judged the RVNAF less capable against the Viet Cong alone than did the other group. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV all believed that the RVNAF could not cope with the indigenous insurgency threat without US combat support until completion of the accelerated Phase II improvement plan in 1972. The Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency, on the other hand, believed that the RVNAF could hold its own against the Viet Cong without US support, although the CIA cautioned that much depended on currently unknown factors such as the effect of a US and NVA withdrawal from South Vietnam. Analysts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense considered that RVNAF capabilities should increase "over time" provided a number of reforms were carried out in addition to the RVNAF improvement program.

With respect to the morale and leadership of the RVNAF, both groups of respondents recognized the weaknesses, but differences arose in assessing the magnitude of these problems and their influence on future developments. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV thought that substantial progress had already been made in correcting the problems, and they expected this progress to continue. But answers from the Office of the Secretary of Defense indicated a belief that the current improvement program was insufficient to make the RVNAF an effective fighting force unless accompanied by major political and military actions--actions that were not being taken at the present time.[7]

While the various departments and agencies were completing and refining answers to the President's Vietnam questions, Secretary Laird traveled to South Vietnam in early March and observed the progress of the RVNAF. As related in Chapter 1, Secretary Laird carried to Vietnam the clear message that the RVNAF must begin to take over the fighting. In his trip report to the President, the Secretary

7. (~~TS~~-GP 3) NSC Staff Memo to SecState et al., "Revised Summary of Responses to NSSM 1: The Situation in Vietnam," 22 Mar 69, (pp. 15-17), Att to JCS 2472/413-8, 24 Mar 69, same file, sec 5.

challenged the basic objectives of the accelerated Phase II RVNAF improvement and modernization plan. The heavy expense of such modernization could not be justified merely as a measure to permit the Republic of Vietnam to deal with local insurgency. The emphasis could and must be shifted, he told the President, to measures to achieve a self-sufficient RVNAF. Accordingly, he recommended that more funds be provided to hasten the modernization program and that ways be sought to improve the effectiveness of the RVNAF. He made it clear that he was supporting additional funds with the understanding that the program would permit the Republic of Vietnam to start replacing US forces with RVNAF regular and paramilitary troops.[8]

After reviewing Secretary Laird's report and the answers to the Vietnam questions, the President met with the National Security Council on 28 March to consider Vietnam policy. As described in Chapter 1, it was the consensus of the meeting that there had been sufficient improvement in the RVNAF to justify initiation of planning to transfer the combat to the South Vietnamese and begin withdrawal of US forces. On 1 April 1969, the President promulgated the decisions of the 28 March meeting, including direction for the development of a plan for Vietnamizing the war. Ten days later, Dr. Kissinger issued more specific instructions. He directed the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence, to draw up a plan to transfer combat operations in South Vietnam to the Republic of Vietnam with the US role restricted to combat support and advisory missions only. The planning should be based on an assumption that the highest national priority would be accorded to equipping and training South Vietnamese forces.[9]

8. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, March 5-12, 1969," 13 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS Trip to SEA, Mar 69.

9. (TS) Longhand notes by CJCS taken at 28 Mar 69 NSC Mtg on back of pages of TP for SecDef and CJCS (NSC Mtg 28 Mar), "Revised Summary of Responses to NSSM 1: The Situation in Vietnam," n.d., JMF 077 (21 Mar 69) (NSC Review Group Mtg, 28 Mar 69). (TS-GP 1) NSDM 9, 1 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/459, 2 Apr 69; (TS-GP 1) NSSM 36, 10 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/467, 11 Apr 69; JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1.

The President's decision, together with Dr. Kissinger's implementing directive, reoriented the RVNAF improvement program. Originally, the United States had intended only to prepare the South Vietnamese forces to cope with the Viet Cong; now the Nixon Administration had changed the objective to the creation of forces able to fight both the Viet Cong and the NVA, with US forces reduced to a supporting role.

The Secretary of Defense assigned the Joint Chiefs of Staff responsibility for the Vietnamization plan.[10] Meanwhile, on 28 April 1969, Deputy Secretary Packard approved the accelerated Phase II RVNAF improvement and modernization plan, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted on 4 January. Mr. Packard informed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretaries of the Military Departments that "Vietnamizing the war should have the highest priority." He approved a total RVNAF force strength of 875,750, authorizing COMUSMACV to make minor adjustments (five percent of each service strength) to RVNAF service ceilings within the total force level. He stressed the importance of providing the RVNAF with all necessary equipment, training, and logistic support.[11]

The Military Departments had already examined the equipment requirements for the accelerated Phase II program. The Secretary of the Navy, John H. Chafee, concluded that the additional equipment could be provided with no adverse impact on the readiness of US naval forces. Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor, however, had misgivings. The Army's capability to resond to crises was already inadequate, he warned, and the transfer of more equipment to the ARVN at that time would delay deliveries to active and reserve units of the US Army.

The US Air Force was responsible for the overall direction of the VNAF improvement and moderization program, but it was the US Army that provided the needed helicopters and

10. For the JCS response, see Ch. 4, pp. 106-108.
11. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, "RVNAF Phase II Plan for Improvements and Modernization (U)," 28 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/272-38, 29 Apr 69, JMF 911/535 (16 Apr 68) sec 13.

training for the program. On 22 April 1969, the Secretary of the Army sent the Secretary of Defense a plan to train 1,475 VNAF aviators and 1,875 mechanics by FY 1971 to meet the accelerated Phase II helicopter activation schedules. To accomplish this training without adverse impact on US Army requirements, the Army would have to expand its training facilities and personnel, at a total cost of approximately $39 million for the period FY 1969 through FY 1971. In addition, the Army would have to divert more than 500 helicopters currently programmed for Army use. The result would delay the distribution of new helicopters to US commands in Europe and Korea. Nevertheless, the Secretary of Defense approved the Army plan in principle on 18 June 1969, subject to a further review of the requirement for additional personnel and funds.[12]

Expansion of Accelerated Phase II Improvement and Modernization Program

Presidents Nixon and Thieu met at Midway Island on 8 June 1969 to discuss the Vietnam war. During the meeting, they agreed that the RVNAF had progressed far enough to warrant the replacement of some US forces with South Vietnamese troops, and President Nixon announced the withdrawal of 25,000 US forces from Vietnam.[13]

At Midway, President Thieu also presented President Nixon with a plan for further strengthening of the RVNAF. He wanted more manpower, more equipment, and money to provide a better standard of living for his fighting men. Specifically, he wanted to raise the RVNAF strength ceiling by about 170,000, to a total of approximately 1,045,000 by FY 1972, with roughly 120,000 of the new spaces alloted to the territorial forces engaged in the pacification program. The additional equipment that he sought included F-4 fighters, C-130 transports, air defense missiles, and Sheridan tanks. The desired financial support for the RVNAF

12. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, "Improvement and Modernization of the Vietnam Air Force," 22 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/272-37, 24 Apr 69, same file, sec 12. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecA, SecAF, and CJCS. "Improvement and Modernization of the Vietnamese Air Force (U)," 18 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/272-40, 19 Jun 69, same file, sec 13.

13. (U) Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, p. 443. See Ch. 4.

included provision for higher pay and rations, free food allowances, and increased housing allowances. With this new plan, President Thieu hoped to prepare the RVNAF to take over the major combat responsibility, to protect pacification gains, and to deal successfully not only with the existing Communist danger, but with large-scale threats from outside, at least until help from others could be obtained.[14]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the new RVN plan and furnished the Secretary of Defense their comments on 29 July 1969. They were skeptical about the implication in the plan that the RVNAF, through further modernization and expansion, would be able to assume the major fighting responsibility against the current VC/NVA threat. The new RVN plan would provide some additional offensive capability, but it seemed doubtful, in view of RVNAF leadership and morale problems, that this added strength on paper would enable the South Vietnamese to take over major combat responsibility.

Consequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a smaller RVNAF increase than that requested by the Republic of Vietnam. They proposed an expansion of 117,047 spaces during FY 1970 and 1971 and an enlargement of the National Police by 30,000 over the same period. Specifically, they asked the Secretary to approve a FY 1970 RVNAF strength increase of 77,883 with authority for COMUSMACV to release these spaces on an incremental basis commensurate with qualitative improvements of the RVNAF and with RVN ability to recruit and train the additional personnel. For FY 1971, they recommended 39,164 more spaces for planning purposes. Broken down by service the JCS force recommendations were as follows:

14. (S-GP 1) RVNAF Improvement and Development Plan, n.d. presented to Pres Nixon by Pres Thieu at Midway Conference, 8 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/497, 30 Jun 69; (S-GP 4) JCSM-462-69 to SecDef, 29 Jul 69, Encl to JCS 2472/497-3, 26 Jul 69; JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) secs 1 and 2. (S-GP 4) DJSM-1074-69 to CJCS, 7 Jul 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69.

Service	FY 1970	FY 1971	Total
PF	36,700	24,550	61,250
RF	17,570	5,173	22,743
ARVN	13,703	7,964	21,667
VNMC	3,766		3,766
VNN	2,945	1,477	4,422
VNAF	3,199		3,199
Total	77,883	39,164	117,047
National Police	15,000	15,000	30,000
	92,883	54,164	147,047

The Joint Chiefs of Staff found the RVN request for additional equipment somewhat ambitious in that it exceeded that South Vietnamese technical capability. They considered the current modernization program "adequate" in terms of the present requirements. As the RVNAF capabilities grew, and as their need for more sophisticated weapons developed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would consider provision of suitable equipment. They also submitted to the Secretary an equipment list that they deemed appropriate for FY 1970 (at an estimmated unprogrammed cost of approximately $118 million). In addition, they recommended that two destroyer escorts be loaned to the Republic of Vietnam and that 12 US Coast Guard vessels be turned over outright.[15]

The Secretary of Defense approved the JCS recommendations for both the expanded force structure and equipment transfers on 12 August 1969, directing the Military Departments to deliver the necessary equipment and supplies. The Secretary's action resulted in the approval of a total RVNAF structure of 953,673 by the end of FY 1970 and 992,837 by the close of FY 1971. (See Table V for a detailed breakdown of these structures.) Mr. Laird pointed out that earlier improvement programs had aimed at creating a RVNAF able to deal with insurgency, assuming the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces as well as those of the United States and other allies. Now the object was "to transfer progressively to the Republic of Vietnam greatly increased responsibility for all aspects of the war," under the

15. (S-GP 4) JCSM-462-69 to SecDef, 29 Jul 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/497-3, 26 Jul 69, JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 2.

assumption that enemy forces, both NVA and VC, would remain at their current levels while US forces continued to withdraw. He directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Military Departments to review the current RVNAF improvement program in the light of that objective, requesting a report by 30 September 1969. He wanted them to consider the qualitative and intangible factors necessary for RVNAF improvement, including lower desertion rates, improved leadership, a force structure making better use of existing men and equipment, and the "development of strategy and tactics best matched with RVNAF capabilities."[16]

Review of the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program

The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their review to Secretary Laird on 27 September 1969. They assured him that COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, the Military Departments, and the Joint Staff were all working together to implement the RVNAF improvement and modernization program. Progress was being made on the basis of the "cut-and-try" principle, considering the RVNAF's ability to activate new units, train personnel, and maintain and operate additional equipment. The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided Mr. Laird detailed information on the measures being taken to improve RVNAF leadership and morale, logistics, and intelligence capabilities. With regard to strategy and tactics, they told the Secretary that the 1970 Campaign Plan, then in preparation, would give the RVNAF greatly increased responsibilities and would be tailored to RVNAF capabilities. In addition, efforts were under way to lower the desertion rate, to encourage the RVNAF to increase the level of combined operations and planning, and to assist the RVNAF in deciding the best methods to use in equipping, training, and organizing their forces.

Despite these efforts, the Joint Chiefs of Staff still did not believe the South Vietnamese forces could be

16. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS and Secys of MilDepts, "Government of Vietnam Proposals Presented at the Midway Conference, 8 June 1969 (U)," 12 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2472/497-5, 13 Aug 69, same file, sec 3. (TS-GP 1) Ann to App to JCSM-593-69 to SecDef, 27 Sep 69, Encl to JCS 2472/497-6, 24 Sep 69, same file.

sufficiently improved to meet the current combined VC/NVA threat without outside support. They advised Mr. Laird that a residual US force would be required to offset RVNAF deficiencies as long as the existing enemy threat remained in South Vietnam. Certain out-of-country and offshore support forces would also be needed, as proposed in the final interagency Vietnamization plan of 29 August 1969 (see Chapter 4).

The size of the US residual force would vary depending on further expansion of the RVNAF and the amount of additional allied support. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Republic of Vietnam be approached to determine if it would extend the conscription age bracket from the present 18-38 span to 18-43 and recruit additional women to fill clerical and administrative positions in the RVNAF. They also proposed seeking additional military support from the other countries currently furnishing assistance to South Vietnam. Thailand and South Korea appeared to be the only likely prospects, but there was no certainty, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, that any additional support could be negotiated.[17]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff met with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense on 6 October 1969 and discussed RVNAF improvement and modernization. At this meeting, Mr. Laird asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop ways to show RVNAF progress and accomplishments in order to counteract public criticism of the program.[18]

Accordingly, on 15 October 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary "displays of representative data" for use before congressional committees. This material demonstrated: the upward trend of RVN force strengths; numbers of units and inventory of modern equipment; the increasing proportion of effort borne by the Republic of Vietnam in certain significant fields; and brief resumes of the progress in various areas of RVNAF improvement. They provided similar unclassified data for release to the news media. The long-term solution, the

17. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-593-69 to SecDef, 27 Sep 69, Encl to JCS 2472/497-6, 24 Sep 69, JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 3.
18. (~~S~~-GP 4) JCS 2472/537, 11 Oct 69, JMF 911/535 (11 Oct 69).

Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, lay in better day-to-day press coverage, and they suggested encouragement of more extensive US and free world press treatment of the South Vietnamese forces and their operations. In addition, the television industry could be asked to prepare reports on Vietnamization, with Department of Defense assistance.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also discussed the possible acceleration of RVNAF improvement, but were reluctant to suggest additional measures beyond the extension of the conscription age bracket and greater use of women in the armed forces, as recommended on 27 September. Overall RVNAF effectiveness was more dependent, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, on qualitative improvement than on quantitative increases in existing forces. Despite the US desire for stepped-up RVNAF takeover of the war, they opposed a fixed schedule for the Vietnamization process, urging reliance on the "cut-and-try" principle instead. They also used this occasion to reiterate their view that the Republic of Vietnam could not cope, alone, with a threat of the current proportion.[19]

The Military Departments also prepared reviews of their portions of the improvement and modernization program. On 6 October, the Secretaries of Navy and Air Force both reported continuing progress in the corresponding South Vietnamese services. The Secretary of the Air Force told Secretary Laird that the VNAF 20-squadron force would be expanded to 40 squadrons by mid-1972 and equipped with F-5s, A-37s, UH-1Hs, and AC-47s. The Secretary of Navy was proud of the actions under way to improve VNN leadership and esprit de corps, to increase combined planning and operations, to achieve logistics independence by June 1971, and to build a VNN field intelligence organization. To date, the VNN forces were being expanded ahead of the Accelerated Phase II schedule, and the desertion rate was only 1.5 per 1,000--well below the overall RVNAF rate of 12 per 1,000. Both Secretaries, however, doubted that provision of equipment to the Republic of Vietnam at a faster rate would be

19. (S-GP 4) JCSM-636-69 to SecDef, 15 Oct 69, Encl to JCS 2472/537, 11 Oct 69, same file.

of benefit. The Republic of Vietnam did not have the necessary technicians to use the additional equipment.[20]

The Secretary of the Army, Stanley Resor, presented his assessment to Mr. Laird on 25 October 1969. The strengthening of the ARVN made up the largest portion of the RVNAF improvement and modernization program, and the Army review indicated that the program was improving the ARVN in both numbers and quality. He stressed his Department's wholehearted commitment to the effort. "Vietnamization," he said, "is considered to be the most important program in the Army." Nevertheless, problems continued. The ARVN's logistics were still only marginally adequate and its intelligence capability suffered from a lack of equipment and qualified personnel; progress was being made, however, in the areas of counterintelligence, communications security, and overall intelligence training. Programs were under way to improve the ARVN manpower base through additional training, and personnel policies were being reviewed to alleviate leadership and desertion problems. The US Army was also training the Vietnamese in topographic and field engineering techniques to prepare them to take over additional engineering equipment presently in the hands of US units.

Finally, Secretary Resor noted that in the past US advisers had focused most of their attention on tactics.[21] He felt that their mission should now be changed to emphasize the Vietnamization program. This could be

20. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, "Review of RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program (U)," 6 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/497-8, 7 Oct 69; (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecN to SecDef, 6 Oct 69, "Review of the Vietnamese Navy and Vietnamese Marine Corps Improvement and Modernization Program," Att to JCS 2472/497-9, 7 Oct 69; JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 3.

21. During conversations with Secretary Laird at the Pentagon on 2 April 1969, Vice President Ky complained that US advisers tended to take control rather than merely advising and that, as a result, many Vietnamese commanders became "lazy" and did not learn their jobs properly. He found the attitudes of the advisers understandable given the fact that they were in Vietnam only for one-year tours and sought quick solutions to problems. Nevertheless, Vice President Ky felt the approach was wrong and that the advisers should be more patient. (S-GP 4) Memo of Conv, "Courtesy Call by Vice President Ky of the Republic of Vietnam," 4 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2572/464, 10 Apr 69, JMF 911/075 (CY 69).

accomplished by redesignating the 15,462 US Army advisers to ARVN units as "liaison teams" and eliminating those advisory functions no longer needed.[22]

At the 6 October meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Deputy Secretary Packard had evidenced particular interest in the improvement of the RVNAF intelligence capability and asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for further information on this matter. The Acting Chairman, General Westmoreland, provided the information on 30 October 1969, reviewing the intelligence capabilities of each of the RVNAF services and describing plans to enhance and expand them. Mr. Packard replied five days later that he was encouraged by the progress in the expansion of the RVNAF intelligence assets and wished the program to receive continuing emphasis.[23]

Secretary Laird informed General Wheeler on 10 November 1969 that he had reviewed both the JCS and Service evaluations of the RVNAF improvement and modernization program and was "encouraged" by the progress in force expansion and equipment deliveries. Now was the time, he believed, to begin planning for Phase III, the consolidation phase, and to reorient program objectives. Accordingly, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare a Phase III plan.[24] It should be designed to raise RVNAF effectiveness so that the Republic of Vietnam could maintain "at least current levels of security" as US forces were reduced to a support force by 1 July 1971 and, in continuing steps, to an advisory force two years later. Mr. Laird intended to remain flexible on the subjects of US troop redeployments and residual force levels, but for planning purposes he suggested

22. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, "Review of RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (I&M) Program," 25 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/543, 28 Oct 69, JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 3.

23. (S) DJSM-1579-69 to CJCS, 13 Oct 69; (S-GP 1) CM-4685-69 to DSecDef, 30 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/497-10, 3 Nov 69; (S-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Review of RVNAF Intelligence Capabilities (U)," 4 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2472/551, 7 Nov 69; same file.

24. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had already prepared a Phase III plan (see above, pp. 178-179) at the direction of Deputy Secretary of Defense Nitze, but this plan did not meet the revised RVNAF improvement and modernization program objectives of the Nixon Administration.

alternative US support levels of 260,000[25] or 190,000, assuming the current enemy threat. He also asked that the plan include an updated examination of US force redeployments.

In addition, Mr. Laird wanted a comprehensive review of RVNAF missions, force structure and mix, including required changes in RVNAF combat support and combat service support forces, as well as new equipment requirements. Essential to the success of Phase III, Mr. Laird believed, would be the overcoming of deficiencies in less tangible areas such as training, leadership, and morale, and he directed inclusion of programs in the plan to eliminate these weaknesses. He recognized that previous plans had assumed a continuing US support force and that Phase III, therefore, represented "a major change" in the thrust of US efforts to improve the RVNAF. He wanted the plan, together with cost estimates, by 31 January 1970.[26]

Simultaneously, Mr. Laird instructed the Secretaries of the Military Departments to review their RVNAF improvement and modernization efforts to ensure compliance with the new guidance furnished to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He placed special emphasis on training--a function for which the Services had primary responsibility--as well as on such other matters as the identification of problem areas where US technological solutions could enhance RVNAF progress.[27]

25. This figure was in accordance with presidential planning guidance of 11 October 1969. On that date, the President approved a strategy paper for US general purpose forces, together with general budget guidelines for the next five fiscal years. This budget guidance contained alternative assumptions regarding Vietnam: an end to US involvement after 1 July 1970 or a phase-down of US forces to 260,000 by 30 June 1971 and continuing reduction thereafter with an end to US combat involvement by 30 June 1973. (~~TS~~) NSDM 27, 11 Oct 69, JMF 001 (CY 1969) NSDMs.

26. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization -- RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Aspects and Related Planning," 10 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2472/552, 10 Nov 69, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 1.

27. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts et al., "Vietnamization -- RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Aspects and Related Planning," 10 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2472/552, 10 Nov 69, same file.

The development and approval of the Phase III plan is related in Chapter 10. Meanwhile, in late November, the Republic of Vietnam reported that recruitment and training of the additional territorial units approved for FY 1970 would be completed ahead of schedule and requested acceleration into FY 1970 of the RF and PF units approved for FY 1971 planning. General Abrams, the US Embassy in Saigon, and CINCPAC all supported this request, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought Secretary of Defense approval on 19 December 1969. They recommended the early release of 24,550 PF and 5,173 RF spaces along with 2,964 ARVN spaces needed for logistic and command support of the new RF and PF units. This force increase of 32,687 spaces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated, would raise materiel and support costs by $34.9 million in FY 1970 and by $18.6 million per year for the following two fiscal years. If budget constraints made it impossible to furnish new weapons, they added, territorial units could be temporarily supplied with equipment released by the re-equipping of regular RVNAF units.[28]

The Secretary of Defense approved the JCS recommendations on 6 January 1970, raising the RVNAF force level to 986,360 for FY 1970. He was "extremely pleased" with the initiatives of the Republic of Vietnam and the RVNAF in an area "so critical to both pacification and Vietnamization." To support the activation of the new units, he directed maximum use of equipment released by US forces redeploying from Vietnam.[29] (See Table VI for actual RVNAF strengths in 1969.)

At the beginning of December 1969, Secretary Laird gave the President a report on RVNAF improvement and modernization. Progress in weapons programs had been encouraging; most were on schedule and some even ahead of schedule. All ARVN maneuver battalions were armed with the M-16 rifle and RF/PF weapons modernization would be completed during the course of the month. In fact, the weapons programs were 90 percent complete, and Mr. Laird expected no problems in carrying out the remainder. Progress had also been made in training, though much remained to be accomplished. Force

28. (C-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 111730Z Dec 69, JCS IN 13441; (C-GP 4) JCSM-769-69 to SecDef, 19 Dec 69, Encl to JCS 2472/570, 17 Dec 69; JMF 911/535 (11 Dec 69).

29. (C-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Accelerated Activation of Regional Force and Popular Force Units (U)," 6 Jan 70, Att to JCS 2472/570, 8 Jan 70, same file.

expansion had consistently exceeded goals, and for several months in 1969, actual recruit training exceeded plans by about 20 percent.

Despite this success, a number of deficiencies remained. Some actions were behind schedule, Mr. Laird said, particularly those involving specialist training. Raising the quality of training, especially at the junior officer level, was a serious concern. More English language instructors and more trained technicians to man military and civil communications systems were also required. Secretary Laird pointed out the need for a nationwide system of manpower priorities since there simply were not enough qualified persons in the Vietnamese manpower pool to fill all the demands for technical skills.

All in all, Secretary Laird was statisfied with the progress in RVNAF improvement and modernization during 1969. He recognized that, so far, the material and quantifiable aspects of the program had been stressed. Now, he assured the Prcsident, greater emphasis would be given the less tangible areas of training, leadership, and morale. He told the President that he had directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop a Phase III plan to include comprehensive programs to overcome existing deficiencies, as well as to prepare the RVNAF to maintain security in South Vietnam as US forces withdrew.[30]

RVNAF Effectiveness

Secretary Laird's report to the President on RVNAF progress was based, primarily, on the SEER, the System for Evaluating the Effectiveness of RVNAF. General Westmoreland had established this system at the beginning of 1968 in an attempt to provide a "quantified objective evaluation" of RVNAF development. It consisted of four sub-systems[31]

30. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Vietnamization," 1 Dec 69, Att to JCS 2472/552-3, 2 Dec 69, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 1.

31. These were the ARVN-Marine Forces Evaluation System (AMFES); the Naval Forces Evaluation System (NFES); the Air Forces Evaluation System (AFES); and the Territorial Forces Evaluation System (TFES).

covering the various RVNAF elements. Under SEER, US advisers with RVNAF units submitted monthly statistical reports to MACV, as well as quarterly assessments of operational effectiveness, leadership, training, staff functions, and problem areas. These data were then compiled and tabulated by the MACJ3 and published in quarterly SEER reports.[32]

The SEER procedure was not without deficiencies. The inherent differences in ground, sea, and air forces and the variations in the mission, organization, and equipment of the regular and territorial forces made it difficult to compare levels of performance. In addition, the subjective nature of the SEER questionnaires made it impossible to insure a uniform standard for separate evaluations by several hundred US advisers with varying training and experience. In 1969, COMUSMACV revised the SEER questionnaire in an effort to provide more precise measurement of RVNAF progress, and this change caused some initial confusion in adviser reporting. Both COMUSMACV and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized the weaknesses in SEER, and in August 1969, General Wheeler cautioned the Secretary of Defense about these reports. He noted the shortcomings of the system and advised Mr. Laird that thorough analysis should be made and other staff inputs used before drawing firm conclusions from the SEER data. But, despite its shortcomings, SEER was the best measurement of RVNAF improvement available, and the United States used it throughout 1969, attempting to refine and improve it.[33]

During 1969, SEER reports indicated an overall improvement in RVNAF operational effectiveness. Expansion of the RVNAF proceeded at "the maximum practical rate," though accompanied by a degradation in the effectiveness of some RVNAF regular ground units, which had been drawn on for cadres to form new units. Nevertheless, there was an overall upward trend in the effectiveness of RVN regular land forces in 1969 as compared with the previous year, and

32. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VI-135 - VI-136. (S) MACV SEER Report, 1st Qtr, CY 1970, 1 Jul 70, JMF 911/337 (1 Jan 70).

33. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VI-135. (S-GP 4) USMACV, "RVN Regular Forces Advisory Report," 31 Aug 68, p. 506, JMF 911/337 (1 Jan 68). (U) CM-4512-69 to SecDef, 21 Aug 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 69.

there was encouraging improvement in specific ARVN units, including the 2d, 5th, 8th, 9th, and 23d Divisions. Regular forces took an increasingly aggressive approach to combat operations, engaging the enemy with significantly reduced US reinforcement. Both ARVN and VNMC battalions devoted approximately 50 percent of their time to combat operations as compared with only 25 percent early in 1968. They maintained favorable kill ratios as well as favorable ratios of weapons captured to weapons lost and repeatedly discovered enemy caches in the course of their expanded operations. The overall ARVN/VNMC "operational effectiveness," as reported by SEER, rose from 76.1 in the first quarter of 1969 to 82.8 by the end of the year.[34]

There was a steady increase in the strength of the Regional and Popular Forces during 1969, giving them a greater density and area coverage capability. As a result, they assumed a larger role in pacification, freeing regular units to return to their primary mission of combatting enemy main-force units. The territorial forces increased their rate of day and night operations, expanded their intelligence-gathering activities, and inflicted more casualties on the enemy, in both men and materiel, than they suffered. At the close of the year US advisers reported a 94 percent improvement over 1968 in the use of supporting fire and a slight improvement in rapport between the territorial forces and the civilian population.[35]

The Vietnamese Navy (VNN) continued to expand and assume additional responsibilities in 1969. During the year, the US Navy units and VNN forces conducted coastal and riverine operations, coordinating logistic, intelligence, communications, pacification, and psychological efforts. As the training of VNN forces improved, they gradually assumed more combat responsibility from US Navy personnel. By the close of 1969,

34. (S) MACV SEER Report, 1st Qtr CY 1970, Pt. I, JMF 911/337 (1 Jan 70). (TS-GP 1) OJCS, Combat Analysis Group, J-3, CAG-VSUM 1-70, "A Periodic Summary of Progress toward Vietnamizing the War (U)," Mar 70, pp. C-40 - C-55, JCS Hist Div files (hereinafter cited as CAG-VSUM 1-70.) (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VI-136 - VI-138.

35. (S) USMACV SEER Report, 4th Qtr, CY 1970, 30 Mar 70, Pt. I, J-3 Files. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, pp. C(RF/PF) 1-31.

independent VNN and combined USN/VNN commands controlled most of the naval operations in III and IV CTZs; the VNN had assumed command of 29 of 49 inshore surveillance stations; a VNN/VNMC amphibious task force was operating successfully in the Delta; and plans called for the VNN to take over the bulk of the responsibility for riverine operations by June 1970. The SEER reports indicated that VNN forces had increased their attacks on enemy personnel and craft, had improved their kill ratios, and had searched greater numbers of vessels in 1969. The SEER evaluation also revealed that the majority of VNN forces were conducting their missions aggressively; it rated their performance as equal to, and at times exceeding, that of comparable US Navy units.[36]

In accordance with the RVNAF improvement and modernization program, the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) took over an increased share in all air operations in South Vietnam during 1969, including air mobile assaults, medical evacuation, and logistic missions. Total sorties flown by the VNAF rose from approximately 54,900 in the first quarter of the year to 73,700 during the last three months of 1969. The SEER reviews rated the VNAF squadrons in four readiness categories; at the beginning of 1970, 95 percent of the VNAF was adjudged "operationally ready," the second highest of the four levels.[37]

The VNAF fighter squadrons increased their total number of strikes in South Vietnam during 1969 while those conducted by US and FWMAF forces decreased. During the year, VNAF fighters flew about 19 percent of all strike sorties flown, but for the last quarter, the figure was 30 percent. United States advisers considered many of the older, more experienced VNAF pilots to be aggressive and thoroughly

36. (C) USMACV SEER Report, 4th Qtr, CY 1969, 30 Mar 70, Pt. I, p. 11; Pt. II, p. A-1, J-3 Files. (T8-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VI-138. (T8-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, pp. (C/VNN) 1, 10, 20. (T8-GP 4) Memo, SecN to SecDef, "Review of the Vietnamese Navy and Vietnamese Marine Corps Improvement and Modernization (U)," 6 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/497-9, 7 Oct 69, JMF 911/535 (8 June 69) sec 3.

37. (C) USMACV SEER Report, 4th Qtr, CY 1969, 30 Mar 70, Pt. II, p. A-1, J-3 Files. (S-GP 4) MACV SEER Report, 1st Qtr, CY 1970, Pt. II, p. 2, JMF 911/337 (1 Jan 70).

capable, and they rated overall VNAF fighter squadron performance as "excellent." They cautioned, however, that performance might decline as experienced cadres were removed from operational squadrons to form new units.[38]

The performance of the VNAF helicopter squadrons was less impressive. The VNAF had only 3.5 percent of all helicopters in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1970, and only about 74 percent of this capability had been in commission during the final months of 1969. This situation resulted from a shortage of trained maintenance personnel, gunships, and command/control helicopters and from a high accident rate--17.4 percent during 1969 as compared to 13.9 percent in 1968. The weakness of the VNAF helicopter squadrons had resulted in inadequate combat support for ARVN forces and caused the cancellation of or degradation of some ground force operations during 1969.[39]

RVNAF Weaknesses

Although improvement of the RVNAF progressed significantly in 1969, many problems remained. The expansion of forces and turnover of equipment proceeded according to plan, but the areas of training, leadership, and morale still needed much attention. These were not new problems, nor were they ones that could be easily or quickly resolved. The conditions that had contributed to the RVNAF's record of low morale, poorly trained leaders, and limited technical knowledge were deeply entrenched. In spite of sustained efforts to eliminate these weaknesses, they persisted throughout 1969.

A key indicator of the low RVNAF morale was the high desertion rate among the land forces. Desertion levels had risen sharply during the 1968 Tet offensive and reached an all-time peak of 17.2 per 1,000 in October of that year. By the beginning of 1969, however, the rate had dropped to 12.6 per 1,000. The rapid expansion of the RVNAF was a major factor in the high desertion rates, and statistics

38. (S) USMACV SEER Report, 4th Qtr, CY 1969, 30 Mar 70, Pt. I, pp. 3, 21, J-3 Files. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, pp. C(VNAF) 18-20.
39. (S) USMACV SEER Report, 4th Qtr, CY 1969, 30 Mar 70, Pt. II, p. 25, J-3 Files.

showed that a large percentage of the deserters were recruits with less than six months service. Inadequate enforcement of anti-desertion laws and periodic amnesties also encouraged desertion. Other causes included: over-exposure to combat; insufficient leave; low pay and benefits; inadequate training; lack of faith in the government; uncertainties concerning the peace negotiations; and the closeness of family ties within the Vietnamese culture.[40]

In 1969 the Republic of Vietnam, with US encouragement and assistance, implemented a number of programs to reduce desertions. Early in the year the Republic of Vietnam undertook a pilot program in II CTZ to provide RVNAF troops with transportation to and from their homes when on leave. Other efforts encompassed: increased commissary and post exchange facilities and dependent housing; a liberalized leave program; establishment of a finger-printing program for easier identification of deserters; formation of permanent desertion control committees; expansion of political warfare activities at the unit level; expanded psychological operations to educate the people regarding the seriousness of the desertion problem; emphasis on the punishment under the law for harboring deserters; recommendations for legislative action to improve veterans' benefits; and increased decorations and awards.[41]

The RVNAF desertions dropped slightly during 1969 to a year-end rate of approximately 11 per 1,000. Desertions in the land forces were always the highest among the RVNAF services. The rates for the ARVN and VNMC, though fluctuating, declined throughout the first three quarters of 1969, but then turned upward during the last three months of the year. In December 1969, the ARVN rate was 15.9 per 1,000,

40. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, pp. C-5 - C-6. (S-GP 4) COMUSMACV 596 to CJCS, 14 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69. (S-GP 4) Encl 2 to CM-4200-69 to SecDef, 24 May 69, same file, May 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VI-73.

41. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 596 to CJCS, 14 Feb 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 69. (TS-GP 4) COMUSMACV 50351 to CINCPAC, 29 Sep 69, JCS IN 16544. (TS-GP 3) Ann E to JCSM-42-70 to SecDef, 29 Jan 70, Encl to JCS 2472/552-9, 24 Jan 70, pp. E-1 - E-7, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 3A. (Various annexes to JCSM-42-70 considered problems confronting the RVNAF; hereinafter these annexes will be cited as the appropriate annex to JCSM-42-70, 29 Jan 70.)

nearly the same as at the beginning of the year. The VNMC rate at the same time was 23.6, nearly 20 per 1,000 lower than at the beginning of the year, but it rose dramatically again in January 1970. Desertions in the RF and PF declined slightly during the year, and desertion in the VNN and VNAF was not a major problem. Whether the small downturn in the desertion rate during 1969 was the result of the efforts taken to alleviate the problem or the natural consequence of the decreasing level of fighting was open to question, but in any case, desertions remained a major concern for the RVNAF.[42]

The RVNAF also suffered throughout 1969 from a lack of trained leaders. There was a shortage of senior commanders and most commanders were usually below the authorized grades. There was also an imbalance between the officer and non-commissioned officer (NCO) grade structures, resulting from the inability of the RVNAF training and promotion systems to keep pace with the rapid expansion of the forces. Other factors contributing to the leadership problem included the lack of personnel qualified for promotion, high casualty rates among lower ranking officers, unrealistic promotion goals, insufficient use of battlefield promotions, and the practice of using military personnel in civilian agencies. During the year, both COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff emphasized to the senior RVNAF commanders the importance of merit promotions and training. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam adopted a liberal battlefield promotion policy and a rotation program designed to give officers a variety of experience. But these new procedures were not carried out fully. The RVNAF did increase the total number of officers and NCOs during 1969, and more officers were promoted than in any previous year. Yet officer and NCO goals were not met, and at the close of the year, the quality of leadership still hindered the conduct of the war and the effort to build a self-sufficient RVNAF.[43]

42. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VI-73. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. VII-30.

43. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VI-76 - VI-78. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 50351 to CINCPAC, 2 Sep 69, JCS IN 16544. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Annex F to JCSM-42-70, 29 Jan 70, pp. F-1 - F-4.

Adequately trained personnel were essential for the improvement of leadership, but the RVNAF was traditionally weak in this area. Consequently, the quality of RVNAF training programs was of great importance in 1969. The Central Training Command supervised the major portion of all training for the RVNAF with the assistance of the COMUSMACV Training Directorate, which administered all of the RVNAF's offshore training programs. Each RVNAF component provided training for its forces similar to that provided to US forces, and the training was conducted at service schools, in-country training centers, and offshore FWMAF installations.

Training for RVNAF ground forces was conducted in three Phases: Phase I, individual training; Phase II, unit training; and Phase III, operational readiness training, which gave instruction to units between operations to maintain or improve unit and individual proficiency. Generally, Phases I and II were implemented as programmed during 1969, but a significant number of ground force units failed to conduct Phase III training during the year. The VNN training was complicated by the language barrier and the shortage of experienced personnel to man the growing inventory of vessels but VNN programs were at 100 percent of capacity at the end of 1969.

Personnel of the VNAF underwent approximately 17 to 24 months of training; pilots received English-language instruction in Vietnam and fixed and rotary wing aircraft instruction in the United States. This was followed by combat-crew training and technical language courses. Specialized instruction was also required for VNAF enlisted maintenance and support personnel. When 1970 began 2,756 VNAF pilots were needed. Only 45 percent of these were available, but because of the long lead-time required for VNAF training, the improvement program for the air forces was not scheduled for completion until 1972.[44]

At the end of 1969, the RVNAF still had major training deficiencies. The Central Training Command was not staffed

44. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VI-81 - VI-82. (TS-GP 3) Ann C to JCSM-42-70, 29 Jan 70, pp. C-5 - C-16. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, pp. C(ARVN-VNMC) -45 - (ARVN-VNMC) -48, (VNN) -5, C(VNAF) -9. (S-GP 4) DJSM 565-69 to ASD(SA), 18 Apr 69, JMF 911/535 (CY 1969).

for effective control, nor did it supervise the specialized schools, which remained under the control of the various technical services. Other problem areas included a lack of standardization in programs, inadequate proficiency testing, inexperienced training personnel, and failure to relate combat experience to the training programs. In addition, many training facilities were inadequate and the VNN had no facility to instruct personnel for depot-level maintenance. Clearly, training was an area of RVNAF improvement that required attention in the coming year.[45]

Another problem confronting the RVNAF was the lack of an adequate logistics system. Although the South Vietnamese armed forces had maintained a logistics organization throughout their existence, they had relied on the United States for supply and maintenance assistance. The improvement and modernization program launched in 1968 had included a logistics portion to achieve a self-supporting armed force in a counterinsurgency role. Under the Nixon Administration, however, the decision to create a South Vietnamese armed force to meet the existing Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army threat necessitated the rapid development of a considerably larger RVNAF logistics system.

In 1969, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Joint General Staff, oversaw all RVNAF logistic matters and also served as Commander of the Central Logistics Command, controlling ARVN logistic and technical services. The ARVN, the VNN, and the VNAF each maintained its own logistics organization, but the ARVN supported the VNMC as well and provided common-item and functional logistical support for the other services, the territorial troops, and selected paramilitary forces.

In order to maintain the expanded RVNAF that would result from the 1969 improvement and modernization programs, the RVNAF, with the assistance of COMUSMACV, promulgated the Master Plan for Logistic Self-Sufficiency. It consisted of a series of plans and programs to identify and find solutions to logistics shortfalls. A RVNAF/MACV Combined Logistics Offensive Plan (CLOP) attempted to deal with short-term problems, while the Country Logistics Improvement Plan

45. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VI-104 - VI-105. (TS-GP 3) Ann C to JCSM-42-70, 29 Jan 70, pp. C-2 - C-3.

(CLIP) treated broad, longer-range logistics problems. The CLIP plan identified 73 specific projects to be completed by the end of FY 1972, including such matters as improvement of air and sealift capabilities. Additional features of the Master Plan for Logistic Self-Sufficiency included the conduct of an Administrative and Direct Support Logistical Company Study to identify measures for improvement of the support for the territorial forces and a study of turnover of ports, bases, and other facilities. Additionally, the RVNAF increased on-th-job training in the logistic area during 1969.[46]

A special effort was made in 1969 to improve the logistical support of the Vietnamese Navy. Previously, most of the VNN's logistics support came from the US Navy, with the ARVN supplying common-item support when possible. The original improvement and modernization plan in 1968 had provided for a self-sufficient VNN logistics capability by mid-1972, but in August 1969, the Joint General Staff and COMUSMACV published a joint Accelerated Turnover Logistics Infrastructure (ACTOVLOG) Plan to make the VNN self-sustaining by June 1971. Under this plan, the United States transfered US Navy logistics facilities to the VNN as the latter became increasingly proficient. Original estimates indicated that the VNN would eventually assume command of approximately 30 bases currently under US command or to be constructed. By October 1969, a VNN Logistics Command had been established, and the VNN had assumed command of 13 bases. But the ambitious goals set for the ACTOVLOG Plan were not fulfilled. At the close of 1969, the VNN logistics system could not support the expanding VNN force structure, and there was reason to believe that the system would be inadequate through June 1971 and only marginally adequate through the following year.[47]

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46. (TS-GP 3) App III to JCSM-522-69 to SecDef, 29 Aug 69, Encl A to JCS 2472/467-4, 19 Aug 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 4. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-593-69 to SecDef, 27 Sep 69, Encl to JCS 2472/497-6, 24 Sep 69, JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 3. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, p. C-16. (S-GP 4) DJSM-949-69 to ASD(I&L), 21 Jun 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 69.

47. (TS-GP 4) App to Memo, SecN to SecDef, "Review of the Vietnamese Navy Improvement and Modernization Program (U)," 6 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/497-9, 7 Oct 69, JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 3. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, pp. xi, C(VNN) -6.

United States officials in both Saigon and Washington were aware of the need to develop an adequate logistics base for the South Vietnamese forces. In July 1969, President Nixon asked about this matter. As relayed to Secretary Laird by Dr. Kissinger, the President wanted to know what more the United States could do to improve the inferior RVNAF logistics. The reply, based on a briefing by the CINCPAC J4, went to Dr. Kissinger on 15 July. Secretary Laird explained that the revision of the improvement and modernization program to create a combat force to meet an enemy threat of the current proportions required much greater logistic support than originally planned.

> We are actively reviewing the adequacy of the system to meet increased requirements. We plan both to improve RVNAF logistic capabilities and to augment these capabilities for the short term with US support where necessary. Our preliminary assessment is that we must significantly increase US logistic support to RVNAF over what is now being provided.

Mr. Laird then went on to describe the current efforts to enhance RVNAF logistics capability.[48]

Even though both the Republic of Vietnam and the United States recognized the RVNAF logistics needs and had instituted efforts to fulfill them, the problems were not susceptible to rapid solution. At the beginning of 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that the RVNAF logistics system could provide only "marginally adequate" support to its forces without US in-country support. In addition, the RVNAF had to rely on the United State in the important specialized areas of sea and airlift, naval and aircraft maintenance, and port operations. Obviously, major improvement was still required to bring the RVNAF logistics organization to full effectiveness.

48. (S-GP 4) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, "South Vietnamese Combat Effectiveness," 26 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/492-2, 30 Jun 69; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, "Vietnamization - Logistic Support," 15 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/492-3, 22 Jul 69; JMF 911/355 (12 Jun 69). (S-GP 4) DJSM-1003-69 to CJCS, 27 Jun 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 69.

Despite the remaining weaknesses of the RVNAF, US officials were pleased with its progress during 1969. The proportion of RVNAF time devoted to combat doubled and operational effectiveness steadily improved. The RVNAF, displaying increased confidence in its own abilities, had improved flexibility in combat operations and had expanded support for pacification. As General William B. Rosson, Deputy COMUSMACV, told the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a year-end assessment:

> RVNAF performance has improved and is continuing to do so. GVN forces have been getting into the war at an increasing pace as indicated by their increased casualties which are consistently higher than U.S. Forces. In three of the past five weeks RVNAF has inflicted more casualties on the enemy than have U.S. forces. Much remains to be done to achieve major increases in effectiveness, but results achieved to date are encouraging.[49]

49. (S-GP 4) Msg, DepCOMUSMACV (MAC 183) to Actg CJCS (Moorer), 5 Jan 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 70.

TABLE V

RVNAF Force Structure
As Approved by the Secretary of Defense
on 12 August 1969

Forces	End FY 1970	End FY 1971 (to continue unchanged through end FY 1972)
RVNAF		
ARVN	387,835	395,799
VNN	31,645	33,122
VNAF	35,786	35,786
VNMC	13,070	13,070
Regional Forces	270,497	275,670
Popular Forces	214,840	239,390
Subtotals	953,673	992,837
Paramilitary		
Civil Irregular Defense Group	24,179	---
Revolutionary Development Cadre	47,200	47,200
*Son Thong RD Cadre	7,300	7,300
Province Reconnaissance Units	6,000	6,000
Armed Propaganda Teams	5,550	5,550
Kit Carson Scouts	2,916	2,916
National Police	87,000	102,000
National Police Field Forces	20,200	20,200
Subtotals	200,345	191,166
Grand Totals	1,154,018	1,184,003

*Previously Troung Son Cadre

(~~TS~~-GP 1) Ann to App to JCSM-593-69 to SecDef, 27 Sep 69, Encl to JCS 2472/496-6, 24 Sep 69, JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 3.

TABLE VI

1969 RVNAF Strengths

As of 1 January 1969

Service	Authorized	Assigned
ARVN	374,132	380,270
VNN	19,344	18,882
VNAF	32,587	18,625
VNMC	9,304	9,134
RF	252,927	219,762
PF	178,140	172,536
Total RVNAF	866,434	819,209

Assigned Strengths

Service	31 March 1969	31 June 1969	31 September 1969
ARVN	380,625	392,686	401,595
VNN	22,524	24,635	26,401
VNAF	20,583	24,527	29,385
VNMC	8,716	9,314	10,504
RF	237,814	249,553	254,800
PF	174,367	175,118	206,998
Total RVNAF	844,629	875,833	929,683

As of 31 December 1969

Service	Authorized	Assigned
ARVN	374,132	416,278
VNN	28,700	30,143
VNAF	32,587	36,469
VNMC	10,419	11,528
RF	255,167	260,455
PF	182,725	214,383
Total RVNAF	883,730	969,256

(TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VI-2, VI-52.

Chapter 7

THE DECISION TO INVADE CAMBODIA

Cambodia's Role in the War

Since the beginning of its combat involvement in Vietnam, the United States had faced the problem of cutting off North Vietnamese assistance to the insurgency in the south. Not only did this aid come directly across the Demilitarized Zone from North Vietnam, but it also moved through the mountainous border areas of Laos and Cambodia, the Republic of Vietnam's neighbors on the west. Both of these states, with weak governments and large Communist movements, provided ideal infiltration routes and staging areas for enemy forces in South Vietnam. As described in earlier volumes of this history, Laos presented the more immediate and difficult problem but, increasingly, as the war continued, the enemy relied on Cambodia as a channel to feed manpower and supplies into South Vietnam.

Geographically, Cambodia consists of a large central basin of generally low-lying terrain surrounded by mountain areas. On the east Cambodia and South Vietnam share a 763-mile border, extending from near the South Vietnamese village of Dak To south and southwestward to the Gulf of Siam. On the map this border is a ribbon of twists and turns, marked by oddly shaped projections that have gained descriptive nicknames. (See Map I.) The most important of these, militarily speaking, is formed by the tip of the Cambodian province of Svay Rieng, which thrusts some 40 miles into South Vietnam at the juncture of III and IV CTZs. The apex of this intrusion, known as the "Parrot's Beak," approaches within 30 miles of Saigon; on the northern side of this same projection is an irregular formation, the "Angel's Wing," and on the south another, the "Crow's Nest." Farther north in Kompong Cham Province, two smaller salients known as the "Dog's Head" and the "Fishhook" also push into South Vietnam. The Cambodia-South Vietnam boundary is further complicated by the existence of a number of areas where the exact dividing line between the two states has never been resolved.[1]

1. Donald P. Whitaker et al., Area Handbook for the Khmer Republic (Cambodia) (1973), pp. 4, 15. Locations of the picturesquely named places along the border are shown in maps appearing in (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-31 - C-34, C-36.

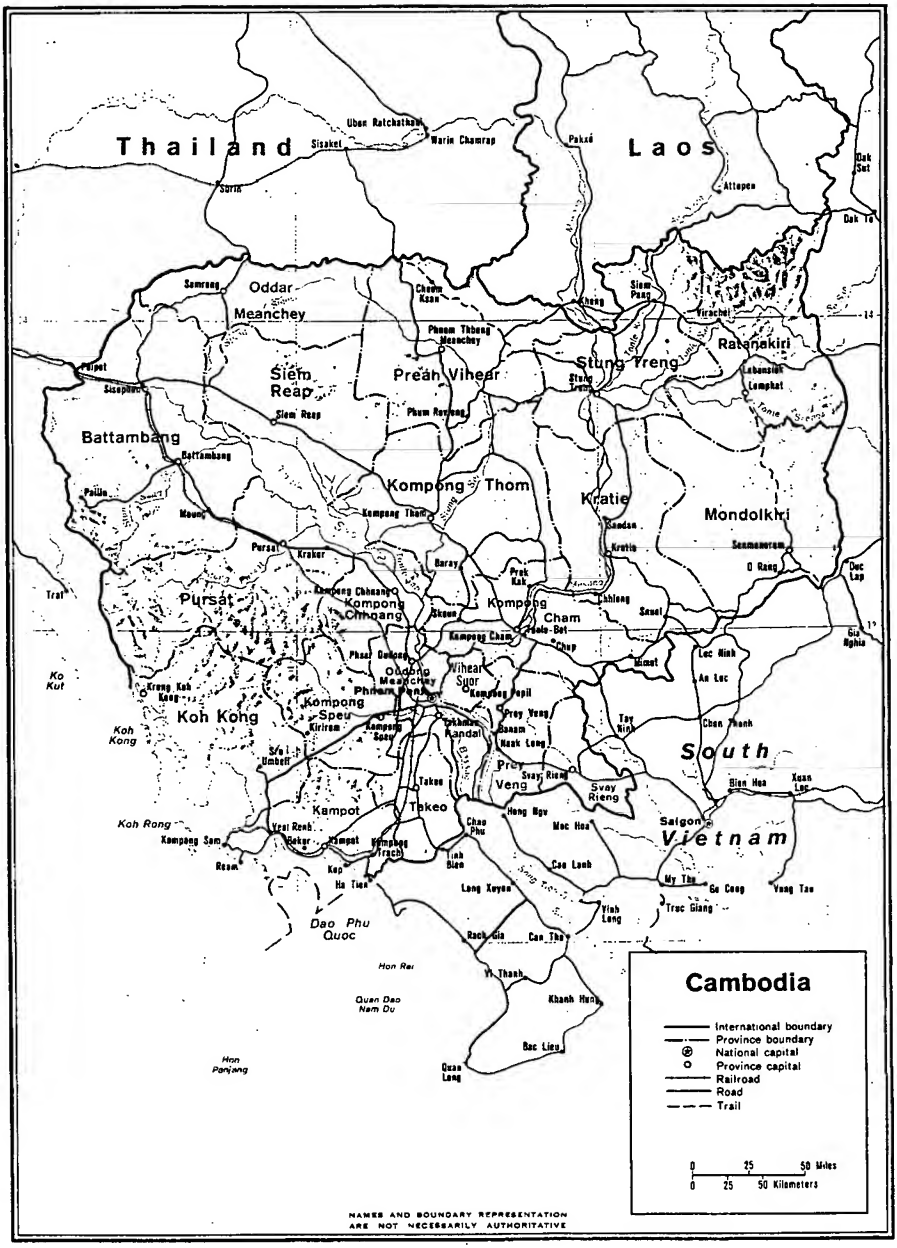
Throughout the 1960s, Cambodia was nominally a kingdom under the rule of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who contented himself with the title of Chief of State. He ruled the Khmers, the inhabitants of Cambodia, with all the accouterments of a modern state, including a constitution and a National Assembly. The constitution specified, however, that all powers emanated from the Chief of State, and the National Assembly, elected by universal suffrage, was only an advisory body until 1970.[2]

Prince Sihanouk viewed the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam in the early 1960s with concern. The Khmers are an ethnically distinct people from their Vietnamese and Thai neighbors, and long-standing animosities existed. The Prince saw in the expanding Vietnamese conflict and the growing US involvement, which had full Thai support, the possibility of Cambodia being caught in a squeeze between its two traditional enemies--Thailand and Vietnam. In an attempt to avoid such an eventuality, he proclaimed a policy of neutrality. As he aptly put it: "When two elephants fight, the wise ant stands to one side to avoid being tromped."[3] But with the adoption of neutrality came a tendency to align with the communist powers; whether from conviction or expediency, or both, Sihanouk began to allow the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces to use Cambodian territory, although he repeatedly denied it in the years 1963 through early 1969.[4]

As Prince Sihanouk assumed his avowedly neutral stance in Southeast Asia, he grew increasingly hostile toward the United States. The first step in the decline in US-Camodian relations occurred in 1962 when the United States angered Sihanouk by refusing his call for an international conference to guarantee Cambodian neutrality. President Kennedy did, however, assure the Prince that the United States would respect Cambodian independence and territorial integrity. In the fall of 1963, Cambodian-US relations deteriorated further as a result of anti-Sihanouk broadcasts

2. Whitacker, Area Handbook (Cambodia), pp. 153-154.
3. Quoted in I.G. Edmonds, The Khmers of Cambodia (1970), p. 148.
4. Donald Kirk, Wider War (1971), pp. 50-61. Edmonds, The Khmers of Cambodia, pp. 148-150.

Map 1


Thailand
Laos
Ubon Ratchathani
Sisaket
Surin
Samrong
Oddar Meanchey
Chhum Ksan
Phnum Thbeng Meanchey
Siem Reap
Preah Vihear
Stung Treng
Ratanakiri
Lomphat
Pailin
Battambang
Phum Reyveng
Kompong Thom
Kratie
Mondolkiri
Sandan
Pursat
Kraker
Baray
Kompong Chhnang
Kompong Chhnang
Prek Kak
Kompong Cham
Chamkar Leu
Skeun
Kompong Cham
Chup
Snuol
Lec Ninh
An Loc
Tay Ninh
Chau Thanh
Ko Kut
Koh Kong
Kompong Speu
Kiriram
Phnom Penh
Oudong
Meanchey Bank
Wihear Suor
Kompong Speu
Pepil
Prey Veng
Takhmao
Kandal
Basaum
Neak Loeung
Koh Kong
Sre Umbell
Takeo
Prey Veng
Svay Rieng
Kampot
Takeo
Hong Ngu
Moc Hoa
Saigon
Vietnam
Koh Rong
Kompong Som
Vrai Renh
Kampot
Kompong Trach
Kep
Ha Tien
Tinh Bien
Cao Lanh
My Tho
Go Cong
Vung Tau
Long Xuyen
Vinh Long
Trac Giang
Dao Phu Quoc
Rach Gia
Can Tho
Hon Rai
Vi Thanh
Khanh Hung
Quan Dao Nam Du
Bac Lieu
Hon Panjang
Quan Long
Cambodia
International boundary
Province boundary
National capital
Province capital
Railroad
Road
Trail
0 25 50 Miles
0 25 50 Kilometers
NAMES AND BOUNDARY REPRESENTATION ARE NOT NECESSARILY AUTHORITATIVE

from South Vietnam and Thailand that the Prince believed the United States was promoting. He warned the United States that he would seek an accommodation with the Communist bloc and divest himself of Western aid if the propaganda attacks did not cease. Concurrently he launched an economic swing to the left, nationalizing the banks and foreign-controlled import-export companies. In November 1963, he cancelled the US aid program, which had begun in 1955 and amounted to $30 million annually at the time of the termination.[5]

On two occasions in early 1964, South Vietnamese forces shelled Cambodian villages near the SVN border, killing and wounding a number of civilians. The second incident, a ground and air attack on 20 March 1964, included the participation of US advisers. Both South Vietnam and the United States expressed formal regrets, but Prince Sihanouk brought the matter to the attention of the United Nations Security Council, charging repeated acts of aggression against his country. The United States assured the Council of its respect for Cambodian neutrality, but explained that the border was not clearly marked and that there was evidence of Cambodian collusion in providing aid and safe haven to the Viet Cong. The United Nations sent a committee to Cambodia to investigate the "friction" along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border, but this action did not satisfy Prince Sihanouk. Finally, on 3 May 1965, Sihanouk broke diplomatic relations with the United States, citing an unflattering magazine article and other alleged slights to Cambodian "dignity and interests."[6]

While US-Cambodian relations disintegrated, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese activity in Cambodia increased. As early as 1960, an attache report from Saigon had called attention to increased VC strength in southwestern Vietnam resulting from infiltration through Cambodia. By 1964, US officials both in South Vietnam and in Washington began to grow alarmed over the enemy use of Cambodia. Secretary of Defense

5. Jules David, The United States in World Affairs, 1964 (1965), pp. 168-174. For the period 1955-1963, US aid to Cambodia totaled $309.7 million in economic and $83.7 million in direct military assistance.

6. David, The United States in World Affairs, 1964, pp. 169-174. Richard P. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs, 1965 (1966), pp. 61-62. Dept of State Bulletin, 8 Jun 64, pp. 911-912; 31 May 65, pp. 853-854.

Robert S. McNamara returned from a trip to South Vietnam in March of that year and reported to the President, among other things, that continued US and South Vietnamese respect for Cambodian neutrality was being exploited by the enemy; the Viet Cong was making extensive use of Cambodian territory for sanctuaries and infiltration. On several occasions during 1964, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the removal of restrictions against military action in Cambodia. They wanted authority for both hot pursuit and cross-border operations by the RVNAF in order to pursue and destroy enemy elements fleeing into Cambodia. With the commitment of US ground forces to combat in South Vietnam during 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to press for authorities to deal with the enemy staging and transit areas in Cambodia, but none of their requests was granted.[7]

In 1965, the United States and the Republic of Vietnam initiated MARKET TIME, a maritime blockade of the South Vietnamese coast to prevent sea infiltration, and this blockade became effective during 1966. Then, no longer able to reinforce his troops in III and IV CTZs by sea, the enemy began to move supply shipments through Cambodian ports, principally the town of Kompong Som, which had been renamed Sihanoukville. From there, munitions and other materials were trucked to base areas along the South Vietnam-Cambodia border. This movement across Cambodia occurred with the tacit approval of the Cambodian Government and involved direct cooperation with some individuals in the political hierarchy. The first such shipment through Sihanoukville arrived in October 1966. Within a short time, the new route had become a primary means of supply for enemy forces in the lower half of South Vietnam.[8]

7. See (TS-GP 1) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, pp. 9-8 - 9-19, 12-43 - 12-46, 24-30 - 24-33.

8. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-1.

[redacted]

The movement of major amounts of supplies through Sihanoukville heightened the concern of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and they continued to call for allied action in Cambodia, including psychological and covert operations. In May 1966, the United States undertook to disseminate leaflets from South Vietnam into a limited area of Cambodia along the border, using favorable wind currents. More importantly, in May 1967, the United States initiated a clandestine intelligence collection program in northeastern Cambodia--an action that COMUSMACV and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had urged for nearly a year. This operation, nicknamed DANIEL BOONE, consisted of small teams of indigenous agents led by US Special Forces personnel.9

Originally DANIEL BOONE was restricted in area of operation and limited to infiltration on foot, but gradually both the area and scope of the operations expanded. By the end of 1967, DANIEL BOONE was conducted in Cambodia all along the South Vietnam border to a depth of 20 kilometers, helicopter insertion of personnel was permitted, and forward air control (FAC) aircraft were used. After the 1968 Tet offensive, the United States authorized the use of anti-personnel land mines in DANIEL BOONE activities and further enlarged the operating area. In December 1968, a recommendation by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for use of artillery and tactical air in emergency extractions of DANIEL BOONE teams from Cambodia was turned down, but DANIEL BOONE teams were authorized to capture and bring out from Cambodia VC/NVA prisoners. In 1969 the nickname was change to SALEM HOUSE. These operations were still going on at the time of the US invasion of Cambodia; by 30 June 1970, 1,119 DANIEL BOONE-SALEM HOUSE operations had been executed, nearly all of which included US participation.10

[redacted]

9. (TS-GP 1) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, pp. 35-1 - 35-6. (U) DOD Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos, 10 Sep 73, pp. 29-30.

10. (U) DOD Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos, 10 Sep 73, pp. 29-30. (TS-GP 1) CM-3813-68 to DSecDef, 7 Dec 68; (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg ASD (ISA) to CJCS, "DANIEL BOONE Operations (U)," 24 Dec 68; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (1 Dec 68-31 Dec 69).

The conduct of these operations did not stem enemy use and transit of the Cambodian border areas. By the end of 1968, US intelligence had identified at least 14 base areas in Cambodia or astride the border, nine of which were adjacent to III CTZ.[11]

In the last months of 1968, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the urging of both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, suggested military action to deal with the threat arising from the enemy base areas in Cambodia. In late September and again in mid-December, they requested authority to pursue enemy forces into specified sections of Cambodia. "The sanctuary afforded the enemy in Cambodia has cost the United States many lives," they told the Secretary of Defense, and has "provided the enemy with the capability of reconstituting his forces after defeat thereby enabling him to continue his offensive campaign almost indefinitely." Before acting on these recommendations, Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford wanted a JCS assessment of the military effects and risks of such operations, and this study had not been finished when the Johnson Administration left office in January 1969.[12]

The Nixon Administration Looks at Cambodia; MENU Operations

Immediately upon assuming office, President Nixon began to consider both military and diplomatic initiatives that might be applied to the Cambodian problem. On the day after his inauguration, 21 January 1969, the President requested an assessment of the "feasibility and utility" of a quarantine of Cambodia to prevent the entry of supplies and

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11. COMUSMACV defined a base area (BA) as "a section of terrain which contained installations, defensive positions, or other facilities used by the enemy to support control elements and to conduct training, staging, logistics, or combat operations. It met the criteria of a small war zone and was similarly organized, but of lesser importance." (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1968, pp. 96-102.

12. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-588-68 to SecDef, 19 Sep 68, Encl to JCS 2366/16, 16 Sep 68, JMF 880/320 (16 Sep 68) sec 1. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-742-68 to SecDef, 13 Dec 68, App to JCS 2472/399, 11 Dec 68; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operations in Cambodia and Air and Naval Blockage of North Vietnam," 21 Dec 68, Att to JCS 2472/399-1, 23 Dec 68; JMF 880/520 (11 Dec 68) sec 1.

equipment destined for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff received the responsibility for this project, and in his direction to the Joint Staff for the study, General Wheeler enlarged on the President's request. In addition to a quarantine, he instructed the Joint Staff to "contemplate" a wide range of actions in Cambodia that could be applied in concert or incrementally, "subject to their usefulness and political acceptability." Such actions should include naval blockage of seaports, blockage of the Mekong River, and other measures to end external support to the enemy operating from Cambodian territory.[13]

The Joint Staff study went through several revisions and was finally approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 February 1969. Based on this study, they recommended to the Secretary of Defense continuation of interdiction operations against enemy LOCs in Laos, attempts to secure Prince Sihanouk's support or acquiescence in allied military actions against enemy sanctuaries and supply lines in and through Cambodia, and "short-term" air and ground raids against clearly identified enemy targets in sparsely populated border areas of Cambodia and in Southern Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not propose an air or sea quarantine at that time; rather they favored retention of this option for possible future use. On 18 March 1969, Secretary Laird notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he had submitted their proposals to the President, but with the recommendation that Mr. Nixon defer any action pending National Security Council consideration.[14]

Meanwhile, the US military commanders in South Vietnam were becoming increasingly alarmed over the enemy buildup

13. The President's directive is referred to in (TS-GP 1) Draft memo for Pres, Att to JCSM-114-69 to SecDef, 27 Feb 69, Encl to JCS 2366/20-4, 24 Feb 69, JMF 880/432 (22 Jan 69) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) CM-3879-69 to DJS, 22 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2366/20, 22 Jan 69, same file, sec 1.

14. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2366/20-1, 3 Feb 69; JCS 2366/20-2, 11 Feb 69; JCS 2366/20-3, 17 Feb 69; JMF 880/432 (22 Jan 69) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-114-69 to SecDef, 27 Feb 69, Encl to JCS 2366/20-4, 24 Feb 69, same file. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Quarantine of Cambodia (U)," 18 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/399-6, 19 Mar 69, JMF 880/520 (11 Dec 68) sec 2.

in the border areas of Cambodia adjacent to South Vietnam. These enemy sanctuaries, the commanders believed, threatened US forces and operations in III and IV CTZs. In early February 1969, intelligence indicated the presence of the principal enemy command and control facility for the lower half of South Vietnam, the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), just across the border in Cambodia, and COMUSMACV asked authority to strike the area with B-52s. The Joint Chiefs of Staff presented this request to the Secretary of Defense and the President on 11 February 1969, and after over a month's consideration the President approved. General Wheeler passed the authority to COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and CINCSAC on 17 March, and the operations began the following day under the code word designation MENU.[15]

In view of Cambodia's official neutrality, and other considerations, President Nixon directed that all information on MENU be closely held. Knowledge of the operation was limited to the individuals essential to its successful execution, and a procedure was carefully devised to conceal the bombing. General Abrams submitted all MENU strike requests, by special security communication channels, through CINCPAC to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who obtained the approval of the Secretary of Defense. Simultaneously, to account for the resources involved, COMUSMACV also presented a routine request for a B-52 strike on a target in South Vietnam as cover for the MENU strike. Both strikes were approved, but normally only the MENU one was carried out. The sorties were conducted at night and directed by ground control radar. All strikes were flown so that the aircraft passed over or near the targets in South Vietnam, but released their bombs on the MENU targets in Cambodia. In preparation for the MENU missions, the B-52 crews were briefed on the South Vietnam targets and received instructions to avoid Cambodia. Only pilots and navigators were specially instructed to react to all directions for bomb release from ground control sites; the remaining crew members

15. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 1782 to CJCS, 9 Feb 69; (~~TS~~) Msg, Actg CJCS (McConnell) 1836 to COMUSMACV, 12 Feb 69; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, CJCS 3287 and 3298 to COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and CINCSAC, 16 and 17 Mar 69; OCJCS File Operation BREAKFAST. Hearings, Bombing in Cambodia, S. Com on Armed Services, 93d Cong, 1st sess, pp. 131-132. (U) DOD Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos, 10 Sep 73, pp. 5-18 (hereafter cited as DOD Report on Selected Operations).

were unaware that their aircraft was being guided beyond the designated target in South Vietnam to strike another in Cambodia.[16]

On the return of aircraft, routine reports were filed as though the strikes had been carried out on the Vietnamese targets; separate reports, on a strict "need-to-know" basis, were submitted by special channel for the MENU strikes. As a consequence, the MENU sorties were included in overall Southeast Asia statistical totals, but were not there identified with Cambodia. The precautions to prevent disclosure of MENU proved quite successful. In fact, while the MENU attacks were taking place, only a few US officials were aware of the B-52 operations in Cambodia, and the US public had no knowledge of the attacks at all. It was only in the summer of 1973 that a congressional investigation revealed the existence and the extent of the MENU operation, and the bombings became the subject of public controversy.[17]

During the MENU operation, US B-52s struck six enemy base areas along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. These areas were named BREAKFAST, DINNER, DESSERT, SNACK, SUPPER, and LUNCH. The MENU strikes continued for fourteen months, through 26 May 1970. A total of 3,875 sorties were flown, expending 180,823 tons of munitions as follows:

Base Area	Sorties	Tons
350 (DESSERT)	706	20,157
351 (SNACK)	885	25,336
352 (DINNER)	817	23,391
353 (BREAKFAST)	228	6,529
609 (LUNCH)	992	26,630
740 (SUPPER)	247	6,780
Totals	3,875	108,823[18]

16. (U) DOD Report on Selected Operations, pp. 5-12. Both former CJCS General Earle G. Wheeler and former SecDef Melvin R. Laird confirmed in the summer of 1973 that President Nixon ordered the treatment of MENU operations "with greatest secrecy." NY Times, 31 Jul 73, 1; 10 Aug 73, 1.

17. (U) DOD Report on Selected Operations, pp. 5-14. For a brief description of the controversy over and the subsequent explanation for MENU in 1973, see the Appendix at the conclusion of this chapter.

18. (U) DOD Report on Selected Operations, pp. 14-15.

Shortly after the beginning of the MENU bombing, the Joint Chiefs of Staff completed and provided the Secretary of Defense on 9 April 1969 an assessment of the advantages and risks associated with military operations against enemy forces in Cambodia. This study responded to Secretary Clifford's request in late December 1968. The Joint Chiefs of Staff repeated their long-held conviction that use of Cambodia gave the enemy a significant advantage in staging and conducting operations in South Vietnam. The enemy was increasing, rather than decreasing, his activities in Cambodia, and they urged consideration of either pursuit or pre-emptive operations against Cambodian sanctuaries. Such operations should reduce the overall threat to friendly forces and could be conducted with "little relative risk" to friendly forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred pre-emptive operations of a week's duration against enemy base areas in Cambodia. In addition, they recommended: standing authority for COMUSMACV to conduct pursuit operations into Cambodia to a depth of 10 kilometers, including the use of B-52 aircraft as approved on a case-by-case basis; "on call" employment of artillery and air strikes against enemy forces in the border areas of Cambodia; and increased intelligence operations in Cambodia, which would involve US reconnaissance patrols and aircraft, plus the use of tactical air and artillery to support emergency extraction of ground reconnaissance teams. They reiterated the stand taken in their Cambodian quarantine study of 27 February 1969, in favor of political initiatives to gain Prince Sihanouk's support or acquiescence in allied military operations in Cambodia.[19]

No action was taken on the JCS recommendations. On 8 April 1969, Dr. Kissinger had notified Secretary Laird that the President had reviewed the JCS February study on Cambodia and desired to hold this matter "in abeyance for the time being." In light of that action, Mr. Laird advised Dr. Kissinger and the President of the existence of the later JCS report on Cambodia but did not forward it. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were prepared, he told Dr. Kissinger, to present their views whenever desired.[20]

19. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-207-69 to SecDef, 9 Apr 69, Encl to JCS 2472/399-7, 27 Mar 69, JMF 880/520 (11 Dec 68) sec 2.

20. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, "Quarantine of Cambodia," 8 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/399-8, 9 Apr 69; (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Cambodia," 15 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/399-9, 18 Apr 69, same file.

Restoration of Diplomatic Relations with Cambodia

When President Nixon asked about military actions in Cambodia on his entry into office, he also directed the Department of State to prepare a study on a possible resumption of diplomatic relations with Cambodia. There had been a number of indications that Prince Sihanouk was growing alarmed at the increasing Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army presence in his country and might welcome renewed diplomatic ties with the United States. In late 1967, the Prince had entertained Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy in Phnom Penh. While Mrs. Kennedy was in Cambodia ostensibly to visit the ruins of Angkor Wat, there was speculation that the US Department of State had encouraged the visit to open a dialogue with Sihanouk. Shortly thereafter, in January 1968, the Prince received the US Ambassador to India, Chester Bowles, to discuss means for easing US-Cambodian tensions. Prince Sihanouk and Ambassador Bowles agreed to seek a strengthening of the international control commission to police Cambodia's borders, and the United States promised to provide the Prince information on Viet Cong and North Vietnamese infilatration of Cambodian territory. In addition, Ambassador Bowles pledged that the United States would not adopt a policy of hot pursuit into Cambodia. But the exchange produced no agreement to restore diplomatic relations, nor did it bring any decline in enemy use of the Cambodian sanctuaries.[21]

Following the Bowles visit to Phnom Penh, signs continued that Sihanouk wanted better relations with the United States. During 1968, he dropped hints of his interest in conversations with French, Australian, Indonesian, and Philippine officials. In addition he released 12 US soldiers held in Cambodia and sent a diplomat to Washington to assist the French Ambassador in his task as custodian of the Cambodian Embassy in the US capital. Moreover, the Prince commented publicly on the usefulness of the US presence in Southeast Asia as a counterbalance to Chinese ambitions, and he was somewhat restrained in his reaction to instances of border violation.[22]

21. (C) Dept of State Memo, Head to Bundy, 28 Jan 69, Att to Encl to JCS 2366/21, 6 Feb 69, JMF 880/540 (31 Jan 69). Kirk, Wider War, pp. 64-65. NY Times, 11 Jan 68, 1; 13 Jan 68, 3.

22. (C) Dept of State Memo, Head to Bundy, 28 Jan 69; Dept of State, Draft Memo for Pres, "Diplomatic Course of Action with Respect to Cambodia," n.d., Att to Encl to JCS 2366/21, 21 Feb 69, JMF 880/540 (31 Jan 69).

The Department of State prepared the requested study and presented it to the Department of Defense for comment before submission to the President. The Department of State believed that the recent signals from Prince Sihanouk, even though interspersed with contrary indications and harsh denunciations, did show a desire for improved relations with the United States. But the Department of State did not interpret the Prince's actions as an indication that he had now decided the United States was going to win in Vietnam. Rather he seemed merely to be hedging his bets. The Department of State also observed that enemy use of Cambodia had increased and that even the fullest resumption of ties would not change the military situation or lessen Sihanouk's complicity in the movement of enemy supplies through Cambodia. In fact, such a resumption might curtail any expansion of US operations along the Cambodian border. Nonetheless, in overall judgement, the Department of State believed that it was to the advantage of the United States to restore relations with Cambodia and recommended that the President proceed gradually toward a renewal of diplomatic ties.[23]

The Director of the Joint Staff, Vice Admiral Nels C. Johnson, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Mr. Paul Warnke, commented jointly on the Department of State study. They argued that a prompt restoration of relations, without significant concessions by Cambodia, could be interpreted as a validation of Sihanouk's policies, which had facilitated the "permissive and uninhibited" enemy use of Cambodian territory. They believed that the course proposed by the Department of State would hinder the "minimal" US operations conducted in Cambodia and might even require reduction of these activities. Admiral Johnson and Mr. Warnke recommended consideration of a full range of actions before making any decision that could impose constraints on the operations designed to protect US forces in South Vietnam. Specifically, they suggested continuation of diplomatic and military initiatives to persuade Cambodia to cease its

23. (TS) Dept of State, Draft Memo for Pres, "Diplomatic Course of Action with Respect to Cambodia," n.d., Att to Encl to JCS 2366/21, 6 Feb 69, same file.

support of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, increased military operations in Cambodia, and establishment of a neutral status for Cambodia.[24]

President Nixon accepted the Department of State position and decided to proceed with gradual resumption of diplomatic relations with Cambodia, stating that this decision could be reversed at any stage. As a first step, President Nixon addressed a letter to Prince Sihanouk on 14 February 1969, assuring the Prince of his desire for "a genuine and lasting improvement" in US-Cambodian relations. The President also expressed belief that every effort must be made to confine the conflict in Southeast Asia to South Vietnam and to find "an honorable peace" there. But, even before peace was restored, the President hoped solutions could be found to the issue dividing Cambodia and the United States. Prince Sihanouk acknowledged President Nixon's letter and promised "whole-hearted" cooperation.[25]

Meantime, Cambodia and the United States proceeded cautiously toward a restoration of diplomatic relations. President Nixon requested and Prince Sihanouk granted on 12 March the release of four US pilots being held in Cambodia. On 28 March, after four years of denials, Prince Sihanouk acknowledged to newsmen that the Viet Cong and

24. (TS-GP 1) Joint DJS-ASD(ISA) Memo, "Diplomatic Course of Action with Respect to Cambodia," 1 Feb 69, Encl to JCS 2366/21, 6 Feb 69, same file.

25. (S) Msgs, State 24758 and 24759 to Saigon et al., 15 Feb 69, JCS IN 93924 and 94090. (S-GP 3) Msg, State 29566 to London, 26 Feb 69, JCS IN 24075. (This msg relayed the text of the Sihanouk reply to the SecState, who was in Europe.)

Within the Joint Staff there was continuing unease over the decision to seek renewed relations with Cambodia. On 4 March 1969 the Director recommended that General Wheeler express concern to the Secretaries of Defense and State that the President's recent action indicated an insufficient regard for its military implications. General Wheeler apparently did not agree; at any rate, he did not formally bring the matter to Secretary Laird's attention. (TS-GP 3) DJSM-350-69 to CJCS, 4 Mar 69, JMF 880/540 (31 Jan 69). Index sheets in OCJCS indicate that the draft memo attached to DJSM-350-69 was not sent and that the DJSM was returned to the originator.

North Vietnamese were increasingly infiltrating Cambodian territory. In mid-April the United States pledged to recognize and respect Cambodian "sovereignty, independence, neutrality, and territory," and Prince Sihanouk responded that he was ready to begin talks on a restoration of relations.[26]

The talks occurred and produced an agreement. On 10 June, Prince Sihanouk announced that he would reestablish diplomatic relations with the United States, and the Department of State in Washington confirmed the agreement "in principle," pending the resolution of necessary administrative details. Subsequently, on 2 July 1969, Secretary Rogers announced that the two countries would shortly exchange charges d'affaires. The United States named Lloyd M. Rives as its Charge d'Affaires ad interim on 21 July, and Mr. Rives arrived in Phnom Penh on 15 August. The Cambodian Charge, Thay Sok, presented his note of accreditation to Secretary Rogers on 29 August 1969, thereby ending a five-year lapse in diplomatic relations between the United States and Cambodia.[27]

While these events were approaching their culmination, the commanders in the field and the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to complain of enemy activity in Cambodia and to urge action against the Cambodian sanctuaries. On 6 June 1969, General Wheeler requested Secretary Laird's approval of a COMUSMACV proposal to use US-led exploitation forces of platoon size, supported by tactical air and artillery, in the SALEM HOUSE area of Cambodia. Two weeks later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that a 1957 US-Cambodian mapping agreement, which had continued despite the break in relations between the two countries, obligated the United States to provide Cambodia 161 additional maps. The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged that these maps not be released since many of them covered areas of Cambodia occupied by the Communists and release to the Cambodian Government could ultimately put the maps in the hands of the enemy. Neither JCS request was approved; both

26. NY Times, 13 Mar 69, 14; 29 Mar 69, 6; 13 Apr 69, 2; 17 Apr 69, 1.
27. NY Times, 11 Jun 69, 3; 12 Jun 69, 9; 16 Aug 69, 12. Dept of State Bulletin, 21 Jul 69, p. 41; 11 Aug 69, p. 115; 22 Sep 69, p. 261.

the Secretary of Defense and the Department of State found such actions unwise at a time when the United States and Cambodia were on the verge of restoring diplomatic relations.[28]

Several weeks later, on 31 July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again complained of enemy activity in Cambodia as well as Cambodian complicity in this activity. They suggested to the Secretary of Defense that the recently announced renewal of relations with Cambodia be put to "advantageous use" by undertaking diplomatic initiatives designed to reduce or end Cambodian support of the enemy. But, again, no action was taken on the JCS proposal.[29]

On 12 August 1969, Prince Sihanouk appointed a new government to solve growing domestic problems in the country. He named a leading conservative, General Lon Nol, as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense--positions that Lon Nol had held in previous governments. Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, a cousin and traditional rival of Sihanouk, became Deputy Prime Minister. Prince Sihanouk, however, retained control over foreign affairs.[30]

The most serious problem confronting the new government was the state of Cambodia's economy. Prince Sihanouk's cancellation of US aid in 1963, together with his policy of nationalization, had wrought havoc. Lack of incentive had slowed production and resulted in a gross national product that rose by only ten percent during the years 1963-1968.

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28. (TS-GP 3) CM-4304-69 to SecDef, 6 Jun 69; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Additional Authority for SALEM HOUSE," 9 Jul 69, JMF 880/320 (6 Jun 69). (S-GP 3) JCSM-380-69 to SecDef, 18 Jun 69, Encl A to JCS 2366/24, 10 Jun 69; (S-GP 30 Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Large-Scale US Topographic Maps of Cambodia," 7 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2366/24-1, 9 Jul 69; JMF 880/265 (10 Jun 69).

29. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-473-69 to SecDef, 31 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2366/25, 5 Aug 69, JMF 880/432 (30 Jul 69). DSecDef informed CJCS on 25 Aug 69 that he wanted to secure DCI's comments on the JCS proposal because of "heavy" intelligence implications; (TS-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, 25 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2366/25-1, 26 Aug 69, same file. Available records reveal no further action.

30. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-5. Kirk, Wider War, pp. 83-84.

In addition, exports had dropped substantially, severely reducing the foreign exchange earnings that might have financed needed industrial development. The primary factor here was a decline in rice exports. Rice was by far the most important item in Cambodia's export trade, but during the period 1964-1968 rice shipments from Cambodia fell by more than 50 percent. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army presence in Cambodia was largely responsible for this decrease. The Communist forces purchased rice in Cambodia at the world price, well above the price fixed by the Cambodian Government, and it was estimated that Cambodian merchants smuggled at least 100,000 tons of rice a year to the Vietnamese Communist troops. This black market sale of rice robbed the Government of both tax money and profits from international trade and, in turn, hindered Sihanouk's policies of nationalization and socialism.[31]

General Lon Nol and Sirik Matak launched an immediate program of economic reforms and a policy of denationalization. Prince Sihanouk accepted these new policies at first, but began to oppose his new government in October. To the disagreement on economic policy was added a clash over the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese presence in Cambodia. Prince Sihanouk viewed this as a foreign policy matter and hence under his purview; Lon Nol and Sirik Matak considered it a domestic problem and their responsibility. After several unsuccessful maneuvers in late 1969 to remove Lon Nol and Sirki Matak, Prince Sihanouk left Cambodia in early January 1970 for a visit to France.[32]

The Situation in 1970

The Prince's departure brought no lessening of enemy activity in Cambodia. The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese continued to use Cambodia in early 1970 to infiltrate men and supplies into III and IV CTZs, and the increasing effectiveness of allied operations in South Vietnam caused the enemy to place even greater reliance on the Cambodian sanctuaries. The enemy base areas grew to be large, permanently garrisoned enclaves over which the Cambodian Government had little or no control. In addition, the Viet Cong

31. Kirk, Wider War, pp. 81-83. NY Times, 8 Aug 69, 10.
32. Kirk, Wider War, pp. 83-88. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-5 - C-6.

and North Vietnamese were directly aiding the indigenous Cambodian Communists, the Khmer Rouges, and the internal insurgency was growing in size and seriousness.[33]

During the first two months of 1970, CINCPAC continued to warn the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the danger emanating from Cambodia. In early January he cited recently captured enemy documents, indicating plans to infiltrate a NVA regiment from Cambodia into IV CTZ, and he recommended a diplomatic protest to the Cambodian Government.[34]

A month later, on 3 February, CINCPAC reported substantial movement of supplies through Sihanoukville destined for the enemy, abetted by Cambodian officials. Since political pressure did not work, and since military operations in Cambodia appeared to be ruled out, Admiral McCain suggested covert operations and provided a plan. Nine days later, on 12 February 1970, he called for a joint review with the Department of State of his suggestion for covert operations, as well as possible overt military and political actions. These actions were in order, he believed, since US policy no longer appeared predicated primarily upon a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. The United States was now relying on Vietnamization to achieve its objectives, but the "present permissive policy" toward Cambodia was seriously endangering Vietnamization. On 4 March 1970, CINCPAC again recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a program of covert actions against the enemy supply system in Cambodia, together with diplomatic efforts to attain Cambodian cooperation in elimination of the enemy sanctuaries.[35]

No action resulted from CINCPAC's proposals. Basing his action on the January request, General Wheeler asked the Secretary of Defense to pursue with the Department of State a diplomatic protest to the Cambodian Government over alleged support of the enemy, but no further action was taken. In February, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, apprised the Director of Central Intelligence of CINCPAC's suggestion for covert

33. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 2439 to CJCS, and CINCPAC, 22 Feb 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70.
34. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 042258Z Jan 70, same file.
35. (S-GP 3) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 030350Z Feb 70 and 040428Z Mar 70; (TS) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 12 Feb 70; same file.

actions in Cambodia, but Mr. Helms preferred to await a political, economic, and diplomatic assessment of Cambodia then under way before advocating a new program. Subsequently, a CIA study in early March estimated that no more than half of minimum enemy resupply requirements in southern II and III, and IV CTZs came through Cambodia during 1968 and 1969.[36]

In late February, General Abrams provided the Joint Chiefs of Staff a detailed assessment of the Cambodian situation. Whereas the previous Cambodian policy of complicity was "seemingly" based on the assumption that the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese would triumph in Vietnam, General Abrams believed that the Cambodians now saw the situation differently. The Communists were no longer winning and a much longer struggle was in prospect. Additionally, the expansion of Viet Cong and North Vietnam Army control of Cambodian territory, their growing assistance to the Khmer Rouges, and their harassment of the local Cambodian population were all putting pressure on the Cambodian Government to act. Consequently, it appeared that the Government was attempting to restrict enemy activities in its territory. The deciding factor, General Abrams concluded, would be the progress of the war in Vietnam. Continued Allied success might bring the Cambodian Government to a definite break with the Communists.[37]

General Abrams wanted to be prepared if such a change in Cambodian Government policy occurred. In Janury 1970 he had set his staff the task of planning "relatively modest (regimental-size)" ARVN cross-border operations into Cambodia with US support. In February, he removed the size restraints while specifying that the forces involved were to be "predominantly" Vietnamese. This planning remained, however, strictly a US activity with no RVNAF participation.[38]

36. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-4816-70 to SecDef, 13 Jan 70; (~~TS~~) CM-4906-70 to DCI, 14 Feb 70; (~~TS~~) Memo, DCI to CNO (in reply to CM-4906), "Cambodian Aid to the VC/NVA," 27 Feb 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70. The March CIA study is not available, but it was briefly summarized in (S) Reg. of Personnel Handling of Classified Doc., 6 Mar 70, Att to (~~S~~) Memo to CNO, 3 Mar 70, same file.

37. (~~S~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 2439 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 22 Feb 70, same file.

38. (~~S~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-32.

The Ouster of Prince Sihanouk

Meanwhile, events in Phnom Penh had been building toward a climax. With the departure of Sihanouk for France, Lon Nol and Sirik Matak proceeded with economic reforms. In February they gained approval in the National Assembly for a relaxation of the government's monopoly on import and export of certain goods, permitting greater scope to private enterprise. On 24 February, Lon Nol and Sirik Matak announced a currency reform and recalled all Cambodian riel notes in exchange for new. This move was designed to deprive the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops of the use of large sums of both real and counterfeit currency, accumulated to pay for rice and the shipment of supplies to their border sanctuaries.39

On 8 March, demonstrations against the large Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in Cambodia broke out in five towns of the border province of Svay Rieng. The demonstrations spread to Phnom Penh where mobs, with apparent government acquiescence, sacked the embassies of North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (Viet Cong) on 11 March. The following day, Lon Nol expressed official regrets to the Viet Cong and to North Vietnam in a one-sentence statement. This terse apology was accompanied by cancellation of a trade treaty with the Viet Cong and a demand for the removal of all VC/NVA forces from Cambodia within three days. (This demand was somewhat unrealistic, since it would have been physically impossible for the estimated 40,000 enemy personnel in Cambodia at that time to leave so quickly.)40

At the same time, Lon Nol and Sirik Matak wrote to Sihanouk in France, seeking authority to increase the Cambodian armed forces to 100,000 men. Without waiting for a reply, however, the Cambodian National Assembly met in secret session on 18 March and by a vote of 92-0 removed Prince Sihanouk as Chief of State. The Assembly replaced the Prince with its Chairman, Cheng Heng, though he would be a figurehead only. Lon Nol and Sirik Matak took over actual control of the government.41

39. Kirk, Wider War, pp. 88-90.
40. Ibid., pp. 91-94. NY Times, 11 Mar 70, 1; 14 Mar 70, 1. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-7.
41. Kirk, Wider War, pp. 93-102. NY Times, 19 Mar 70, 1.

Subsequently, Cambodian army units moved into positions along the South Vietnam border. No significant clashes with the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese occurred, but their governing authorities suspended diplomatic relations with Cambodia. Prince Sihanouk, who was in Moscow at the time of his removal as Chief of State, traveled to Peking. Here, on 23 March, he broadcast a call to arms against Lon Nol, rejecting any thought of reconciliation with the new regime in Phnom Penh. Later, following the US invasion, a specially convened Cambodian tribunal found Sihanouk guilty of treason and corruption on 5 July and sentenced him to death in absentia. On 9 October 1970 the National Assembly by unanimous vote proclaimed Cambodia a republic.[42]

The United States Considers Action in Cambodia

The removal of Prince Sihanouk and the takeover of the Cambodian Government by pro-Western leaders completely changed the US position with respect to that Southeast Asian nation, and US officials began a reassessment of the situation. On 20 March, General Wheeler advised CINCPAC of the many questions being raised in Washington about possible actions in Cambodia and asked for Admiral McCain's views. The Admiral replied the next day that recent events in Cambodia did, indeed, present unique opportunities that might not arise again. He believed that actions should be taken to preclude possible enemy initiatives and recommended an immediate US offer to provide the Cambodian Government with advice, intelligence, and operational support. Specifically, he suggested furnishing tactical intelligence to the Cambodian Armed Forces (Forces Armees Nationales Khmeres, or FANK[43]), coordinating allied operations on the South Vietnam side of the border with FANK operations in Cambodia. Other possibilities for US action included provision of tactical air and artillery support for FANK operations and military assistance to improve the Cambodian forces.[44]

42. Kirk, Wider War, p. 112. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-8. William P. Lineberry, The United States in World Affairs, 1970 (1972), p. 142.

43. Until shortly after the removal of Prince Sihanouk, the Cambodian forces were known as the Forces Armees Royales Khmeres (FARK), but they will be referred to throughout this chapter as FANK.

44. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 3958 to CINCPAC, 20 Mar 70; (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 212342Z Mar 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70.

A week later, on 28 March 1970, CINCPAC elaborated on his ideas regarding Cambodia. Regardless of political developments in Phnom Penh, he believed that the United States should take action against the Cambodian sanctuaries, since they posed a real threat to Vietnamization. He requested greatly expanded authority for COMUSMACV cross-border operations, including immediate pursuit, small spoiling attacks, on-call air and artillery strikes, and expansion of both SALEM HOUSE and leaflet drop operations.[45]

The President, too, was concerned about the situation in Cambodia and requested a plan for ground actions against the enemy sanctuaries along the South Vietnam-Cambodia border. This plan, to be considered for execution in the event the Communists attacked Phnom Penh, would make provision for the employment of either US or RVN troops alone or a combination of both. Secretary Laird assigned this task to the Joint Chiefs of Staff who, in turn, delegated the responsibility for preparation of the plan to COMUSMACV on 25 March.[46]

The MACV staff had already been planning for such eventualities in Cambodia, and General Rosson, Deputy COMUSMACV, submitted the requested plan the next day. He listed five enemy base areas for possible attack: Base Area 704 below the Parrot's Beak near Chau Doc Province in South Vietnam, which was a primary staging area for units entering IV CTZ; Base Area 706 in the Angel's Wing; Base Area 352 in the Fishhook, the suspected location of COSVN as well as a significant enemy staging area for forces operating in Long Binh Province of South Vietnam; Base Area 609 near Kontum Province; and Base Area 351 just above the Fishhook. The MACV plan assumed the removal of current restrictions on the use of B-52 and US tactical air in Cambodia, appropriate changes in the rules of engagement, and coordiantion and cooperation between FANK and US/RVN forces. The plan outlined in broad terms the forces needed under vaying conditions, including the mix between South Vietnamese and

45. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 280247Z Mar 70, same file.
46. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Ground Strikes Against Base Camps in Cambodia," 25 Mar 70, JMF 880 (25 Mar 70). (TS) Msg, CJCS 4182 to COMUSMACV, 25 Mar 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes AGainst Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

US troops, to attack several targets successfully. Reaction time would vay depending on the amount of detailed preplanning, but General Rosson estimated that three to four days would be needed once authority was received for combined planning with the Republic of Vietnam and for coordination with the FANK.[47]

When given this plan on 26 March, the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for more information on the size of the force to be employed, the cost and budget implications, the extent of US involvement, the duration of the operations, and the amount of combined planning required. He also inquired about the impact on other allied operations in South Vietnam and on the Vietnamization program. On the same day, Dr. Kissinger relayed to the Secretary of Defense President Nixon's direction for the preparation by 3 April of a combined plan for operations against enemy base areas in Cambodia. The President wanted plans for two options: an attack on Base Area 352 in the Fishhook against the COSVN Headquarters as first priority; an attack on Base Areas 704 and 367/706 in the Parrot's Beak, simultaneously or nearly so, as second priority.[48]

General Wheeler transmitted this request to General Abrams, authorizing him to plan for combined forces in both options. General Abrams was to conduct detailed planning with appropriate individuals on the RVNAF Joint General Staff, but on a "close hold" basis. General Wheeler repeated Secretary Laird's questions about the detailed planning, realizing that such information went far beyond that normally required to support recommendations for contingency operations. General Wheeler also directed COMUSMACV to prepare "an estimate of the success we might hope to achieve in relieving the communist pressure on Phnom Penh and a firm recommendation regarding implementation."[49]

47. (TS) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV (MAC 3999) to CJCS, 26 Mar 70, JMF 880 (25 Mar 70).

48. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Plan for Attacks on North Vietnamese/VC Cambodian Sanctuaries," 26 Mar 70; (TS) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, "Operation Against Enemy Base Camps in Cambodia, 26 Mar 70; same file.

49. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 4213 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 26 Mar 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

The Department of State was not yet aware of the military planning for possible action in Cambodia, and this situation raised a problem for General Abrams, who worked closely with Ambassador Bunker. On 27 March, General Wheeler authorized General Abrams to take the Ambassador into his confidence after impressing upon him the need for absolute secrecy. "You can assure him," General Wheeler added, "that Secretary Rogers would be informed at an appropriate time before implementation is directed." General Abrams immediately advised the Ambassador of the planning, the combined aspects of which were already under discussion with General Vien.[50]

On 30 March, COMUSMACV submitted his new plan. He used the same assumptions as in the 26 March version. The first option, the attack on Base Area 352, offered potential for destruction of the major enemy command and control headquarters with little danger of non-combatant casualties, but risked high US/RVNAF losses. The second option, in the Parrot's Beak region (Base Areas 367/706), would give greater RVNAF participation and visibility, would be of shorter duration (14 days as compared with 28 days for the first option), and should result in fewer US/RVNAF losses than the first option, though higher non-combatant casualties might occur. General Abrams believed that either operation would be successful, but he recommended the first since it would result in fewer civilian casualties. Execution should be in April, he said, to take advantage of weather conditions.[51]

General Wheeler forwarded the plan immediately to the Secretary of Defense in order that it might be sent at once to the White House. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the plan and provided Secretary Laird their comments on 3 April. They found the principal risk of the plan to be the possibility that it might provoke enemy counteraction in the form of a large attack in I CTZ or a general but less intense attack against the South Vietnamese population. Nonetheless, the chances of success outweighed the risks, they believed, and justified execution of either option. They supported COMUSMACV's perference for the first option, urging

50. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 4217 to COMUSMACV, 27 Mar 70, same file. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 4030 to CJCS, 27 Mar 70.
51. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 4159 to CINCPAC, 30 Mar 70, JMF 880 (25 Mar 70).

simultaneous harassing operations at other points in South Vietnam along the Cambodia border. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended delaying any US redeployments from South Vietnam after 15 April pending developments during the next two and a half months. The President took no immediate action on the COMUSMACV plan or the JCS recommendations, but continued to follow developments in Cambodia closely.[52]

In the weeks following the ouster of Prince Sihanouk, the United States considered various other possible actions in addition to military operations against the border sanctuaries. In late March, a member of the Cambodian National Assembly urgently requested US aid in jamming radio broadcasts from Hanoi and Peking. Subsequently, Cambodia also asked for expanded Voice of America broadcasts. CINCPAC supported both actions, and the matter was taken up in Washington. The Department of State initially opposed the radio jamming because of the "unofficial nature" of the request, but on 18 April the President directed selective jamming of broadcasts to Cambodia from both Hanoi and Peking, as well as increased Voice of America broadcasts to Cambodia. These actions, he hoped, would give the impression of greater US support to the Cambodian Government and people.[53]

Another action under review was expanded leaflet drops in Cambodia. The United States was already conducting limited leaflet dispersion in northern Cambodia under the nickname CAMEL PATH, and on 31 March, both the US Embassy in Saigon and CINCPAC requested extension of the CAMEL PATH area southward along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. General Wheeler supported this extension, but Secretary Laird disapproved. While favoring exploitation of enemy uncertainty and confusion in response to the new situation in Cambodia, he believed that the possible benefit of increased leaflet drops would be outweighed by the potential adverse effect

52. (TS-GP 1) CM-5002-70 to SecDef, 30 Mar 70; (TS-GP 1) JCSM-149-70 to SecDef 3 Apr 70, same file.

53. (TS) Msg, Phnom Penh 361 to State, 30 Mar 70, JCS IN 14670. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 020625Z and 112320Z Apr 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5021 to CINCPAC, 10 Apr 70; (TS) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecState, SecDef, and Dir USIA, 18 Apr 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70.

on "the domestic and international standing of the Lon Nol regime."[54]

Combined RVNAF/Cambodian Operations

The United States was not alone in seeing in the changed situation in Cambodia an opportunity for expanded action. In the days following the removal of Prince Sihanouk as Chief of State in mid-March 1970 there were increasing reports of cooperation between the RVNAF and the FANK in actions along their common border. Officers of the two armed forces met, occasionally with US observers present, to plan and coordinate operations against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces. When COMUSMACV learned of such possible actions, he directed that no US forces would participate and cautioned the RVNAF commanders to avoid civilian Cambodian casualties.[55]

Initially, RVNAF operations were limited to fire attacks on enemy forces along the border, but, increasingly, they responded to Cambodian requests for artillery and air strikes on enemy positions within Cambodia. On several occasions ARVN infantry also attacked across the border. In these instances, US advisers were withdrawn. On 24 March, ARVN units in Kien Tuong Province received fire from Cambodia, and the senior US adviser with those units declared a tactical emergency. Subsequently, USAF aircraft conducted two strikes against enemy weapons positions inside Cambodia. The largest action in Cambodia occurred on 27 March when an ARVN battalion attacked two miles into Cambodia, killing 53 enemy; no US personnel participated in the action.[56]

The RVNAF attack in Cambodia on 27 March caused concern in Washington. A message from the White House advised Ambassador Bunker that such RVNAF/FANK cooperation might be cited by "some quarters" as proof that the United States

54. (TS-GP 1) CM-5035-70 to SecDef, 10 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Overflight Authority," 30 Apr 70, same file, 21 Apr-14 May 70.

55. (TS) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV (MAC 3838) to CINCPAC, 23 Mar 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70.

56. (TS-GP 4) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV (MAC 4002) to CJCS and CINCPAC, 26 Mar 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70. NY Times, 28 Mar 70, 1.

was being drawn into an expanded war. The short-term military benefits of cross-border operations, this message cautioned, could be outweighed by the risk of losing domestic support for the President's Vietnam policy. Accordingly, Secretary of State Rogers instructed Ambassador Bunker to urge President Thieu to halt cross-border operations until this matter could be coordinated "at highest levels" both in the United States and in South Vietnam.[57]

Ambassador Bunker consulted General Rosson and both men talked with appropriate South Vietnamese officials. The Ambassador met with Prime Minister Khien, who promised to suspend further cross-border attacks. General Rosson called on General Vien and urged him to curtail further operations of this type. Although "less than enthusiastic," the South Vietnamese general agreed to await orders from his superiors.[58]

On 30 March, Ambassador Bunker met with President Thieu and again asked for a halt in cross-border operations until the matter could be considered by the two governments. He explained that the US position was flexible and that no decision had been made against such actions. President Thieu replied that he understood the US position and had already instructed General Vien to make no further attacks into Cambodia.[59]

On 1 April, the United States withdrew objections to RVN-Cambodian operations in the border areas. The Secretary of Defense asked that this information be relayed to General Abrams with emphasis on two points: the type and level of effort should be consistent with that prevailing prior to 28-29 March; coordination should be maintained between RVNAF and FANK units.[60]

57. (S) Msg, State 45730 to Saigon, 28 Mar 70, JCS IN 11355. The White House msg has not been found, but it is summarized in (TS) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV (MAC 4108) to CINCPAC, 28 Mar 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70.

58. (TS) Msg, Dep COMUSMACV (MAC 4108) to CINCPAC, 28 Mar 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70.

59. (TS) Msg, Saigon 4725 to State, 30 Mar 70, retransmitted by (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 4229 to CINCPAC, 31 Mar 70, same file.

60. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "South Vietnam/Cambodia Border Operations," 6 Apr 70, same file.

At the request of Cambodian military leaders, the RVNAF sent a task force into the Angel's Wing on 5 April, using two battalions of infantry and an armored regiment with VNAF close air support. In a three-hour attack, the task force killed 56 enemy and captured enemy weapons, ammunition, and documents; US advisers and support were withdrawn prior to the operation.[61]

The scale of this latest attack drew Secretary Laird's attention, and the following day, 6 April, he reminded General Wheeler of the caveats in the 1 April authorization. He had agreed to the removal of objections to border operations by the RVNAF because it appeared essential and failure to do so might have been "detrimental to our own forces and the US goal in SVN," but he feared the South Vietnamese might be going too far. "We must tread a narrow line between the Scylla and Charybdis of permitting the South Vietnamese to do too little along the border areas and of encouraging them to do too much." The Secretary asked General Wheeler and the field commanders to give this matter "their personal attention."[62]

General Abrams responded that he had alerted his commanders to the problem, adding that the South Vietnamese "have handled this carefully and with sensitivity to the political forces involved." Admiral McCain also defended the cooperative RVNAF/FANK efforts, which he said had forestalled enemy operations against III and IV CTZs. The current level of action against the enemy in the Cambodian-South Vietnam border area should continue at this "critical time," in order to divert the enemy's attention from Phnom Penh and force him to focus on the protection of his logistic complexes.[63]

The RVNAF-Cambodian operations thereafter satisfied the Secretary, for on 21 April he advised General Abrams:

> It has been my judgment that joint RVNAF/Cambodian operations, when effected through

61. (~~S~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 4350 to CJCS, 6 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1 Jan-20 Apr 70.
62. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "South Vietnam/Cambodia Border Operations," 6 Apr 70, same file.
63. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 4587 to CINCPAC and Actg CJCS, 8 Apr 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 090333Z Apr 70; same file.

close cooperation and liaison among responsible officers of these two nations, could serve our purpose well. That judgment, through your encouragement to the RVNAF, has been borne out to date. We must, of course, continue to exercise direction and demand (a) that joint operations have the requisite coordination between the South Vietnamese and the Cambodians and (b) that US participation be restricted to South Vietnamese territory.[64]

Aid for the Cambodian Armed Forces

The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese also moved to take advantage of the uncertain situation resulting from the removal of Prince Sihanouk. After some initial hesitation, they staged pro-Sihanouk demonstrations in Phnom Penh and various province towns and moved their forces into threatening positions along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border in the Fishhook, Parrot's Beak, and 704 area. No major clashes occurred during March, but by the first of April the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had launched their campaign. Moving out from their bases, they expanded the areas under their control. By mid-April, they controlled a corridor in Cambodia along the South Vietnam border from the Fishhook in the north to the Gulf of Siam, varying in width from 10 to 15 kilometers. Enemy forces overran all Cambodian border posts and installations in this strip between the Gulf of Siam and the Mekong River, and only Cambodian posts of company size or larger existed north of the Mekong. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had not only secured their base area, but they had also guaranteed freedom of movement along the border.[65]

This deteriorating military situation in Cambodia caused growing concern in Washington, and the President and his advisers began to consider providing military assistance to the FANK. At the time of Sihanouk's deposition, the Cambodian armed forces numbered about 40,000 army personnel organized in 55 infantry and commando battalions and nine

64. (TS) Msg, SecDef to COMUSMACV thru CJCS, 210150Z Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 21 Apr-14 May 70.

65. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-8 - C-9. NY Times, 30 Mar 70, 1.

specialized half-brigades; 1,750 air force personnel in three wings; and a 1,400-man navy composed of coastal and river groups. In addition, there were an estimated 55,000 to 65,000 men in the paramilitary forces, including the Provincial Guard, the part-time volunteer Home Guard, and the National Youth Movement. But despite its paper organization, the FANK was an ill-equipped and untrained force, totally unprepared for combat. It lacked experienced leaders, corruption was prevalent among its officers, and pay was low. The only combat experience had been some action during the 1960s against domestic Communist opponents of Prince Sihanouk; otherwise the FANK had been relegated to menial tasks such as draining swamps and cleaning ditches. In addition, the logistic services for FANK were completely inadequate, and the problem was compounded by the fact that the Cambodian forces had always been dependent on foreign sources for materiel. Hence the equipment was of mixed origin, and much of it was obsolete.[66]

Might not the Cambodian forces be given weapons and ammunition captured from the enemy? Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard suggested this possibility on 11 April to General Wheeler, who relayed the inquiry to General Abrams, requesting information on the number of enemy weapons available as well as the time needed to deliver these weapons to the FANK. General Rosson replied on 13 April that the United States could provide only limited numbers of captured weapons. The RVNAF, however, had an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 AK-47 rifles of Chinese manufacture available, although ammunition would be a limiting factor. General Rosson had consulted Ambassador Bunker who felt that the provision of captured weapons would be a sound move if the United States desired to assist Cambodia militarily; he thought the Republic of Vietnam would approve such a course. On the same day, 13 April, Deputy Secretary Packard authorized COMUSMACV to approach the Republic of Vietnam with regard to the amount of captured ordnance in South Vietnam available for shipment to Cambodia. He also authorized COMUSMACV to

66. (TS-GP 1) J-5 BP 25-70, "Cambodia (U)," 23 Apr 70, JMF 880 (12 Feb 70). Whitaker, Area Handbook (Cambodia), p. 309.

process this ordnance from storage and ready it for movement should a decision be made to furnish it to Cambodia.[67]

On 15 April, the Cambodian Foreign Minister addressed an appeal to all diplomats in Phnom Penh, including US Chargé Rives, for arms assistance against the Communists. Later that same day, the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), an interdepartmental body that had been established under the National Security Council in May 1969 to deal with crisis planning, decided that Chargé Rives should develop more definite information on FANK requirements for small arms, equipment, and medical supplies. He should also consult with the Cambodian Government on the best method of covert cross-border delivery of weapons and supplies. Meanwhile, COMUSMACV would ready the captured weapons held by the RVNAF for possible shipment, as already directed by the Deputy Secretary of Defense.[68]

General Abrams met with General Vien, who informed him that the ARVN had about 1,500 AK-47s in working order, plus another 4,000 that could be made serviceable, and 75,000 rounds of ammunition. General Abrams also ordered his own forces to begin collecting and preserving captured rifles, machine guns, mortars, and rocket launchers, and he believed he could accumulate "reasonable numbers" in a short time. He informed General Wheeler, however, on 16 April that ground delivery of these weapons to Cambodia was becoming less feasible each day as the enemy consolidated his control of the belt of territory inside the Cambodian border. General Abrams proposed, instead, delivery by air using assets of the MACV Studies and Observation Group (SOG).[69]

Delivery of the captured arms to Cambodia would present certain other difficulties. To avoid the appearance of

67. (TS) Msg, CJCS 5037 to COMUSMACV, 11 Apr 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg; Dep COMUSMACV (MAC 4838) to CJCS, 13 Apr 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 5160 to COMUSMACV, 15 Apr 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (Furnishing Arms).

68. NY Times, 16 Apr 70, 3; 17 Apr 70, 1. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5172 to COMUSMACV, 15 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (Furnishing Arms).

69. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 5037 to CJCS, 16 Apr 70, same file. The Studies and Observation Group was a subordinate MACV command responsible for the conduct of unconventional warfare and special operations in Southeast Asia.

expanding the war, the United States preferred that the Republic of Vietnam transport the weapons. Yet this was a sensitive issue. The Khmers and the Vietnamese were traditional enemies, and after the ouster of Prince Sihanouk, the leaders of the Cambodian Government began to whip up anti-Vietnamese sentiment. This campaign was directed not only against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops operating in Cambodia, but also at the some 600,000 Vietnamese residing in Cambodia. In early April there were growing reports of FANK harassment and atrocities against the resident Vietnamese, climaxing in the discovery on 15 April of the bodies of an estimated 400 massacred Vietnamese floating down the Mekong River. As a result, the Republic of Vietnam was reluctant to provide the Cambodian forces with further arms.[70]

Nonetheless, on 16 April, the Washington Special Actions Group decided that COMUSMACV should begin collecting and preparing for movement to Cambodia 5,500 AK-47s, together with the maximum available ammunition and magazines, contingent upon the agreement of General Vien, whose forces held the weapons. Subsequently, General Abrams talked with President Thieu, who consented to provide VNAF planes for delivery of the weapons to Cambodia. On 21 April, General Abrams informed General Wheeler of a plan to send about 1,500 AK-47s and ammunition to Cambodia that night. He estimated that there would be another 4,000 rifles ready for movement by 27 April. With regard to the actual transport of the weapons, General Abrams again suggested use of MACV SOG assets since reliance on the VNAF presented "very high political risks" to the Republic of Vietnam because of the widely publicized slaying of Vietnamese in and around Phnom Penh.[71]

President Nixon, however, decided that the VNAF should be used to deliver the weapons. This decision would be reconsidered, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV were advised, should President Thieu refuse to carry out delivery or if RVN participation became infeasible for other reasons.[72]

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70. NY Times, 16 Apr 70, 1. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 5302 to CJCS, 21 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (Furnishing Arms).

71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 5285 to COMUSMACV, 17 Apr 70; (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 5302 to CJCS, 21 Apr 70; same file.

72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Actg CJCS (Westmoreland) 5486 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 21 Apr 70, same file.

The first delivery of munitions--1,500 AK-47s with magazines and 100,000 rounds of ammunition--took place as scheduled on the night of 21-22 April. But the fragile state of RVN-Cambodian relations quickly complicated matters. President Thieu stopped further delivery of weapons and ammunition, pending arrangements for the protection of the Vietnamese living in Cambodia.[73]

As an alternative source of weapons for the FANK, General Abrams suggested the provision of 15,000 US M-2 carbines, currently in the United States and destined for the RVN Peoples Self-Defense Forces (PSDF). General Wheeler supported the recommendation, and the Secretary of Defense on 26 April approved the delivery of these US carbines along with 45,000 magazines and a 30-day supply of ammunition to COMUSMACV for possible shipment to the FANK. Meanwhile the Republic of Vietnam, after securing satisfactory assurances from Cambodia, decided to resume supply of the captured AK-47s and the movement of the weapons began on the night of 27-28 April.[74]

By 28 April, over 4,000 AK-47 rifles had reached Phnom Penh. The shortage of ammunition, however, remained a limiting factor, and COMUSMACV recommended that three million rounds of ammunition be made available to Cambodia with deliveries of one million rounds per month to begin in August. General Wheeler supported this recommendation, but since the US Army did not have the amounts of AK-47 ammunition required, he asked the Secretary of Defense to authorize the Army to procure it in the international arms market, at an estimated cost of $219,000. This procurement was subsequently approved, although after the invasion of Cambodia the shortage of AK-47 ammunition was relieved somewhat by the capture of enemy stocks.[75]

73. (TS-GP 1) J-5 BP 27-70, "Cambodia (U)," 23 Apr 70, JMF 880 (12 Feb 70). (TS) CM-5083-70 to SecDef, 26 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (Furnishing Arms).

74. (TS-GP 1) CM-5083-70 to SecDef, 26 Apr 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 5723 to CINCPAC, 26 Apr 70; (TS-GP 1) DJSM-603-70 to CJCS, 28 Apr 70; same file.

75. (TS-GP 1) CM-5085-70 to SecDef, 28 Apr 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 7773 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 5 Jun 70; same file.

On 29 April 1970, COMUSMACV sought authority to deliver to Cambodia the 15,000 US M-2 carbines that he had recommended several days earlier. Authorization was immediate, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff informing General Abrams on the same day that he could start shipping the weapons to Phnom Penh, using VNAF planes and coordinating with the US mission there.[76]

In the meantime, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reviewing more effective means of building up the fighting strength of the FANK. Specifically, they were considering a plan for sending equipment in packages. Each package would equip a 1,000-man force and would contain 800 carbines, 50 pistols, 30 light machine guns, 100 submachine guns, 30 rocket launchers, and 20 light mortars, along with supporting equipment and ammunition. On 29 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the US Defense Attaché in Phnom Penh whether the Cambodian forces could use such assistance and, if so, how many packages--up to a total of ten--would be needed.[77]

The US Attaché in Phnom Penh replied at once that the FANK could use all ten packages. He asked delivery as soon as possible with two packages shipped every other day. Following approval in Washington of the provision of arms packages for FANK, General Wheeler notified CINCPAC on 2 May that the equipment was presently in the Saigon area and that VNAF aircraft would transport the packages to Cambodia. The first shipment was scheduled for 7 May 1970.[78]

The Situation in Cambodia Grows Worse

It was rapidly apparent, even while the United States was considering provision of weapons and equipment to the FANK, that something more than this would be required to contain the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in Cambodia. After having taken over the band of territory in Cambodia along the South Vietnam border, the enemy moved in mid-April to

76. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 5695 to CJCS, 29 Apr 70; (TS-GP1) Msg, JCS 5878 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 29 Apr 70; same file.
77. (TS) Msg, JCS 7385 to Phnom Penh (DATT), 29 Apr 70, same file.
78. (TS-GP 1) Msg, USDAO Phnom Penh 103 to JCS, 29 Apr 70; (TS) Msg, CJCS 6066 to CINCPAC, 2 May 70; same file.

secure major highways leading into his base areas. During the last two weeks of April, Viet Cong and NVA forces cut major roads leading from the border to the interior and overran the provincial towns east and southeast of Phnom Penh. By 19 April, they were within 20 miles of the Cambodian capital and threatened to isolate the city. The Cambodian armed forces appeared unable to hold back the VC/NVA advance, and on 20 April, Lon Nol urgently appealed to the United States to assist his country. Two days later the provincial capital of Saang fell to the Communists, bringing the enemy within 15 miles of Phnom Penh.[79]

In an attempt to restrict the increasing enemy movement in Cambodia, the United States expanded air operations there. Although the MENU bombing, initiated in March 1969, continued, these B-52 strikes were not effective against fleeting targets such as maneuvering enemy personnel. Consequently, on 18 April 1970, COMUSMACV requested special authority to employ US tactical air for a 30-day period in a narrow eight-mile strip of territory in northeastern Cambodia adjacent to the South Vietnam border. General Abrams reported growing enemy force movements in that area, and he considered attack on such targets essential to the prudent conduct of operations. On 20 April, after securing approval at higher levels, General Wheeler granted COMUSMACV the requested authority for a 30-day period, giving the operation the name PATIO. The carrier CORAL SEA was assigned to Task Force 77 in the Gulf of Tonkin for this action. The first PATIO attacks took place on 24 April when US F-100s struck enemy columns in Cambodia, inflicting an estimated 100 casualties. On 25 April, the PATIO authority was extended along the entire Cambodian border to a uniform depth of 18 miles, and air operations in Cambodia were intensified.[80]

As with MENU, all matters relating to PATIO operations were handled on a highly restricted basis. All requests, approvals, and reports were transmitted by special security channel communications. Each PATIO strike had a cover target in Laos and routine reports of attacks on those targets

79. NY Times, 20 Apr 70, 1; 22 Apr 70, 1; 23 Apr 70, 1. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-9.

80. (U) DOD Report on Selected Operations, p. 21. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, CJCS 5405 and 5694 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 20 and 25 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Operation MENU/PATIO, 1 Apr 70.

were furnished and recorded in the Department of Defense automated data base. Special communication channel reports of the actual attacks in Cambodia were provided only to those with a need to know. This dual reporting resulted in some confusion, since the first 124 of the total 156 PATIO sorties flown in April and May 1970 were not included in the routine data base.[81]

Stepped Up Military Planning

In light of the growing enemy threat to Phnom Penh, President Nixon was also interested in the readiness of plans for ground attacks in Cambodia. Dr. Kissinger examined COMUSMACV's 30 March plan for US/RVNAF attack on enemy base areas in Cambodia.[82] On 16 April he asked Secretary Laird to have General Abrams develop alternative plans. The existing plan involved "considerable U.S. participation," and Dr. Kissinger wanted operations that could be conducted entirely by South Vietnamese forces.[83]

On 18 April, President Nixon traveled to Honolulu to welcome the Apollo 13 astronauts back to the United States, returning to the Western White House in California the following day. While in Hawaii, the President and Dr. Kissinger met with Admiral McCain and discussed possible cross-border attacks into Cambodia. If such operations were mounted, the President asked, what would be the best mix of US and South Vietnamese forces? Or should only RVNAF troops be used, with the United States furnishing air and artillery support from within South Vietnam? Admiral McCain assured the President that plans were being prepared on an urgent basis and would be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as quickly as possible. The President told CINCPAC that Lon Nol should be helped to establish communication with Saigon. He added that he had already sanctioned the provision of financial support to the Cambodian Government as well as the supply of captured weapons for the Cambodian

81. (U) DOD Report on Selected Operations, pp. 21-22.

82. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 4159 to CINCPAC, 30 Mar 70, JMF 880 (25 Mar 70). See above, p. 235.

83. (~~TS~~) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 16 Apr 70; (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 5404 to CINCPAC, 20 Apr 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes in Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

forces. The theme of the meeting, CINCPAC told General Wheeler, was the need for speed in view of the "precarious situation" in Cambodia.[84]

On 20 April, President Nixon addressed the nation on his efforts toward peace in Vietnam, using the occasion to announce the scheduled withdrawal of 150,000 US personnel from Vietnam during the coming twelve months.[85] In connection with the withdrawal, the President advised the leaders of North Vietnam that they would be taking "grave risks" should they attempt to jeopardize the security of the US forces remaining in Vietnam by increased military action in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos. Should they do so, Mr. Nixon warned, as he had done in announcing each previous US troop withdrawal from South Vietnam, he would take "strong and effective measures" to deal with the situation. Other than this general warning, the President gave no indication that possible US action in Cambodia was under consideration.[86]

On the same day, the Secreaty of Defense asked the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Westmoreland, for recommendations to alleviate the situation in Cambodia. Within hours, General Westmoreland provided his response. Noting the growing threat to Phnom Penh, he said it appeared that the enemy intended to overthrow the Cambodian Government and return Prince Sihanouk to power. The time had passed, General Westmoreland believed, when material assistance could arrest the deterioration in Cambodia. "We must move quickly against the vulnerable enemy base areas in Cambodia with RVNAF forces." To relieve the pressure on the Cambodians, he recommended division-size RVNAF attacks on the enemy positions. United States forces should provide artillery and logistics support, without crossing into Cambodia. In addition, General Westmoreland recommended giving the FANK US M-1 rifles and employing the Khmer troops currently in South Vietnamese Irregular Defense Group camps in operations in Cambodia (the latter proposal had been suggested by General Abrams several days earlier).[87]

84. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 220437Z Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 21 Apr-14 May 70.

85. See Ch. 10.

86. (U) Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 373-377.

87. (TS) CM-5063-70 to SecDef, 21 Apr 70; (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 18 Apr 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 21 Apr-14 May 70.

On the same day, 21 April, General Westmoreland alerted both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to the concern in Washington over the increasing threat to Phnom Penh. The enemy appeared to be overextended, he said, and vulnerable to "timely" attack. He thought that both the threat to Phnom Penh and the present alarm in Washington might be conducive to relaxation of the restrictions against operations in Cambodia, and he wanted to Joint Chiefs of Staff to be in a position to take advantage of this more favorable atmosphere. Accordingly, he requested both field commanders to forward their views on: increased US involvement in detailed RVNAF planning for cross-border operations; preparations to provide US fire and logistic support for RVNAF units in Cambodia; possible use of US troops in the most "productive" base areas; and plans for employment of Khmer CIDG troops.[88]

Both Admiral McCain and General Abrams replied the following day. All his earlier recommendations concerning Cambodia, the Admiral said, had been overtaken by events. The United States must take "immediate and greater action" than previously envisioned to reverse the Viet Cong/NVA tide. For the success of Vietnamization, and for the attainment of US objectives in Southeast Asia, "a neutral Cambodia remains vital to our program." Therefore CINCPAC recommended: RVNAF attacks on enemy base areas with sustained followup actions as required; employment of US forces within South Vietnam so as to support the RVNAF in Cambodia; and expanded SALEM HOUSE and psychological warfare operations to support the above actions. Full tactical air support should be given, using US assets if those of the VNAF were insufficient.[89]

General Abrams found the current planning for cross-border operations and for fire and logistics support for ARVN actions in Cambodia to be adequate. He urged "selective use" of US troops in base area attacks and employment of Khmer CIDG troops. He also favored diversion of small arms and ammunition from the PSDF in South Vietnam to the Cambodian armed forces.[90]

88. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Actg CJCS (Westmoreland) 5495 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 21 Apr 70, same file.
89. (TS-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 220435Z Apr 70, same file.
90. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 5364 to Actg CJCS and CINCPAC, 22 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

On 22 April the National Security Council considered the Cambodian question. As a result of the Council's deliberations, the President authorized RVNAF "shallow" cross-border attacks of division-size against enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia. The United States would provide artillery support and would be prepared to provide tactical air support on "the basis of demonstrated necessity." In addition, the President directed: an immediate step-up of military assistance to Cambodia through third country channels wherever possible; a "maximum" diplomatic effort to enlist assistance by other interested countries; and the air movement of Khmer forces currently in CIDG units in South Vietnam, with their equipment, to Phnom Penh as quickly as possible. Congressional liaison , "when appropriate," the President said, would be handled by his office.[91]

The President had now decided on large RVNAF cross-border attacks into Cambodia, but he had not committed US ground forces to the action. There was still opposition among some of the President's advisers to such US participation, and Admiral Moorer, who had attended the NSC meeting as Acting Chairman, described the situation to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV:

> As you are well aware, there are some strong dissenting opinions in high levels of our government as to the extent of U.S. involvement. However, highest authority feels very strongly that a Communist takeover of Cambodia will place the Vietnamization program in serious jeopardy.

It was imperative, Admiral Moorer instructed the two commanders, that planning proceed as expeditiously as possible.[92]

On 23 April, COMUSMACV submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for RVNAF operations in Cambodia. General Abrams had succeeded in overcoming some initial RVNAF

91. (TS) Extracts of NSDM 56 to SecState, SecDef, Atty Gen, and DCI, "Actions in Support of the Cambodian Government," 22 Apr 70, Att to Memo, ASD(ISA) to DSecDef et al., 23 Apr 70, JMF 001 (CY 1970) NSDMs.

92. (TS) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 5634 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 23 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

reluctance to attack base areas in Cambodia that did not pose a direct threat to South Vietnamese troops, and the plan now had the approval of the Joint General Staff and the RVNAF commanders. It provided for South Vietnamese troops to carry out ground operations in the Parrot's Beak and Crow's Nest areas in Svay Rieng Province (Base Areas 706/367) to destroy enemy bases and defeat enemy forces. United States ground forces would not participate, but the United States would furnish tactical air, artillery, and gunship support, medical evacuation, resupply, and other logistical assistance. In addition, US forces would cover the areas in South Vietnam vacated by the RVNAF units committed to the Cambodian operations, and increased B-52 strikes on the South Vietnamese side of the border would precede the attack. General Abrams recommended that the planned strike be initiated on or about 27 April. He informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a special combined JGS/MACV group had been formed to recommend other actions to assist the Cambodians. This group was preparing a plan for attack on Base Areas 352/353 in the Fishhook by a combined RVNAF/US force, even though US participation in such an action had not been authorized.[93]

Planning for the Cambodian operation was now advancing so rapidly that developments did not follow regular procedures. The available record does not reveal any formal recommendation of the plan by either the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the Chairman. In any event, the plan was forwarded to the President, who approved it the same day, 23 April 1970. President Nixon wanted the plan carried out on 27 April or as soon thereafter as operationally feasible. Provision of US tactical air support, if required, was authorized. General Abrams was delegated the authority to decide when and to what extent US support called for in the plan should be introduced. No US advisers must be allowed in Cambodia, except those forward air controllers who would be required if US aircraft were brought into action. Press guidance for the operation, forwarded to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV two days later, provided that publicity of the forthcoming operation should be delayed, if possible, and that everything practicable should be done to discourage or prevent correspondents from accompanying the RVNAF forces into Cambodia.[94]

93. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 5419 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 23 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 15-30 May (Folder - "Base Area 706").

94. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 5623 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 23 Apr 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 5691 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 25 Apr 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

On 24 April, Secretary Laird advised General Wheeler that it was "absolutely essential that no US advisers be introduced into Cambodia at any time during the operation." General Abrams' plan, however, implied that US personnel would be on the ground in Cambodia in support and supply roles. The Secretary wanted clarification of the US support envisioned in the plan. General Wheeler, who had returned to his duties after a brief stay in the hospital, relayed the Secretary's concern to General Abrams.[95]

In answer, General Abrams pledged that there would be no US personnel on the ground in the first wave of attack, although US advisers must be in the air over Cambodia from the outset to coordinate US gunship support. There might be some friction with ARVN commanders, he warned, since they wanted US advisers to accompany their forces into Cambodia. Following the first wave, General Abrams intended to insert US ground advisers, if necessary to control gunship support. In addition, US advisers would be embarked in aircraft flying over Cambodia--those used for tactical air support as well as for command and control, medical evacuation, and resupply. There would also be heightened US troop activity in South Vietnam, including US forces blocking the South Vietnamese side of the border in III and IV CTZs, and there might also be increased and reoriented artillery fire. General Abrams' assurances apparently satisfied Secretary Laird, since he pursued the matter no further.[96]

President Nixon was anxious for the planned action in Cambodia to go well. In a conversation with Admiral Moorer he spoke of his own determination that the upcoming RVNAF operation in the Parrot's Beak should succeed. Subsequently, General Wheeler informed General Abrams of the President's concern that, should the operation fail, he would be subjected to strong criticism of the type evoked by the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. "In other words," General Wheeler continued, "he feels very strongly indeed that all

95. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Cambodian Operations," 24 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 15-30 May 70 (Folder-"Base Area 706"). (TS) Msg, CJCS 5660 to COMUSMACV, 24 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

96. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 5508 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 25 Apr 70, same file.

commanders involved, ARVN and US, must have an aggressive frame of mind and a determination to achieve success." General Wheeler did not doubt the resolution of COMUSMACV or his commanders, but he was less sure of the RVNAF. Consequently, he urged the US commanders to help the RVNAF overcome its "somewhat timid and slow reactions" to tactical situations.[97]

President Nixon also had misgivings about possible clashes between RVNAF soldiers and Cambodians once the South Vietnamese troops crossed the border. Because of the FANK mistreatment of some Vietnamese living in Cambodia, the President feared that the RVNAF might attempt to retaliate against the Cambodian population. Accordingly, Secretary Rogers instructed Ambassador Bunker to caution President Thieu that the United States wanted the Cambodian population in the Parrot's Beak protected. The Ambassador responded that he had already approached President Thieu on this matter and received assurances that the RVN forces had strict orders not to mistreat the civilian population in Cambodia. General Wheeler also alerted COMUSMACV on this matter, suggesting that he caution General Vien.[98]

Meanwhile the joint MACV/RVNAF group, which was planning an attack against enemy Base Areas 352/353 in the Fishhook, proceeded with its work. General Abrams wanted the RVNAF to execute such an attack concurrently, or as nearly so as possible, with the strike into the Parrot's Beak. But on 25 April he told General Wheeler that the RVNAF leaders were reluctant to undertake a Fishhook attack without US participation. Although General Abrams was still attempting to get RVNAF agreement for unilateral South Vietnamese action, he suggested the possibility of launching the attack with US forces. "You are in the best position," he told General Wheeler, "to judge whether this should be raised." There is no indication, however, that General Wheeler proposed a strictly US attack to either the Secretary of Defense or the President.[99]

97. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 5711 to COMUSMACV, 25 Apr 70, same file.

98. (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 5689 to COMUSMACV (Rogers to Bunker), 24 Apr 70; (~~TS~~) Msg, Saigon 223 to State, 25 Apr 70; (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 5828 to COMUSMACV, 28 Apr 70; same file.

99. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 5504 to CJCS, 25 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 272223Z Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 21 Apr-14 May 70.

General Abrams was unable to persuade the RVNAF to undertake action against Base Areas 352/353 alone, and on 26 April, he submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for a combined US-RVNAF attack in that area of Cambodia. The US 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) and the ARVN Airborne Division would constitute the attacking force under the "overall coordination" of the Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division. General Abrams at first designated the planned strike Operation SHOEMAKER; subsequently, at the request of the Republic of Vietnam, the name was changed to TOAN THANG 43.[100]

That same day, 26 April, the National Security Council again discussed Cambodia. Following the meeting, the President authorized attacks on enemy base areas in Cambodia to a depth of 30 kilometers from the South Vietnam border. Primary responsibility for these attacks, whenever possible, would lie with the South Vietnamese with US support as necessary, but the President also authorized combined US/RVNAF operations. The US/RVNAF action against Base Areas 352/353 was approved; any additional combined operations, however, would require presidential approval on a case-by-case basis. The President also approved provision of US tactical, helicopter, and artillery support for operations in Cambodia, up to a depth of 30 kilometers, in all base areas north of and including 352/353. The Washington Special Actions Group was to coordinate these activities.[101]

Now, after much reluctance, the President had decided to commit US ground forces to operations in Cambodia. He apparently believed that success in the Cambodian operations was too important to place sole reliance on the RVNAF. But, in sending US ground forces into action in Cambodia, President Nixon accepted other dangers--greater involvement than he desired and possible adverse public reaction.

Officials in Washington wanted to execute the US/RVNAF attack on Base Areas 352/353 on 30 April, but coordination

100. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 5558 to CJCS, 26 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

101. (TS) NSDM 58 to SecState, SecDef, Atty Gen, and DCI, 28 Apr 70, OCJCS NSDM Book. (NSDM 58 superseded NSDM 57 of 26 Apr 70, but made no substantive changes therein.)

problems forced a 24-hour delay. On 28 April General Wheeler ordered COMUSMACV to execute Operation TOAN THANG 43 "not later than early Friday, 1 May 1970, Saigon Time." In accordance with the President's 26 April decision, he authorized attack on other identified North Vietnamese and Viet Cong base areas in Cambodia, to a depth of 30 kilometers. Primary responsibility for such attacks, wherever possible, should lie with the RVNAF, with US support. Combined US and RVNAF operations were also authorized, but required submission to Washington for approval on a case-by-case basis. General Abrams could employ tactical air, helicopters, and artillery in all base areas north of and including 352/353.[102]

Subsequently, General Wheeler instructed COMUSMACV that, because of the "political sensitivity" of the first open US ground incursion into Cambodia, the RVNAF should be given the lion's share of publicity and credit during the operation. United States participation should be played down and US personnel should encourage the press to focus on the RVNAF. "Higher authority," General Wheeler continued, "has requested that all possible steps be taken to dampen the expected effort of the critics of this type of action and the impact which these efforts would have on the American people."[103]

On 27 April, General Wheeler had notified COMUSMACV that H-hour for the RVNAF attack on the Parrot's Beak area was 0800, 29 April, Saigon time. General Wheeler again stressed the need for success; otherwise the "credibility" of Vietnamization would be seriously compromised. If the RVNAF bogged down and the presence of US advisers became desirable, General Wheeler asked COMUSMACV to let him know "soonest." He had already received assurances that there would be no difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission if it was vital to the success of the operation.[104]

General Abrams replied on the following day, 28 April, that it was vital for US ground advisers to accompany the

102. (TS) Msgs, CJCS 5730 and 5750 to COMUSMACV, 27 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70. (TS) Msg, CJCS 5812 to COMUSMACV, 28 Apr 70, same file, 28 Apr-8 May 70.

103. (TS) Msg, CJCS 5859 to COMUSMACV, 29 Apr 70, same file.

104. (TS) Msg, CJCS 5750 to COMUSMACV, 27 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 Mar-27 Apr 70.

RVNAF units from the beginning of the Parrot's Beak action. Provision of US advisers, he said, would help to insure that the operation did not bog down; would improve coordination, which, even at best, was poor among RVNAF units; and would spur the South Vietnamese to maintain an aggressive attack. The number of US personnel involved would be about 50 ground advisers at the battalion level and 50 air coordinators, also on the ground. The latter, however, were already authorized. General Wheeler immediately sought the approval of the Secretary of Defense, and Mr. Laird granted it the same day, in time for the operation to commence with US advisers.[105]

According to plan, RVNAF units launched their attack into the Parrot's Beak at 0830 on the morning of 29 April. Led by elements of the 9th Armored Cavalry (ARVN), South Vietnamese forces from both III and IV CTZs, accompanied by US ground advisers, crossed into Cambodia. As planned by COMUSMACV and approved by President Nixon, the United States also supplied tactical air support, medical evacuation teams, and some supplies. The RVNAF designated the attack TOAN THANG 42, while COMUSMACV called it ROCKCRUSHER.[106]

Two days later, on the morning of 1 May, a combined US/RVNAF force totaling some 10,000 men invaded Cambodia to attack enemy Base Areas 352/353. Half of this force consisted of US ground troops. The allied force immediately fanned out, attempting to envelop the suspected COSVN headquarters in a pincer.[107]

As US and South Vietnamese troops moved into the Fishhook, it was still the evening of 30 April in Washington, and President Nixon addressed the nation on television to announce the Cambodian operations. He had ordered the

105. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 5675 to CJCS, 28 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 28 Apr-8 May 70. (TS) CM-5084-70 to SecDef, 28 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (Furnishing Arms). (CM-5084-70 has notation that SecDef approved the recommendation.) (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5807 to COMUSMACV, 28 Apr 70, same file.

106. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-33 - C-35. NY Times, 30 Apr 70, 1.

107. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-35 - C-37.

action, the President said, to protect US soldiers in South Vietnam, to guarantee continued US troop withdrawals, and to insure the success of Vietnamization. He recited the long history of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese violations of Cambodian territory and explained that in the past two weeks, North Vietnam had dropped all pretense of respect for Cambodian neutrality and sovereignty. Thousands of enemy soldiers were invading the country from the border sanctuaries and encircling Phnom Penh. In these circumstances Cambodia had called on the United States and other nations for assistance.

President Nixon recalled that, on 20 April, he had promised to take "strong and effective measures" if the enemy increased activity in Laos, Cambodia, or South Vietnam. This warning, he continued, had been ignored, and as a result the United States now faced three choices: to do nothing; to give massive military assistance to Cambodia; or to go to the "heart of the trouble" by cleaning out the major North Vietnamese and Viet Cong sanctuaries supporting enemy attacks in both Cambodia and South Vietnam. The President had chosen the last option. In cooperation with the Republic of Vietnam, the enemy sanctuaries along the Cambodia-Vietnam border were being cleared out.

The allied operations were not an invasion, the President declared, since the areas attacked were completely occupied and controlled by North Vietnam. The United States did not intend to occupy any areas of Cambodia, Mr. Nixon promised, but would withdraw once the enemy was driven from his Cambodian bases. Until then, he asked for the support and understanding of the American people.[108]

108. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 405-410.

APPENDIX

Revelation and Public Explanation of MENU Bombing in 1973

President Nixon decided in mid-March 1969 to launch the MENU operations, and the B-52 bombing of targets in Cambodia continued thereafter until May 1970. At the President's direction these operations were treated with extreme secrecy, with knowledge of their existence confined to a small number of people in the chain of command. Elaborate cover procedures, described more fully in the chapter above (pp. 220-221), were applied to conceal the MENU attacks. Following each B-52 strike in Cambodia a routine report was filed indicating that the action had been against a designated target in South Vietnam. Thus the MENU sorties were included in the overall Southeast Asia statistical totals, so that the resources expended were accounted for, but without mention of Cambodia. When the Department of Defense later used the routine data base to provide information to the Congress on air activities in Southeast Asia, the MENU sorties were reflected in the figures for South Vietnam.

Public disclosure of the MENU bombing did not occur until 14 July 1973, when a Senate Armed Services Committee investigation of the air war in Southeast Asia brought it to light. In testimony before the committee a former Air Force major stated that he had participated in falsification of records to conceal the B-52 operations in Cambodia, and he described the special hand-delivery channel through which his unit had received the orders for MENU strikes.[1]

Two days later, on 16 July, Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger defended the unreported raids as "fully authorized" and necessary for the protection of US forces. The secrecy was required, he said, "because of the sensitive operational and diplomatic situation . . . ." The Department of Defense in September 1973 published a "Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos" that, among other things, provided detailed information on the MENU bombing. In that report, the Department of Defense admitted that information provided to Congress had

1. NY Times, 15 Jul 73, 1.

been incorrect, since it was derived from a data base that had been perverted by the entries made to conceal the sorties in Cambodia.[2]

Following the revelation of the secret Cambodian bombing, both former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Earle G. Wheeler, initially disavowed knowledge of any falsification of official reports on the attacks, but subsequently recalled otherwise. On 30 July 1973, General Wheeler told the Senate Armed Services Committee that President Nixon personally ordered the MENU bombing under the tightest security measures possible. Mr. Laird stated that the special reporting procedures were known to and approved by the National Security Council.[3]

A spokesman for the Department of State claimed that Prince Sihanouk had been informed of the secret strikes and that he had acquiesced in the bombing. The Department of State spokesman specifically referred to a 1968 conversation between the Prince and the US Ambassador to India, Chester Bowles. In that conversation, Sihanouk reportedly said that he would be "very glad" if the United States solved his problem--the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army presence in his country. The Department of State also cited an exchange between Prince Sihanouk and Senator Mike Mansfield in August 1969, five months after the MENU bombing had begun. Here, the Department of State quoted the Prince as saying "There had not been Cambodian protests when these [US strikes] hit only Viet Cong and not Cambodian villages or population." Senator Mansfield, however, did not recall any mention of bombing in the conversation, and Prince Sihanouk denied that he had authorized or approved any US air strikes in Cambodia during 1969 or 1970.[4]

When the strikes were first revealed in July 1973, a White House spokesman confirmed that the President had authorized both the bombing and the secrecy. On 20 August 1973, in an address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, President Nixon

2. NY Times, 17 Jul 73, 1. (U) DOD Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos, 10 Sep 73, pp. 5-18.

3. NY Times, 19 Jul 73, 1; 31 Jul 73, 1; 10 Aug 73, 1. S. Hrgs, Bombing in Cambodia, pp. 131-189.

4. NY Times, 25 Jul 73, 1; 26 Jul 73, 1.

defended his action. It was required, he said, to protect US troops. He noted that the Cambodian Government had not objected; to the contrary, during the spring of 1969, Prince Sihanouk had invited him to visit Phnom Penh. "This," the President added, was "after the strikes had been going for a long time" and was "a pretty good indication of what he [Sihanouk] thought about what we were doing."[5]

5. NY Times, 19 Jul 73, 1. President Nixon's Speech at National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, New Orleans, 20 Aug 73, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, vol. 9, pp. 1007-1014.

Chapter 8

THE INVASION OF CAMBODIA AND ITS AFTERMATH

The First Days

The initial operation of the Cambodian incursion, TOAN THANG 42, began on 29 April 1970 when South Vietnamese forces with US combat advisers and tactical air support entered the Parrot's Beak area. Three multi-battalion ARVN task forces crossed into Cambodia from III CTZ while four small forces invaded from IV CTZ. During the first day, the RVNAF encountered heavy enemy resistance, and 300 enemy were reported killed by air strikes. Thereafter enemy resistance was light, and on the afternoon of 1 May, the two RVNAF thrusts linked up at the town of Svay Rieng. By that time the RVNAF claimed 463 enemy killed (not including the 300 killed in air actions) and 15 detained. In addition, substantial amounts of enemy weapons and supplies, including 67 tons of rice, had been captured. Friendly casualties were placed at 56 killed and 331 wounded. On 2 May, the RVNAF launched Phase II of Operation TOAN THANG 42, securing Highway No. 1 and driving southward. They also moved west of Svay Rieng to assist Cambodian forces in that area. The United States continued to furnish advisers, medical evacuation, emergency resupply, and artillery support.[1]

Meanwhile, a combined US/RVNAF force entered the Fishhook area on 1 May in Operation TOAN THANG 43. United States tactical and B-52 air strikes early on 1 May signaled the beginning of the attack. Following preparatory air attacks, ground troops entered the Fishhook from three directions in an attempt to encircle the suspected Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the enemy command headquarters for operations in the southern portion of South Vietnam. This invading force of 10,000 consisted of two armored cavalry regiments (the US 11th and the ARVN 1st) and two infantry brigades (3d Brigade of the US 1st Cavalry Division and the ARVN 3d Airborne). Also participating and under the operational control of the US brigade were an armored and a mechanized infantry battalion from the US 25th Infantry Division and the 3d Brigade, US 9th Infantry Division,

1. ~~(S-GP~~ 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-35 - C-57. NY Times, 30 Apr 70, 1; 3 May 70, 2.

respectively. Only scattered resistance was encountered, and by the end of the first day, the allies had advanced some three to five miles inside Cambodia. Enemy casualties for the first day were estimated at 398 killed and 11 detained; friendly losses were four killed and 38 wounded. By 5 May, numerous enemy caches, including weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and food, had been seized, but no significant numbers of enemy troops had been located. Both the light enemy resistance and the failure to find the COSVN gave increasing indication that many enemy troops had fled in advance of the allied arrival.[2]

Public Reaction

In planning and approving the Cambodian invasion, the President and his advisers had realized that this operation might rekindle public agitation against the war in Southeast Asia. This proved the case, and public reaction was immediate. Those who opposed the US role in Vietnam considered the Cambodian action a deliberate expansion of the war and a violation of international law. They rejected any justification based on the long history of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese violation of Cambodian neutrality. The anti-war movement, after declining in vigor during the previous winter, now found a new rallying point. Following the President's 30 April announcement of the incursion, demonstrations and protests broke out on college campuses across the country. Demonstrations on 1 May that began as peaceful protests developed, in a number of instances, into rock-throwing melees that had to be met with tear gas and other police action. In Washington, the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the group that had organized the October and November 1969 moratoriums,[3] announced a demonstration in the capital on 9 May to protest the expansion of the war.[4]

The campus demonstrations did not, however, represent the majority sentiment in the United States, although there was a lack of consensus on the proportion of public support for the President. White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler

2. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-35 - C-37, C-68 - C-70. NY Times, 3 May 70, 1; 4 May 70, 1.
3. See Ch. 5, pp. 147-148, 151.
4. NY Times, 1 May 70, 38; 2 May 70, 1 and 32.

announced that telephone calls following the 30 April speech ran six-to-one in favor of the President's decision, and a Columbia Broadcasting System poll, released on 3 May, showed a margin of two-to-one supporting Mr. Nixon's action in Cambodia. But a Gallup poll with a differently phrased question, "Do you think we should send United States troops to help Cambodia?," found 58 percent answered in the negative. Nevertheless, the Gallup poll indicated that the US public approved the President's handling of the war by about a seven-to-five ratio. In an attempt to rally support, former President Lyndon Johnson on 1 May urged all Americans to support President Nixon in the Southeast Asian crisis, but Mr. Nixon further alienated the college campuses when he publicly referred to the radical students who opposed his Vietnam policies as "bums."[5]

The student opposition to the Cambodian invasion reached new heights following a tragic incident at Kent State University in Ohio. During a demonstration there on 4 May, National Guardsmen fired a volley that killed four students. President Nixon immediately deplored the deaths and called on all opposed to the war to use peaceful dissent rather than violence to express their opinions. But the President's words could not calm the emotions aroused on college campuses, and student protest actions increased. Thirty-seven college and university presidents, including those of Princeton, Columbia, and Johns Hopkins, called on Mr. Nixon to demonstrate "unequivocally" his determination to end promptly US military involvement in Southeast Asia, and students stepped up preparations for the 9 May rally in Washington.[6]

Public reaction to the Cambodian invasion was not restricted to the colleges and universities. In the Congress, too, there was opposition. President Nixon briefed key congressional leaders on the Cambodian decision on the evening of 30 April just before his public broadcast. But on the following day Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, emphatically disagreed with the President's decision to send US troops into Cambodia, and his committee in a unanimous vote requested a conference with the President for a further explanation. Senator Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, who until that time

5. Ibid., 1 May 70, 2; 2 May 70, 1; 4 May 70, 9.
6. Ibid., 4 May 70, 1; 5 May 70, 1; 6 May 70, 1.

had tended to support Mr. Nixon's Southeast Asian policy, also criticized the Cambodian action. After listening with "grave interest" to the President's briefing and broadcast on the situation, he felt that he must "most respectfully disagree" with the campaign into that country. He forecast "serious" Senate consideration of specific legislation to limit how the President spent military funds in Southeast Asia.[7]

President Nixon met with the Senate and House Armed Services Committees as well as the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees of the two houses on 5 May to explain his Cambodia policy in the hope of countering the growing criticism. He gave the congressional delegation a firm commitment that US troops would be withdrawn from Cambodia within three to seven weeks. Some were already returning to South Vietnam, he added. He also pledged that US forces would not penetrate deeper than 21 miles into Cambodia.[8]

In a further effort to allay opposition before the 9 May Washington demonstration, the President moved on several other fronts. He met with the heads of eight major universities on 7 May and promised that he and his Administration would stop "hostile" comments about students. He also scheduled a meeting with the governors of the 50 states on the Cambodian situation, and at an 8 May news conference, he reported that the action in Cambodia was progressing faster than expected. "The great majority of all American units will be out by the second week of June," he asserted, "and all Americans of all kinds, including advisers, will be out of Cambodia by the end of June."[9]

On 9 May, between 75,000 and 100,000 persons demonstrated in Washington against the Cambodian invasion. In a further gesture of conciliation, President Nixon visited the Lincoln Memorial before dawn of that day and talked with a number of young people who had gathered to protest his war policies. He asked them "to try to understand what we are doing." At 1 P.M. the protesters assembled on the Ellipse opposite the White House and listened to speakers attack the Cambodian operations. Both US Army and National Guard troops had been

7. Ibid., 1 May 70, 1; 2 May 70,1 and 5; 3 May 70, 3.
8. Ibid., 6 May 70, 1.
9. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 413-423.

brought into the city, but they were not needed to control any disturbance. Exceedingly warm weather led to bathing in public fountains and the Reflecting Pool, and some observers considered that the atmosphere of a pleasant outing had pervaded the afternoon. The protest was almost entirely peaceful; the only violence occurred in splinter demonstrations later in the evening when some rocks were thrown and windows broken. These acts were put down by police, who had to use tear gas to disperse a crowd around the Department of Justice.[10]

While the students condemned the Cambodian incursion in their Washington rally, Congress expressed its opposition in the consideration of legislation to cut off funds for future US military activity in Cambodia. On 11 May 1970, Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, and Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, introduced an amendment to the Foreign Military Sales Bill to prohibit the President from using any funds appropriated by the Congress for retaining US forces in Cambodia, for providing US military advisers, instructors, or US-sponsored native forces to the Cambodian Government, or for conducting any air combat over Cambodia in support of Cambodian forces. The amendment would not restrict the current operations, but was designed to prevent the President from carrying out future military actions in Cambodia without the approval of the Congress. The amendment was immediately considered by the Foreign Relations Committee and sent to the Senate floor for debate on the same day.[11]

Further Military Planning

Despite the public and congressional opposition, the President and his advisers proceeded with planning for additional military action in Cambodia. Mr. Nixon met with the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 May and outlined US objectives for the forthcoming 30 days. He wanted General Abrams to use the "maximum feasible military strength" against all other important Cambodian base areas that could be attacked with available US and South Vietnamese forces. He called for a bold, aggressive approach, striking the hardest possible blows and destroying

10. NY Times, 10 May 70, 1.
11. Ibid., 12 May 70, 1.

as many enemy sanctuaries as possible. Although he restricted attacks to the strip of Cambodia within 30 kilometers of the South Vietnam border, he promised to consider extension beyond that limit if General Abrams believed it necessary or desirable. The President gave the attacks in Cambodia the highest priority of all US operations in Southeast Asia.[12]

Following the meeting with the President, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Moorer, instructed General Abrams to submit an outline plan for the attack of an additional base area in Cambodia during the next week. The plan, which Admiral Moorer wanted by the next day, should provide for the use of either a combined US/RVNAF force or a South Vietnamese force. Admiral Moorer also directed COMUSMACV to prepare another plan for operations into additional base areas of the field commander's choice. The latter plan was to cover the next 30 days and provide for as much destruction of enemy facilities and supplies as possible. "Higher authority desires a hard hitting campaign to be carried out with imagination and boldness," Admiral Moorer said, adding that if COMUSMACV needed increased air assets, "let me know immediately." Two days later, on 3 May, General Wheeler informed General Abrams that "higher authority" also wished an outline plan to attack Base Area 704, west of the Parrot's Beak, at the earliest possible time.[13]

On 2 May, General Abrams submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for a combined US/RVNAF attack against Base Area 702. This area was continguous to Kontum Province in II CTZ and was a major enemy logistical and troop staging area for operations in South Vietnam. The operation, with the Commanding General of the US 4th Infantry Division in overall control, would commence not later than 7 May. General Wheeler immediately forwarded the plan to the Secretary of Defense, who approved it for execution. General Abrams subsequently refined the plan, naming the operation

12. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 6037 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 1 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 15-30 May 70 (Folder "Base Area 702").

13. Ibid. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6090 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 1 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 28 Apr-8 May 1970.

Binh Tay I and scheduling initiation for 5 May. General Wheeler authorized COMUSMACV to execute the plan on 4 May.[14]

On the same day, General Abrams forwarded his plan for a more extended campaign in Cambodia. It included a series of unilateral and combined ground operations and a combined riverine operation on the Mekong. General Abrams proposed combined attacks in Base Area 350, above the Fishhook, on or about 6 May and in Base Areas 354 and 351 (see Map II) on about 8 May. He hoped to mount the riverine operations with both US and RVN forces on 10 May and attack Base Area 704, plus a new and unnumbered base area centered on Nui O Mountain, on 12 May. An attack on Base Area 701 would be carried out as the situation developed and forces became available. The 704, Nui O Mountain, and 701 actions would be conducted by the RVNAF. All operations were planned to run throughout the campaign. The riverine operation would interdict enemy traffic on the Mekong, seize an enemy transshipment point on Highway No. 1, evacuate Vietnamese refugees, safeguard Cambodian shipping, and help keep Highway No. 1 open. The Joint General Staff had concurred in the outline plan, and detailed planning was proceeding on an urgent basis. Weather was a key factor, General Abrams cautioned. Should it deteriorate, as was entirely possible in mid-May, operations might be forced to halt before all the base areas had been attacked.

The ongoing Parrot's Beak (TOAN THANG 42) and Fishhook (TOAN THANG 43) operations would last until optimum destruction had been accomplished, COMUSMACV continued. To carry out the new outline plan and to sustain current operations, large forces would have to be shifted into Cambodia, temporarily degrading security of vacated areas in South Vietnam. "This is an acceptable calculated risk for the short term," General Abrams explained, although there was danger of a possible enemy reaction in South Vietnam with a major drive through I CTZ. Since US redeployments had restricted allied flexibility to reinforce or fill gaps,

14. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, COMUSMACV 5906 and 5982 to CJCS, 2 and 4 May 70; (TS) CM-5104-70 to SecDef, 2 May 70 (CM-5104-70 has SecDef's handwritten approval of the MACV plan); (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6102 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 4 May 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 15-30 May 70 (Folder "Base Area 702").

such an enemy attack could curtail the planned operations in Cambodia.[15]

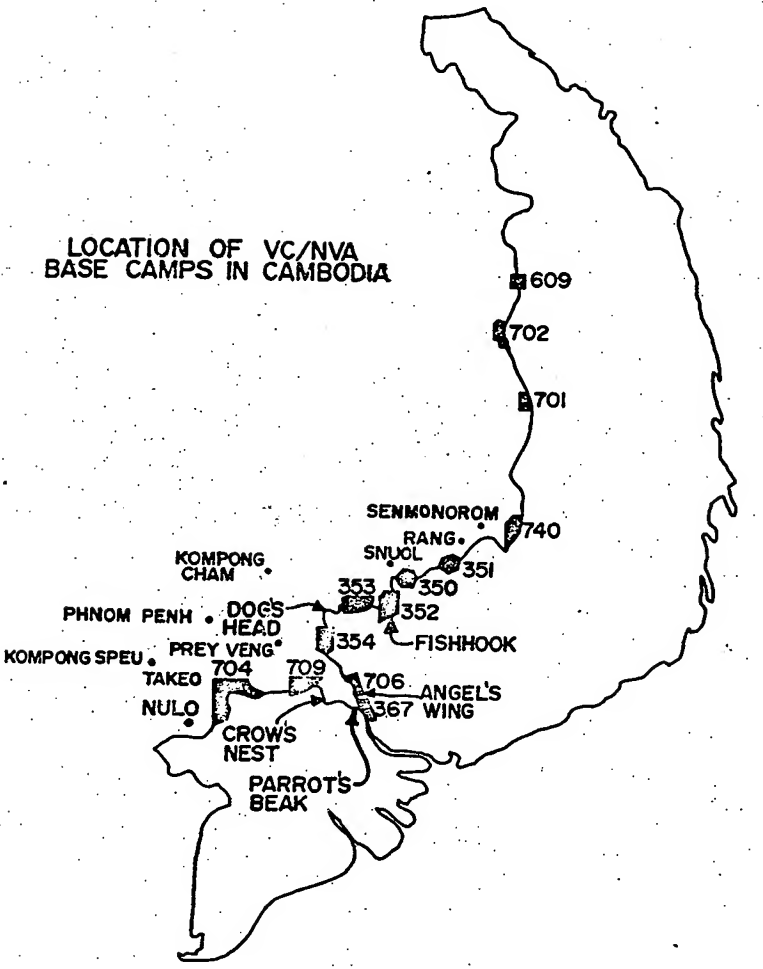
In considering additional action in Cambodia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were conscious of the growing public discontent with the Cambodian operations. On 4 May, General Wheeler told COMUSMACV that there was developing concern both in the press and among "opposition groups" that US and RVNAF troops would become bogged down forever in Cambodia. While efforts had been made to get the message across that the Cambodian operations would end with the destruction of enemy installations and supporting facilities, he believed that it would be "very much to our advantage" to be able to announce the end of an exercise or the withdrawal of some forces back to Vietnam as soon as possible. He hastened to add that:

> The number one requirement is to do an effective job on the objectives and I do not wish to imply that we would want you to prematurely terminate an operation or in any way jeopardize it just to gain a press advantage. However, it would be highly desirable for higher authority to be in a position to exploit fully the termination of an operation or withdrawal of at least some of the forces engaged in Cambodia.[16]

General Abrams was reluctant to commit himself to specific withdrawals, pointing out the difficulties involved in such a course. "After the low tempo of friendly offensive operations during the past several months," he said, "it took some doing to get people back into the offensive spirit. We have recaptured it and don't wish to create the impression that we are slowing down by premature announcement of troop withdrawal from Cambodia." Several units would be involved in more than one operation. Some would rest between assignments, but others must move directly from one combat operation into a new one.[17]

15. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 5996 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 4 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 28 Apr-8 May 70.
16. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6139 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 4 May 70, same file.
17. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 6065 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 5 May 70, same file.

MAP II


LOCATION OF VC/NVA
BASE CAMPS IN CAMBODIA
609
702
701
SENMONOROM
740
RANG
SNUOL
351
KOMPONG
CHAM
353
350
PHNOM PENH
DOG'S
HEAD
352
354
FISHHOOK
KOMPONG SPEU
PREY VENG
704
709
TAKEO
706
ANGEL'S
WING
367
NULO
CROW'S
NEST
PARROT'S
BEAK

On 5 May 1970, General Abrams informed his Washington superiors that he was preparing to attack Base Areas 350, 351, and 354. General Wheeler immediately approved these assaults, but advised General Abrams that his action revealed a misunderstanding of existing authorities. At the 26 April NSC meeting, President Nixon had directed that no combined attacks would be made in Cambodia without specific Washington approval. Thus General Wheeler explained, COMUSMACV's notice of the impending attack "took us by surprise." No doubt General Abrams had seen the submission of his plan for the attack on additional base areas and the subsequent message traffic regarding it as constituting tacit approval to proceed, but for political reasons, "advance approval from higher authority" was required. In order to submit requests for such approval, General Wheeler needed as quickly as possible information about the base areas to be attacked, the schemes of maneuver, and the friendly forces involved. General Wheeler had that day, 5 May, sent to the Secretary of Defense the proposal for operations against Base Area 704 and the riverine operation. "Am I correct," he asked General Abrams, "in assuming that this is the next operation you have in mind?"[18]

Press guidance for the operations that COMUSMACV was about to initiate, General Wheeler instructed, remained unchanged from that issued for the initial Cambodian operations. Higher authority, however, hoped that the attack against Base Area 354 would "blend" into other operations in the Parrot's Beak and that COMUSMACV would not need to make a separate announcement of the new action. General Wheeler continued:

> Of course, with the active press you have in country, you may be forced to do otherwise, and you must act according to your own best judgment. As viewed from here your operations seem to be achieving increasing success. I am praying this favorable course continues, for the carping critics and faint hearts are numerous. As you would expect, the pressures on the highest authority are tremendous.[19]

18. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 6081 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 5 May 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6214 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 5 May 70; (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 6224 to COMUSMACV, 5 May 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 28 Apr-8 May 70.

19. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 6224 to COMUSMACV, 5 May 70, same file.

General Abrams replied that he regretted the surprise he had caused Washington by his announcement of the attacks on Base Areas 350, 351, and 354; he had assumed that the exchange of messages with the Joint Chiefs of Staff amounted to approval for the operations. The next planned operations, he said, would be the one against Base Area 704 and the riverine operations. With respect to the press coverage, he reported that he was continuing to apply the original guidance "of full disclosure and full access without overemphasizing the US role or the extent of the operations." Wherever possible RVNAF participation was being featured, and operations that had already been started were being related to the Parrot's Beak and TOAN THANG 43 actions.[20]

Meanwhile, the enemy was increasing military pressure on the Cambodian forces beyond the area of the US/RVNAF action. On 3 May, US Chargé Rives had reported from Phnom Penh that the FANK were having serious encounters in Prey Vent, Kandal, and Takeo Provinces, deep in Cambodia, and were urgently seeking US air and ground assistance. Mr. Rives recognized the Cambodian predicament, but recommended against any response. "If credence is to be given the President's recent speech, as well as to his overall policy, we must draw a line somewhere." For the United States to move forces beyond Svay Rieng, lifting troops by helicopter to Takeo in support of the Cambodians, would appear to accomplish exactly what the President's critics seemed to fear--involvement of the United States further in a "hopeless morass." There was no guarantee, Mr. Rives said, that these moves would accomplish more than to push the enemy even nearer to Phnom Penh. He was convinced that the United States must stop somewhere in Cambodia, even if the Lon Nol Government was threatened.[21]

Although concerned over the Cambodian situation, Washington authorities accepted Mr. Rives' advice and did not provide the requested air and ground assistance to the Cambodian forces in the Takeo area. They agreed that the best way to help would be to speed up COMUSMACV's planned riverine and Base Area 704 operations. Accordingly, General Wheeler asked COMUSMACV if those two actions,

20. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 6128 to CJCS, 6 May 70, same file.
21. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6093 to COMUSMACV, 4 May 70, same file. (This message relayed Mr. Rives' report.)

planned for 12 May, could be moved ahead two or three days. Higher authority, General Wheeler said, would like to begin the operations even earlier if possible. In complicance, General Abrams moved up the scheduled initiation of both the Base Area 704 and riverine attacks to 9 May. Final approval for initiation of the operations, as well as for one against Base Area 709, was granted by General Wheeler on 7 May. As an exception to the 30-kilometer penetration restriction, riverine operations could be conducted up the Mekong to the site of the ferry on Highway No. 1, although support craft should stay within about 30 kilometers of the border.[22]

On 6 May, General Wheeler informed COMUSMACV of another Cambodian request for assistance in the Neak Luong-Banam-Samraoung Thom area along the Mekong River. General Wheeler assumed that the best way of relieving enemy pressure there was to continue with the operations either under way or planned. He advised General Abrams that "the feeling here is that the US should not become involved in combined operations with Cambodian forces." General Abrams replied that the combined riverine operations and ground assault into Base Area 704 on 9 May would be the best response to relieve the situation in question. He concurred with General Wheeler that combined US-Cambodian military action was not desirable, although situations might arise where tactical air support of some Cambodian forces might be useful.[23]

The Mekong riverine operation and the RVNAF ground attacks into Base Areas 704 and 709 were launched according to plan on 9 May. The Mekong action was the last operation with US participation against a new area in Cambodia. Subsequently, attacks were carried out against Base Areas 701

22. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6153 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 4 May 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 6061 to CJCS, 5 May 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6317 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 6 May 70; (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 6393 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 7 May 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 28 Apr-8 May 70. (JCS 6317 approved execution of the Base Area 704 and riverine operations; JCS 6393 superseded JCS 6317 and authorized attacks in Base Areas 704 and 709 and the riverine operation.)

23. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6320 to COMUSMACV, 6 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 21 Apr-14 May 70. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 6181 to CJCS, 7 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 28 Apr-8 May 70.

and 740 and against the Nui O and western 704 area, but South Vietnamese troops conducted these thrusts.[24]

Meantime, on 7 May, the Secretary of Defense addressed COMUSMACV directly on the Cambodian operations. He referred to an assessment by General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker indicating that the military costs and risks of the action were reasonable and manageable. He pointed out, however, that there were additional factors that he must consider in making recommendations to the President. To give clear credibility to the success of the Cambodian operations, it was essential, Mr. Laird said, to establish certain "key patterns." To that end, he asked General Abrams for his views on the following questions: (1) When would US ground operations, including the provision of advisers, coordinators, and other types of support to RVNAF units be completed in Cambodia? (2) Could the operations in Cambodia be kept primarily South Vietnamese with US support for their duration and what were the plans for doing so? (3) Could the operations in specific base areas be conducted separately and reported as separate operations as each was finished? (4) Could the United States continue to redeploy troops from South Vietnam during May and June? The Secretary also asked about progress of Vietnamization during the Cambodian operations and about plans to reinstitute joint RVNAF/Cambodian border operations after the US withdrawal. He added that all operations in Cambodia involving US support must be essentially complete by 31 May and terminated "in toto" by 15 June.[25]

In reply, General Abrams assured Secretary Laird on 11 May that all planned operations in Cambodia could be supported successfully with the resources on hand, but he cautioned against undue haste in withdrawal from Cambodia. Thorough searches of the base areas had to be made on foot over difficult ground to find cleverly concealed and dispersed enemy caches. Removal of the discovered stores was also time consuming. In the interval between the Secretary's request and General Abrams' answer, the President announced at his 8 May news conference that the majority of US troops would be out of Cambodia by mid-June and completely removed

24. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-89 - C-97.

25. (TS) Msg, OSD 6398 to COMUSMACV (thru CJCS), 7 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 28 Apr-8 May 70.

by 30 June. This was a more lenient timetable than Mr. Laird's deadlines of 31 May and 15 June, and General Abrams preferred the new schedule.

With regard to the Secretary's second question about shifting to South Vietnamese forces the primary responsibility for remaining operations, General Abrams said that all approved ongoing operations could be successfully completed with the present forces assigned. Where operations involved a preponderance of US troops, as in Base Areas 352/353, 354, 351, and 704, it would be unsound, he thought, to shift forces during the area-clearing process, but "the primarily RVN nature of the operations will increase as we go along." He also assured Secretary Laird that all border area operations were conducted and reported separately. With respect to continuing troop withdrawals from South Vietnam, General Abrams believed it "too early" to assess the impact of the Cambodian action on the Vietnamization program or to propose redeployments for May and June 1970. Additionally, it was too soon, he thought, to foresee the character of future RVNAF/Cambodian operations.[26]

The Operations Continue

In accordance with the plans prepared by General Abrams and approved in Washington, the US-RVNAF campaign in Cambodia proceeded. On 5 May, COMUSMACV launched Operation Binh Tay I into Base Area 702, the northernmost attack of the Cambodian invasion. Following initial air attacks, forces of the US 4th Infantry Division and the 40th ARVN Regiment began the combat assault. They encountered light enemy contact until the final days of the operation and concentrated primarily on intensive search and clear operations, discovering large quantities of weapons and munitions, food, and medical supplies. All US maneuver elements withdrew from BINH TAY I on 16 May although the ARVN forces continued the operation for another nine days. Final statistics for the operation showed 276 enemy killed and 18 detained while friendly losses amounted to 46 killed (30 US and 16 ARVN) and 170 wounded.[27]

26. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 6400 to SecDef (info CJCS), 11 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 21 Apr-14 May 70.

27. All information on the ground operations and the riverine attack in Cambodia, unless otherwise stated, is from (~~S~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-57 - C-97.

On 6 May, US and RVNAF troops attacked into Base Areas 354, 351, 350. Tactical Air strikes and artillery bombardment preceded the movement of the 1st Brigade of the US 25th Infantry Division into Base Area 354, just above the Parrot's Beak. This attack, designated TOAN THANG 44, met only light and scattered resistance, except in the vicinity of cache sites and enemy base camps. The operation was completed on 14 May when the US brigade redeployed to a new location in Base Area 353 in Operation TOAN THANG 43.

The operations in Base Areas 351 and 350, named TOAN THANG 45 and 46, respectively, were of longer duration. Forces of the US 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) conducted TOAN THANG 45 and found little enemy opposition during the first day of the attack. On the following day, however, they made contact with the enemy and shortly thereafter discovered "a very large" ammunition and storage area, which became known as "Rock Island East." Search operations continued throughout May and into June with cache discoveries coming faster than the troops could remove or destroy them. Consequently, COMUSMACV assigned another battalion of the 1st Cavalry Division to the operations. Forces of the 5th ARVN Division were lifted by US aircraft into Base Area 350 in Operation TOAN THANG 46. There they conducted search operations, finding large stores of weapons, ammunition, and rice. The operation started to phase down on 20 June and all the ARVN troops had left Base Area 350 by 30 June.

United States and South Vietnamese forces began a major land and water attack in Cambodia on 9 May. As noted above, this operation was moved ahead three days from the originally planned execution date of 12 May at the request of Washington officials. Thirty US gunboats joined with 60 South Vietnamese craft in a thrust up the Mekong River, while ARVN troops of the 9th Division invaded Base Area 709 and the eastern part of Base Area 704, territory just to the east of the Mekong River. This was the southernmost operation of the Cambodian invasion and the first attack in the Mekong Delta.

The allied flotilla advanced quickly up the Mekong and South Vietnamese marines seized the strategic ferry crossing at Neak Luong on the Phnom Penh-Saigon highway. The South Vietnamese boats then proceeded to Phnom Penh and began evacuation of South Vietnamese civilians waiting there. This latter part of the operation was conducted by the Vietnamese Navy without consulting the United States, and no US forces

or craft went beyond Neak Luong. The South Vietnamese boats left Phnom Penh on 15 May carrying 9,000 refugees, and the riverine portion of the operation was completed on 18 May. There was no further US participation in this operation, but the ARVN ground operations continued and subsequently expanded into the western part of Base Area 704 and the Nui O area. Here the ARVN troops conducted search operations similar to those being waged in the other base area attacks. The river thrust and the initial ground invasion were called CUU LONG I, with the naval portion labeled TRAN HUNG DAO XI. As the land action expanded in the Mekong Delta, the operation was redesignated CUU LONG II and, finally, CUU LONG III, which was concluded on 30 June.[28]

Two further attacks were launched into enemy base areas during the Cambodian invasion; both operations were conducted by Vietnamese forces with US tactical air support. The first, BINH TAY II, was against Base Area 701 and lasted from 14 through 27 May. The second, BINH TAY III into Base Area 740, was begun by troops of the 8th ARVN Cavalry on 20 May and extended through 27 June. Both followed the pattern of the previous and ongoing base area attacks, consisting of initial air strikes, troops assaults into the target areas, and search operations to locate and evacuate or destroy enemy equipment and supplies.

While these various operations, beginning on and after 5 May, were being launched, the two original operations of the invasion TOAN THANG 42 and 43 continued. In Base Area 367 and 706 in the Parrot's Beak, South Vietnamese forces with US support pressed on with TOAN THANG 42, engaging and overrunning enemy forces. On 9 May, additional RVNAF troops were brought in to prevent enemy reoccupation while the combat task forces moved deeper into Cambodia along Highway No. 1. On 23 May, the South Vietnamese forces began a new phase of the operation, attacking the Chup Rubber Plantation, just to the north of the Parrot's Beak and along Highway No. 7. Heavy contact with the enemy followed, causing increased casualties on both sides.

Meanwhile, Operation TOAN THANG 43 progressed in Base Areas 352 and 353. The 10,000 US and South Vietnamese forces

28. NY Times, 10 May 70, 1; 12 May 70, 1. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 6400 to SecDef (info CJCS), 11 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 21 Apr-14 May 70.

pushed into the Fishhook from three directions, finding many enemy caches, including a major enemy storage site that was dubbed "The City." On 9 May, the 2d Brigade of the US 25th Infantry Division was introduced into the operation and attacked southwest of Mimot Plantation. Enemy resistance, which had been light, stiffened in mid-May, and on 14 May, the 1st Brigade of the US 25th Division, which had just completed Operation TOAN THANG 44 in Base Area 354, relieved the 1st Brigade of the ARVN 1st Cavalry Division. Search and clearing operations continued in the Fishhook throughout the remainder of May and into June, uncovering numerous small weapons and ammunition caches and several large rice stores, but the allied forces never found the COSVN headquarters, which had been a major objective of this particular attack.

Air operations played an important role in the Cambodian invasion and were used in all the actions between 29 April and 30 June. Both US and VNAF tactical air support was employed along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. The VNAF flew the majority of the sorties in Operations CUU LONG I, II, and III and TOAN THANG 42, while the US Air Force conducted the majority in the other operations; Army organic air was also used extensively. United States aircraft flew 5,189 preplanned and 1,675 immediate airstrike sorties plus 193 gunship and 44 flaredrop missions; the South Vietnamese flew 2,691 tactical sorties and 184 gunship missions.[29]

The United States also employed B-52 strikes in six of the base area attacks in Cambodia. These strikes provided massive firepower for preparatory bombings prior to the initial combat assaults. Follow-on missions were also used against the suspected COSVN headquarters and other enemy locations beyond the 30-kilometer limitation imposed on US ground forces. By far the largest air effort during the Cambodian incursion occurred in Operation TOAN THANG 43 in the Fishhook. There both tactical and B-52 strikes preceded the ground invasion and provided close air support for troops in contact.[30]

In addition to the regularly announced and reported air activities in Cambodia, the United States also continued

29. (~~S~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-128.
30. Ibid., C-128, C-131.

the highly secret B-52 (MENU) and tactical (PATIO) air operations in Cambodia, which had been initiated before the invasion. The MENU bombing dated from March 1969 and continued through 26 May 1970.[31] Secret US tactical air strikes in Cambodia, under the code word PATIO, had begun on 24 April 1970[32] to supplement the MENU bombing; they were restricted to an 18-mile strip in Cambodia along the entire border with South Vietnam. On 11 May 1970 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with approval of the Secretary of Defense, authorized the employment of PATIO strikes against an enemy truck park and storage area in Cambodia near the Laos border and outside the standard 18-mile zone. The strike was conducted as planned on 14 May with 32 sorties occurring under FAC control. During the Cambodian operation, a total of 156 sorties were flown in Cambodia under the PATIO authority.[33]

Surveillance and MARKET TIME Operations

On 25 April 1970, the United States began air and naval surveillance of the port of Kompong Som (previously called Sihanoukville) to determine whether supplies intended for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in Cambodia and South Vietnam were passing through the port. Two US Navy destroyers, especially equipped for the task, maintained continuous patrol in international waters off Kompong Som, beyond the 12-nautical mile limit of Cambodian-claimed territorial waters. In addition, US Navy MARKET TIME aircraft provided air surveillance of the approaches to harbor. No RVNAF forces participated in these activities.

During the period 25 April-20 May, 30 ships--16 arrivals and 14 departures--were detected at Kompong Som by the surveillance operations. None of these vessels appeared suspicious, however, and their movements were consistent with normal merchant marine traffic. General Wheeler advised the Secretary of Defense on 25 May 1970 that an evaluation of the reports indicated that all steel-hulled traffic into Kompong Som had been detected. General Wheeler

31. See Ch. 7, pp. 220-221, for the initiation of MENU as well as for statistics for the operation.

32. See Ch. 7, p. 246.

33. (U) DOD Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos, 10 Sep 73, pp. 21-22.

recommended that the surveillance be kept up as long as useful data accrued, noting that there was little risk to the US forces involved and that charges of US interference with shipping to or from Kompong Som could not be substantiated. He also found the activity beneficial in that the presence of US ships off Kompong Som provided visible evidence to interested parties that a quarantine could be enforced at any time.[34]

Besides the air and naval surveillance of Kompong Som, MARKET TIME operations were extended from South Vietnam along the Cambodian coast for a short distance in order to prevent sea infiltration of men and supplies into Cambodia. During the initial days of the invasion, Secretary of State William P. Rogers wondered if it might not be to the advantage of both the United States and the Government of Cambodia to conduct MARKET TIME in Cambodian waters to reduce the chance of enemy resupply by sea. He noted evidence of considerable sampan and junk activity, as well as an enemy attack against Cambodian forces at the coast town of Kep. Accordingly, he proposed to expand MARKET TIME operations to 104 degrees East, just beyond the Cambodian coastal town of Kampot, and he requested US Chargé Rives in Phnom Penh to solicit the views of the Cambodian Government on this matter. The Government of Cambodia concurred in the extension, and on 8 May, the Secretary of State informed Chargé Rives that the operation would be initiated without any announcement in either Saigon or Washington. The Secretary hoped that the "press can be denied knowledge of the operation for as long as possible."[35]

On the same day, 8 May 1970, General Wheeler instructed CINCPAC to prepare a contingency plan for the expansion of MARKET TIME operations into Cambodian waters, emphasizing the use of South Vietnamese forces and minimum US participation. The area for the enlarged operations would extend from the present MARKET TIME boundary at the South Vietnam-Cambodia border to a point on the Cambodian coastline at 104 degrees East and "thence south along 104 degrees East to the present MARKET TIME boundary at the median point

34. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5219-70 to SecDef, 25 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (MARKET TIME OPNS).

35. (~~TS~~) Msgs, State 68509 and 69970 to Phnom Penh, 5 and 8 May 70, JCS IN 84252 and 88196.

between Cambodia and Phu Quoc." The following rules of engagement would apply: small craft should be stopped and searched only if they gave strong indication that they were attempting to infiltrate supplies into Cambodia; vessels that were clearly identified as supplying enemy forces could be destroyed if they were of North Vietnamese origin. General Wheeler directed CINCPAC to take special precautions, however, to prevent interference with any shipping, even Communist, carrying on normal commerce with Cambodia. If Soviet or Chinese Communist vessels were found engaging in resupply, MARKET TIME forces should take no action, but should report to higher authority for "appropriate instruction." General Wheeler wanted the widened MARKET TIME to begin at the same time as the attack into Base Area 704 and the Mekong riverine operation or as soon thereafter as possible.[36]

But before the requested plan could be prepared, the Republic of Vietnam unilaterally expanded inner barrier MARKET TIME patrols into Cambodian waters without waiting for US approval or guidance. The Chief of Naval Operations of the Vietnamese Navy, with the approval of the Joint General Staff, ordered the first MARKET TIME operation in Cambodian coastal waters on 9 May 1970. No US vessels participated, but the action occurred on such short notice that US advisers could not be withdrawn from the three South Vietnamese craft conducting the initial patrol. Later investigation revealed, however, that only one of the Vietnamese vessels with a single US adviser actually entered Cambodian waters.[37]

General Abrams prepared the requested MARKET TIME plan and CINCPAC submitted it, with his endorsement, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 11 May. But they postponed action pending receipt of the Vietnamese Navy's rules of engagement for action in Cambodian waters. Shortly thereafter, the Vietnamese Chief of Naval Operations agreed to abide by the rules specified by General Wheeler on 8 May, and the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Moorer,

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36. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6477 to CINCPAC, 8 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia (MARKET TIME OPNS).

37. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 092225Z May 70; (~~TS~~-GP 3) CM-5170-70 to SecDef, 15 May 70; same file.

requested Secretary of Defense approval of MARKET TIME operations in Cambodian waters in accordance with the COMUSMACV plans.[38]

Secretary Laird approved the expansion of MARKET TIME into Cambodian waters on 13 May 1970 with the understanding that the South Vietnamese would follow the US rules of engagement. At the same time, he made clear his displeasure on learning that MARKET TIME operations had already begun off Cambodia without his knowledge. He was shocked to find that an operation with US advisers had been undertaken without his approval, and he requested an explanation.[39]

Two days later, on 15 May, Admiral Moorer explained to Mr. Laird how the South Vietnamese had, without US consent or consultation, initiated MARKET TIME in Cambodian waters and how US advisers had inadvertently participated in the initial patrol. He assured the Secretary that both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV had been cautioned to keep Washington fully informed of new independent RVNAF operations involving US advisers so that proper authority for US participation could be secured before the operations were launched. Both the vessel commander and the accompanying US adviser must make parallel requests to their respective superiors before any action could be taken in the extended MARKET TIME area. Admiral Moorer went on to report that, currently, five VNN vessels were employed in Cambodian coastal waters in MARKET TIME patrols.[40]

38. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 6366 to CINCPAC, 11 May 70; Msg, CINCPAC to Actg CJCS, 120503Z May 70; Msg, COMUSMACV 6474 to CJCS, 12 May 70; Msg, CJCS 6587 to CINCPAC, 12 May 70; (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS "Market Time Operations - Cambodia," 13 May 70; same file.

39. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Market Time Operations - Cambodia," 13 May 70, same file.

40. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 6695 to CINCPAC, 13 May 70 (by this msg the CJCS also authorized CINCPAC to conduct MARKET TIME operations in the Cambodian area in accordance with the COMUSMACV plan); (~~TS~~-GP 3) CM-5170-70 to SecDef, 15 May 70; same file.

The MARKET TIME operations off Cambodia proceeded without further incident. By 25 May, the RVNAF had 210 personnel embarked in 25 VNN craft engaged in MARKET TIME activities related to Cambodia, but only five VNN vessels actually manned stations in Cambodian waters. United States involvement consisted of 21 US Navy advisers aboard the VNN craft patrolling the MARKET TIME inner barrier, and US ships in South Vietnamese waters gave logistic support to the VNN. In addition, US ships extended the MARKET TIME middle barrier off the Cambodian coast, but remained in international waters, and US aircraft provided air surveillance of the approaches to Kompong Som.

The expanded MARKET TIME activities did not prove particularly fruitful. Of 17 sampans and junks detected and searched by 25 May, none was detained or found to contain contraband. Nevertheless, the presence of these naval units had reduced the junk/sampan traffic to "near zero," General Wheeler told the Secretary of Defense, indicating that no enemy infiltration was occurring. General Wheeler advised Secretary Laird on 25 May 1970 that the expanded MARKET TIME patrols off Cambodia were well worth the extra expense, which could be absorbed under regular operating costs. There was some slight risk of involving third country shipping, but CINCPAC had assured General Wheeler that operating rules were being strictly enforced to avoid such risks. There was some possibility, General Wheeler continued, that the South Vietnamese might unilaterally extend the patrols farther westward, but should that happen, US advisers would be withdrawn. In any event, it was planned that all US Navy personnel and craft engaged in Cambodian waters would return to the regular MARKET TIME patrol areas by 30 June 1970.[41]

General Wheeler's warning of possible South Vietnamese expansion of patrols in Cambodian waters proved prophetic. On 26 May the Vietnamese Navy announced a unilateral extension of MARKET TIME westward into Cambodian waters to 103 degrees 47 minutes East, to include the harbor and approaches to Kompong Som. United States advisers were immediately withdrawn from the VNN vessels, and no US personnel participated in the expanded MARKET TIME patrols. The Vietnamese continued to follow the rules of engagement laid down by the United States on 8 May.[42]

41. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5219-70 to SecDef, 25 May 70, same file. (~~S~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. F-12 - F-13.
42. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 260359Z May 70, JCS IN 25959; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 090256Z Jun 70, JCS IN 49036.

Planning for the Post-30 June Period

While the Cambodian operations were in progress, the President and his advisers sought to determine a course of action to be followed after US forces withdrew from Cambodia. The primary US objective in the Cambodian invasion was to destroy the enemy base areas that supported operations in South Vietnam, but a secondary aim was to relieve Viet Cong and North Vietnamese pressure on the Cambodian armed forces and thereby indirectly support the Cambodian Government. Once US forces returned to South Vietnam, enemy pressure on the Cambodian Government was likely to increase, and further support would appear desirable. Yet, the policymakers in Washington were reluctant to expand US assistance to Cambodia. They wanted to avoid deeper involvement and undue identification with the Lon Nol Government.

Guidance to this effect had been relayed by the Department of State to US Chargé Rives in Phnom Penh as early as 15 April 1970 and repeated on 9 May. At that time, Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson wrote that the United States was attempting to provide enough support and reassurance to the Government of Cambodia so that it would have the determination and capability to cope with the enemy, but to avoid giving the Cambodians any false expectations regarding the extent of US assistance. Mr. Johnson referred to the furnishing of captured arms and munitions to the FANK and said: "We want carefully to avoid getting ourselves in an 'advisory' role vis-a-vis the FANK or the GOC with the responsibility that would flow there from." The US mission in Phnom Penh must be kept small to avoid any impression that the United States was taking over, thus committing US prestige in Cambodia in a "major way."[43]

The Secretary of Defense, in his thinking about Cambodia and further actions both there and in South Vietnam, was concerned about maintaining support at home for the President's Southeast Asia policy. On 15 May 1970, he advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was time to consider plans for concluding the operations in Cambodia, for conducting "effective" operations in Southeast Asia after 1 July 1970, and for "transitioning from our current operations to the

43. (TS) Msgs, State 55340 and 07081 to Phnom Penh, 14 Apr and 9 May 70.

longer range program." He reminded the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the decision to invade Cambodia had been based on both tactical and strategic objectives. The former were to disrupt the enemy's base areas and to deny him major amounts of military supplies and ammunition; the latter included facilitation of Vietnamization, continued and possibly accelerated US troop withdrawal from South Vietnam, and promotion of "meaningful" negotiations to end the war. Field reports indicated that the tactical objectives were in sight, but the Secretary now considered the longer-term strategic outcome of the Cambodian operations even more important. "If our military activities are not successful in these terms, no amount of highlighting immediate tactical results will suffice to satisfy the American people."

Secretary Laird told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the President's supporters in Congress had accepted a four to six week duration for the US sanctuary operations in Cambodia. They would continue to support the President as long as his promises were kept and the strategic objectives were achieved. For this reason, it was "absolutely mandatory" that all US ground units, advisers, controllers, and other support personnel be out of Cambodia by 30 June. General Abrams had indicated that he could comply with this schedule, but care must be taken to allow for adverse weather, enemy attacks, or other unforeseen circumstances. The scheduling should err on the side of withdrawing "a bit early," the Secretary said, to avoid being caught in Cambodia after 30 June.

The Secretary asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a plan covering a number of aspects of the Cambodian campaign. He wanted to see the projected termination date for each separate Cambodian operation and details of the phasedown of US elements in Cambodia through 30 June. The program for removing or destroying enemy material captured in Cambodia should also be set out. In addition, he directed that the plan provide for the employment of US air operations, both tactical and B-52, at a level deemed "militarily useful" in Cambodia or along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. If new or extended authorities were required, a request should accompany the plan. Further, he directed inclusion of planning for the reversion of naval operations to the level considered necessary to fulfill US objectives in Southeast Asia and the return of RVNAF units to "productive cross-border operations" similar to those in progress before the US entry into Cambodia. He also wanted "the initiation of

even more aggressive and positive military programs by the South Vietnamese" to accelerate pacification and security within South Vietnam.

Secretary Laird recognized that his request was "a tall order," but he was certain the Joint Chiefs of Staff realized "how much rides in the balance." Not only must the time limit for termination of US ground operations in Cambodia be met; the longer-term stratetic value of the Cambodian operations must be made manifest by sustained progress within South Vietnam.[44]

As an initial response, General Wheeler on 22 May submitted a plan for US air interdiction in eastern Cambodia to follow the withdrawal of US troops. The plan provided for both tactical air and B-52 operations under forward air control in that part of Cambodia bounded by the Laos border on the north, the South Vietnam border on the east, Route 13 on the south, and a line 200 meters west of the Mekong River on the west. Reconnaissance operations would also be conducted to provide surveillance of enemy activity, to locate military facilities and logistics areas, and to furnish target damage assessment. Sortie levels for the plan would be determined by "the relative priorities of other air operations and the approved sorties level for Southeast Asia."[45]

Although President Nixon had publicly promised the withdrawal of all US forces from Cambodia by 30 June 1970, this commitment did not apply to South Vietnamese troops, and the United States anticipated that RVNAF operations in Cambodia would continue after that date. The nature and extent of such South Vientamese operations was a sensitive question, however, and was considered by both the Departments of State and Defense in Washington. The result was guidance in the form of a joint State/Defense message dispatched by Secretary Rogers on 21 May to US officials in Saigon and Phnom Penh and to CINCPAC. The United States, the message said, would encourage the Republic of Vietnam to maintain a "flexible posture" on future Cambodian operations,

44. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS "Southeast Asia Planning," 15 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/621, 16 May 70, JMF 907/501 (15 May 70).

45. (TS) CM-5203-70 to SecDef, 22 May 70, JMF 880/323 (22 Jun 70).

principally to deter enemy occupation of border sanctuaries and moves against Phnom Penh or ports in southern Cambodia. "We want to make clear that restrictions which apply to U.S. forces after 30 June do not apply to SVN forces." South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia must be consistent with the objectives of Vietnamization and should, therefore, be limited to enemy-occupied areas where the enemy presence threatened forces and operations in South Vietnam.

Consequently, the United States favored brief RVNAF attacks in Cambodian border areas to protect friendly forces across the border. If the enemy realized that South Vietnamese forces could enter Cambodia at will, the Joint State/Defense message advised, he would be deterred from a buildup in the border areas. The United States would furnish logistic and artillery support, as necessary, from South Vietnam to back up RVNAF operations in Cambodia. "We would prefer air support be provided by the GVN," the joint message read, "but would not preclude U.S. air support if essential."

Although favoring South Vietnamese operations in the border areas of Cambodia, the United States wanted the Republic of Vietnam to use caution, avoiding "wide ranging" actions designed to support the Cambodian Government. United States policymakers in Washington did not want to give the enemy pretext for attacking Phnom Penh or seizing all of Cambodia. The joint State/Defense message stressed the desire that the Republic of Vietnam consult the United States fully on all operations in Cambodia and coordinate closely with the Cambodian Government.[46]

Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams called on President Thieu on 26 May 1970 to explain US policy toward Cambodia and to discuss further operations there. President Thieu was fully satisified with the US position. He reiterated that it was not his purpose to remain permanently in Cambodia, to take over the Cambodian battle, or to seize any Cambodian territory. His objective in fighting there, he said, was to assist and accelerate Vietnamization, to clean out the remaining Viet Cong strongholds, and to destroy enemy forces within the country. He anticipated at that time that all South Vietnamese forces would leave Cambodia

46. (TS) Msg, Joint State/Def (State 77899) to Saigon and Phnom Penh, MACV, and CINCPAC 21 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 9-31 May 70.

by 30 June, but he hoped to work out arrangements with the Cambodian Government to allow limited cross-border operations to stop the enemy from rebuilding border bases. President Thieu planned to meet with his corps commanders the following day to review the whole Cambodian operation. He believed that there should be a plan governing operations in Cambodia for the next three months.[47]

General Abrams relayed a report of the meeting with President Thieu to General Wheeler, who found it "very interesting." The same subject, he told General Abrams in reply, had been discussed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense that same day. "We believe," General Wheeler told COMUSMACV, "that we should encourage the South Vietnamese to plan for incursions or raids in force subsequent to 30 June on a selective basis in areas to which the enemy returns and which pose a threat to Free World Military forces." The one problem that General Wheeler foresaw in the guidance received to date was that the United States would not provide logistic or air support to such operations in Cambodia nor could any US forces be involved. The prohibitions would not extend to air interdiction in the northeastern part of Cambodia if targets and patterns of enemy operations indicated that such a campaign would be remunerative. But Secretary Laird was "quite specific," General Wheeler added, that "we could not be placed in a position of supporting ARVN operations in Cambodia after 30 June with close air support sorties and logistic support." The Secretary had asked if General Abrams had started planning with the Joint General Staff for post-30 June operations in Cambodia, and General Wheeler asked General Abrams to forward this information.[48]

On 28 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to Secretary Laird's 15 May request regarding the termination of the Cambodian action and future planning. They sent him a summary of the plans for the culmination of US operations in Cambodia and a plan for operations in South Vietnam after 1 July 1970,[49] together with an assessment of the Cambodian

47. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 7175 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 26 May 70, same file.

48. (TS) Msg, CJCS 7308 to COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, 26 May 70, same file.

49. The plan for operations in South Vietnam after 1 July is covered in Ch. 9 below, pp. 323-324.

invasion to date. They believed that the allied action in Cambodia had reduced the threat of a major enemy effort in III and IV CTZs as well as in southern II CTZ, estimating that the enemy would need six to nine months to replenish stockpiles and be ready to resume sustained operations along the Cambodian border. Although driven from the border areas, the enemy had seized more positive control of most of Cambodia east of the Mekong River and north of Highway No. 7 and would, no doubt, try to consolidate positions in this area. In addition, once allied forces left Cambodia, the enemy would certainly attempt to rebuild base areas and supply lines, carry out attacks against South Vietnam from Cambodia, and keep up pressure on Phnom Penh, hoping to cause the overthrow of Lon Nol. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also observed that the operations in Cambodia had resulted in only "minimal effect" on enemy capabilities in I and northern II CTZs in South Vietnam and warned that recent evidence indicated the possibility of major enemy attacks in those areas within the "next month or so."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff then summarized for the Secretary the plans for ending US action in Cambodia, cautioning that there were important variables, such as the extent of further RVN operations inside Cambodia and the stability of the Lon Nol Government, that could not be forecast with confidence at that time. All ongoing US attacks in Cambodia were being terminated as rapidly as possible and all US personnel would be withdrawn to meet the 30 June deadline. Precise termination dates and specific numerical phasedowns could not be determined in advance because of the uncertainties of enemy reaction and weather, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff did provide the Secretary a table presenting their best estimate of those dates and troop withdrawals for each base area operation in Cambodia. Captured enemy material and equipment that could be moved was being evacuated to forward supply points in South Vietnam to await further disposition; removal of several major caches had already been completed. Remaining captured supplies that could not be safely or feasibly transported were being destroyed in place.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff also reviewed their plan for air interdiction in Cambodia after 1 July 1970, which had been submitted to the Secretary on 22 May 70.[50] United

50. See above, p. 288.

States naval operations in and around South Vietnam after 1 July would revert to the type and level conducted prior to the Cambodian incursion, including: SEA LORDS riverine interdiction and waterway control; MARKET TIME coastal surveillance and interdiction along the South Vietnamese coast; tactical air support from TF-77 carriers on YANKEE STATION; and naval gunfire support along the South Vietnamese coast. In addition, two Amphibious Ready Groups/Special Landing Forces would be kept in ready status in the Western Pacific for possible commitment in South Vietnam. The MARKET TIME patrol of the Cambodian coast would continue, but only South Vietnamese craft would operate in Cambodian waters, and contingency plans would be developed and maintained for the quarantine of Kompong Som.

In his 15 May request, the Secretary of Defense had directed that plans be made to return RVNAF units to cross-border operations similar to those conducted prior to 28 April 1970, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured Mr. Laird that COMUSMACV would continue efforts to control the magnitude and nature of RVNAF attacks into Cambodia. The approaching monsoon season as well as internal security requirements within South Vietnam would limit RVNAF action in Cambodia. In addition, COMUSMACV would carefully monitor all RVNAF actions in Cambodia, providing US support only for those that were consistent with US concepts and objectives.[51]

Meanwhile, on 27 May, General Abrams had replied to General Wheeler's inquiry concerning the initiation of planning with the Joint General Staff. He had not begun such planning because his instructions on this matter appeared contradictory. He interpreted the joint State/Defense message of 21 May as permitting US close air support for RVNAF operations "if essential"; yet the guidance of the Secretary of Defense, relayed by General Wheeler on the previous day, indicated that the United States would not provide close air support for RVNAF actions in Cambodia. Because of this discrepancy, General Abrams had suspended any work with the Joint General Staff on post-30 June planning until he received further instructions.[52]

51. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-261-70 to SecDef, 28 May 70, Encl to JCS 2472/612-1, 25 May 70, JMF 907/501 (15 May 70).
52. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 7183 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 27 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 9-31 May 70.

This guidance was not long in coming. On the afternoon of 30 May, President Nixon gathered his top advisers, including Generals Wheeler and Abrams, at the Western White House at San Clemente to review the situation in Cambodia. Among the subjects discussed was policy for post-30 June operations, and the President resolved the question of US close air support in Cambodia. He approved US air interdiction missions in Cambodia, but not US close air support of South Vietnamese forces operating there. He granted General Abrams authority to employ US tactical air outside of the specified interdiction area when required to enhance the "security and safety of US forces in South Vietnam," but the term "close air support" was not to be used in describing such operations. After General Abrams had returned to Saigon, General Wheeler informed him that "In view of our meeting with the President . . . , I believe that you have adequate guidance with which to conduct post-1 July planning with the JGS."[53]

Presidential Progress Report

President Nixon on 3 June reported to the American people on the progress of the Cambodian invasion. He had recently met with General Abrams, he revealed, and based on the General's assessment, he could "now state that this has been the most successful operation of this long and very difficult war." In Cambodia during the month of May, the President said, US and South Vietnamese troops had captured a total amount of enemy arms, equipment, ammunition, and food nearly equal to what had been captured in all of Vietnam in all of the previous year. He reviewed his reasons for ordering the action and listed the following "long-range" impacts of the Cambodian operation: (1) elimination of an immediate danger to the security of US forces remaining in Vietnam; (2) additional "precious time" for the South Vietnamese to train and prepare themselves for their own defense so that US forces could be withdrawn; (3) insurance for continued success of the US troop withdrawal program in South Vietnam.

53. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 7710 to CJCS, 7 Jun 70; (TS) Msg, CJCS 7490 to COMUSMACV, 1 Jun 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 1-30 Jun 70.

The success of the operations to date, the President continued, guaranteed the withdrawal of all US forces from Cambodia by 30 June. In fact, 17,000 of the 31,000 American troops who had entered Cambodia had already returned to Vietnam. The remainder, he promised, including all air support, logistics, and military advisory personnel, would be out of Cambodia by the end of the month. The only remaining US activity in Cambodia after 1 July, Mr. Nixon announced, would be air missions to interdict enemy troop and material movements when he considered it necessary to "protect the lives and security of our men in South Vietnam."

The President concluded his speech with an appeal for support. He assured the dissenters that he understood the deep divisions in the country over the war and realized that many American were deeply troubled. "But I also have a solumn obligation to make the hard decisions which I find are necessary to protect the lives of 400,000 American men remaining in Vietnam."[54]

With the matter of US air support for South Vietnamese cross-border actions in Cambodia resolved, General Abrams on his return to Vietnam proceeded to discuss future RVNAF operations in Cambodia with General Vien, Chief of the Joint General Staff. He explained to the South Vietnamese General what the United States would like his force to accomplish and the extent of US support. General Abrams found the RVNAF willing to continue operations in Cambodia and, despite traditional enmities and some current difficulties with the Cambodians, anxious to assist their neighbor. General Vien told COMUSMACV that his forces were doing all they could to place pressure on the enemy in Cambodia. He noted that his troops had been fighting without letup for over a month and that the need for relief of troops and maintenance of equipment was evident. Consequently, General Abrams reported to General Wheeler on 7 June that the South Vietnamese forces were doing "all that reasonably can be expected at this time."[55]

54. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 476-480.

55. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 7438 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 2 Jun 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 7708 to CJCS, 7 Jun 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 1-30 Jun 70.

Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams called on President Thieu again on 8 June to convey a personal message from President Nixon praising the recent performance of the RVNAF and to inform the RVN President of the decision made at the San Clemente meeting concerning US air support in Cambodia. President Thieu told them that the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were moving west of the Mekong River to get beyond the reach of allied attacks. He felt that very soon the United States and the Republic of Vietnam should try to help the Cambodians by giving them air support, crew-served weapons, and training for their military leaders. He suggested that both non-commissioned officers and officers might be trained in South Vietnam.[56]

In Washington, meantime, attention focused on the withdrawal of US forces from Cambodia. Both Congress and the public were watching closely to see if the President fulfilled his promise to have all US troops out of Cambodia by 30 June. "I am sure you are aware," the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Moorer, reminded COMUSMACV on 12 June, "there is considerable attention being given to the rate of withdrawal of US troops now in Cambodia." He asked General Abrams for an estimate of the timing of the withdrawal based on his overall plan as well as his idea of how the situation might develop in the base areas over the next two weeks. Admiral Moorer realized, of course, that COMUSMACV wanted to get the best possible results out of the remaining time to insure the maximum impact on the enemy.[57]

General Abrams replied that a "meaningful withdrawal schedule" could not be provided at that time because of the numerous variables involved. Admiral Moorer relayed this information to Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard, explaining that the variables included such factors as weather, terrain, and enemy actions, none of which could be forecast with any accuracy. Admiral Moorer also reported

56. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV 7753 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 8 Jun 70, same file.

57. (~~TS~~) Msg, Actg CJCS 8376 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 12 Jun 70, same file. During June 1970, Admiral Moorer was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Designate, scheduled to replace General Wheeler on 1 Jul 70, and he frequently served as Acting Chairman in the absence of General Wheeler.

that a total of 857 individual enemy caches had been uncovered to date, with the number still increasing. Eighty-seven remained to be removed or destroyed, and each field commander was pressing the search of his assigned area to find as many enemy munitions, weapons, and other supplies as possible within the time limit. Admiral Moorer pledged to the Deputy Secretary that the withdrawal deadline would be met; General Abrams had given the same assurance and was taking steps to insure that the withdrawal would be complete and orderly.[58]

Further Post-30 June Planning

President Nixon met with the Washington Special Actions Group on 15 June and set forth his latest views on future US courses of action in Cambodia. He placed greatest emphasis on keeping Cambodia free of Communist control. The key question was whether the United States could, by providing aid and equipment, prevent the enemy from seizing Cambodia. This question then raised the further one of what measures the United States was justified in taking to achieve its purpose. He noted that the cross-border and other actions had stemmed enemy progress within Cambodia and against South Vietnam, probably removing the threat at least until the end of the unfavorable monsoon in October.

Even though the United States had not participated in the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk, President Nixon continued, it was now associated with the anticommunist government of Lon Nol. If he should fall, international opinion would blame the United States regardless of whether or not it gave maximum assistance. For this reason, and because of the importance of a free Cambodia to the war in South Vietnam, the President believed that the United States must be willing to take some risks to keep Cambodia from Communist control.

Actions that the United States must take, the President said, included provision of as many weapons and items of equipment as the Cambodians could profitably use. He stressed the need for better intelligence from Cambodia and

58. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 8069 to Actg CJCS, 15 Jun 70; (TS) CM-5991-70 to DSecDef, 15 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 1-30 Jun 70.

said that the Republic of Vietnam must be kept "loose," so that the threat of RVNAF action in Cambodia would remain hanging over the enemy's head. In addition, he wanted more effective use of air, both US and South Vietnamese, in Cambodia. "We will continue our air interdiction after 1 July," he said, "but a broad interpretation of the word interdiction is desired."[59]

As a result of the presidential guidance received at the WSAG meeting, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent General Abrams further instructions regarding the use of the RVNAF in Cambodia. "We believe that the employment of the RVNAF in Cambodia can have a major impact on the situation there over the next several weeks," they informed the field commander on 17 June. General Abrams should encourage the Joint General Staff to be "positive" toward operations in Cambodia and should assist in planning these operations as much as possible. It was important that the RVNAF increase efforts to remove enemy interdiction points and keep major highways in Cambodia open.

An important consideration, the Joint Chiefs of Staff added, was that the withdrawal of US forces from Cambodia could cause a psychological letdown on the part of the Cambodians. Therefore, although scheduled reductions in US troops in South Vietnam would soon place additional in-country responsibilities on the RVNAF, actions should be conducted by the South Vietnamese forces in Cambodia. It was particularly important, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, to launch such operations during the next few weeks, to the extent permitted by RVNAF capabilities, to prevent the loss of major objectives to the enemy.[60]

On 20 June 1970, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard acted on the plans for terminating US operations in Cambodia, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had sent to the Secretary of Defense on 28 May. Mr. Packard approved continued air reconnaissance over all of Cambodia, requesting that tactical reconnaissance over populated areas be held to the minimum consistent with adequate intelligence collection. For planning of further operations in Cambodia, the Deputy Secretary

59. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 8495 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 15 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1-15 Jun 70.
60. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2385 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 17 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 16-23 Jun 70.

provided the following guidance: (1) the permanent withdrawal of US forces from Cambodia by 30 June applied to all US forces, except those performing authorized overflight, and included SALEM HOUSE team leaders and US advisers to all RVNAF units; (2) the "main focus" of allied military efforts must be in South Vietnam, with the increased RVNAF confidence gained in the Cambodian operations translated into actions to accelerate Vietnamization and pacification; (3) RVNAF ground incursions into Cambodian sanctuaries must be limited by specific ground rules, controlling depth of penetration, size of forces, and frequency of attack. Mr. Packard strongly urged a careful monitoring of RVNAF plans and operations so that US support was given only to those cross-border operations that met US objectives. He also asked about the degree to which General Abrams could exercise approval of and control over RVNAF cross-border operations after 30 June. He wanted to know, too, about the number of RVNAF troops that would remain in Cambodia after the US withdrawal and the nature of subsequent operations in Cambodia.[61]

In reply, Admiral Moorer emphasized that the United States could not completely control South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia after 30 June. General Abrams did not hold approval authority for RVNAF cross-border operations in Cambodia. Such authority was exercised by President Thieu through the Joint General Staff to the RVNAF corps commanders. United States commanders could influence the RVNAF operations in Cambodia in two ways, Admiral Moorer continued. First, the regular discussions by General Abrams and his senior commanders with General Vien and his commanders provided a means for presenting the US viewpoint. Second, the United States could influence RVNAF action by the amount of support provided. Curtailment of US support after 30 June would have a very real effect on the RVNAF capability for cross-border operations.

The Republic of Vietnam had set rules for operations in Cambodia after the US withdrawal, the Admiral stated. It

61. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Planning," 20 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/621-2, 22 Jun 70, JMF 907/501 (15 May 70). DSecDef also gave his decision on the JCS plan for operations in South Vietnam after 1 Jul 70, which had accompanied the Cambodian plans on 28 May 70, but this action is covered in Ch. 9, below.

had agreed with the Government of Cambodia on a 16-kilometer strip on either side of the border in which forces of either nation could operate to prevent the re-establishment of enemy sanctuaries. In addition, President Thieu had authorized an area 40 to 60 kilometers deep inside Cambodia within which his corps commanders could respond to requests for assistance from FANK commanders; beyond that limit, President Thieu would approve any RVNAF assistance on a case-by-case basis.

With respect to the number of South Vietnamese troops remaining in Cambodia and the nature of their operations, Admiral Moorer could not answer directly. Since COMUSMACV did not have operational control of the RVNAF, it was impossible to predict accurately the intentions or reactions of the South Vietnamese forces. "The number of RVNAF troops involved in Cambodia," concluded the Admiral, "will be directly related to RVN politics, military capabilities, and their evaluation priorities at any given time."[62]

By the end of June, it was apparent that the South Vietnamese were going to continue to be involved in Cambodia in the coming months to a fairly substantial degree, but US military officials both in South Vietnam and in Washington were confident that these actions would meet US objectives. Admiral Moorer spelled out for Dr. Kissinger on 28 June the probable nature of future South Vietnamese action in Cambodia. The Admiral expected the Republic of Vietnam to turn its efforts after 30 June against the enemy in South Vietnam, but at the same time to carry out specific operations in Cambodia. These latter actions included: maintenance of a forward base at Neak Luong to keep Highway No. 1 open and to respond to Cambodian requests for assistance against enemy high pressure points in the vicinity; cross-border attacks against "hard intelligence targets" as the enemy attempted to rebuild his bases; riverine actions to support the forward base at Neak Luong as well as to keep the Mekong open to Phnom Penh; naval anti-infiltration patrols along the south cost of Cambodia; special operations, on a case-by-case basis when requested by the highest Cambodian authorities; and VNAF air strikes and helicopter lift as necessary. Further, Admiral Moorer stated, cooperation between the military headquarters in Saigon and

62. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5339-70 to SecDef, 25 Jun 70, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/621-2, 1 Jul 70, same file.

Phnom Penh was good, as was the rapport between mutually supporting units of the FANK and RVNAF. Observation by the Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General John W. Vogt, during a recent visit had confirmed the good Cambodian-South Vietnamese working relationship.[63]

Meantime, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had refined the plan for US air operations in Cambodia after 30 June. General Wheeler had submitted an initial plan to the Secretary of Defense on 22 May,[64] but since then both the President and the Deputy Secretary of Defense had given additional guidance on the extent of US involvement in Cambodia following the withdrawal of US forces. Admiral Moorer forwarded the revised plan to the Secretary of Defense on 23 June. It provided for operations designed to destroy enemy forces and bases threatening US troops in South Vietnam, to disrupt enemy operations and destroy supplies, and to deny the enemy freedom to use his established base areas and lines of communication. The plan delineated an operating area in northeast Cambodia similar to the earlier plan; the north, west, and east boundaries (the Laos border, a line 200 meters west of the Mekong River, and the South Vietnam border, respectively) remained unchanged, but whereas the southern boundary in the earlier version had been Route 13, the new plan moved the boundary further south to a line "200 meters south of Route 7 from 200 meters west of the Mekong to the intersection with Route 78 and then southeast along that route to the South Vietnamese border." Admiral Moorer requested authority to conduct air interdiction in Cambodia until 1 November 1970 in accordance with this plan. On 20 June, Deputy Secretary Packard had, among other things, authorized US air reconnaissance over all of Cambodia. Admiral Moorer asked modification of that authority to permit armed escort and flak suppression for reconnaissance missions in the interdiction area.[65]

On 29 June, Secretary Laird advised the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the "most prudent approach" to air interdiction in Cambodia would be a limited effort.

63. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 9228 to Dr. Kissinger at San Clemente, 28 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 24 Jun - 2 Jul 70.

64. See above, p. 288.

65. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5320-70 to SecDef, 23 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2366/29, 30 Jun 70, JMF 880/323 (22 Jun 70).

United States air operations in Cambodia should concentrate on enemy troop buildup and supply caches, avoiding populated areas as much as possible and limiting US involvement as much as practicable. Accordingly, he felt that air operations should be confined to the area above Route 13, thereby avoiding the concentrations of population along the Mekong. He approved tactical and B-52 interdiction against troop and supply buildups in the area bounded by Route 13 on the south, the Laos border on the north, the South Vietnam border on the east, and a line 200 meters beyond the Mekong on the west, avoiding populated areas. He also approved "selective" tactical and B-52 interdiction in the area between Route 13 and the Route7-Route 78 line as proposed in the JCS plan and bounded on the east and west by the same boundaries as the above interdiction zone. Operations in this latter area were to be against "identified, highly lucrative" targets posing a "substantial" threat to allied forces. Mr. Laird confirmed the authority for air reconnaissance over all of Cambodia, approved armed escort and flak suppression for reconnaissance in the first interdiction area defined above, and authorized search and rescue operations over all of Cambodia. These authorities, he specified, were effective from 30 June until 1 November 1970.[66]

During the Cambodian invasion, US officials had considered and planned various other activities in Cambodia for the period following the withdrawal of US troops. One such activity was SALEM HOUSE Operations, the program of clandestine intelligence collection in Cambodia relying on South Vietnamese personnel led by US Special Forces. On 20 May the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Moorer, proposed to the Secretary of Defense a plan to continue SALEM HOUSE in Cambodia after 30 June. Secretary Laird concurred, but with the stipulation that the operations, including air transport and support, be manned entirely by South Vietnamese.[67]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned that the elimination of US participation from SALEM HOUSE operations would

66. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Air Interdiction in Cambodia subsequent to 30 June 1970," 29 Jun 70, same file.

67. (TS-GP 1) CM-5199-70 to SecDef, 20 May 70; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Outline Plan for SALEM HOUSE Operations (C)," 21 May 70; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 15-30 May 70.

greatly reduce the effectiveness of the program, and Admiral Moorer again raised the issue with the Secretary of Defense on 16 June. The South Vietnamese, he said, did not currently have the capability to assume the program. Admiral Moorer recognized the political implications involved, but believed that careful targeting of operations against areas of high enemy density and low civilian Cambodian population could avoid press or diplomatic repercussions. Therefore, he strongly recommended continued use of US personnel and air assets in SALEM HOUSE operations after 30 June.[68]

Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard, however, disapproved Admiral Moorer's request. In providing planning guidance on 20 June, he stated that the permanent withdrawal of all US forces from Cambodia by 30 June included SALEM HOUSE team leaders. Admiral Moorer was reluctant to accept this decision and again appealed to the Secretary of Defense on 25 June. He recognized the domestic and foreign political aspects of the situation, but wanted it clearly understood that removal of US personnel and air support from the SALEM HOUSE program would degrade both the quantity and quality of intelligence collection in Cambodia. He requested continued employment of US-led teams and US troop-lift helicopter gunships throughout the entire SALEM HOUSE area of operations. As an absolute minimum, Admiral Moorer said, use of helicopters was required to have an effective program.[69]

Secretary Laird replied on 29 June that, although he shared the concern over the possible effect on intelligence gathering, he could not concur in the use of US personnel in SALEM HOUSE after 30 June. "Any hedging of the US withdrawal from Cambodia as stated by the President," he said, "will surely be revealed." He did authorize US tactical air and helicopter support of SALEM HOUSE operations when such support was "clearly" beyond the South Vietnamese capability. In addition, he asked to be advised if the operations conducted under these limitations did result in a serious degradation of intelligence capabilities.[70]

68. (TS-GP 1) CM-5266-70 to SecDef, 16 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 16-23 Jun 70.

69. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Planning," 20 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/621-2, 22 Jun 70, JMF 907/501 (15 May 70). (TS-GP 1) CM-5347-70 to SecDef, 25 Jun 70, JMF 880/320 (6 Jun 69).

70. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SALEM HOUSE Operations," 29 Jun 70, same file.

The resumption of psychological warfare activities in Cambodia following the departure of US forces on 30 June also received attention. The United States had carried out a program of leaflet drops in Cambodia for several years, under the nickname CAMEL PATH,[71] but these operations were suspended when US troops entered Cambodia on 1 May 1970. With the approach of the deadline for the removal of US troops, Deputy Ambassador Samuel D. Berger in Saigon recommended the reinstitution of psychological operations. He proposed a program of leaflet drops and loudspeaker operations throughout Cambodia. The program would be developed jointly by the US Embassy in Saigon and COMUSMACV and carried out by COMUSMACV after coordination with the US Chargé in Phnom Penh.[72]

Ambassador Berger's proposal was reviewed in Washington and approved. On 27 June, a joint State/Defense/USIA message to Saigon, Phnom Penh, and CINCPAC authorized aerial psychological missions in all of eastern Cambodia from the Laos border to the Gulf of Thailand. Requests for operations beyond the approved area would be considered in Washington on an individual basis.[73]

To aid Cambodia after the withdrawal of US troops, the United States also decided to furnish radio broadcast assistance. The Washington Special Actions Group approved this assistance on 17 June 1970, directing aerial rebroadcast of taped Radio Cambodia programs using US Navy EC-121 (PROJECT JENNY) aircraft. In accord with the WSAG decision, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Chief of Naval Operations on 23 June to deploy the required planes for the broadcast operations.[74]

Possible Use of Thai Forces in Cambodia

During the course of the Cambodian invasion, the United States considered the use of Thai forces in Cambodia both to assist the allied base area attacks and to aid the

71. See Ch. 7, p. 236.
72. (TS) Msg, Saigon 9843 to State, 22 Jun 70, JCS IN 71609, JMF 880/321 (7 Apr 70).
73. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Joint State/Def/USIA to Phnom Penh, Saigon, and CINCPAC, 27 Jun 70, JCS IN 81856.
74. (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 3221 to CNO, 23 Jun 70 (derived from JCS 2344/67), JMF 880/632 (19 Jun 70). (S-GP 3) Revised Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "JCS 2366/41 - Aerial Rebroadcast Assistance to Radio Cambodia (U)," 23 Nov 70, JMF 880/312 (5 Jul 70).

Government of Cambodia. Such action had two potential advantages. The employment of Thai troops to assist the Cambodians could be presented as fulfilling President Nixon's doctrine that US allies in endangered areas should increasingly supply the manpower for their own defense. Moreover, Thai operations in Cambodia would reduce direct US military expenditures there. Such a reduction might make it unnecessary to seek additional defense appropriations from the Congress, where strong resistance to further expenditures for the Cambodian operations could be expected. Ultimately, the United States would pay for the Thai troops in Cambodia, but the funding would be through the Military Assistance Program for Thailand rather than direct appropriations for the Cambodian attacks.

During June, two proposals for sending Thai forces into Cambodia were under study in Washington. The first called for the deployment of two Thai Khmer regiments, totaling approximately 4,000 men, to western Cambodia. These Thai troops would be charged with securing rail and road routes leading to Phnom Penh and providing area security in the western provinces. The second proposal envisioned sending a Black Panther division to the sanctuaries along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border to carry out operations similar to the RVNAF actions in those areas.[75]

The US Ambassador in Thailand, Mr. Leonard Unger, favored the proposals, believing it "very important politically" to have a Thai military presence in Cambodia. General Abrams, however, was opposed. The formal agreement between the United States and Thailand governing US support for Thai forces in Vietnam, he pointed out, would require provision of combat and service support, as well as medical evacuation, for the Thai troops in Cambodia. To provide such support after 30 June, he believed, would be contrary to the instructions already set forth by the President. Ambassador Bunker supported General Abrams' position, stating that they both had serious reservations concerning the "feasibility" of achieving effective use of Thai forces in Cambodia.[76]

75. (TS) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 8150 to CINCPAC, 10 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1-15 Jun 70.

76. (S-GP 1) Msg, Bangkok 700 to State, 6 Jun 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 7582 to CJCS, 4 Jun 70; (S-GP 1) Msg, Saigon 033 to State, 5 Jun 70; same file.

Consideration of the proposals continued in Washington throughout June, but no agreement was reached within the US Government or between the United States and Thailand. The principal obstacle was the inability of the two governments to agree on the amount of assistance that the United States would furnish Thailand to cover the cost of sending the force into Cambodia. Consequently, Thailand sent no personnel to Cambodia although it did give limited material assistance, consisting of eating utensils, clothing, and medical supplies. As discussed below,[77] Thailand also conducted some air strikes in Cambodia after the withdrawal of US forces.[78]

Another proposal considered by US officials in Washington during June was the positioning of Thai and Republic of Korea troops already in South Vietnam along the border to assist the RVNAF in cross-border attacks into Cambodia after 30 June. General Abrams opposed this proposal also; he believed that both contingents could contribute more effectively by their participation in ongoing operations in South Vietnam, thereby relieving RVNAF units for deployment to the border areas. In addition, he doubted that either force could undertake cross-border operations without substantial US helicopter and tactical close air support, which he could not provide. Admiral McCain concurred with General Abrams and there was no further action on the proposal.[79]

The End of the Invasion

Even as the US policymakers in Washington planned for the termination of the Cambodian invasion and for the period immediately thereafter, US and RVNAF operations in Cambodia drew to a close. (See Table VII) The US attack on Base Area 354 (TOAN THANG 44) and the combined US-South Vietnamese action

77. See below, pp. 309-310.

78. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, Actg CJCS (Moorer) 9207 to CINCPAC, 26 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 24 Jun- 2 Jul 70. (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 9732 to CINCPAC, 10 Jul 70, same file, Jul 70. (~~S~~) Memo, ASD(ISA) to DSecDef, "Thai Forces in Western Cambodia," 20 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 24 Jun-2 Jul 70. (~~S~~-GP 1) Rpt to Thai Cabinet by Thai Mission to Cambodia, 4 Jun 70, Att to Memo, DDir for Plans, CIA to Dr. Kissinger et al., 5 Jun 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1-15 Jun 70.

79. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 7906 to Actg CJCS, 12 Jun 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC 130435Z Jun 70 to Actg CJCS; OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, 1-15 Jun 70.

against Base Area 702 (BINH TAY I) were both completed by the end of May, and major fighting in Cambodia was over in early June. Thereafter US units began a gradual return to South Vietnam while remaining forces concentrated on finding and removing enemy caches. The US withdrawal from Base Areas 352 and 353 (Operation TOAN THANG 43, the initial US thrust into Cambodia) started on 10 June and was finished by 19 June; the RVNAF exit from those areas was complete by 25 June. Both tactical and B-52 strikes continued in an intensive effort to destroy enemy personnel, facilities, and supplies remaining in the area.

In Operation TOAN THANG 45, the US attack into Base Area 351, the evacuation began on 20 June and was finished nine days later. On 29 June, all US advisers and other US support personnel were removed from Operation TOAN THANG 42 in the Parrot's Beak area, although the RVNAF continued the operation until 22 July. Since no US ground troops had participated in Operation TOAN THANG 42, the removal of these US advisers completed the US withdrawal from Cambodia, and President Nixon's commitment to be out by the end of June was fulfilled with one day to spare. United States casualties for the entire operation amounted to 284 killed, 2,339 wounded, 29 captured, and 13 missing.[80]

As the fighting subsided in Cambodia, so did the public outcry in the United States against the incursion. The protest against the invasion reached the high point in the Washington demonstration on 9 May and gradually dwindled thereafter. Public attention turned in the meantime to the Senate debate on the Cooper-Church amendment[81] to prohibit the President from using congressionally approved funds for military operations in Cambodia. The Administration opposed the amendment, viewing it as an unconstitutional restraint on the powers of the President as Commander in Chief. In an effort at compromise, Senators Cooper and Church offered a revision to the amendment making explicit that no funds would be cut off until 1 July 1970, the date by which the President had pledged that all US forces would be out of Cambodia. The debate continued, however, and it was not until 30 June,

80. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. C-51, C-57 - C-97.

81. See above, p. 267.

after all US forces had departed Cambodia, that the Senate adopted the Cooper-Church amendment by a vote of 58-37.[82]

On the same day, President Nixon announced the successful completion of the Cambodian operation and the withdrawal of all US forces from that country. In a televised address, he told the American people that the US and South Vietnamese sweeps into the border areas of Cambodia had destroyed enemy bases, thereby saving allied lives in the future, assuring continued US troop withdrawals from South Vietnam, and ensuring continued progress in the Vietnamization program. Thirty-two thousand US and 48,000 South Vietnamese forces, he reported, had participated in major operations against the "most significant" enemy base areas in Cambodia, but now all US forces, including logistics personnel and advisers, as well as a majority of the South Vietnamese troops, had returned to South Vietnam. He stressed the limited nature of the Cambodian action. United States ground forces had "scrupulously" avoided penetrating beyond a 21-mile limit, even though this self-imposed restriction "may have cost us some military advantages."

In highlighting the results of the operations, the President reported the capture of: 22,892 individual weapons and 2,509 "big crew-served" weapons; more than 15 million rounds of ammunition, or about what the enemy had fired in South Vietnam during the previous year; 14 million pounds of rice, sufficient to feed all the enemy combat battalions estimated to be in South Vietnam for about four months; 143,000 rounds of rocket, mortar, and recoilless rifle ammunition, equivalent to the amount used by the enemy in South Vietnam during a 14-month period; and 199,522 anti-aircraft rounds, 5,482 mines, 62,022 grenades, and 83,000 rounds of explosives. In addition, the US and South Vietnamese forces had captured 435 vehicles and destroyed over 11,688 bunkers and other military structures.

President Nixon then discussed the prospects for future US and allied action in Cambodia. There would be no US ground personnel in Cambodia, except for those regularly assigned to the US Embassy in Phnom Penh, nor would there be any US advisers with Cambodian units. The United States would, however, turn over material captured in the base area

82. NY Times, 12 May 70, 1; 16 May 70, 1; 27 May 70, 1; 4 June 70, 1; 12 Jun 70, 1; 27 Jun 70, 4; 1 Jul 70, 1.

attacks to the Cambodian Government, provide military assistance to Cambodia in the form of small arms and other relatively unsophisticated equipment, and conduct air interdiction missions against enemy troop and supply buildups in Cambodia that threatened forces in South Vietnam. Such air operations would proceed with the approval of the Cambodian Government. In addition, the United States would encourage other countries of the region to give both diplomatic and military support for the maintenance of Cambodian independence and neutrality. The Republic of Vietnam also planned to help, the President said. The RVNAF remained ready to prevent the rebuilding of enemy base areas in Cambodia along the South Vietnamese border. Such operations would be launched from South Vietnam, but there would be no US logistic or air support and no US advisers in these operations. President Nixon assured the US public that the Saigon government's primary objective remained Vietnamization. Consequently, the majority of the South Vietnamese forces would leave Cambodia and any future RVNAF operations there would be consistent with the goal of a successful Vietnamization program.[83]

In an interview the following day with representatives of the three major television networks, President Nixon reiterated that he had no intention of sending US ground forces or advisers back into Cambodia. "We have plans," he said, "only to maintain the rather limited diplomatic establishment that we have in Phnom Penh and I see nothing that will change that at this time." In response to a question about the extent of US commitment to preserving the current government in Cambodia, Mr. Nixon answered that the only commitment was the traditional US policy "that a country that chooses to be neutral should have its neutrality respected." To that end, the United States was furnishing the Cambodians small arms for their own defense and giving them moral support.[84]

United States Actions and Policy After the Invasion

. President Nixon had announced in his 3 June speech and reaffirmed in his 30 June report that the United States would

83. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 529-541.
84. Ibid., pp. 543-559.

continue air operations in Cambodia after 1 July 1970 against targets threatening operations and troops in South Vietnam. A plan had been approved by the Secretary of Defense on 29 June,[85] and the operations began on 1 July. The Secretary had delineated an area for US air interdiction in Cambodia enclosed generally by the Laos border on the north, Route 13 on the south, the Mekong River on the west, and the South Vietnam border on the east. He also approved "selective" tactical and B-52 interdiction in a strip south of this area to a line following Routes 7 and 78 from the Mekong River to the South Vietnam border. Operations in the first area were designated FREEDOM DEAL while those in the lower area were called FREEDOM DEAL EXTENSION. In addition, the United States after 1 July conducted reconnaissance over all of Cambodia as well as search and rescue operations to recover downed US air crews. The United States also carried out search and rescue for Vietnamese air crews downed in Cambodia when such operations were considered beyond VNAF capabilities.[86]

On 30 July 1970, COMUSMACV reported significant enemy buildup, consisting of both troop concentrations and supply caches, in Cambodia below the FREEDOM DEAL EXTENSION area. He requested, and Washington approved on 1 August, an expansion of the FREEDOM DEAL EXTENSION 50 miles southward. (The added FREEDOM DEAL EXTENTION territory included the area bounded by Route 7 on the north, the South Vietnam border on the east, Routes 75, 155, 1543, and the Prek Kampong Spean River on the west, and then south to the Vietnam border.) On 25 August 1970, the FREEDOM DEAL area was extended approximately 74 miles to the west to allow attack on additional enemy troop and supply targets beyond the Mekong River; CINCPAC designated this western extension FREEDOM DEAL ALPHA. United States air operations in all three FREEDOM DEAL areas continued throughout the remainder of 1970 and into 1971.[87]

In addition to the US air activity in Cambodia, Thailand also conducted limited tactical air operations there during

85. See above, pp. 300-301.
86. (S-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1970, II, p. 179.
87. Ibid., II, pp. 179-180. (S-GP 3) DJSM-1294-70 to CJCS, 4 Sep 70, JMF 880/323 (22 Jun 70). (U) DOD Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos, 10 Sep 73, p. 23.

the latter half of 1970. At the request of the Cambodian Government, the Royal Thai Air Force began these strikes on 4 July 1970 and flew a total of 353 sorties in Cambodia during the remainder of the year. The United States encouraged and supported these Thai operations by selling Thailand air munitions on a cash basis through the Foreign Military Sales Program, offsetting the Thai foreign exchange costs by an increase in economic assistance.[88]

To guide future US decisions and actions regarding Cambodia, President Nixon directed two interdepartmental studies. In early June, he established an ad hoc group, composed of representatives of the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence, to assess short-term US policy alternatives in Indochina "with particular emphasis on the implications of the Cambodian situation." The study group report, circulated by the NSC staff on 6 July, assumed that the North Vietnamese intention in Cambodia was to test the viability of the Lon Nol Government. It assessed a number of policy issues and alternatives, including US military actions in Cambodia after 30 June and levels of US military and economic assistance for Cambodia. The study did not, however, present any conclusions or recommended courses of action. In distributing the report, the Director of the NSC Secretariat said that it would be discussed by the Special Review Group "at a time to be determined," but available records do not reveal any evidence of further action on the report.[89]

Six weeks later, on 17 August 1970, the President directed the preparation of alternative short-range military strategies for Cambodia. Consideration of these strategies was to be the initial step of a comprehensive review of policy for Southeast Asia covering the next five years. The entire study would be conducted by the NSC Special Review Group for Southeast Asia, with specialized panels dealing with diplomatic and military strategy options, special interests, and

88. (TS-GP 3) USMACTHAI/JUSMACTHAI Command History Supplement, 1970, p. 1.

89. (TS-GP 3) NSSM 95 to SecState, SecDef, and DCI, 6 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2339/322-1, 11 Jun 70, JMF 907/530 (25 May 70) sec 1. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dir, NSC Secretariat to DSecDef, USecState, CJCS, and DCI, "U.S. Policy Objectives in Indochina: NSSM 95," 6 Jul 70, Att to JCS 2339/322-4, 8 Jul 70, same file, sec 2.

military and economic assistance. Each panel included representatives from the appropriate departments and agencies, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[90]

On 27 August the Secretary of Defense provided guidance for the DOD participants in the interdepartmental study. With respect to Cambodia, he directed that the strategic objectives of any operations there should "facilitate and speed up" Vietnamization, allow accelerated US troop redeployment from South Vietnam, and reduce US combat casualties. Any plans for US support to Cambodia or attempts to influence strategy there, the Secretary said, should limit direct US military assistance to existing authorities and exclude any US ground operations. In addition, such plans should enhance the survival of the Government of Cambodia, concentrate on controlling essential territory, and emphasize political-military activities that would limit the level of violence and help retain the support of the population for the Cambodian Government. The purpose of US air activity in Cambodia, the Secretary added, was to protect US forces in South Vietnam and to interdict the resupply of enemy troops threatening US units in Vietnam. Concerning South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia, Mr. Laird reaffirmed earlier guidance: RVNAF actions must be governed by specific ground rules limiting depth of penetration, size of force, and frequency of attack, and should not risk a serious ARVN defeat; US support would be provided only for those operations consistent with US objectives; and RVNAF attacks must be consistent with the goals of Vietnamization.[91]

The interdepartmental planners proceeded with their Cambodian review and presented their final report to the NSC Senior Review Group on 16 October 1970. They listed three alternatives: a minimum resources strategy, with restricted US assistance and with RVNAF action limited generally to cross-border operations to pre-empt enemy attacks in South Vietnam; a limited resources strategy, with increasing US assistance to improve the capabilities of the Cambodian

90. (~~TS~~-GP 1) NSSM 99 to SecState, SecDef, and DCI, 17 Aug 70, Att to JCS 2339/327, 18 Aug 70, JMF 907/520 (17 Aug 70) sec 1.

91. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to ASD(ISA), "Southeast Asian Strategy Alternatives," 27 Aug 70, Encl to Att to JCS 2339/327-1, 2 Sep 70, same file.

Government and its forces and with RVNAF operations providing occasional support to the FANK; and a strategy for a more determined effort to sustain the Cambodian Government and improve its forces through increased US aid, coupled with stronger emphasis in RVNAF operations on assisting the FANK in holding Cambodian territory against the enemy. The third strategy had three variants with respect to the amount of territory to be protected, ranging from roughly one-fifth of Cambodia under the first and least costly to one-half of the country (the area currently controlled by the Cambodia Government) for the third and most expensive. President Nixon approved on 26 October the third variant. Consequently, the United States would provide military and economic assistance to the Government of Cambodia and encourage RVNAF action in Cambodia, both to assist the FANK and to protect US and RVNAF units in South Vietnam, but no US forces would be employed in Cambodia.[92]

In reality, the President's decision merely made formal the existing situation, for the United States had already been giving Cambodia limited military aid even though it had no regular military assistance program for that country. In late April 1970, just before the invasion, the United States had supplied the Cambodian forces with captured enemy weapons and munitions from stock accumulated in South Vietnam[93]; in May and June the United States provided emergency aid to the Cambodian Government in the form of small arms, ammunition, uniforms, medical supplies, and radios, totaling $8.9 million in value. Funds for this assistance were diverted from other country programs in the FY 1970 MAP. July brought a marked increase in US military assistance for Cambodia when $40 million was allocated for that purpose on 23 July. Most of this aid consisted of small arms and ammunition, trucks and jeeps, and other basic items. The Republic of Vietnam supplemented the US program with a series of eight-week

92. (TS-GP 1) NSC Report, "US Strategy Options for Cambodia," 15 Oct 70, Att to JCS 2339/327-6, 16 Oct 70, same file, sec 3. (TS-GP 1) TP for DSecDef and CJCS, "NSSM 99--US Strategy for Southeast Asia (U)," 14 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2339/327-8, 16 Dec 70, same file, sec 4. (TS) Extracts of NSDM 89 to SecState, SecDef, et al., 26 Oct 70, JMF 001 (CY 1970) NSDM, sec 3.

93. See Ch. 7, pp. 241-245.

training courses for new Cambodian troops, and VNAF C-119 flying boxcars made daily deliveries of ammunition and other equipment to Cambodia. These shipments included some 10,000 Chinese-made AK-47 rifles captured during the allied invasion. The United States did not give Cambodia any of its own M-16 rifles since the AK-47 was the basic weapon of the Cambodian army. In accord with President Nixon's desire for other Southeast Asian nations to help Cambodia, Thailand also initiated training programs for 20 Cambdian light infantry companies and a dozen Cambodian pilots. This training began in September 1970 and was conducted at no cost to the United States.[94]

On 23 October 1970, President Nixon approved another $50 million to assist the Cambodian forces. There was still, however, no congressionally-approved military assistance program for Cambodia, and the $90 million provided that country since July was diverted from other areas within the overall FY 1971 MAP. At the time of the October allocation, the Departments of State and Defense had recommended a figure of $60 million, but the President approved only $50 million. He did not want to exceed a total of $100 million, the overall limitation on military assistance to countries for which no specific program had been presented to Congress.[95]

On 18 November, President Nixon presented Congress a request for supplemental foreign assistance funds for FY 1971, including $255 million for Cambodia to cover the increased assistance for that country implicit in his 26 October policy decision. He explained that he had already transferred $100 million from other vital programs, such as those for Greece, Turkey, and Taiwan, in order to give military assistance to

94. NY Times, 8 Jul 70, 1. Dept of State Bulletin, 28 Sep 70, pp. 356-360. Kirk, Wider War, p. 130. (S-GP 3) COMUSMACTHAI Command History, 1970, p. 132.

95. NY Times, 19 Nov 70, 11. (S-GP 3) Memo, Actg SecState (U. Alexis Johnson) to Pres, "Determination and Authorization to Furnish an Additional $50 Million of Military Assistance to Cambodia," 21 Oct 70, Encl to Att to JCS 2366/40, 2 Nov 70; (S-GP 3) Presidential Determination No. 71-5, 23 Oct 70, Att to JCS 2366/40, 2 Nov 70; (S-GP 3)Memo, Spiers to SecState, "Presidential Determination on Military Assistance to Cambodia," n.d. (Att to Presidential Determination No. 71-7, 11 Feb 71), Encl to Att to JCS 2366/47, 22 Feb 71; JMF 880/497 (21 Oct 70).

Cambodia, and he wanted to restore these funds to their original programs.[96] He also asked for $155 million in new funds for Cambodia. Of this figure, $70 million would be for economic support and $85 million for military assistance. Seventy percent of the military aid would be used for ammunition. To justify his request, the President cited the growth of the Cambodian forces from some 40,000 men in April 1970 to the current 150,000. It was essential, he told the Congress, to supplement Cambodia's own efforts by providing the resources needed to allow that country to defend itself. Additionally, this assistance to Cambodia would promote continued success of the Vietnamization program in South Vietnam. Congress approved the President's supplemental request, including the $255 million for Cambodia, on 22 December 1970, but with a restriction prohibiting the President from using any of the funds to introduce ground combat troops or military advisers into Cambodia. There was also a stipulation that the military aid program did not constitute a defense commitment to the Cambodian Government.[97]

The growing US military assistance to Cambodia necessitated an expanded organization to administer the program. On 25 July 1970 CINCPAC had requested the establishment of a military equipment delivery team in Phnom Penh composed of four US military officers and three enlisted men. The team would oversee the US military assistance program for Cambodia, providing "expeditious and orderly" distribution of assets and determination of requirements. Admiral Moorer endorsed the CINCPAC request, recommending that the Secretary of Defense secure Department of State concurrence, but on 4 August, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard turned down the proposal. As an alternative, he approved the immediate augmentation of the US Defense Attaché Office in Phnom Penh with one officer and one enlisted man for military assistance duties.[98]

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96. In subsequent congressional testimony the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Marshall Green, explained that, of this $100 million, $90 million had already been transferred and $10 million was "likely to be transferred."

97. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 1074-1079. Dept of State Bulletin, 21 Dec 70, pp. 756-762. NY Times, 23 Dec 70, 1.

98. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 250300Z Jul 70, JCS IN 33284; (TS-GP 1) CM-77-70 to SecDef, 25 Jul 70; (TS-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Cambodia MAP," 4 Aug 70; JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

This disposition of the matter occurred during the same month, August 1970, in which the United States and Cambodia raised their diplomatic representatives to the ambassadorial level.[99] For several months thereafter the Political/Military Counselor of the US Embassy in Phnom Penh handled military assistance matters as a special representative of CINCPAC, but under the control of the Ambassador. The Counselor was assisted by six military personnel and by other Embassy staff members as needed. In addition, about 50 US military personnel in South Vietnam supported the Cambodian military assistance program.[100]

The increase in military assistance for Cambodia during the fall of 1970, as well as the President's request to Congress in November 1970 for still further military aid increases, made it essential, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, to provide a military element in Cambodia to supervise the delivery of military supplies. They informed the Secretary of Defense of their concern on 23 December 1970. They were aware that the US Ambassador in Phnom Penh felt that "only a few additional people" were needed and they understood the desirability of a low US profile in Cambodia. Nonetheless they considered that the "magnitude" of the program and the statutory responsibilities of the Secretary of Defense in administering military assistance required a larger establishment to insure adequate supervision. Accordingly, they recommended the immediate creation of a US Military Equipment Delivery Team (MEDT) for Cambodia of 110 personnel to manage, control, and coordinate military assistance. Such a team would be headed by a US Army brigadier general, under the military command of CINCPAC. Initial location of the team, with the exception of those personnel already in Cambodia, would be in South Vietnam. Deployment of essential portions of the team to Cambodia would be coordinated with the Department of State and conducted as quickly as possible.[101]

99. (U) Interv, Willard J. Webb with Mr. Andrew Antippus, Cambodia Desk, Dept of State, 23 Oct 73.

100. (~~TS~~-GP 3) App A to JCSM-579-70 to SecDef, 23 Dec 70, Encl A to JCS 2366/44, 11 Dec 70; (~~S~~) Msg, Joint State/Def (State 166459) to Phnom Penh and CINCPAC, 8 Oct 70, JCS IN 67684; JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

101. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-579-70 to SecDef, 23 Dec 70, Encl A to JCS 2366/44, 11 Dec 70, same file.

Secretary Laird approved on 28 December a Military Equipment Delivery Team for Cambodia, but with a strength of not more than 60 US personnel. He conceded that experience might demonstrate the need for further personnel, but he had set the manning level at 60, rather than the 110 recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in order to conform with the President's desire for a low US profile in Cambodia. The Secretary further specified that no more than ten of the 60 personnel might be initially assigned in Cambodia, but he did authorize temporary duty travel to Cambodia for those assigned in South Vietnam as required, subject to coordination with the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission to Cambodia.[102]

The Situation at the Year's End

The situation in Cambodia and the relation of the country to the war in South Vietnam were uncertain at the close of 1970. President Nixon considered the allied invasion of Cambodia during May and June a success, and so it was in the near term. The allied forces had destroyed the enemy's Cambodian sanctuaries, which had supported the war across the border in the lower half of South Vietnam, and had captured extensive quantities of enemy weapons, ammunition, and food. The Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated that it would take the enemy at least six to nine months to rebuild bases and lines of communication and to replenish stockpiles. Thus the Cambodian incursion brought reduced enemy action in South Vietnam during the latter half of 1970. This decrease, in turn, resulted in lower US and South Vietnamese casualties and allowed further time for the RVNAF to prepare for the combat role in South Vietnam and the departure of US forces.

But the longer term results of the Cambodian invasion were more questionable. When the US and RVN forces invaded the Cambodian border areas, the enemy avoided contact, falling back deeper into Cambodia and occupying areas theretofore free of enemy control. At the end of May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had told the Secretary of Defense that the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had established control of "most of Cambodia east of the Mekong River and north of Highway 7"; at the conclusion of the invasion on 30 June,

102. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Cambodian Military Equipment Delivery Team (MEDT)," 28 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2366/44-1, 30 Dec 70, same file.

COMUSMACV estimated that the enemy controlled a third of the country. The expansion in enemy occupation of Cambodian territory not only increased the danger to the already fragile Government of Cambodia, but it also permitted the enemy added room for maneuver that favored his efforts to restore infiltration routes and rebuild stocks of supplies.[103]

The allied invasion of Cambodia and the accompanying spread of enemy control also wrecked the Cambodian economy. In early 1970, Cambodian officials had predicted a record rice harvest for the year and the export of 450,000 metric tons, giving Cambodia an overall favorable trade balance for the first time since 1965. Rubber production was expected to increase, adding to the favorable balance. But the invasion and spreading enemy occupation led to a precipitous drop in rice production, besides cutting off Phnom Penh from the main rice growing areas. It was doubtful as 1970 closed that Cambodia could feed itself in the coming year without importing rice. Rubber production fell sharply, too, as the plantations and processing plants were overrun and destroyed by both enemy and allied troops during the invasion. Whereas Cambodia exported 14,128 metric tons of rubber in the first four months of 1970, total rubber exports for the entire year amounted to only 18,426 metric tons. Inflation rates soared in Cambodia. The country verged on both economic and military collapse, and the Lon Nol Government became increasingly dependent on foreign assistance for its survival.[104]

The enemy had two objectives in Cambodia during the second half of 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed. The first was to reestablish and retain lines of communication and base areas in order to mount and support operations both in South Vietnam and in the rest of Cambodia; the second was to apply sufficient military and psychological pressure against the Cambodian population to cause the downfall of the current government and replace it with a Communist regime or one more amenable to the Communist policy in Southeast Asia. To carry out these aims, the

103. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-261-70 to SecDef, 28 May 70, Encl to JCS 2472/621-1, 25 May 70, JMF 907/511 (15 May 70) sec 1. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. C-25.
104. Kirk, Wider War, p. 131.

enemy had in Cambodia at the end of 1970 a force estimated at between 50,000 and 60,000 men, of whom 20,000 to 25,000 were combat personnel. Additionally, there were about 5,000 to 10,000 Khmer Rouge troops cooperating with the enemy.[105]

How effective these forces would be in attaining the enemy objectives remained to be seen. United States officials in Washington did not believe that there was an immediate danger to the Lon Nol Government, but neither did they see a quick resolution of the situation in Cambodia. In the course of the strategy review for Cambodia during September and October 1970, the panel dealing with diplomatic options had concluded that there was little likelihood of a permanent solution in Cambodia in the absence of a basic settlement in Vietnam. Both the United States and North Vietnam would continue to be concerned about Cambodia, the panel said, primarily as it related to the war in South Vietnam. In any event, the United States planned to assist the Lon Nol Government in 1971 through continued air interdiction in the northeastern part of the country and with the provision of both economic and military assistance.[106]

105. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-420-70 to SecDef, 27 Aug 70, App to JCS 2366/38-1, 26 Aug 70, JMF 880 (25 Aug 70). (TS) Assessment of Cambodian Military Situation, Att to DJSM-1866-70 to CJCS, 15 Dec 70, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Dec 70.

106. (S) Paper Prepared by Diplomatic Options Panel, "Political Considerations Involved in Short Range Military Strategies for Cambodia," 3 Sep 70, JMF 907/420 (17 Aug 70) sec 1. (TS) Extracts of NSDM 89 to SecState, SecDef, et al., 26 Oct 70, JMF 001 (CY 1970) NSDMs, sec 3.

TABLE VII

Cambodian Base Area Operations
29 April-30 June 1970

Operation	Date Initiated - Terminated	Area of Operation
TOAN THANG 42	24 Apr-22 Jul (US advisers and supporting forces withdrawn 29 Jun)	Parrot's Beak, Base Areas 367/406
TOAN THANG 43	1 May-19 Jun	Fishhook, Base Areas 352/353
TOAN THANG 44	6-14 May	Base Area 354
TOAN THANG 45	6 May-29 Jun	Base Area 351
TOAN THANG 46	6 May-30 Jun	Base Area 350
BINH TAY I	5-25 May	Base Area 702
BINH TAY II	14-27 May	Base Area 701
BINH TAY III	20 May-27 Jun	Base Area 740
CUU LONG I	9 May- 1 Jul	Mekong River, Base Area 704/709
CUU LONG II	17-24 May	Mekong Area
CUU LONG III	24-30 May	Mekong Area

Chapter 9

THE WAR IN VIETNAM, 1970

The expansion of US and RVNAF ground operations into the border areas of Cambodia in May and June was the most dramatic action of 1970. Despite that high point of activity, however, the year as a whole saw a marked decline in US combat operations in South Vietnam. President Nixon continued to seek an end to US involvement in Vietnam, either through negotiations or by transferring the burden of combat to the South Vietnamese. Since negotiations brought no success, the United States proceeded with Vietnamization--strengthening the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces while simultaneously withdrawing US forces. In addition, there was continued pressure for reduction of US casualties, accompanied by strict limitation of US funds available for Vietnam. It was within these parameters that COMUSMACV conducted operations in Vietnam during 1970.

In accordance with the President's wishes, General Abrams concentrated in 1970 on making Vietnamization succeed. United States combat operations were reduced while RVNAF actions expanded. As US ground units redeployed during the year, more reliance was placed on US reconnaissance, artillery, tactical air, and B-52 resources. Remaining US forces increasingly shifted their effort to support of the RVNAF, equipping and training the RVNAF, providing territorial security, and assisting in pacification.

Enemy operations also declined in 1970. After the large-scale actions of 1968 and early 1969, North Vietnam had placed increased emphasis on guerrilla warfare and had resorted to economy-of-force tactics in the latter part of 1969. These tactics were continued in 1970. The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army concentrated on rebuilding base areas and on efforts to strengthen their guerrilla and political structures. North Vietnam's chief objective was to bring about the failure of the RVN pacification program, and Regional and Popular Force outposts and positions were the main enemy targets.

The Search for a Strategy

President Nixon established the broad strategy for Vietnam for 1970 in February in his report to the Congress on foreign

policy. He reiterated that the US goal in Vietnam had been and remained "a just peace." To achieve this end, he was pursuing "two distinct but mutually supporting courses of action"--negotiations and Vietnamization. After reviewing the lack of progress in the first of these courses, he turned to the second. "Our task is to continue to proceed carefully in the policy of Vietnamization, and to find the means which will best support our purpose of helping the South Vietnamese to strengthen themselves." He said that US forces would continue to be withdrawn in accordance with an orderly schedule based on three criteria: level of enemy activity, progress in the negotiations, and the increasing ability of the Republic of Vietnam to defend itself.[1]

United States military strategy in South Vietnam in 1970 remained unchanged from what it had been in the latter half of the preceding year, and COMUSMACV continued to operate under the statement of mission issued by the Secretary of Defense on 15 August 1969.[2] But, in 1970, General Abrams and his commanders had to accomplish their tasks with reduced resources.[3]

Not only was the withdrawal of US forces continuing, but funds for the war in Southeast Asia came under unyielding limitations. President Nixon had reduced the US defense budget, and all military programs, including funds for the Vietnam war, felt the pinch. Throughout 1970 both public and congressional opinion opposed any increase in expenditures for Vietnam. In approving Phase III of the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program on 13 March 1970, the Secretary of Defense told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was "most unlikely" that Congress would appropriate added FY 1970 or 1971 funds for the Vietnam war. All funding for Vietnam, the Secretary directed, must be met from within existing and foreseeable DOD budget ceilings. When recommended levels of activity could not be met within the approved fiscal guidance and budget decisions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were to identify appropriate trade offs.

1. Presidential Message to Congress, "United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace," 18 Feb 70, Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 115-190.

2. See Ch. 3.

3. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Statement of Mission of United States Forces in Southeast Asia," 15 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2339/306-3, 18 Aug 69, JMF 911/305 (28 Jul 69).

Later in March the Secretary issued fiscal and logistic planning guidance for Southeast Asia for FY 1972-1976, which confirmed the strict budget limitations.[4]

As described earlier, the US-RVNAF invasion of Cambodia, launched on 1 May 1970, aroused an immediate public outcry in the United States. On 15 May the Secretary of Defense instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to submit plans for ending US operations in Cambodia by 30 June 1970. He stressed that the period after termination of that campaign would be a "critical time in which the strategic value of the Cambodian operations must be demonstrated." The clearest evidence would be provided by marked progress in pacification and security within South Vietnam, accompanied by uninterrupted withdrawal of US forces. The Secretary directed the preparation of plans designed to accomplish these results in the post-Cambodian period, with particular attention to eliciting "more positive and progressive field operations" by the RVNAF within South Vietnam.[5]

On 28 May the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted to the Secretary of Defense their plans for concluding the action in Cambodia and for the conduct of operations after 1 July 1970.[6] The post-July plan turned less on new measures and programs than on intensification of effort in existing ones. It called for acceleration of Vietnamization and pacification, military operations to reduce the enemy infiltration of men and supplies, and opposition to the enemy's effort to

4. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization--Consolidated Improvement and Modernization (I&M) Program and Related US Planning (U)," 13 Mar 70, Att to JCS 2472/522-15, 14 Mar 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 4. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to Secys of Mil Depts, CJCS, and Dirs of DOD Agencies, "FY 72-76 Fiscal and Logistic Guidance--Planning Assumptions for the War in Southeast Asia," 24 Mar 70, Att to JCS 2458/677-19, 27 Mar 70, JMF 555 (15 Jan 70) sec 3.

5. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Planning," 15 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/621, 16 May 70, JMF 907/501 (15 May 70).

6. The planning for termination of operations and withdrawal from Cambodia has been treated in Ch. 8.

maintain a threatening military capability in Cambodia. The plan provided for allied operations to exploit the tactical success of the Cambodian operation by: thwarting enemy efforts to increase his influence in South Vietnam from Cambodia; redistributing forces to enhance pacification and development; reducing--particularly in I and II CTZ--the flow of materiel and manpower support for enemy forces; and capitalizing on the growing RVNAF professional confidence.

In accordance with the Secretary's direction, the plan assigned an increased combat role to the RVNAF. The United States would intensify support for pacification programs and continue support for RVNAF improvement and modernization; US combat operations would be designed to accelerate the attainment of RVNAF combat effectiveness and to support pacification. The US efforts would include: tactical air and B-52 operations; continued naval operations; operations to free ARVN units for employment in border areas and clearing zones; operations, in conjunction with the ARVN, to counter and remove the enemy presence and threat to I and II CTZ; continued SALEM HOUSE/PRAIRIE FIRE operations under current authorities; logistical support within Vietnam for RVNAF cross-border operations into Cambodia after 30 June 1970; and expanded and intensified psychological operations in support of US objectives.[7]

On 20 June 1970, the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved the JCS plan for operations after 1 July 1970. He also affirmed that the 15 August 1969 mission statement for US forces in Vietnam remained applicable for current Southeast Asia planning. As related in the previous chapter, the Administration was particularly sensitive to criticism of the Cambodian invasion, and Mr. Packard gave specific instructions concerning the withdrawal of all US forces from Cambodia and limitations on RVNAF ground incursions into the Cambodian sanctuaries. In addition, he emphasized to General Wheeler that the main focus of allied effort after 1 July must be in South Vietnam.[8]

7. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-261-70 to SecDef, 28 May 70, Encl to JCS 2472/621-1, 25 May 70, same file.
8. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Planning," 20 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/621-2, 20 Jan 70, same file.

Meantime, Secretary Laird had again raised the matter of military strategy for Southeast Asia with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In a memorandum for the Chairman on 5 June, he noted that there had been a number of significant events and trends since the Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed strategy in 1969. He listed, among others: the 115,500 reduction in authorized US troop strength; the August 1969 modification of COMUSMACV's mission statement; the substantial improvement in RVNAF quality, as well as the increase in RVNAF force levels; the decline in NVA/VC troop strength in South Vietnam; the reduction in some phases of combat intensity with concomitant reductions in US casualties; shifts in the NVN leadership, particularly those occasioned by the death of Ho Chi Minh; the US and RVNAF incursions into the Cambodian sanctuaries; and the increasing economic pressures in both the United States and South Vietnam. He thought the changes resulting from these trends and events necessitated a reassessment of military strategy. The Secretary also asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider various means of interdicting the enemy's supply line, running through sea routes in the Gulf of Siam and then through either South Vietnam or Cambodia.[9]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared and presented their assessment of military strategy for Southeast Asia to the Secretary of Defense on 24 July 1970. They premised their study on the assumption that the US purpose in Vietnam and Southeast Asia remained what it had been--"a peace in which the peoples of the region can devote themselves to development of their own societies . . . [and] determine their own political future without outside interference." The Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed three alternative strategies that they considered both feasible and within the bounds of current policy. Alternative One was a minimum strategy to ensure a viable Republic of Vietnam, with little US effort in other areas of Southeast Asia. Alternative Two would add active programs to ensure the independence of Thailand and Cambodia while continuing current air and covert activities in Laos. Alternative Three further broadened the range of action by including overt major ground and air operations

9. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Military Strategy in Southeast Asia," 5 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2339/321, 8 Jun 70, JMF 907/520 (5 Jun 70) sec 1. (For the JCS strategy review in 1969, see Ch. 3.)

to cut LOCs in Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the immediate adoption of Alternative Two for FY 1971. They considered that funds and resources they had recently recommended in connection with the presidentially announced US force reduction of 150,000 in Vietnam[10] would be adequate for support of this strategy if supplemental MAP funds were provided. Even if lesser funds were allowed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the Alternative Two strategy should be adopted, though its execution would involve greater levels of risk depending upon the magnitude of the shortfalls.

Accomplishment of the Alternative Two strategy would require the following: continuing military, naval, and air operations by US, RVN, and FW forces within and immediately adjacent to the Republic of Vietnam; continuing US air interdiction in Laos; ground operations in southern Laos against enemy supply lines, to be conducted by RVN and Thai forces; and expansion of unconventional operations in Laos. The strategy was designed to encourage and support efforts of the Republic of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand in collective actions in defense of their security and independence. The United States would continue to provide materiel, training, and advisory assistance and would encourage third countries of the region to provide forces and other assistance, as appropriate. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that their recommended strategy would exploit allied initiative, put pressure on the enemy "across a broad front," and disrupt enemy bases and lines of communication. Disadvantages of the Alternative Two strategy included increased costs, particularly for the support of allies, and a possible arousing of "elements in the United States who oppose actual or apparent enlargement of the conflict in Southeast Asia."[11]

On 17 August 1970, the Secretary of Defense commended the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their "comprehensive and objective" reassessment. He was concerned, however, about the risks of their recommended strategy when pursued without a supplemental budget appropriation, which he indicated was out of the question. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to restate

10. See Ch. 10.
11. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-357-70 to SecDef, 24 Jul 70, Encl A to JCS 2339/321-1, 15 Jul 70, JMF 907/520 (5 Jun 70) sec 1.

their strategy, with a stronger focus on programs within South Vietnam. In revising the strategy the Joint Chiefs of Staff should give "full consideration" to the funds realistically expected in FY 1971 and subsequent years. The Secretary was aware that US policies relating to objectives in Vietnam had changed markedly over the past 18 months. He emphasized that US military strategy should strive for successful Vietnamization and continued US troop withdrawals, reduction of US casualties and costs, and stimulation of meaningful negotiations.

Secretary Laird noted that the JCS strategy assessment of 24 July as well as his own comments addressed primarily "short-range" matters without looking to the longer range strategic concepts. Accordingly, he requested the development of alternative strategies to provide "a wider range of military options" in a longer time frame--extending well beyond the FY 1973 period. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff must ensure the retention of sufficient flexibility to meet enemy initiatives.[12]

On 18 September 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a revised short-range US military strategy for Southeast Asia in FY 1971 together with an overall strategic concept for the 1970-1975 period. The short-range strategy was essentially a restatement of the one they had recommended on 24 July, except that certain proposed actions were now relegated to the category of "options" in order to stay within the Secretary's guidelines. These actions were: waterborne raids along the Mekong in Cambodia; operations by Thai troops in Laos or by ARVN forces in Laos or Cambodia; and expanded unconventional warfare in Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that these options were militarily advantageous and would enhance prospects for achievement of US objectives. The basic restated strategy could be executed within the FY 1971 Service budgets. The options, of course, would increase costs, but the increases could be absorbed by trade offs and reprogramming. The only exception was the action involving Thai operations, which would require offset funds for the Royal Thai Government.

12. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Military Strategy in Southeast Asia," 17 Aug 70, Att to JCS 2339/321-3, 20 Aug 70, same file.

The overall strategic concept for Southeast Asia for 1970-1975 was designed to support the Nixon Doctrine. Briefly, it provided that the United States would honor its treaty commitments and continue to provide advice and assistance to its allies, but would rely primarily on these Asian nations, either individually or through regional efforts, to furnish the manpower to maintain internal security and protection from outside attack.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended adoption of this long-range strategic concept. For the shorter range, they still preferred the strategy they had recommended on 24 July; however, if it could not be approved, they favored their revised version plus as many of the optional military actions as conditions warranted. They also recommended supplemental funding for FY 1971 to support the military capabilities of the Government of Cambodia.[13]

The Secretary of Defense took no action on either the restated short-range strategy or the overall concept, probably because, as the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted, their current response now appeared no more than a preliminary step in the accomplishment of a larger task recently set by the President. Mr. Nixon had directed a comprehensive review of strategy alternatives for Southeast Asia for the period 1970-1975. The presidential directive, set forth in NSSM 99 of 17 August 1970 to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence, called for development of strategy alternatives, together with appraisals of costs and of political consequences. As an initial step, the President wanted alternative short-range military strategies for Cambodia. By a separate action, the President had also established a Special Review Group for Southeast Asia within the NSC system. This Group, comprising the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and chaired by Dr. Kissinger, was charged with coordination of planning for Southeast Asia and with development of "a comprehensive long-range political, military and economic policy document."[14]

13. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-447-70 to SecDef, 18 Sep 70, Encl to JCS 2339/321-4, 14 Sep 70, JMF 907/520 (5 Jun 70) sec 2.
14. (~~TS~~-GP 1) NSSM 99, 17 Aug 70, Att to JCS 2339/327, 18 Aug 70, JMF 907/520 (17 Aug 70) sec 1. (S) Extracts from NSDM 79, 13 Aug 70, JCS 001 (CY 1970) NSDMs, sec 2.

In providing supplementary guidance for Defense participation in the NSSM 99 study, the Secretary of Defense directed that the FY 1971 budget guidance and the tentative guidance for the FY 1972-1976 period be followed. Other guidelines laid down by the Secretary were that US combat operations were to be steadily decreased, commensurate with capabilities of indigenous forces, and that US longer-range alternative strategies must provide a wider scope of military options to ensure flexibility.[15]

The NSSM 99 study was carried out by interdepartmental panels under the direction of the new Special Review Group for Southeast Asia. Individual panels dealt with the subjects of military strategy, diplomatic options, and military and economic assistance. Officers of the Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5), Joint Staff, participated in preparation of the study. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not review the various resulting drafts, but the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, as a member of the Senior Review Group, had a voice in the final decisions. By late October, alternative strategies for Cambodia had been developed, and the President approved one for FY 1971 that called for strengthening the Cambodian armed forces with a view to securing effective control of the Cambodian countryside. This strategy did not envision the use of US forces, but it did provide for the employment of the RVNAF in Cambodia in areas near the South Vietnamese border.[16]

Attention then turned to the long-range strategies for Southeast Asia as a whole. By mid-December, four alternatives, labeled "strategic thrusts," had been prepared. The first would attempt to induce Hanoi, principally by military means, to terminate rapidly its military effort; the second, using a combination of political and military measures, would seek to erode North Vietnam's determination and ability to dominate Indochina; the third called for a gradual shift to the political arena, primarily by reducing the level of violence and continuing US troop redeployments while developing a framework for mutual accommodation; and

15. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to ASD(ISA), "Southeast Asian Strategy Alternatives," 27 Aug 70, Encl to Att to JCS 2339/327-1, 2 Sep 70, JMF 907/520 (17 Aug 70) sec 1.

16. (TS) Extracts from NSDM 89, 26 Oct 70, JMF 001 (CY 1970) sec 3.

the fourth would try to extricate all US military power from South Vietnam as rapidly as possible while attempting to maintain US credibility with respect to keeping commitments. The Senior Review Group considered these alternatives on 14 December, but Dr. Kissinger adjourned the meeting in order to permit further review by all the participants. Consequently, by the end of 1970, there had been no decision on long-range strategy.[17]

The Contending Forces--The Enemy

While US officials in Washington attempted to define the US strategy for Southeast Asia, the combat continued in South Vietnam. The enemy showed no willingness in 1970 to end the hostilities, but neither did he attempt to expand his action in South Vietnam.

In January, the enemy strength in South Vietnam was estimated at approximately 151,560 Viet Cong and 84,370 NVA. This total of 235,930 compared with an estimated 259,000 a year previously. These forces comprised 281 maneuver battalions, 135 VC and 146 NVA. They were deployed as follows: 96 in I CTZ; 48 in II CTZ; 91 in III CTZ; and 46 in IC CTZ.[18]

17. (TS) Report prepared by VSSG Working Group, "NSSM 99, Part II, US Strategy for SEA," n.d., J-5 files. (TS-GP 1) TP for DSecDef and CJCS for SRG meeting on 14 Dec 70, "NSSM 99--US Strategy for SEA (U)," Att to JCS 2339/327-8, 16 Dec 70; (TS-GP 1) J-5 Memo for Record, "Meeting of NSC Senior Review Group on a Progress Report on NSSM 99 (Phase II) (U)," 15 Dec 70, Encl to Att to JCS 2339/327-10, 21 Dec 70; JMF 907/520 (17 Aug 70) sec 4. (The strategy study continued in 1971, but the focus shifted sharply to an analysis of near-term considerations regarding force development in Thailand, Cambodia, and the Republic of Vietnam; the allocation of air effort; possible enemy plans for action for 1972; and an economic assessment of South Vietnam.)

18. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-91 - III-93.

The VC/NVA troops were controlled by Hanoi through five regional headquarters: the B-5 front, corresponding to the DMZ; Military Region Tri Thien Hue (MRTTH), the area from the DMZ southward almost to Da Nang; MR 5, the central coastal region; the B-3 front, the central inland region; and the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN). The last of these five included most of the lower part of South Vietnam and was the most important of these headquarters. The COSVN received orders directly from the NVN Politburo and High Command and was the Central Office of the Peoples' Revolutionary Party (PRP) in South Vietnam. It played a key role in coordinating the policy directed by Hanoi throughout South Vietnam.[19]

In 1970, the enemy followed the strategy adopted in the late spring of the previous year. At that time, apparently because of the failure of his general offensives in 1968 and early 1969, the enemy had shifted to a strategy geared to a protracted conflict, limiting his offensive efforts to "surges" of activity confined to a particular CTZ. As expressed in COSVN Resolutions 9 of July 1969 and 14 of October 1969, the new strategy stressed conservation of forces, rebuilding of base areas, and guerrilla tactics with the objectives of inflicting high US casualties and defeating the pacification effort while lowering the enemy's own manpower and materiel costs.[20]

Enemy operations during 1970 continued to be guided by Resolutions 9 and 14, which were supplemented in February by Resolution 136. This latest resolution assessed both the allied and Communist situations in South Vietnam, finding the allies destined to failure and the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese on the way to eventual success. Resolution 136 also set forth guidelines and missions for future operations in South Vietnam, repeating the call for defeat of the pacification program and a rebuilding of Viet Cong strength through the familiar economy-of-force tactics. It listed as main targets US forces and local RVN officials, with especial attention focused on rural development cadre and

19. Ibid., III-89, Fig III-1.
20. See Ch. 3 and 5.

support troops, police, Chieu Hoi and armed propaganda officials, and ralliers.[21]

Communist Party First Secretary Le Duan publicly confirmed North Vietnam's decision to persevere in a protracted war on 2 February 1970. In a speech commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the party, he declared that his country was prepared to fight for "many years more" to force withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam. He called for a "two track" policy of building socialism in the north while simultaneously continuing the war in the south. This policy was reaffirmed by Premier Pham Van Dong in September, and its implementation could readily be discerned in the level and nature of NVN activity.[22]

The enemy moved steadily away from large-scale military operations during 1970, and there were no repetitions of the Tet offensive of 1968 or the post-Tet attacks of 1969. Instead, the enemy relied primarily on guerrilla warfare and increased sapper tactics, using these specially trained, highly motivated assault troops in small groups to attack allied installations. During the year, the enemy initiated sporadic surges in each of the four Corps Tactical Zones. On the night of 31 March 1970, a series of coordinated attacks occurred in all four CTZs. The allies at first took this to be the beginning of a spring offensive, but after two days of intensified activity, enemy actions fell back to their previous low level.[23]

During the year, the enemy expanded the movement of supplies and materials into South Vietnam and concentrated on establishing and strengthening staging areas. Enemy supply and base area activity was particularly great in the RVN/Cambodian border area of III CTZ and deeper in Cambodia opposite III CTZ. It was to destroy these supply caches and sanctuaries that US and RVNAF forces launched the Cambodian invasion in May 1970. That operation significantly reduced the threat to III and IV CTZ, although some enemy activity continued along the border. Elements of three VC/NVA divisions operated there in the latter part of 1970, concentrating on the restoration of supply lines, base areas,

21. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, III-98 - III-99.
22. Ibid., III-2. NY Times, 3 Feb 70, 3.
23. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-94 - III-113.

and command and control facilities disrupted by the Cambodian operation. The allied invasion of Cambodia also caused some relocation of enemy forces in the Delta. At the end of 1969, General Abrams had warned of increasing NVA strength in that region, and by early 1970 it appeared definite that five regiments and a division headquarters had moved into the area. The Cambodian incursion, however, diverted some of these forces away from the population centers of the Delta.[24]

Although the Cambodian operations reduced the Communist capabilities in the southern half of South Vietnam, the enemy threat to the northern part of the country increased during 1970. This was most pronounced in I CTZ, where the enemy remained capable of launching large-scale attacks. The VC/NVA had 20 battalions deployed in or near the Demilitarized Zone. In addition, the enemy built up a new logistical base in the Laos-Cambodia-South Vietnam "tri-border" area of II CTZ. He used the favorable terrain and lack of population in that region to hide larger units and move them toward the coastal plains and urban areas.[25]

The Allies

Opposing the enemy were the RVNAF, growing larger and (it was hoped) stronger, a dwindling US force, and approximately 70,000 troops from other countries. United States strength in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1970 stood at 474,819--a reduction of some 60,000 compared with a year earlier. These US forces included a total of 93 maneuver battalions (81 Army and 12 Marine), deployed as follows: 37 in I CTZ, 17 in II CTZ, and 39 in III CTZ. All US combat troops had been withdrawn from IV CTZ in 1969. (On 1 July 1970, the four Corps Tactical Zones were redesignated Military Regions (MRs), although the territory of each remained unchanged.) The RVNAF strength at the opening of 1970 was 969,256, an increase of approximately 110,000 since January 1969.[26]

24. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-155 - III-192.
25. Ibid., III-50, III-103 - III-104, III-131.
26. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. IV-7, IV-9. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VI-13. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 303-69, 31 Dec 69, p. 8.

As 1970 began, seven other countries besides the United States had a total of 68,889 men in Vietnam, most of them coming from the Republic of Korea (ROK), Thailand, Australia, and New Zealand. With the withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam, there were internal pressures in several of these countries to reduce their own troop commitments. In the fall of 1970, Australia withdrew the 900-man 8th Australian Regiment, and New Zealand called home an infantry company of 144 men. The Philippine Civic Action Group (PHILCAGV) had begun its withdrawal in 1969 and completed it by 15 February 1970; the remaining force was redesignated the Philippine Contingent, Vietnam (PHILCOVN). The ROK force, by far the largest, was overstrength at the beginning of 1970. During the year it was reduced to authorized strength, but was not otherwise affected. The net result of these and other changes was to reduce the "third country" forces to 67,444 men by the end of 1970.[27] (See Table VIII, at the end of this chapter.)

All the allied forces in South Vietnam operated under the Combined Campaign Plan 1970. Like the 1969 plan, the one for 1970 was prepared jointly by the RVNAF Joint General Staff and the Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF). The 1970 plan, however, included two assumptions reflecting the adoption of the Vietnamization policy during 1969: reduction of the FWMAF consistent with the development of the RVNAF, progress in pacification, and the level of enemy activity; and continuation of the accelerated program for improvement and modernization of the RVNAF. The Combined Plan for 1970 also provided for the transition from the 1969 security system, where emphasis had been on critical areas, to one that ultimately would require less participation by combat forces of the FWMAF. Another change was to give a more important role to the territorial forces, consisting of the Regional and Popular Forces, supported by the National Police and the People's Self Defense Force (PSDF). In addition to supporting pacification, these forces would now carry out operations to prevent enemy infiltration, attacks, and harassment of populated areas.

With respect to the Pacification and Development Program, the Combined Campaign Plan 1970 made a significant innovation.

27. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. IV-31 - IV-38.

Whereas the 1969 plan called for the RVNAF and the FWMAF to support pacification, the new plan directed them to participate in it. Pacification was given importance equal to the defeat of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces. The Combined Campaign Plan 1970 complemented the 1970 Pacification and Development Plan. The latter, solely a South Vietnamese document, provided the direction, together with assignment of responsibility within the Republic of Vietnam, for the Pacification and Development program in 1970.[28]

Ground Operations

Allied operations in 1970 were chiefly concerned with locating and destroying enemy units, base camps, and cache sites, as well as supporting the RVNAF in providing security for the population and destroying the VC infrastructure. In 1970, the ground operations were characterized by decreased and smaller scale contacts with the enemy, increased RVNAF operations, intensified support for pacification, and significant cross-border operations in Cambodia.

During the year, MR 1 had the highest enemy threat. The VC/NVA strengthened their tactical position in the mountainous regions of northern MR 1 and along the central DMZ and retained the ability to launch large-scale attacks in this area. They consolidated their bases in the mountains and during the early part of the year established new bases along the Vietnamese-Laotian border in Quang Tri province and the A Shau valley. The enemy attempted to push eastward using regiment-sized units, thus increasing the threat to Quang Tri city. He defended cache sites, harassed allied operations, and conducted attacks on the populous lowland south of the DMA.

Military Region 1 also had the largest concentration of US combat troops. Friendly forces conducted 18 major operations there during 1970. In the mountainous western area, the principal object was to destroy the enemy's LOCs, especially in the A Shau valley. Along the DMZ the efforts were primarily reconnaissance-in-force and saturation ambush to

28. (S) RVNAF JGS and FWMAF, Combined Campaign Plan 1970, 31 Oct 69, JMF 911/350 (31 Oct 69) sec 1A. (S) RVN Plan, "Pacification and Development Program," n.d. (received in OCJCS on 13 Nov 69), JMF 911/319 (26 Jun 69) sec 2.

interdict infiltration into the populated lowlands. During November and December, operations to the eastern portion of the MR 1 were restricted owing to the monsoon rains and tropical storms, but ARVN forces continued to operate in the west and assumed increasing responsibility throughout the year. The RF/PF secured the populated area of the coastline, thus freeing the regular ARVN forces to operate against the enemy in the western portion of MR 1.[29]

In late June 1970 the Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the rules of engagement governing US and RVNAF forces in MR 1 operating in or near the DMZ. Recognizing that the Cambodian operation had seriously disrupted the enemy's base areas along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border and had significantly reduced the VC/NVA threat in that area, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that certain amendments to the existing rules were required to maintain pressure on the enemy and pre-empt his activities from across or within the DMZ. Accordingly they requested permission on 26 June 1970 for ground operations in the DMZ south of the PMDL to prevent an enemy buildup there. Additionally, they recommended authority to employ tactical air, as well as artillery and naval gunfire, in the DMZ north of the PMDL and to conduct observation overflights of that same area.[30]

After a two-month consideration, the Secretary of Defense turned down the JCS request. The present rules, he told the Chairman on 26 August 1970, were adequate for the defense of US forces, "particularly if commanders prudently exercised their inherent right to defend their forces." The Secretary added that the best intelligence available to him showed no significant changes in levels or types of military or logistical activity within the DMZ during the past weeks. Moreover, since infiltration rates into the DMZ remained well below those of the past two years, he believed that an increase of allied operations in the DMZ would be interpreted by Hanoi as evidence of a US intention to prolong the war. Such a development could have an undesirable effect on the Paris talks.[31]

29. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-103 - III-140, V-7, E-3.

30. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-318-70 to SecDef, 26 Jun 70, Encl to JCS 2472/639, 26 Jun 70, JMF 911/321 (26 Jun 70).

31. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam Demilitarized Zone (U)," 26 Aug 70, Att to JCS 2472/639-1, 27 Aug 70, same file.

The danger in MR 2 was second only to that in MR 1. Several enemy regiments operated in the tri-border area and in central Binh Dinh province, but in the remainder of the Region, enemy forces were widely dispersed and understrength and did not pose a serious threat. Enemy activity was relatively light during the first part of the year. It was characterized by sporadic attacks-by-fire, light ground probes, sapper attacks, interdiction of LOCs and terrorism. On the night of 31 March-1 April the enemy conducted 53 attacks-by-fire and eight ground attacks. During April and May the area in the Dak Seang-Ben Het-Dak To triangle in northwestern Kontum Province was subjected to attacks-by-fire, ground assaults, and sniper fire. Except for a few attacks on RF/PF and ARVN installations and short upsurges at the end of August and November, enemy activity was at a low level for the rest of the year.

There were 40 major allied operations in MR 2 during 1970. Along the coastal region the allied military forces concentrated on community defense and development, and the maintenance of the roads to and from the region, especially Route 19. In the sparsely populated central highlands friendly forces maintained government control.

The ARVN forces primarily carried out pacification missions and security operations. In mid-March the 47th Regiment, 22d ARVN Division, replaced the US 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, in Pleiku Province. On 15 April this ARVN division received the responsibility for the entire highland area. For the rest of the year US forces confined their activities to the coastal lowlands.[32]

The stronghold of the enemy in MR 3 remained in northern Phuoc Long and Tay Ninh Provinces along the RVN/Cambodian border, where there were several VC/NVA regiments. Enemy activity, however, was characterized by small unit operations aimed at allied pacification efforts, low-intensity attacks-by-fire, and sapper attacks against RF/PF and the People's Self-Defense Force outposts. During the first six months of 1970, enemy activity was moderate. The Cambodian operation greatly reduced the enemy threat in MR 3, and thereafter enemy activity fell to a low level and continued so through the end of the year.

32. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-131, V,-8, E-42.

Allied operations in MR 3 in early 1970 concentrated on locating and destroying enemy forces, interdicting infiltration routes, and denying base camp areas to the enemy. The major operation in MR 3 during 1970 was the pursuit of enemy forces into Cambodia. United States and South Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia on 1 May and withdrawal of US forces was completed on 29 June. Operations for the remainder of the year were of battalion or smaller size and directed toward strengthening RVN control of the countryside. Throughout the year, US forces supported pacification and assisted in upgrading the ARVN/RF/PF through improvements and modernization. The Australian Task Force continued to operate in Phuoc Tuy Province during the year, and the Royal Thai Army Volunteers operated against the enemy elements in central Bien Hoa Province.[33]

The RVNAF had assumed major responsibility for the war in MR 4 in August 1969, when the last US combat forces were withdrawn. Consequently, there were no US combat operations in that region during 1970, although US helicopter and support elements assisted the RVNAF. During the year, the RVNAF successfully attacked enemy strongholds and carried out reconnaissance-in-force and waterway patrols.[34]

As in preceding years, the United States and South Vietnam marked Tet, Buddha's birthday, Christmas, and New Year's with brief cease-fires. The allies limited each of these holiday cease-fires to 24 hours rather than matching the three-day periods announced by the enemy, since previous experience had taught that the enemy never respected his own proclaimed truces. During these 24-hour periods, US and RVNAF troops suspended all air and artillery operations as well as offensive ground actions in South Vietnam, though they remained on alert and patrolled their base areas. The allied Tet truce began at 051800 (Saigon time) February 1970 with normal operations resuming at 1800 the following day. Buddha's birthday came in the midst of the Cambodian invasion. The allies suspended action in South Vietnam for 24 hours beginning 181100 May 1970, but there was no cessation of operations in Cambodia. The Christmas truce extended from 1800 Christmas Eve until 1800 Christmas day, and the New Year's truce covered the same period on New Year's Eve and Day. As had been the case in all previous holiday truces,

33. Ibid., pp. III-155, V-8 - V-9, E-83.
34. Ibid., pp. V-9 - V-10.

enemy violations marred all four of the 1970 cease-fires, although the number of both violations and casualties was lower than for the corresponding holidays in 1969. For example, there were 98 clashes during the 1970 Christmas truce as compared with 115 in the previous year.[35] (See Table X for specific data on violations and casualties for each of the four truces.)

In July 1970, there was an additional allied cease-fire in the DMZ area to allow the Republic of Vietnam to repatriate seriously ill and wounded North Vietnamese prisoners of war. The Republic of Vietnam announced on 11 June 1970 at the Paris peace talks that it would return these prisoners by sea with Red Cross escorts on 11 July. To facilitate the repatriation, COMUSMACV suspended all offensive operations off the seaward extension of the DMZ during the period 110600 and 112100 (Saigon Time) July 1970. The operation went as planned; RVN naval units delivered 62 war prisoners and 24 captured North Vietnamese fishermen to a point off the coast of North Vietnam, from which they reached shore in boats.[36]

Naval Operations

Naval operations in and around South Vietnam in 1970, as in earlier years, were aimed at prevention of waterborne infiltration into that country. The US Navy and the Vietnamese Navy (VNN) patrolled over 1,000 miles of South Vietnamese coast as well as inland waterways and canals. During the Cambodian operation, naval units provided waterborne blocking forces for ARVN and US Army sweeps into the Parrot's Beak and Fishhook regions of Cambodia, resulting in effective RVN control of the Mekong River from the South China Sea to Phnom Penh. The disruption of his supply system in Cambodia forced the enemy to increase attempted seaborne infiltration,

35. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 300-69, 27 Dec 69; 32-70, 7 Feb 70; 117-70, 19 May 70; 300-70, 28 Dec 70; 1-71, 4 Jan 71. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. V-13 - V-18. NY Times, 24 Dec 70, 1; 26 Dec 70, 1; 2 Jan 71, 1.

36. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. X-53 - X-55.

but allied naval operations effectively countered those attempts. During 1970, US Navy forces accelerated the transfer of operations to the VNN, and by the close of the year the only US naval combat forces remaining in Vietnam were nine Seal platoons. The other US naval elements in the country were engaged in providing advice and logistics support to the VNN.[37]

The two major naval operations during 1970 were MARKET TIME and Southeast Asia Lake-Ocean-River-Delta Strategy (SEA LORDS). The former had been initiated in 1965 as a defense against seaborne infiltration of men and supplies into the Republic of Vietnam. It consisted of an inner barrier, an outer ship control area, and air barriers. As described in Chapter 8, MARKET TIME operations were extended along the Cambodian coast in May 1970, and after an agreement had been reached with Cambodian authorities in June, VNN vessels patrolled Cambodian waters as far as Phu Dü Island. By the end of June, all MARKET TIME operations in Cambodian waters were carried out by the VNN. In September 1970, the VNN assumed responsibility for the MARKET TIME inner barrier, and the operation was redesignated TRAN HUNG DAO XV. On 1 December the last 14 US Patrol Craft Inshore (PCF), or "swift boats," used for MARKET TIME inner barrier patrols, were transferred to the VNN. At the year's end only the MARKET TIME outer and air barriers remained under US command.[38]

Operation SEA LORDS had been instituted in late 1968 to interdict inland water infiltration in IV CTZ and the southern part of III CTZ. In addition, the operation attempted to maintain a patrol presence on the Cambodian border waterways, pacify key trans-Delta waterways and Bassac Island complexes, harass the enemy by river raids into areas theretofore immune to attack from waterways, and ascertain the feasibility of interdiction on other waterways. These operations continued throughout 1970, though enemy activity was at a low to moderate level. The SEA LORDS operations were progressively turned over to the VNN during the year, and they were redesignated TRAN HUNG DAO.[39]

37. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. V-11 - V-12.
38. Ibid., pp. V-11 - V-12, F-2 - F-16.
39. Ibid., F-16 - F-24.

Air Operations

As the United States reduced its forces in South Vietnam, air operations took on increasing importance there. During 1970, US forces relied on air resources to seek out and destroy both the enemy and his supplies and to support US and RVNAF ground operations and interdiction. Throughout the year, the allies held air superiority in Southeast Asia. Air-to-air combat had almost ceased after the bombing halt in North Vietnam in November 1968, and only enemy ground fire and surface-to-air missiles posed any serious threat to allied air operations. In fact, the greatest hindrance to US air operations in 1970 came not from Hanoi, but from the budget restrictions that necessitated continuing reductions in US air activity levels for Southeast Asia.

In September 1969, the Secretary of Defense had set air activity levels for the first half of 1970 at 1,400 B-52 and 14,000 USAF tactical air sorties per month, and US Navy tactical air sorties at the beginning of 1970 were limited to 4,200 per month. In presenting a report on the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program to the Secretary of Defense on 29 January 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested that the current air activity levels be maintained. The Secretary responded on 13 March. With respect to sortie levels, he instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was essential to study the situation thoroughly and adjust programs "in the most prudent manner" to available resources.[40]

On 30 April 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted to the Secretary of Defense revised force and activity levels for Southeast Asia to conform with the Secretary's fiscal guidance. To meet the FY 1971 budget, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented activity levels of 1,000 B-52, 10,000 USAF tactical air and 2,700 USN tactical air sorties per month.

40. (TS-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1970, II, p. 142. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-42-70 to SecDef, 29 Jan 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/552-9, 24 Jun 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 3. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization - Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (I&M) Program and Related US Planning (U)," 13 Mar 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-15, 15 Mar 70, same file, sec 4. Other aspects of the JCS report on the RVNAF I&M Program are treated in Ch. 10.

At the same time, they recommended that supplemental FY 1971 funds be provided to allow for surges in air activity. On 2 June, they again addressed the question of air activity levels, providing the Secretary of Defense two alternatives. The first, Alternative A, retained the currently authorized monthly levels of 1,400 B-52, 14,000 USAF tactical air, and 3,500 USN tactical air sorties, while the second, Alternative B, would reduce the activity levels to those presented in April. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended approval of Alternative A with appropriate supplemental funding.[41]

Three days later, on 5 June, the Secretary of Defense notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he could not at that time approve a request for supplemental funds for FY 1971. Any additional costs, he directed, would be met through reduced activities in Southeast Asia or elsewhere. With respect to air activity levels, the Secretary directed continuation of the current rate until 15 July 1970. He told the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assume that the monthly sortie rates thereafter would be not more than 1,200 for B-52s, 10,000 for USAF tactical fighters, and 3,600 for US Navy fighters. He emphasized, however, that these figures were average monthly rates. If circumstances permitted, lower levels should be flown during periods of relative inactivity, allowing some added operational surge capability when needed. This procedure, he believed, "would also allow us to signal more readily to the enemy through marked operational sortie rate increases."[42]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were reluctant to accept this decision. On 26 June, the Acting Chairman informed the Secretary that he and his colleagues, as well as the field commanders, supported continuation of the current sortie

41. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-202-70 to SecDef, 30 Apr 70, Encl to JCS 2472/552-31, 27 Apr 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 9. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-266-70 to SecDef, 2 Jun 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/625, 25 May 70, JMF 911/374 (24 Apr 70) sec 1.

42. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization--Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program and Related Planning," 5 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-36, 11 Jun 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 10.

levels. In July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again raised the matter of air activity levels with the Secretary of Defense. In assuring him of the effectiveness of the air interdiction campaign in Southeast Asia (in response to a concern expressed by Deputy Secretary Packard), the Joint Chiefs of Staff resubmitted the two alternatives for air activity levels they had proposed on 2 June. Alternative A, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, provided a level of activity that "approached" the minimum requirements of the field commanders. Alternative B was the level that the Services could produce within budget constraints; it represented, however, a 40 percent reduction in tactical air sorties and a 28 percent reduction in B-52 operations from FY 1970 levels, and both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders believed that it would entail substantial risks to US efforts in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, "from a military standpoint," the retention of air activity specified in Alternative A of their 2 June recommendations. They went on to recommend that, regardless of the level of activity authorized, the responsible field commanders be permitted to apply available assets within rules of engagement and operating authorities without further constraints on tactics, techniques, or distribution of sorties among operational areas and target systems.[43]

The Secretary of Defense submitted the question of air activity levels to the President, who resolved the matter on 12 August. He directed the Department of Defense to provide funding adequate to support a FY 1971 air activity level of 14,000 tactical air (both Air Force and Navy), 1,000 B-52, and 1,000 gunship sorties monthly in Southeast Asia, but to authorize "a lower sortie level than funded." The President specified that between 10,000 and 14,000 monthly tactical sorties should be flown, "depending upon the circumstances as determined by COMUSMACV." To compensate for the reduction in air activity levels, he directed continuing efforts to enhance the capabilities of both the VNAF and the RLAF.[44]

43. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-367-70 to SecDef, 30 Jul 70, Encl to JCS 2472/646-1, 27 Jul 70, JMF 907/322 (11 Jul 70).

44. (~~S~~-GP 1) Extract from NSDM 77 (revised), 12 Aug 70, JMF 001 (CY 1970) NSDMs sec 2.

The President's decision resolved the question for the moment, but it arose again several months later. On 7 November 1970, the Secretary of Defense stressed to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the importance of viewing the US tactical air effort "in context with the total allied effort." While US sorties had been decreasing, allied capability was expanding, and it partially offset the US reductions. He stated that US sortie levels might be further reduced during FY 1972 by about 30 percent, although the decline in the overall allied effort would be less than 15 percent. The Secretary wanted to ensure "that these more realistic sortie levels are used in our tactical air planning for next year."[45]

In late November and early December both the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as a group, and the Chairman, acting separately, expressed concern to the Secretary of Defense that decisions were being reached to reduce US sortie rates in Southeast Asia on the basis of fiscal considerations rather than on operational needs. In his 8 December memorandum, Admiral Moorer recommended that decisions on US air sortie levels be made on the basis of military requirements, as determined by the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and not strictly on budget factors.[46]

On 17 December 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again appealed to the Secretary of Defense. All of them, with one exception, supported continuation of air sorties for the remainder of FY 1971 as currently programmed. For FY 1972, they recommended a monthly average of 1,000 B-52, 700 gunship, and a minimum of 10,000 (7,300 USAF and 2,700 USN) tactical air sorties rather than monthly averages of 700 B-52, 450 gunship, and 8,325 (5,625 USAF and 2,700 USN) tactical air sorties as currently programmed in Service budgets. Acceptance of the programmed FY 1972 levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, would threaten the success of Vietnamization and increase the risk of enemy actions that could reverse the downward trend in US casualties. They

45. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Allied Tactical Air Sorties Rates for FY 1972 (U)," 7 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2339/333, 16 Nov 70, JMF 907/323 (7 Nov 70).

46. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-551-70 to SecDef, 27 Nov 70, Encl A to JCS 2339/33-1, 23 Nov 70; (TS) CM-413-70 to SecDef, 8 Dec 70; same file.

urged the Secretary of Defense to provide additional funds and resources to support their recommended FY 1972 activity levels since reprogramming within or between the Services to support them would cause increased risk in other important areas or functions. The dissenter was the Chief of Staff, Army, who did not support these recommendations because of reservations concerning accompanying force levels, which he felt the Army could not meet.[47]

On 24 December, the Secretary of Defense advised Admiral Moorer that he had taken steps to ensure funds to fly the higher sortie levels recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Further, he said that a final decision on activity and force levels for use in FY 1972 planning would be made at a later date. On the last day of the year, the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued a Program/Budget Decision approving an increase of $249.1 million in FY 1972 for Southeast Asia. Included in that decision was support for the following numbers of monthly sorties: 10,200 tactical air (7,500 USAF and 2,700 USN), 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship. Again, this action resolved the immediate question, but the conflict between military requirements and budget resources for air activity levels would be a continuing problem in the coming months.[48]

Within the activity levels determined in Washington, the field commanders carried out air operations in Southeast Asia during 1970. General Abrams used tactical air strikes to support ground operations throughout South Vietnam. In addition, there was continued employment of tactical air in neighboring Laos and Cambodia to strike enemy troop concentrations, supply caches, and infiltration routes. Within the overall authorizations, preplanned distribution of sorties was 45 percent in-country and 55 percent out-country early in the year. In May and June 1970, during the

47. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-576-70 to SecDef, 17 Dec 70, Encl to JCS 2472/695, 14 Dec 70, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70). For discussion of the objections of Chief of Staff, Army, see Ch. 10, p. 402.

48. (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Force and Activity Levels in Southeast Asia for FY 72 (U)," 24 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2339/333-2, 6 Jan 71, JMF 907/323 (7 Nov 70). (~~S~~) Program/Budget Decision 505, "Southeast Asia High Option," 31 Dec 70, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

Cambodian campaign, the out-country figure rose significantly at the expense of strikes in South Vietnam. The sorties distribution returned to something like the previous ratio in the period July-September, but during the last quarter of 1970, increasing percentages of sorties went to Cambodia and Laos. In connection with the reduction in tactical air sorties and associated budget restrictions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended a reduction of the Seventh Fleet attack carrier forces (CVAs) from four to three, effective "about 1 November 1970." The Secretary of Defense approved with the stipulation that there would be no announcement prior to the effective date.[49]

In addition to tactical air, the United States continued to use ARC LIGHT, conventional B-52 bombing operations, against enemy targets in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. But, as a result of the sorties reduction approved by the President in August, ARC LIGHT sorties for 1970 totaled only 15,015, or 4,414 less than the previous year. The greatest number of ARC LIGHT missions were sent into Laos, followed in order by MR 1, MR 3, Cambodia, MR 2, MR 4, and the DMZ. Beginning in September, all B-52 operations against targets in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were flown from Thailand.[50]

The United States also used its air resources in Southeast Asia in 1970 for reconnaissance and the collection of intelligence, for tactical airlift, and for search and rescue operations. This last category of operations resulted in 1970 in 303 "saves," of which 174 were "combat saves." Air strikes against North Vietnam (ROLLING THUNDER) had not been authorized since 1 November 1968, but the ROLLING THUNDER target list was continually revised and kept current in order to maintain the capability for immediate resumption of effective bombing of North Vietnam, if it should be authorized.[51]

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49. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. VI-20 - VI-26. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VI-11. (S-GP 3) JCSM-383-70 to SecDef, 14 Aug 70, App to JCS 2147/515-1, 9 Aug 70; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "CVA Force Levels (U)," 19 Aug 70, Att to JCS 2147/515-2, 20 Aug 70; JMF 466 (30 Jul 70).

50. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. VI-27.

51. Ibid., pp. VI-34 - VI-39, VI-119.

Air Operating Authorities Over North Vietnam

The question of operating authorities against North Vietnam was another matter of serious concern to US commanders in Vietnam during 1970. The United States had ceased all offensive air operations against North Vietnam on 1 November 1968 and also curtailed offensive actions in the DMZ. The enemy had taken advantage of these restrictions during 1969 to increase his forces in and around the DMZ. Throughout the year the Joint Chiefs of Staff had attempted, with only limited success, to secure permission to eliminate the Communist buildup in and just above the DMZ. In late 1969, North Vietnam also began to augment its air defenses in the NVN panhandle, moving SAMs and AAA there targeted against US aircraft operating in nearby Laos and South Vietnam. As a consequence, the year 1970 brought continuing efforts by US military commanders and by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to obtain additional authorities to meet this mounting threat.

The issue was formally raised on 22 December 1969 when CINCPAC asked JCS permission to retaliate against a SAM site that had fired on US planes over Laos several days earlier, as well as to destroy any other SAM installations that might be discovered during the retaliatory strike. He also wanted authority for pre-emptive attack, on a case-by-case basis, on any NVN SAMs threatening US operations over Laos and for permanent IRON HAND (fighter aircraft) overflight of North Vietnam when B-52 strike forces entered a SAM threat area in Laos.[52]

General Wheeler decided not to seek approval of strikes against the SAMs as requested by CINCPAC, but he did ask Secretary Laird on 24 December for authority for IRON HAND overflight of North Vietnam as necessary to protect B-52 forces operating in SAM/AAA threat areas over Laos or South Vietnam. He explained that the current restrictions against such overflight precluded adequate protection of B-52 forces, which could be attacked by SAMs when flying within 19 nautical miles of the NVN border and by NVN-based 100mm antiaircraft artillery when within three nautical miles of the

52. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 220618Z Dec 69, filed with Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 280336Z Jan 60, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 70.

border. The military risk of the protective overflight would be no greater, General Wheeler added, than that to aircraft currently overflying Laos or South Vietnam within range of active NVN SAM/AAA sites.[53]

At the time he received this request, Secretary Laird still had before him another one submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 30 October 1969, to allow US aircraft attacking targets in Laos to maneuver over North Vietnam and the DMZ.[54] Meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 5 January 1970, he asked them to combine these requests into a single submission for the President. Accordingly, two days later the Chairman submitted a draft memorandum for the President asking overflight authority for fighters on IRON HAND missions and for aircraft engaged in the attack on lines of communications in Laos--both the bombers themselves and the non-ordance-carrying (illuminator) aircraft needed to permit the delivery of laser-guided bombs. Unless these authorities were granted, General Wheeler said, operations to interdict the flow of supplies through Laos would continue to be severely handicapped.[55]

On 28 January, Secretary Laird notified General Wheeler that the President had approved the requested overflight authorities, with the proviso that laser-illuminator aircraft overflight of North Vietnam not exceed 3 nautical miles. In addition, authority was granted for IRON HAND aircraft to fire anti-radiation missiles at AAA/SAM radar signals emanating from North Vietnam below 19 degrees north when such signals clearly posed a threat to friendly forces. The new authorities were for a short term, extending through 31 March 1970.[56]

Meanwhile CINCPAC on 11 January had renewed his proposal to attack SAMs in North Vietnam. He again requested authority to strike SAM and SAM/AAA radars in North Vietnam that threatened US air operations in Laos, as well as permission to destroy truck parks and associated logistic

53. (TS-GP 3) CM-4796-69 to SecDef, 24 Dec 69, same file, Dec 69.
54. See Ch. 5, p. 169.
55. (TS-GP 1) CM-4806-70 to SecDef, 7 Jan 70; (TS-GP 1) DJSM-21-70 to CJCS, 7 Jan 70; same file, Jan 70
56. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 28 Jan 70, OCJCS File, SecDef memos.

buildups in North Vietnam within 25 kilometers of Ban Karai and Mu Gia Passes. On 28 January, CINCPAC alerted General Wheeler to the location of a new SAM site within five miles of Ban Karai Pass, stating that the North Vietnamese SAMs now posed a "clear and present threat" to US air interdiction operations. At a time when enemy logistic efforts in southern Laos were at an alltime peak, CINCPAC believed that it was essential to destroy SAMs in North Vietnam that were endangering US air operations in Laos.[57]

On the following day, 29 January, General Wheeler relayed CINCPAC's views to the Secretary of Defense. It would be advantageous, the Chairman said, for US commanders to have authority for pre-emptive attack of SAM and AAA positions posing a threat to US reconnaissance and bombing operations in Laos.[58]

The Secretary of Defense desired detailed recommendations on proposed changes in the current operating authorities, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided them on 3 February in the form of a draft message. Apparently after a discussion with the Secretary in which various refinements had been made in the authorities, General Wheeler notified CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on 9 February that the following had been approved: pre-emptive attack on "SAM/AAA installations in North Vietnam near the Laotian border south of 20 degrees north" that threatened US aircraft operating against targets in Laos; follow-on attacks, for a 72-hour period, against SAM/AAA installations in North Vietnam south of 19 degrees north that fired on US reconnaissance aircraft; attack by US aircraft or surface-to-air missiles against hostile aircraft operating over North Vietnam that indicated intent to attack US or allied aircraft outside of North Vietnam; and attack on ground control intercept (GCI) sites supporting MIG aircraft that attacked US air operations and that flew from fields in North Vietnam below 19 degrees north. This last authority was limited to the 72-hour period following such a MIG attack, and all of the authorities extended through 31 March 1970.[59]

57. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 112245Z Jan 70; CINCPAC to CJCS, 280336Z Jan 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam.
58. (~~S~~) CM-4868-70 to SecDef, 29 Jan 70, same file.
59. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-44-70 to SecDef, 3 Feb 70; (~~TS~~) Msg CJCS 1970 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 9 Feb 70; JMF 912/323 (2 Feb 70).

Weather conditions in Southeast Asia prevented immediate attack on the threatening SAMs, and on 16 February, the President inquired about the delay in using the expanded authorities. General Wheeler immediately advised the President of the reason and assured him that the Seventh Air Force was fully prepared to strike as soon as opportunity offered. But on the following day, 17 February, the Secretary of Defense temporarily rescinded the authority to attack enemy missile and antiaircraft installations.[60]

General Abrams protested the rescission of the authority for pre-emptive strikes on 22 February, pointing out indications of a break in the unfavorable weather. On 6 March, at the direction of the President, the Secretary of Defense amended the operating authorities over North Vietnam, but he did not reinstate the pre-emptive attack of NVN SAMs. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were now permitted to delegate to field commanders the authority to destroy SAM/AAA installations and immediate support facilities in North Vietnam below 20 degrees north that fired at US or allied planes operating outside North Vietnam. Such attacks were restricted to the 72-hour period following the SAM/AAA firing. Authority to attack GCI sites, however, was now reserved to the Secretary of Defense and would be approved only for facilities positively known to have been employed in connection with an attack by NVN aircraft. Secretary Laird considered these changes to be sound, but requested JCS views as to their feasibility.[61]

Replying on 11 March 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not comment on the new delegation of authority to field commanders, but they took the opportunity to urge restoration of the right of pre-emptive attack. Mere retaliation for cross-border SAM/AAA firings was "too restrictive," they said, in view of the increasing enemy capabilities. Regarding action against GCI installations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff

60. (TS-GP 1) CM-4909-70 to Pres, 16 Feb 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 70. (TS) Msg, JCS 2544 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 17 Feb 70, JMF 912/323 (2 Feb 70).

61. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 2419 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 22 Feb 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 70. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operating Authorities and Rules of Engagement over North Vietnam," 6 Mar 70, JMF 912/323 (2 Feb 70).

warned that to require previous approval in Washington would appreciably delay reaction to any NVN attack. Moreover, the boundary line for such action should be moved to 20 degrees north, in order to take in important sites at Bai Thuong, which was being increasingly used as a base.[62]

The Secretary of Defense took no action on the JCS request of 11 March, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not pursue the issue of pre-emptive attack on North Vietnamese SAMs further. One reason, perhaps, was that in April the North Vietnamese began to withdraw the SAMs from Route Package 1, the area south of 18 degrees, and this removal was completed in early May. General Abrams attributed the withdrawal to US protective reaction against the SAM firings and the approach of the rainy season.[63]

Meanwhile, on 26 March, General Wheeler reminded the Secretary of Defense that the existing operating authorities over North Vietnam expired at the end of the month. He requested extension through 30 June 1970 of the authorities approved on 28 January: maneuvering overflight for both laser illuminator and ordnance delivery aircraft as well as IRON HAND overflight and firing of anti-radiation missiles at SAM/AAA radar signals from North Vietnam below 19 degrees north. He also sought extension for retaliatory attack on SAM/AAA installations in the same area and engagement of enemy aircraft operating over North Vietnam that threatened US or allied operations outside of NVN borders as approved on 9 February and modified on 6 March. The following day, the Secretary of Defense approved the extensions, but with provision for IRON HAND aircraft to strike enemy SAM/AAAs in North Vietnam below 20 degrees north that fired at US aircraft over Laos or NVN. These authorities were later successively extended at the request of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, into 1971.[64]

62. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-109-70 to SecDef, 11 Mar 70, same file.
63. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. VI-127.
64. (TS-GP 1) CM-4985-70 to SecDef, 26 Mar 70; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 27 Mar 70; seen in OCJCS Files and used in preparation of (TS) JCS Hist Div study, "JCS Recommendations/ SecDef Actions on Vietnam," but not found during later research. The same is true of (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Jun 70, though the proposal to which it replied is available as (TS-GP 1) CM-5321-70 to SecDef, 23 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/640, 30 Jun 70, JMF 907/323 (25 May 70). Further

Attack on Logistics Targets in the Panhandle of North Vietnam

In late March, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff were seeking extension of the operating authorities over North Vietnam, the President requested plans for possible use of B-52s in the area of passes between North Vietnam and Laos, including Nape, Mu Gia, and Ban Karai. On 15 April 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a plan prepared by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to the Secretary of Defense. It envisioned attack only on Ban Karai because, according to the field commanders, the other two passes did not at that time offer lucrative targets. The Joint Chiefs of Staff found the plan "feasible" and agreed with COMUSMACV and CINCPAC that tactical air rather than B-52s should be used. Tactical aircraft would be as effective as B-52s and presented less risk. Moreover, as COMUSMACV had observed, "The propaganda value to the enemy of the destruction of one B-52 will be greater than the military gains we might accrue."[65]

Subsequently, the Secretary of Defense inquired about attacking logistics targets along Route 1039. General Wheeler replied on 17 April, confirming that traffic had increased on Route 1039 during the past few days, but adding that Ban Karai Pass and Mu Gia continued to carry heavy traffic. From a military standpoint, General Wheeler said, it would be desirable to extend interdiction efforts into North Vietnam along these entry routes, and he requested permission to confirm precise locations of certain "lucrative logistics-associated targets" on the NVN side of the major entry routes with prestrike reconnaissance. The Secretary

extensions may be traced through the following: (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-308-70 to SecDef, 21 Oct 70; (~~TS~~) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 26 Oct 70; (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 3 Nov 70; (~~TS~~) Msgs, JCS 4437 and 5220 to CINCPAC, 27 Oct and 5 Nov 70; OCJCS File 091 Southeast Asia Air Operations, Jul 70-Jun 71.

65. (~~TS~~) OCJCS Routing Slip for Docs for Clearance and/or Signature, "B-52 Strikes in North Vietnamese Passes (~~TS~~)," 15 Apr 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 4581 to CINCPAC, 8 Apr 70. Tab C to Briefing Sheet for CJCS, 14 Apr 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 70. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-169-70 to SecDef, 15 Apr 70, JMF 912/323 (26 Mar 70).

of Defense approved, and the reconnaissance, conducted on 18 April, confirmed a buildup in activity in the Route 1036/1039/1032 complex. Traffic through Ban Karai and Mu Gia, however, had declined. Accordingly, on 20 April General Wheeler sought authority for a 72-hour strike on the 1036/1039/1032 complex to a depth of 20 nautical miles into North Vietnam. Inasmuch as Route 7 through Barthelemy Pass, farther north, remained a major logistics route into northern Laos, General Wheeler also requested authority for tactical photo reconnaissance of this route, again to a depth of 20 nautical miles.[66]

On 25 April 1970, before the Secretary of Defense had replied to this request, General Wheeler told the Secretary that new information had been received from General Abrams stressing the "magnitude of logistic traffic" in the Route 1036/1039/1032 complex. The Chairman again urged favorable consideration of strikes on those targets, noting that the dry season would soon end. He believed "we should implement this action at the earliest possible time."[67]

After a brief delay, apparently caused by preoccupation with the final planning for the US/RVNAF attacks into Cambodia, Secretary Laird approved the requested strike. Accordingly, on 29 April 1970, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized COMUSMACV and CINCPAC to strike logistics targets in the Route 1036/1039/1032 complex in North Vietnam to a depth of 20 nautical miles. The strike would be for a 48-hour period rather than the 72 hours originally requested. General Wheeler also directed the field commanders to coordinate the strike closely with the beginning of the US/RVNAF thrust into Base Areas 352/353 in Cambodia.[68]

On 1 May 1970, in accordance with the decision of the President, the Acting Chairman, Admiral Moorer, ordered three additional strikes on lucrative targets in North Vietnam along the supply routes leading into Laos and South Vietnam.

66. (~~TS~~) CM-5055-70 to SecDef, 17 Apr 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 5334 to COMUSMACV, 17 Apr 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5062-70 to SecDef, 20 Apr 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 70.

67. (~~TS~~) CM-5076-70 to SecDef, 25 Apr 70, same file.

68. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Authority," 27 Apr 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 70. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 5876 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 29 Apr 70, same file, May 70.

Suggested target areas included Route 15 to Mu Gia Pass, Route 137 to Ban Karai, Route 7 to Barthelemy Pass, as well as the Route 1039/1036/1032 complex. This authorization was rescinded on 2 May, but subsequently reinstated the same day.[69]

In accordance with the above authorities, US forces carried out strikes on logistics targets in North Vietnam on four successive days, 1-4 May. Forces of the 7th Air Force struck target complexes on Routes 1036/1039/1032 on 1 and 2 May; in coordination with the Navy's Task Force 77, they hit the Mu Gia Pass (Routes 15/101) vicinity and along Routes 1032, 1036, and 1039 and also Route 7 on 3 May; and on 4 May the 7th Air Force concluded the campaign with strikes on the Route 137 complex (Ban Karai Pass). In all, 708 sorties were flown. One F-4 strike aircraft and one F-4 reconnaissance escort were lost to ground fire with one crew recovered and one missing, and one RF-4 was damaged.[70]

Admiral McCain believed that the strikes were among the most successful ever conducted against forward elements of the NVN logistics system. The enemy had been caught by surprise at a time of great confusion occasioned by the Cambodian invasion, and in the middle of a "last ditch" attempt to push supplies south before the rainy season. Large supply concentrations along the entry corridors to Laos and the DMZ had been exposed to attack. The Admiral estimated the enemy's losses at between 10,000 and 50,000 tons of all classes of supplies. The Acting Chairman, Admiral Moorer, advised the Secretary of Defense that the results of the strikes, together with the loss of supplies in the Cambodian base areas, should have a substantial impact on the enemy's ability to conduct operations in South Vietnam and Cambodia.[71]

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69. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6013 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 1 May 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 6077 and 6080 to C/Ss PAC and MACV, 2 May 70; (~~TS~~) CM-5097-70 to SecDef, 1 May 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 70. Available sources do not indicate the reason for the rescission and reinstatement of the three additional strikes, but possibly there was a need to adjust the timing with relation to operations in Cambodia.

70. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 041939Z and 050643Z May 70, same file.

71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 130426Z May 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5169-70 to SecDef, 15 May 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 70.

The only adverse aspect of the strikes in North Vietnam arose from a delay in notification to Washington of the attack on the Mu Gia Pass area. United States forces struck Mu Gia on 3 May, yet no prior intent notice was received in Washington--as was done for the other strikes. A report of the strike was not dispatched until 040744Z May, nearly 28 hours after its occurrence, and did not reach Washington until approximately 41 hours after the attack. As a result, when a Defense Department spokesman announced the strikes in Washington on 4 May, he stated that only three areas had been struck, specifically denying any attack in the Mu Gia area. On the following day, 5 May, the Defense Department had to retract the statement and acknowledge the bombing of the Mu Gia Pass area on 3 May.[72]

This incident caused the Secretary of Defense considerable embarrassment, and General Wheeler directed his Assistant, Lieutenant General John McPherson, who was in Hawaii at the time, to investigate. After discussions at PACOM and MACV, General McPherson explained to General Wheeler that the problem stemmed largely from the haste with which the strikes had been carried on (compounded by the "on-again-off-again 24-hour hold") and the time consumed in coordinating between the 7th Air Force and TF 77. When 7th Air Force officials learned that the Navy planned to attack Mu Gia, the aircraft were scheduled to take off from the carriers in 81 minutes. An "intent" message seemed useless at that point, the more so since the JCS message authorizing the strikes had imposed no requirement for it. As for the delay in reporting, it resulted from a misunderstanding that had caused CTF 77 to send his report to CINCPAC through time-consuming SSO channels instead of forwarding it to the 7th Air Force via courier. Moreover, field commanders, unaware that a press conference was scheduled for 4 May in Washington, had stressed accuracy and completeness in reporting rather than speed. All echelons, General McPherson concluded, were reviewing procedures for correction of any deficiencies noted.[73]

72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6262 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 6 May 70; (U) Msg, CJCS 6311 to LTG McPherson, Asst to CJCS, TDY CINCPAC, 6 May 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 70. NY Times, 5 May 70, p. 1, 6 May 70, p. 1.

73. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6262 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 6 May 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, McPherson to CJCS, 070944Z and 091136Z May 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 70.

Secretary Laird also expressed concern that the Mu Gia strike was an additional strike beyond those authorized on 29 April and 1 May. Admiral Moorer, who was again the acting Chairman, explained to Mr. Laird on 15 May that the field commanders considered the 3 May effort against Mu Gia and the 1032/1036/1039 area a "single coordinated strike." They had conducted it accordingly with "near simultaneous" time on all targets.[74]

Throughout the remainder of May and into June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were occupied preparing plans in response to requests from either the Secretary of Defense or the White House for attacks against various targets in North Vietnam. These included: a three-day plan for air and naval operations against Thanh Hoa, Vinh, and/or Quang/Dong Hoi; one-day operation against nine selected targets in the NVN panhandle; and an aerial attack on the the NVN POL pipeline complex. None of the plans, however, was approved for execution.[75]

The Renewed Search for Air Authorities over NVN

In the late summer and early fall of 1970, US military commanders began to prepare for the approaching 1970-1971 dry season campaign. The reduction of US forces in South Vietnam made it necessary to place increased emphasis on the effective use of US air power; at the same time budget reductions demanded judicious use of available resources. Consequently, the US commanders in Vietnam developed a single integrated interdiction program (SIIP), which applied US air power in Southeast Asia as a unified effort. The SIIP encompassed portions of Laos as well as Cambodia and South Vietnam.[76]

74. (~~TS~~) CM-5157-70 to SecDef, 15 May 70, same file.

75. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5118-70 to SecDef, 7 May 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 70. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-5261-70 to SecDef, 7 Jun 70; CM-5260-70 to SecDef, 9 Jun 70; CM-5268-70 to Spec Asst to Pres for NSA, 9 Jun 70; CM-5292-70 to SecDef, 15 Jun 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 70.

76. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-367-70 to SecDef, 30 Jul 70, Encl to JCS 2472/646-1, 27 Jul 70, JMF 907/322 (11 Jul 70). (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-307-70 to SecDef, 21 Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 70-Jun 71.

The SIIP was designed to operate within existing authorities, but some of these--the right of aircraft to maneuver over North Vietnam and to retaliate against SAM/AAA installations in North Vietnam--were scheduled to expire on 1 November 1970. In seeking their extension, the Chairman included one new authorization: overflight of North Vietnam, not to exceed three nautical miles, by aircraft delivering electro-optical (E-O) guided ordnance. Admiral Moorer explained to Secretary Laird that targets with sharp light contrast, such as gun positions in caves, were particularly vulnerable to bombs guided in this manner. To gain favorable access and proper light contrast for attack of such targets, the Admiral stated, aircraft would occasionally have to penetrate NVN airspace, but no more deeply than if they were delivering laser-guided ordnance. The extension of the authorities granted by the Secretary included approval of the E-O overflight.[77]

The North Vietnamese, meanwhile, were preparing for the forthcoming dry season by extending existing lines of communication and opening new ones. By early fall, US intelligence reported that the enemy was beginning his dry season logistics effort earlier than usual and that more would be moved through the Laotian panhandle than in previous years. The road/POL pipeline/waterway complex west of the DMZ was expected to serve as a major corridor, and a westward expansion of the supply system in Laos was predicted.[78]

A parallel effort to increase and improve protective measures and counter-air capabilities in both Laos and southern NVN accompanied the enemy's extension of his infiltration system. In mid-October, Admiral Moorer advised the Secretary of Defense that deployment of enemy SAM and AAA units to the vicinity of the NVN-Laos passes was likely to occur. A week later, he reported the detection of an increase in heavier caliber weapons and fire control radars together with a shift of gun concentration from coastal areas of North Vietnam to the LOCs and passes leading into Laos. Moreover, at least 12 SAM-firing battalions were

77. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-308-70 to SecDef, 21 Oct 70; (~~TS~~) Memo, ASD(ISA) to SecDef, 26 Oct 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 3 Nov 70; same file.

78. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-308-70 to SecDef, 21 Oct 70, same file.

deployed south of the 20th Parallel, and recent photography had revealed 10 occupied sites in the area. Two more battalions were believed to be in the area south of Vinh. The Chairman pointed out that previously two regiments of four firing battalions each had defended the southern panhandle. Now, he said, a third regiment had been activated, probably for defense of the major passes into Laos.[79]

To meet this increasing SAM/AAA threat, COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff resumed their quest, which was to continue throughout the 1970-1971 dry season campaign, for authority to mount pre-emptive strikes against SAM/AAA sites in the NVN panhandle. CINCPAC submitted his first request for such authority on 10 October 1970.[80]

In passing this request to the Secretary of Defense, Admiral Moorer stated:

> This year, with fewer sorties and forces to employ against a more determined enemy, we can ill afford to permit the enemy to drive the B-52 forces away from any of the crucial interdiction areas near the NVN border within range of his SAM/AAA sites . . . identified by COMUSMACV.

Admiral Moorer requested authority to destroy SAM/AAA installations below 20 degrees north within 25 nautical miles of the Laotian border or the DMZ that threatened US aircraft operating over North Vietnam or Laos. The requested authority would include both pre-emptive and retaliatory strikes. Admiral Moorer appreciated the political implications of his request, but considered the authority "well within the realm of executive policy for protective reaction for forces operating in Southeast Asia."[81]

79. (TS) CM-293-70 to SecDef, 14 Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (TS-GP 1) CM-308-70 to SecDef, 21 Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 70-Jun 71.

80. CINCPAC's message of 10 Oct 70 has not been found but is referred to in (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 250228Z Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

81. (TS) CM-293-70 to SecDef, 14 Oct 70, same file.

Secretary Laird rejected the request on 22 October. Although sharing the desire to reduce risks to US aircrews, he wanted "no military initiatives at this time" that could affect the favorable impact of President Nixon's recent peace proposals. Consequently, he directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to examine alternatives that did not entail substantial political risks, yet would enhance the protection of US aircrews if NVN deployed AAA and SAM forces in a manner to threaten critically US interdiction efforts in Laos.[82]

The Secretary of Defense's response did not satisfy the field commanders and, during the remainder of October, CINCPAC continued to seek authority for pre-emptive strikes against occupied SAM/AAA installations in North Vietnam below 20 degrees north. In a request on 27 October, he suggested a procedural alternative. Upon locating a threatening SAM/AAA site, COMUSMACV would issue to CINCPAC and Washington a declaration of intent to strike the site. Dispatched at least 12 hours prior to the attack, it would allow ample time for consideration of all factors involved "at highest level." Barring receipt of a hold order, COMUSMACV would then execute the strike as planned or as soon thereafter as the weather permitted. But none of CINCPAC's requests met with approval.[83]

On 13 November 1970, North Vietnamese ground fire hit and downed an unarmed US RF-4C reconnaissance aircraft 17 nautical miles north-northeast of Mu Gia pass. The following day, CINCPAC submitted an urgent request to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for pre-emptive strikes of enemy SAMs that threatened US planes over Laos or North Vietnam. This request, however, arrived in Washington at the same time that Admiral Moorer was tasked to develop a plan for a three-day strike against targets in North Vietnam below 20 degrees north. Subsequently, Admiral Moorer delegated this responsibility to CINCPAC, adding that no action would be taken on

82. (~~PS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Air Operating Authorities in Lao/NVN Border Areas," 22 Oct 70, same file.

83. (~~PS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 232146Z Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep-Oct 70. (~~PS~~-GP 1) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 250228Z and 270100Z Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

the proposal for pre-emptive attacks pending consideration of this strike plan.[84]

At CINCPAC's direction, COMUSMACV prepared and submitted a plan for 72-hour retaliatory air and naval operations against air defense targets in North Vietnam below 20 degrees north, but when authorized, the strike did not follow the COMUSMACV plan. On 19 November 1970, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to execute a protective reaction strike against air defense and logistics targets in North Vietnam south of 18 degrees 15 minutes north. The Chairman's directive provided only for a one-day strike with a second strike the following day if pilot debriefs and poststrike reconnaissance of the first strike indicated that a second would be productive. Attack was authorized against AAA/SAM-associated equipment threatening US activities in Mu Gia, Ban Karai, and Ban Raving areas and stockpiled supplies and vehicles in the general area of these AAA/SAM complexes, as well as interconnecting routes. Additionally, strikes were authorized against logistic stockpiles and associated transport on or near the routes leading into the pass area. As an exception to the prohibition against strikes above 18 degrees 15 minutes north, the Chairman authorized attack by IRON HAND and flack suppression aircraft on SAM/AAA sites above the line that posed a threat to strike forces.[85]

United States forces executed the strike, nicknamed FREEDOM BAIT, on 21 and 22 November, Saigon time (20 and 21 November, Washington time). A total of 210 aircraft from the 7th Air Force and Task Force 77 participated in two

84. (~~S~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 265-70, 13 Nov 70. NY Times, 14 Nov 70, 8. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 142340Z Nov 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 15354 to CINCPAC, 16 Nov 70; (~~TS~~) Draft DJSM Att to J3M-2097-70 to DJS, 16 Nov 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (Msg, CJCS 15293 to CINCPAC, 14 Nov 70, first requested plans for the 3-day strike. This msg has not been found, but it was possible to reconstruct it from the later cited documents.)

85. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 150654Z Nov 70; COMUSMACV 14807 to CINCPAC, 17 Nov 70; and CJCS 15483 to CINCPAC, 19 Nov 70; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

waves. Deteriorating weather forced cancellation of a third wave, severely curtailing the strike effort. Bomb damage assessment indicated considerable damage to logistics targets, but, although a number of SAM sites and related installations were attacked, their operational status was not appreciably impaired. General Abrams reported that the threat to the US interdiction effort from SAMs remained "virtually unchanged."[86]

Secretary Laird announced the air strikes in Washington at 0255 hours on 21 November 1970. "As part of our publicly announced policy and determined effort to protect American lives," he said, "we are conducting limited protection reaction air strikes against missile and antiaircraft facilities in North Vietnam south of the 19th parallel." The action was in response to attacks on unarmed US reconnaissance planes. These enemy attacks, the Secretary declared, were in violation of the 1968 bombing halt understanding that unarmed reconnaissance would continue. Mr. Laird said that the strikes were designed to protect the lives of US pilots flying interdiction missions against NVN military supplies throughout southern Laos moving toward South Vietnam. On the following day, he added that the United States would continue "protective reaction" operations as required to protect US pilots.[87]

One hour before the first air strike on 21 November (Saigon time), the United States launched an abortive effort to free US prisoners of war believed to be held near Hanoi. In a daring heliborne-raid, a small US party landed at Son Tay camp, 23 miles west of Hanoi, only to find the prisoners had been removed. The party successfully withdrew without serious casualties. One man was slightly wounded by enemy rifle fire and one helicopter was destroyed intentionally by the raiders after a crash landing. The United States did not announce the attempted rescue until 23 November.[88]

The FREEDOM BAIT attack did not accomplish its purpose of seriously damaging the NVN air defenses. On 23 November, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that, although FREEDOM BAIT should reduce the

86. (~~TS~~) NMCC Memos for Record, "Initial Report on Strikes in NVN," 21 Nov 70, and "Report on Strikes in NVN," 22 Nov 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 15061 to CINCPAC, 23 Nov 70; same file.
87. NY Times, 21 Nov 70, 11; 22 Nov 70, 1.
88. Ibid., 24 Nov 70, 1, 12.

immediate threat, it was only a temporary solution. He went on to request standing authority for pre-emptive attacks on occupied SAM and SAM-support installations and components in North Vietnam within 19 miles of the Laotian border or the DMZ. Admiral Moorer believed that FREEDOM BAIT had reduced the political impact of such protective reaction strikes. "I see no political risks in these authorities," he said, "which are not outweighed by the continuing threat to our current interdiction and reconnaissance operations."[89]

The Secretary of Defense did not approve the requested authority. On 30 November, he informed Admiral Moorer that he found existing authorities adequate for the present threat. He reiterated his desire to avoid actions that might endanger the President's peace initiatives or lead to more serious violations of the 1968 bombing halt understandings. In addition, he feared that any expansion in strike authority at that time might undermine congressional support for the 1971 Defense budget and the supplemental military assistance appropriation. He directed Admiral Moorer to watch the situation closely; should a pattern of hostile reactions or threats develop, he would consider another strike such as FREEDOM BAIT. He shared Admiral Moorer's concern for the safety of the B-52 force. If the Admiral believed the threat was increasing, the Secretary suggested the following actions: increases in the number of IRON HAND aircraft; changes in tactics or flight patterns of the B-52s; and substitution of tactical aircraft for B-52s in the high-risk areas near the borders.[90]

On several occasions during December 1970, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense of increasing NVN air defense activity. He continued to seek permission not only to attack SAM sites and support installations, but also to react to an expected deployment of MIGs to airfields south of 20 degrees north. None of these requests was granted. The Chairman asked CINCPAC on 8 Debember to comment on Secretary Laird's suggested changes in operating methods. Admiral McCain referred the query to CINCSAC, who replied that

89. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-382-70 to SecDef, 23 Nov 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

90. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Strike Authority," 30 Nov 70, same file.

current B-52 tactics were believed to be the most effective possible but that they were under constant study.[91]

On 1 January 1971, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC reported the firing of three SAMs at US aircraft over Laos in the vicinity of Ban Karai Pass and requested authority to strike the offending site. This time the authority was granted. On the same day, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized armed reconnaissance in the Ban Karai-Route 137 area, as soon as the weather permitted, followed by a one-time strike when the site or equipment was located. The weather prevented immediate implementation of the strike, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff extended the authority first through 4 January and, subsequently, until 18 January. In response to a COMUSMACV/CINCPAC request, they also obtained Secretary Laird's approval for expansion of the authority to include a one-time strike against two SA-2 missiles on transporters on Route 101F.[92]

The authority for the one-time attack on SAM sites in the Ban Karai-Route 137 area expired on 18 January without its having been executed. Admiral Moorer explained to the Secretary of Defense: "Weather and enemy caution precluded effective armed reconnaissance or strike action against located SAM/AAA equipment and installations while the authority was in effect." Consequently, during the latter part of January 1971, the NVN air defense threat remained unchanged. Admiral

91. (TS) CM-397-70 to SecDef, 1 Dec 70; (TS-GP 1) CM-431-70 to SecDef, 14 Dec 70; (TS-GP 1) CM-452-70 to SecDef, 21 Dec 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 16306 to CINCPAC, 8 Dec 70; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCSAC to CINCPAC, 121750Z Dec 70; same file.

92. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 011953Z Jan 71, JCS IN 21317; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9204 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 1 Jan 71; (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 040735Z Jan 71, JCS IN 23257; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9322 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 5 Jan 71 (this msg has handwritten notation of SecDef approval); (TS) Draft memo, CJCS to SecDef, "Authority to Strike Sites in NVN (TS)," n.d.; (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to DSecDef, "Request for Strike Authority," n.d. (has handwritten approval by DSecDef, dated 5 Jan 71; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 9219 and 9383 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 2 and 6 Jan 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 111135Z Jan 71 (this message, which extended the authorities until 18 Jan 71, has not been located, but is referred to in a draft message attached to (TS-GP 1) CM-523-71 to SecDef, 20 Jan 71, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

Moorer, on behalf of COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, continued to seek throughout the remainder of the dry season campaign expanded authorities to meet and destroy that threat.[93]

The Situation at the Year's End

The military situation in Vietnam at the close of 1970 was encouraging. During the year, the RVNAF expanded by approximately 80,000 men and assumed a major share of the combat operations. Simultaneously, US strength dropped by almost 140,000 men, and this reduction was accompanied by a decline in casualties. American combat deaths in Vietnam in 1970 fell to approximately 4,200, or about half of the 1969 figure and significantly below the record figure of 14,561 in 1968. Even as the United States disengaged from the fighting, the military operations continued to go well. The enemy had abandoned large-scale operations, reverting to guerrilla warfare and economy-of-force tactics. The RVNAF extended its outposts into areas formerly controlled by the Viet Cong, exerting government control over more of the countryside. In addition, both US and RVNAF spokesmen claimed that the Cambodian invasion, the major operation of the year, had significantly weakened the enemy's ability to attack South Vietnam. The fall-off in enemy operations, together with the extension of RVN control over the countryside, allowed steady and continuous progress in pacification during the year, and these indicators all seemed to point toward the success of President Nixon's Vietnamization policy.[94]

93. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-523-71 to SecDef, 20 Jan 71, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

United States aircraft did carry out two protective reaction strikes in other areas of North Vietnam on 8 January 1971. The pilot of a F-105 escorting B-52s in Laos fired at a SAM installation in the Mu Gia pass area when he discovered that his plane was being tracked by enemy radar, and an A-4 accompanying a reconnaissance flight over North Vietnam fired at a coastal radar site 110 miles above the DMZ when it became "locked in" by enemy radar. Neither attack was successful. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 6-71, 9 Jan 71. NY Times, 10 Jan 71, 1; 13 Jan 71, 8.

94. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. I-1 - I-6, III-94 - III-96, V-14.

At the end of 1970, as had been the case at the end of every year since the United States involvement in Vietnam began, the encouraging indicators were paralleled by a number of worrisome uncertainties. Following the Cambodian operation, the North Vietnamese immediately began a supply buildup in southern Laos and Cambodia, with signs pointing to the biggest logistical effort of the war. The ability of the Cambodian army to withstand harassment by enemy forces was uncertain, and the long-standing animosities between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese produced tensions among the FANK and RVNAF forces operating in Cambodia. Additionally, the continuing drawdown of US combat forces left fewer assets in South Vietnam.

Another cause of concern to US officials was the failure of the Republic of Vietnam to root out the Communist subversive apparatus. Although the estimated number of agents in South Vietnam had declined from 100,000 to 60,000 since 1968, the remaining agents could still play an important role in the enemy's current strategy of guerrilla action, terrorism, and political subversion. Some US officials also questioned the ability and inclination of the local RVNAF forces--the RF and PF--to cope with the increased enemy guerrilla tactics and terrorism. The record of the RF and PF had, at best, been spotty, and it was feared that they could not contend with the expected increase in guerrilla activity in the coming year. There was also some anxiety over the coming political campaign in South Vietnam, with the possibility that a strongly contested presidential election might set off another period of coups and countercoups.95

In spite of these uncertainties, US and South Vietnamese officials were cautiously optimistic over the military situation. A military defeat of South Vietnam appeared unlikely for several years to come. The enemy's general offensives had failed, and his supply and infiltration system was severely damaged. But, despite the improvement on the battlefield, the hopes for a lasting peace were no nearer to realization at the end of 1970 than at the beginning of the year. The Paris talks remained deadlocked with scant prospect for any political settlement. More and more observers predicted a future marked by neither total peace nor all-out

95. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. I-3 - I-6. NY Times, 27 Dec 70, 3.

war. One experienced US official in Saigon summed up this feeling when he stated: "My own thought is that nobody is going to live happily everafter."[96]

96. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. I-6. NY Times, 27 Dec 70, 3.

TABLE VIII

Forces in Vietnam, 1970

US Forces[1]

	1 January	31 December
Army	330,648	250,653
Air Force	58,463	43,137
Navy	30,236	16,502
Marine Corps	55,039	25,394
Coast Guard	433	108
Total	474,819	335,794

RVNAF[2]

ARVN	416,278	414,074
VNN	30,143	40,709
VNMC	11,528	13,635
VNAF	36,469	44,997
RF	260,455	283,106
PF	214,383	250,889
Total	969,256	1,047,410

Third Country Forces[3]

Australia	7,672	6,768
Republic of China	29	31
Republic of Korea	48,869	48,537
New Zealand	552	441
Philippines	189	74
Spain	10	7
Thailand	11,568	11,586
Total	68,889	67,444

1. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. IV-7.
2. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VI-13. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VIII-7, 15, 18 21, 21.
3. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. IV-33.

TABLE IX

US Senior Advisers for 1970[1]

MR 1

	LTG Herman Nickerson, Jr.	USMC	CG, III MAF
Mar 70	LTG K.B. McCutcheon	USMC	CG, III MAF
9 Mar 70	LTG Melvin Zais	USA	CG, XXIV Corps[2]
Jun 70	LTG James W. Sutherland	USA	CG, XXIV Corps
Dec 70	LTG Donn J. Robertson	USMC	CG, III MAF

MR II

	LTG Charles A. Corcoran	USA	CG, I FFORCEV
Feb 70	LTG Arthur S. Collins,Jr.	USA	CG, I FFORCEV

MR III

	LTG Julian J. Ewell	USA	CG, II FFORCEV
Apr 70	LTG Michael S. Davison	USA	CG, II FFORCEV

MR IV[3]

1. First named incumbent occupied the position on 1 January 1970. Date of successor is indicated.

2. After 9 March 1970 the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) was a separate uniservice command subordinate to and under the control of CG, XXIV Corps.

3. MR IV did not have a Senior Adviser in 1970. The Commanding General of the Delta Military Assistance Command (DMAC) on 1 January 1970 was MG R. Wetherill, USA. He was replaced in January by MG Hal D. McCown, USA.

TABLE X

1970 Holiday Cease-fire Violations and Casualties[1]

	Major Violations	Minor Violations	US KIA	US WIA	RVNAF KIA	RVNAF WIA	Enemy Kills
Tet	73	39	3	20	7	36	133
Buddha's Birthday	58	85	1	15	15	97	149
Christmas	47	41	0	4	13	49	32
New Year's	48	37	1	11	12	51	63

1. (S-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 32-70, 7 Feb 70; 117-70, 19 May 70; 300-70, 28 Dec 70; 1-71, 4 Jan 71.

Chapter 10

VIETNAMIZATION IN 1970

Vietnamization was the policy designed to end US military involvement in Vietnam, even if diplomatic negotiations produced no solution. It consisted of two complementary aspects--a strengthening of the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam in order for them to take over the combat effort and a progressive reduction of US forces in Vietnam. President Johnson began the process in 1968 when he initiated planning to improve and modernize the RVN forces with a view to their shouldering a larger share of the war. President Nixon expanded and accelerated these plans during 1969 and began actual withdrawal of US troops, calling this approach "Vietnamization."

The stalemate in the negotiations during 1970 necessitated continued reliance on Vietnamization as the means of reducing US involvement in Vietnam. In 1969, public criticism had been a major influence on policy decisions, but in 1970 economic and fiscal considerations became the dominant factors. The Administration desired faster RVNAF buildup accompanied by hastened US withdrawals, but it was wary of approaching Congress for the money needed to speed the expansion of the RVNAF. Throughout the year, the Secretary of Defense repeatedly counseled the Joint Chiefs of Staff that all funding for increased RVNAF improvement must be found within existing and projected budgets--in other words, through compensating reductions in Southeast Asia or other defense programs. As Secretary Laird explained to General Abrams during a visit to Vietnam in early 1970, "the major constraint on US involvement was now economic." Outlays for Vietnam, he said, could no longer be considered separately from other worldwide defense needs.[1]

The Consolidated Phase III RVNAF I&M Program

Planning for faster improvement of the RVNAF had begun in late 1969. On 10 November 1969, the Secretary of Defense

1. (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, February 10-14, 1970," 17 Feb 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 70.

asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare a Phase III RVNAF program (the consolidation phase). It should be designed to raise RVNAF effectiveness to the point where the Republic of Vietnam could maintain "at least current levels of security" while US forces were reduced to a "support force" by 1 July 1971 and to an "advisory force" two years thereafter. Two alternative US support force levels were to be considered, totaling 260,000 and 190,000 respectively. The plan was to include an analysis of RVNAF missions, force structure, and new equipment requirements. Moreover, it was to address qualitative deficiencies in the RVNAF, in training, morale, and leadership. Finally, it was to include a review of US redeployment plans to insure that they properly reflected the objectives of Phase III.[2]

After consulting CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their Phase III program to the Secretary of Defense on 29 January 1970. Their conclusion was that neither of the two manpower figures suggested by Mr. Laird would provide a US support force adequate to enable the Republic of Vietnam to maintain current levels of security against the existing VC/NVA threat. Fortunately, however, the threat seemed to be declining. The Joint Chiefs of Staff cited pacification progress in the past 15 months and a 50,000-man decline of in-country enemy strength during the past year. The Phase III program was predicated on the assumption that the enemy threat would continue to decline. This assumption was necessary if US manpower figures within range of the ones originally suggested by Secretary Laird were to be achieved. But even then, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to acknowledge that "the current FY 1971 budget does not provide sufficient resources to support the extra cost of Vietnamization along with the US force levels and recommended out-of-country/offshore effort discussed in this report."

The Phase III program focused attention on three major areas: first, it would expand the RVNAF and initiate measures to improve the quality of the forces; second, it considered four alternative US support force structures to be attained by the end of FY 1971; third, it recommended a MAAG force

2. (PS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization--RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Aspects and Related US Planning (U)," 10 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2472/552, 10 Nov 69, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 1.

structure for end FY 1973. Whereas past RVNAF I&M programs had raised RVNAF levels almost to the limit that the RVN manpower base could support, the Phase III program recommended only slight increases in the RVNAF structure along with some internal readjustments. For example, the 11 ARVN divisions, which were nearly complete, would be allotted an additional 10 battalions of artillery as well as truck companies and medical units. The VNMC would receive another brigade headquarters. The CIDG would be phased out, thus reducing the Vietnamese Special Forces. The VNN would receive additional small craft for combat, minesweeping, harbor defense, and logistics, raising the total VNN inventory to 1,700 ships and craft.

The Phase III program would add five helicopter, two transport, and two attack squadrons to the VNAF and increase current squadron unit equipment to achieve a greater effect without enlarging the VNAF command and control structure. Ultimately, the VNAF would be expanded to a total force of 49 squadrons. Finally, the territorial forces (RF/PF) and the National Police would be expanded to maintain the current momentum of pacification and to provide additional command and control elements for already approved units.

The Phase III program recommended the expansion of the RVNAF sensor program to prepare the RVNAF to assume responsibility for the security of the DMZ and of major installations and cities. Signal Intelligence forces would be doubled and provided with additional equipment while the RVNAF logistic system was being expanded to provide combat service support for the proposed overall force structure increases. The entire Phase III force structure increases and added equipment requirements would cost approximately $980 million and would expand the RVNAF to the following levels:

Forces	FY 1970	Proposed End FY 1971	FY 1972	FY 1973
Regular Forces				
ARVN	391,235	406,962	410,720	422,224
VNN	37,697	37,697	37,697	37,947
VNAF	38,536	38,536	41,766	43,737
VNMC	13,070	13,435	13,435	13,435
Total Regular	480,538	496,630	503,618	517,343
Territorial Forces				
RF	275,670	287,591	287,591	287,591
PF	239,390	247,799	256,571	256,571
Total Territorial Forces	515,060	535,390	544,162	544,162
Total RVNAF	995,598	1,032,020	1,047,780	1,061,505

As part of the Phase III program the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a training plan for the RVNAF for the period 1970-1973, as developed by COMUSMACV. Their projections indicated that in-country training centers would be at or near maximum use during the next two and a half years. Offshore training facilities were expected to train some 15,000 RVNAF personnel during the same period. The US advisory program, reduced in size, would be reoriented to emphasize training, organization, and management instead of tactics.

The second major area of the Phase III program evaluated the effect of reducing US support forces to 190,000 or 260,000 men, as the Secretary had directed. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered two other possible figures, 218,000 and 270,000. All were based on the following assumptions: that the enemy threat would continue to decline through end FY 1973 (at an unspecified rate); that momentum in pacification would be maintained; that RVNAF capabilities would continue improving; that two FWMAF divisions would be maintained in-country; and that the US would provide support forces to conduct interdiction, air defense, and ARC LIGHT missions through FY 1973. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the 190,000 and 218,000 figures infeasible. Such forces would be too small to respond effectively to contingencies, and the progress of Vietnamization as well as the

protection of US forces would be jeopardized. The 260,000 and 270,000 alternatives were more acceptable. Under either, US forces would maintain the capability to provide the RVNAF with combat support to offset possible shortfalls and retain a US capacity for self-defense. The difference between the two figures seemed small, but it was significant when calculated in terms of combat capability. Trimming the 270,000 force structure by 10,000 would result in a 20 percent reduction of combat maneuver battalions. Therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended approval of the 270,000 figure.

Because it would be difficult to forecast the level of the enemy threat after July 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff avoided setting a US force structure goal for FY 1972. But assuming continued RVNAF improvement and retention of current US out-of-country/offshore support forces through mid-FY 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended initiation of planning for a 43,000 MAAG force structure for end FY 1973. The FY 1971 force structure would have to be phased down to the MAAG force on a "cut and try basis," they believed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were unwilling to describe the composition of either the MAAG or the supplemental support until actual conditions were known.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested expeditious approval of their Phase III program, including the 270,000 US in-country force level for end FY 1971 and a 43,000-man MAAG by the end of FY 1973, to permit development of follow-on plans and directives and as a basis for coordination with the Republic of Vietnam. They were firm in recommending that the phasedown to the FY 1971 and 1973 goals be undertaken on the "cut and try" principle, applied under the guidelines they had set forth rather than following a schedule of "predetermined fixed force levels" for successive dates. Finally, since the FY 1971 budget was "stringent to the point of inflexibility," the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested that sufficient additional resources be provided to support the program. "To the extent that the program recommended may not coincide with current . . . fiscal guidance, differences will have to be resolved, keyed to the most urgent priority--the attainment of US objectives in Southeast Asia."[3]

3. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-42-70 to SecDef, 29 Jan 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/552-9, 24 Jan 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 3.

Secretary Laird did not act on this Phase III program until 13 March 1970, and in the meantime, a number of events, both preceding and following the JCS submission, influenced the Secretary's decision. On 12 January 1970, even before the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their recommendations, the Republic of Vietnam presented the United States with a request for a 170,164-man increase in the RVNAF by the end of FY 1971, which would raise the total RVNAF structure to 1,100,000. The South Vietnamese wanted to implement a sensory device plan for border surveillance and infiltration control and to provide additional radar, artillery, armor, and air defense support as well as strengthen the RF and PF. In addition, assistance in improving the standard of living for RVNAF servicemen was desired. Specifically, the Republic of Vietnam asked for renewal of the canned food assistance program, as implemented in 1968, and building material for 20,000 housing units per year for five years for RVNAF dependents.[4]

Three days later, on 15 January, the Deputy Secretary of Defense forwarded to the Service Secretaries, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and various other Defense components tentative fiscal guidance for the FY 1972 budget. He believed that the total DOD figures represented the maximum that could be obtained in view of available economic resources, the non-defense demands on the Federal budget, and the attitude of Congress and the general public on defense expenditures. He emphasized that, unless there was some change in the international situation, it would be unrealistic to plan on higher funding levels than those he set forth. If increases were recommended in one category, reductions should be identified in other categories to stay within the overall totals. With regard to Southeast Asia, the tentative guidance provided for a US force structure in the Republic of Vietnam of 260,000 by the end of FY 1971 and 29,500 by the conclusion of FY 1973--both below the preferred levels that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were to recommend two weeks later in their Phase III RVNAF I&M program.[5]

4. (S) RVNAF Force Structure Increase Plan 12-69, n.d., Encl to (S-GP 4) Ltr, C/S MACV to CJCS, 14 Jan 70, Att to JCS 2472/588, 29 Jan 70, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 70).

5. (S-GP 1) Memo DSecDef to CJCS et al., "FY 72-76 Fiscal Guidance Memorandum," 15 Jan 70, Att to JCS 2458/677, 16 Jan 70, JMF 555 (15 Jan 70) sec 1.

After more than a month of study, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense on 21 February of their concern over the severity of the fiscal constraints reflected in the tentative guidance. They considered that it did not provide sufficient funds, within a prudent level of risk, to maintain an adequate overall US force structure and deterrent posture under current world conditions. With respect to Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted the assumption of a continuing reduction in US forces, reaching MAAG levels by the end of FY 1973. There was no allowance for the possibility that enemy activity might be such as to preclude these withdrawals, in which case additional funds would be required. Their further comment implied that the restrictions on funding could make this unfavorable development more likely. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the phasedown of out-of-country and offshore effort envisaged in the tentative guidance would fail to provide the level of support necessary for the RVN Armed Forces, as recommended in their recent RVNAF Phase III report.[6]

As already mentioned, Secretary Laird visited South Vietnam in early February and explained to both US and RVN leaders that the "major constraint" on US involvement was now economic. Reduced US funds, he said, were now "consistently narrowing US operational latitude" in Southeast Asia, a fact that provided "an incentive and reinforcement to the Vietnamization policy." Mr. Laird sensed a lack of full realization in Vietnam of the impact of the cuts in the FY 1970 budget and those pending for FY 1971. Noting that there appeared to be a difference "on the order of $1 billion" between COMUSMACV's desires and available resources, the Secretary told General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker that no supplemental Vietnam appropriations could be expected. This left two alternatives, he said: to find more effective ways of using existing resources or to pull out more US troops.

The Secretary of Defense returned to Washington impressed with the progress in the military aspects of Vietnamization, but aware that "monumental" tasks remained. He reported to the President that the economic aspects of Vietnamization were

6. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-65-70 to SecDef, 21 Feb 70, Encl A to JCS 2458/677-8, 14 Feb 70, same file, sec 2.

fraught with potential hazards. Stabilization and expansion of South Vietnam's economy were matters to which both the United States and the Republic of Vietnam must devote immediate attention.

Secretary Laird found continuing US redeployment an "agreed assumption" in Vietnam, with only the issues of composition and timing remaining. The South Vietnamese, he told the President, were "perhaps more confident . . . than our U.S. leadership." Indeed, COMUSMACV had contended that the next (fourth) redeployment increment would be crucial; if military reverses were sustained in the wake of troop withdrawals, "the psychological impact could be severe." Although the Secretary did not fully understand General Abrams' fears, he advised the President that "redeployment increment four will be more difficult than the immediately succeeding increments."[7]

After his return from Vietnam, the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to draft a plan for reducing US strength in Thailand by approximately 10,000 spaces, to reach 32,200 by 30 June 1971. Although he believed the United States should defer any decision on such reductions until enemy intentions for the current dry season became more clear, he thought preliminary planning should begin immediately in view of the complexity of the problem and the need for consultation with the Royal Thai Government on the political implications.[8]

On 13 March 1970, the Secretary of Defense notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff of his decision on the Phase III RVNAF program. At the outset, he made it clear that no additional funds could be provided, noting that it was "most unlikely" that Congress would provide additional FY 1970 or 1971 appropriations for the Vietnam war. Consequently, he directed that all funding for the proposed plan must be met from within existing and foreseeable DOD budgets; when recommended levels of activity could not be thus supported, the Joint Chiefs of Staff should identify appropriate trade-offs.

7. (TS) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, February 10-14, 1970," 17 Feb 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 70.

8. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Force Planning--Thailand (U)," 19 Feb 70, Att to JCS 2353/180-4, 19 Feb 70, JMF 910/374 (25 Aug 69).

Within these limits, the Secretary approved the general concept of the JCS Phase III plan and the programs and force structures proposed for the RVNAF for FY 1970 and FY 1971. This approval was subject to revision based upon further detailed planning, consideration of the proposals submitted by the Republic of Vietnam on 12 January, and more careful study of South Vietnamese economic limitations. He deferred approval of the RVNAF programs for FY 1972 and FY 1973, except for VNAF pilot training, and requested revised recommendations regarding RVNAF programs for those fiscal years based on the RVN 12 January proposals and on a study of costs. With regard to US force structure planning, the Secretary of Defense approved only the FY 1973 MAAG. He requested re-evaluation of the proposed FY 1971 structure, taking into account budgetary decisions and guidance. The Secretary recognized the JCS rationale for supporting a 270,000 force level for end FY 1971, but he believed that US planning should continue to address both the 260,000 and 190,000 levels to allow maximum flexibility in meeting future developments.[9]

Later in March, Secretary Laird issued final fiscal guidance for FY 1972. Implicit in the guidance was acceptance of the 260,000 level for US forces remaining in South Vietnam by the end of FY 1971, but the figure for end FY 1973 was 43,400--the MAAG level the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended rather than the 29,500 that had appeared in the tentative guidance.[10]

The Secretary of Defense forwarded to the Department of State both the JCS Phase III program and his decision on it. In subsequent comments on this exchange, Secretary of State Rogers commended the agreement reached that the US military presence in South Vietnam would be cut down to a 43,000-man

9. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization--Consolidated Improvement and Modernization (I&M) Program and Related US Planning (U)," 13 Mar 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-15, 14 Mar 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 4.

10. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., "FY 1972-76 Fiscal and Logistic Guidance--Planning Assumptions for the War in Southeast Asia," 24 Mar 70, Att to JCS 2458/677-19, 27 Mar 70, JMF 555 (15 Jan 70) sec 3.

MAAG by mid-1973. The preference of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a 270,000 force level at the end of FY 1971 was viewed less favorably, since the justification given was that this level would provide US combat elements that could offset RVNAF combat shortfalls. Secretary Rogers observed, "It had not been our understanding of Administration policy that U.S. forces would have this kind of combat role at that time." The Secretary of State "especially" endorsed the recommendation that flexibility be maintained in execution of redeployment schedules, to allow for acceleration as well as prudent delay.

> The "cut and try" method should be designed to give the President maximum ability to adjust his decisions . . . to developments which bear on them. Given the current events in Cambodia and Laos there are both dangers and opportunities which we cannot fully foresee at this time.[11]

Further US Redeployments

While US officials in Washington deliberated over the Phase III RVNAF improvement program, US troop redeployment from South Vietnam continued. At the start of 1970, the United States had completed two withdrawal increments amounting to 65,000 men, and US forces totaling 474,819[12] remained in South Vietnam (although the authorized ceiling approved by the President was 484,000). In mid-December 1969, President Nixon had announced a third US redeployment of 50,000 to be completed by 15 April 1970.[13] This third increment, nicknamed KEYSTONE BLUEJAY, began in early February 1970 after being purposely delayed in order to retain as many US troops as possible in South Vietnam during the Tet period (5-6 February). The KEYSTONE BLUEJAY redeployment proceeded without incident and was completed by 15 April 1970. Major US units departing South Vietnam included the 1st Infantry Division, the 3d Brigade of the

11. (TS-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 14 Apr 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-28, 17 Apr 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) Sec 8.
12. The figure reported at the completion of the second increment on 15 December 1969 was 472,442; see Chapter 4, p. 125.
13. See Chapter 4.

4th Infantry Division, the USAF 12th Tactical Fighter Group, and the USMC 26th Regimental Landing Team. In all, the third redeployment increment comprised 29,500 Army, 2,000 Navy, 5,600 Air Force, and 12,900 Marine Corps personnel.[14]

As this third increment neared completion, it was obvious that the President would have to make an announcement on the further course of redeployment. With this in mind, COMUSMACV forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 March 1970 a detailed assessment of the situation in South Vietnam. He reported that an enemy logistical buildup in Laos as well as the shifting of regiments from III to IV CTZ portended increased offensive activity in South Vietnam during the spring and early summer. General Abrams considered the US ground, naval, and air forces currently committed to the conflict in South Vietnam essential to the success of Vietnamization. Any planning for further reductions should be based on the cut and try method and assessment of the impact of all elements of the total situation. He feared, however, that additional redeployments were being contemplated without regard to the operational requirements or the progress of the RVNAF. Such action, he believed, could upset "the military and psychological balance" in South Vietnam and jeopardize the ultimate success of the Vietnamization program. The US withdrawals already accomplished, he stated, had strained the capabilities of the RVNAF, and he opposed further redeployments pending developments over the next three months. The Joint Chiefs of Staff gave this assessment to the Secretary of Defense on 16 March 1970, recommending that it be provided to the President.[15]

What use the Secretary made of the COMUSMACV assessment is not found in the record, but on 31 March 1970, he asked for JCS views on continuing redeployments. He wanted them to consider not only military developments, but also

14. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. IV-7 - IV-16.

15. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 3303 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 13 Mar 70; (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-117-70 to SecDef, 16 Mar 70, Encl to JCS 2472/552-17, 16 Mar 70; JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 6.

budgetary "facts of life" and the question of US public support for continued Southeast Asia operations.[16]

Replying three days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary an assessment of the situation in South Vietnam. It reflected the significant progress in the Vietnamization program of the past 10 months as well as the critical nature of the coming several months. The gains thus far were "fragile," and the enemy was capable of causing setbacks in the current favorable trends. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the 115,500 US withdrawals to date with the accompanying one-third reduction in maneuver battalions had exceeded the decrease in enemy forces. In addition, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces could mount offensives on short notice, though the Joint Chiefs of Staff doubted such attacks could be sustained. Further reduction in the already limited allied capabilities during the next few months clearly risked a successful enemy effort to slow or reverse the pacification trends.

Holding that action in South Vietnam could not be considered in isolation from the uncertain situations in Cambodia and Laos, the Joint Chiefs of Staff affirmed General Abrams' call for a pause in redeployments. All factors counseled such a course in order to assess and consolidate the gains already made in Vietnamization. They added that continuation of withdrawals without a pause would bring into question the "credibility" of the cut and try principle. Consequently, they recommended that the decision and announcement on further US troop redeployment from South Vietnam be deferred until 15 June 1970. They recognized that this delay might bring adverse public reaction, but believed that the reaction could be reduced by "a factual public affairs program." With respect to budget implications, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that the impact of a pause in redeployments would be "relatively small in FY 1970," adding that the trade offs necessary to reconcile resources and requirements for

16. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Redeployment Planning," 31 Mar 70, Encl to JCS 2472/611, 2 Apr 70, JMF 911/374 (2 Apr 70).

FY 1971 would be addressed in their reassessment of Phase III of the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program, scheduled to be submitted to the Secretary by 30 April 1970.[17]

The JCS advice went unheeded. President Nixon announced further redeployments on 20 April 1970. Reporting the return of 115,500 US troops as of 15 April, he told the nation in a televised address that "We have now reached a point where we can confidently move from a period of 'cut and try' to a longer-range program for the replacement of Americans by South Vietnamese troops." An additional 150,000 US troops would be withdrawn over the next year. The President avoided setting out any schedule for this reduction, merely stating that it would be completed "during the spring of next year," with the timing and pace determined by "our best judgment" of the current military and diplomatic situation.[18]

The President's announcement decided the basic question on further US redeployments, but the composition and scheduling of these redeployments was to take four months to resolve. In accordance with the presidential decision, the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 24 April to recommend a plan for the reduction of 150,000 authorized spaces in RVN to reach a ceiling of 284,000 by 1 May 1971. The Secretary directed that the plan provide for a 50,000 reduction by 15 October, but it need not exceed 60,000 by the end of the year.[19] Acting on presidential guidance, Secretary Laird instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to base the plan on only one of the three previously announced criteria for US withdrawals--progress in the

17. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-150-70 to SecDef, 3 Apr 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/611, 2 Apr 70, same file.

18. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 373-377.

19. The withdrawal of 60,000 men would leave 90,000 to be redeployed between 1 January and 30 April 1970. The three increments--50,000, 10,000 (the difference between 60,000 and 50,000), and 90,000--were referred to in subsequent redeployment planning as the "original schedule."

improvement of the RVNAF. The other two criteria--progress in negotiations and the level of enemy activity--would have bearing only to the extent of causing acceleration or temporary delay of redeployments, and the plan must have sufficient flexibility to permit these alterations.[20]

Revised Phase III RVNAF I&M Program

At the time of President Nixon's decision on further US force reductions and Mr. Laird's request for a redeployment plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were completing revision of their Phase III RVNAF I&M program, in accordance with the Secretary's 13 March directive. On 30 April they submitted this revised program, advising Secretary Laird that it represented a "reconciliation" between needs and available resources.

The plan included a revised Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program, subsequently referred to as CRIMP, based on reassessment of the recommendations contained in the original Phase III program (as submitted on 29 January) and taking into account the RVN proposals made in January 1970. The revised program had the support of COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Republic of Vietnam, and provided for:

20. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Troop Redeployment Planning, Vietnam," 24 Apr 70, JMF 911/374 (24 Apr 70).

Forces	FY 1971	Proposed End FY 1972	FY 1973
Regular Forces			
ARVN	434,019	441,829	447,456
VNN	39,611	39,611	39,611
VNAF	38,780	44,712	46,998
VNMC	13,462	13,462	13,462
RF	294,446	294,446	294,446
PF	258,027	258,027	258,027
Total RVNAF	1,078,345	1,092,087	1,100,000
Total Paramilitary	179,410	163,285	149,160
Total RVNAF plus Paramilitary	1,257,755	1,255,372	1,249,160

In accordance with the RVN January request, the revised program also provided for additional canned food assistance for the RVNAF, at a cost of $95.4 million over the period FY 1971-1973, and for construction of 20,000 RVNAF dependent shelters per year for five years at a cost of $6 million per year.

The new program, like the earlier version, contained annexes dealing with RVNAF improvement in the areas of intelligence, communications-electronics, training, and morale. Training of the RVNAF was an area in which both the Secretary of Defense and the President had expressed a special interest. The training annex presented a concept for developing a self-sufficient RVNAF by 1 July 1973 through a combination of training at RVNAF Service schools and training centers, in-country on-the-job training, and offshore schooling.

Accompanying the revised program was a tentative US force structure involving approximately 260,000 men, to be achieved by 30 June 1971. This proposal, which reflected the Secretary's fiscal guidance of 24 March 1970, was subject to revision to conform with execution of the recently announced withdrawal of 150,000 spaces by the spring of 1971. The Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized to the Secretary of Defense

the need to avoid personnel turbulence and disruption of RVNAF morale in executing redeployments. Hence the manner in which the pending 150,000 withdrawal was accomplished was of "critical concern." For the end of FY 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested a 44,755-man US force in the Republic of Vietnam--a MAAG of 25,650 spaces plus a 19,105-man force for "supplemental requirements." This force exceeded slightly the Secretary's guidance, which had specified a figure of 43,400 by the same date.

To meet the requirements of their revised program without additional funds, the Joint Chiefs of Staff identified the following trade offs: reduction of US space authorization in Thailand to about 32,200 by 30 June 1971 (in keeping with Secretary Laird's directive of 19 February 1970[21]); redeployment and deactivation of an Army division from Korea by 15 May 1971 and withdrawal of two USAF fighter squadrons from Korea by 1 September 1970; reduction of US air activity in Southeast Asia to a monthly average of 1,000 B-52 and 12,700 TACAIR sorties in FY 1971, with provision for surges, given additional funds, to meet emergencies; reduction of naval gunfire support from six to three ships; and unilateral reprogramming by the US Navy and Air Force involving possible early deactivations of selected units.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff made quite clear to the Secretary of Defense that this program, drawn to conform to his guidance, did not satisfy them. They found it not in consonance with the rate of progress in Vietnamization, the current enemy threat, or the uncertain situation in Laos and Cambodia. Therefore they requested that the Secretary of Defense seek further funds to retain surge capability options and to accommodate the 150,000 personnel reduction to progress in Vietnamization, thereby avoiding personnel and logistical turbulence and allowing periods of level-strength stability between redeployment increments. But even if additional funds were provided, the "substantial reduction" involved in the revised program would, in the JCS view, incur "unacceptable" military risks.[22]

21. See above, p. 380.

22. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-202-70 to SecDef, 20 Apr 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/552-31, 27 Apr 70; JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 9.

The Services, too, were not happy with this revised program, though for a different reason. The Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force both notified the Secretary of Defense that their budgets did not contain sufficient flexibility to meet the additional unfunded FY 1971 requirements of the revised RVNAF I&M program.[23]

The Cambodian incursion, launched on 1 May 1970, brought a great public outcry in the United States. The seeming expansion of the war in the face of the President's recent announcement of further troop reductions produced considerable doubt both in Congress and in the press regarding the Administration's intentions in Vietnam. Concern over this reaction made Secretary Laird particularly vigilant with regard to variations in US troop strength. On 15 May, he advised General Wheeler and the Secretaries of the Military Departments that, even though actual force levels remained under the authorized ceiling, an increase such as had occurred between 30 April and 7 May (1,136 personnel) could create "potentially troublesome effects." Every effort should be made, he said, to avoid further increases and, if possible, to effect gradual reductions while the full FY 1971 schedules were being formulated.[24]

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff replied that, by earlier agreement, redeployments were planned and residual strengths maintained on the single criterion of authorized troop level, without regard to the actual personnel count as it fluctuated from week to week. Abandonment of this policy, he contended, would deny COMUSMACV required flexibility in managing troop strengths and might, as a consequence of statistical confusion, create a credibility gap. The Secretary responded that he did not desire "to establish dual accounting standards, i.e., (1) an authorization ceiling and (2) a lower actual manpower ceiling." He fully endorsed the continued use of the authorized strength approach by COMUSMACV

23. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, "Vietnamization-Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program and Related Planning," 5 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-34, 11 May 70; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, same subj, 14 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-35, 15 May 70; JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 10.

24. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., "Personnel Strength in RVN," 15 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/622, 19 May 70, JMF 911/101 (15 May 70).

in managing the redeployment effort. The Secretary's concern was that an actual gain of 7,000 to 8,000 men, even though still below the authorized ceiling, might be presented by the news media as a major increase in the US commitment to Southeast Asia. This could create "substantial public consternation and concern" by casting doubt on the President's pledges to continue overall withdrawal and terminate the operations against the Cambodian sanctuaries by 30 June. Therefore Secretary Laird thought it important to monitor the troop strength fluctuations closely in order to insure, if possible, "that the actual strength does not go above the current level," approximately 430,000.25

Reassured, General Wheeler stated that he foresaw no difficulties in adhering to this guidance. Indeed, a forecast of US strength in Vietnam through 30 June 1970 on a weekly basis, recently completed by the Joint Staff, showed that a steady decline to the level of 421,300 could be anticipated. Minor variations from the predicted figures might occur. The Chairman assured the Secretary of Defense that "any unusual situation which may develop will be brought to your immediate attention."26

The Cambodian invasion and the defensiveness engendered in the Administration by the public reaction also affected US redeployment planning. In a request to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 May for a plan to terminate all US operations in Cambodia by 30 June, Secretary Laird advised that no amount of tactical triumphs in Cambodia would satisfy the American people; rather, the worth of those operations must be demonstrated in lower casualties, increased Vietnamization, continuing redeployments, and progress in negotiations. With respect to US redeployment schedules, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider three additional possibilities: acceleration of the 150,000 redeployment previously announced; implementation of at least a 174,000-man reduction through

25. (S) CM-5211-70 to SecDef, 23 May 70; (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to SecA and CJCS, "Personnel Strength in RVN," 27 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/622-2, 27 May 70; same file.
26. (S-GP 3) CM-5237-70 to SecDef, 28 May 70, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/622-2, 1 Jun 70, same file.

30 June 1971 to a 260,000 ceiling (the schedule on which the FY 1971 budget request was based); and moving to a 240,000-man authorization by May-June 1971, a level alluded to by the President in an 8 May press conference.[27]

On 2 June 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted to the Secretary of Defense two alternatives for a 150,000 space reduction in response to his 24 April request. Alternative A, derived from CINCPAC recommendations, was essentially the original schedule suggested by the Secretary of Defense. It consisted of two increments, 60,000 during the period 1 July-31 December 1970 (with 50,000 redeployed by 15 October) and 90,000 between 15 February-30 April 1971. An important feature was continuation of the currently authorized air sortie levels. Alternative A provided relatively greater security in South Vietnam and surer progress in Vietnamization by delaying departure of the largest US contingent until late in the time span, but would incur significantly higher expense. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the cost of this alternative would exceed current budget requests by $1 billion; the trade offs necessary to meet this situation would require reductions to "substantial risk levels" in forces committed to NATO or available for worldwide contingencies.

Alternative B, developed by the Joint Staff, envisioned reduction in three increments: 60,000 between 1 July and 15 October 1970; another 40,000 by 31 December 1970; and the remaining 50,000 by 1 May 1971. Accompanying this would be a reduction in air sortie levels. The Joint Chiefs of Staff described Alternative B as a course that met the directed budget constraints by making major reductions solely in Southeast Asia programs. "It requires acceptance of dangerous risks in Southeast Asia, but it avoids the disadvantages of the worldwide trade-offs in Alternative A."

In view of the risks they had identified, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that neither of the alternatives was "militarily prudent." They recommended approval of Alternative A, but with provision of the supplemental funding necessary to preclude the trade offs and reprogramming that

27. ([redacted]-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Planning," 15 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/261, 16 May 70, JMF 907/501 (15 May 70).

would otherwise be required. They commented on the possibility of accelerating the withdrawal during 1971, as the Secretary had requested, but made no recommendation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that any decision in this matter should await an assessment of the situation made in late 1970.[28]

Even though the scheduling of the 150,000 redeployment was not yet resolved, the President on 3 June announced the withdrawal of an initial increment of that package. In a televised report on the Cambodian operations, President Nixon told the nation that 50,000 men of the previously announced 150,000 redeployment would be out of Vietnam by 15 October 1970.[29]

Decision on the Revised Phase III Program

On 5 June 1970, the Secretary of Defense responded to the JCS recommendations on both RVNAF improvement and redeployment alternatives. After recognizing the "concerted staff effort and the hard choices they represent," he went on to point out that since the JCS submission on RVNAF I&M on 30 April, events in Cambodia as well as serious budget deficits had altered in a major way "the manner in which we must address RVNAF Improvement and Modernization and the results we must expect from it." It was now abundantly clear that, upon completion of the Cambodian operations, the United States must accelerate improvement of the RVNAF "in every possible way." That acceleration, as well as stepped up US redeployments, relied on RVN capability to assume a much greater responsibility for the conduct of the war by the end of FY 1971.

The Secretary of Defense approved the revised Consolidated RVNAF I&M Program for FY 1971-1972 and the 1973 portion for planning purposes, subject to further review in light of US budget and RVN economic constraints. He deferred final FY 1973 approval pending a better long-range view of the effects

28. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-266-70 to SecDef, 2 June 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/625, 25 May 70, JMF 911/374 (24 Apr 70) sec 1.
29. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 476-480.

of the Cambodian operations, US redeployments, and the impact of budgetary and economic constraints on the FY 1972 RVNAF structure.

The Secretary did not approve the JCS recommendations for supplemental FY 1971 DOD budget requests to cover the costs of the enlarged program. Rather he directed that all funding for Southeast Asia must be met under "existing and foreseeable DOD budget ceilings." Secretary Laird observed that "the political and economic climate, now even more than in March, militates against requesting supplemental funds for FY 1971 except for pay increases."

The Secretary of Defense continued to place high priority on US efforts to improve RVNAF leadership, training, and morale. He approved the JCS proposals to supply additional canned foods and to construct RVNAF dependent housing.

Although concerned that the United States not detract from the RVN resolve to assume greater responsibility for the war, Mr. Laird thought that the United States would be remiss, in light of US budgetary programs and South Vietnamese economic perils, not to develop plans to reduce the RVNAF at the earliest possible moment. Accordingly, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to begin "a comprehensive review" directed toward reducing the RVNAF structure to 1,000,000 by the end of FY 1973 (the revised Phase III program called for 1,100,000 by that time). The Secretary wanted this report by 1 December 1970.

With regard to US forces in South Vietnam, the Secretary advised that budget planning should continue to assume a strength of approximately 260,000 men as of the end of FY 1971, though the option of more rapid redeployment must be retained. He approved for planning a 25,000 MAAG structure with a 19,000 supplemental MAAG for the end of FY 1973, making 44,000 spaces in all. Decision was deferred on the JCS alternatives for the 150,000-space redeployment pending clarification of DOD budget levels, but as an interim measure he directed a 50,000 withdrawal by 15 October 1970 in accordance with the President's announcement.

The Secretary of Defense also approved a reduction of approximately 10,000 spaces in Thailand and a US monthly air

sortie level for Southeast Asia of 1,200 B-52 and 13,600 TACAIR effective 15 July 1970 (in place of the current 1,400 and 14,000 levels for those activities).[30]

The Secretary's decision of 5 June determined the size and nature of the RVNAF that the United States would support, and the remainder of the year was spent in working toward the goals of the Consolidated Program. In mid-June, however, the President requested JCS views on possible follow-up actions to capitalize on the results of the Cambodian operation. Among other suggestions, he requested assessment of an ARVN or RF/PF expansion to cope with border threats as well as to facilitate US redeployment. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that such changes were neither necessary nor feasible. The existing force balance, they thought, was "the optium obtainable within aggregate RVN manpower and economic limitations." Evidently their advice was accepted, for no further action resulted from the President's suggestions.[31]

As the Secretary had requested, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the possibility of reducing the RVNAF manpower goal to 1,000,000 by FY 1973 and tendered their judgment on this matter on 1 December 1970. Backing the recommendations of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again supported the current RVNAF structure as appropriate for the current situation. They reviewed three alternatives for reducing the RVNAF to a 1,000,000-space ceiling under three varying reduced enemy threats, but concluded that all three required further evaluation. For the present, they supported the approved 1,100,000 RVNAF force for the end of FY 1973. Consequently, the Secretary of Defense took no further action to reduce the RVNAF.[32]

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30. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization--Consolidated Improvement and Modernization Program and Related Planning," 5 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-36, 11 Jun 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 10.

31. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, "Possible Actions in Support of Vietnamization and Negotiations," 15 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/633, 16 Jun 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-305-70 to SecDef, 19 Jun 70, App to JCS 2472/633-1, 16 Jun 70; JMF 911/535 (15 Jun 70).

32. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-552-70 to SecDef, 1 Dec 70, Encl to JCS 2472/552-44, 12 Nov 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 11.

RVNAF Improvement and Modernization--Special Operations

Throughout its involvement in South Vietnam, the United States had carried out covert activities, or "special operations" as they were called, both to harass the enemy and to gather information. In 1964, even before the commitment of US ground combat troops in Vietnam, the United States initiated OPLAN 34A, consisting of limited clandestine actions against North Vietnam, and used US destroyers for DE SOTO patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin to collect intelligence. Subsequently, with the expansion of the conflict, the United States began aerial reconnaissance of North Vietnam, Laos, and areas of Cambodia. Other important special operations included SHINING BRASS and DANIEL BOONE/SALEM HOUSE, which inserted tactical intelligence missions into Laos and Cambodia, respectively. All special operations in North Vietnam ceased with the 1968 bombing halt, but those in Laos and Cambodia continued. The US Studies and Observation Group, a subordinate command of COMUSMACV, was responsible for all these operations.[33]

With the adoption of the Vietnamization policy, the United States decided to transfer special operations, on a reduced scale, to the Republic of Vietnam. But in this instance, Vietnamization involved particular problems owing to the need for the strictest secrecy. The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided for the development of a RVNAF special operations capability in their plans for RVNAF improvement, but for security reasons, the special operations portion was staffed and processed separately.

On 20 March 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense the Special Annex to their Phase III Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program. It provided for the development of the necessary capacity within the RVNAF, while US participation was phased down to a support force by mid-1971 and to an advisory force by mid-1973. The goal was to develop an ability within the RVNAF to conduct special operations at approximately 25 percent of the current

33. See (~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Chs. 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 24, 35, and 52. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971-72, p. B-1.

level. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized, however, that if NVA activity in enemy-held border areas did not diminish, the intelligence-gathering function of special operations would remain of critical importance. Therefore, continued US assistance would be required until RVNAF operational capabilities became adequate to reduce the risk of a surprise enemy offensive. This JCS program would reduce US special operations advisers to the RVNAF from the current 1,246 to 399 by FY 1973 and would lower the cost of US support from $26.2 million in FY 1970 to $13.1 million in FY 1973.[34]

To facilitate OSD review of the JCS program, the Assistant Secretary (ISA) asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide an evaluation of covert activities and an appraisal of the ability of the Republic of Vietnam to continue them effectively. Replying on 12 May 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that measurement in statistical terms was difficult. More broadly, special operations could be credited with collecting essential intelligence on enemy movements, logistical buildups, and tactical intentions throughout the border areas of Laos and Cambodia and in the vicinity of the DMZ. The LOC intercept and harassment achieved by these operations tied down sizable enemy forces in passive security roles. With respect to RVN ability and motivation to perform such operations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that South Vietnamese forces had participated fully in both past and present special operations and that the Joint General Staff had indicated "strong interest" in continuing them during the Vietnamization process.[35]

In his 5 June decision on the JCS revised Consolidated Phase III RVNAF I&M Program, the Secretary of Defense questioned the desirability of US support for RVNAF special operations. He wondered if the projected results warranted a US investment of $13.1 million a year and 399 US advisers, as well as 2,500 high-quality Vietnamese personnel. He wanted a further study

34. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-123-70 to SecDef, 20 Mar 70, Encl to JCS 2472/522-10, 10 Feb 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 4.
35. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-228-70 to SecDef, 12 May 70, App to JCS 2472/522-32, 5 May 70, same file, sec 10.

of the need for this program and of the possibility of turning it over more quickly to the RVNAF.[36]

On 14 October 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again assured the Secretary of Defense that the RVNAF needed a special operations capability in order to meet enemy offensive operations and to provide security for the remaining US forces in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff still considered their 20 March special operations program valid, but in view of budget constraints, they recognized that the pace of the turnover to the RVNAF must be increased. Accordingly, they recommended accelerated RVNAF Special Forces training and reduction of US FY 1973 costs from $13.1 million to $9.8 million, with the US adviser requirement lowered from 399 to 155. The Secretary of Defense approved this proposal for planning purposes on 12 November 1970, pending completion of studies of US strategy alternatives for Southeast Asia for the period 1970-1975, as the President had directed on 17 August 1970.[37]

Further Planning for US Withdrawals

The question of US force structure in South Vietnam remained to be determined even after the Secretary's decision of 5 June on the RVNAF improvement program. Although he had directed the withdrawal of 50,000 US personnel by 15 October, Secretary Laird had deferred a decision on the scheduling of the remaining 100,000 of the announced 150,000 reduction pending budget clarifications.

Previously, on 2 June 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had proposed two redeployment schedules. Both would see the entire increment of 150,000 withdrawn by 1 May 1971. The difference lay in the number of troops to be withdrawn by the end of calendar 1970: 60,000 under Alternative A (which the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred), and 100,000 under Alternative B. In late July 1970, however, the Secretary of the Army notified

36. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnamization-Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program and Related Planning," 5 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-26, 11 Jun 70, same file.

37. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-482-70 to SecDef, 14 Oct 70, Encl to JCS 2472/552-41, 22 Sep 70, same file. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "RVNAF Special Operations," 12 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-42, 13 Nov 70, same file, sec. II. For the President's directive regarding strategy alternatives (NSSM 99), see Ch. 9.

the Secretary of Defense that because of budget and manpower limitations the Army was incapable of implementing Alternative A and barely able to meet the requirements of Alternative B. Added to this was Secretary Laird's conviction, expressed even more strongly than before to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 30 July, that "a supplemental budget request for FY 1971 is infeasible." Consequently he suggested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff revise their redeployment plans in light of the monetary and Army manpower problems.[38]

On 13 August the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented the Secretary of Defense with five alternatives for a 150,000 redeployment. They resubmitted their Alternatives A and B, as proposed on 2 June, and advanced three new ones: Alternative B (Modified), consisting of three 50,000 increments to be completed by 15 October 1970, 31 December 1970, and 30 April 1971, respectively; Alternative C, representing the recommendations of the field commanders and calling for three increments of 50,000, 40,000 and 60,000 within the same time periods as B (Modified); Alternative D, differing from Alternative C only in the internal composition of the increments, with partial substitution of Marine Corps units for Army spaces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that all the Alternatives, except Alternative A, imposed "imprudent risks to Vietnamization and U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia." But recognizing that Alternatives A and B were no longer possible because of budget and timing factors, the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated that of the three remaining courses, "Alternative C is preferable."[39]

After a discussion of the matter with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary Laird forwarded their recommended alternative to the White House on 20 August, stating that he was "inclined to accept" it. His remaining hesitancy arose from the fact that even this redeployment schedule would not bring authorized manning down to budget request levels during the

38. (U) Memo, SecA to SecDef, "Manpower and Costs Related to Vietnam Withdrawals," 23 Jul 70; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Redeployment Planning (U)," 30 Jul 70, Att to JCS 2472/625-1, 30 Jul 70; JMF 911/374 (24 Apr 70) sec 2.

39. (TS-Gp 3) JCSM-388-70 to SecDef, 13 Aug 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/625-2, 10 Aug 70, same file.

remainder of 1970. Only with the final withdrawal increment would it come into conformance with the FY 1971 budget figures, reaching 284,000 men on 1 May 1971. Nevertheless, "though budget pressures would be exceedingly tight," Secretary Laird believed that the Department of Defense could, by managing its funds "with the utmost discretion," allow for the higher troop levels outlined in the JCS recommendation.

The Secretary informed Dr. Kissinger that within the Department of Defense he had already ruled out the alternative of seeking additional appropriations. He was convinced that "there is no practical chance that supplemental funds could be obtained. The very act of making a supplemental request would, in fact, open the door for Congressional actions which could prove inimical to our interests in Southeast Asia."[40]

The President deferred a decision, asking for the views of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as those of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on the risks associated with the redeployment schedule (Alternative C) outlined by Secretary Laird. When the President announced the 150,000 reduction figure, he had anticipated that no more than 60,000 troops would be withdrawn from South Vietnam before the end of 1970. Although he agreed that there would be no supplemental budget requests in FY 1971, he wanted estimates of the costs and manpower requirements necessary to hold to "the original schedule" (increments of 50,000, 10,000, and 90,000).[41]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated the cost of the original redeployment schedule, even with reduced air sortie levels, at about $400 million above the FY 1971 budget. In addition, they now realized that the Army could no longer support the manpower requirements of that schedule without reduction of worldwide commands below acceptable readiness conditions. Consequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered Alternative C, as presented to the White House on 20 August by the Secretary of Defense, the "most suitable of

40. (~~S~~) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, "Southeast Asia Redeployments," 20 Aug 70, JMF 907/374 (20 Aug 70).

41. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, "Southeast Asia Redeployments," 4 Sep 70, Att to JCS 2472/669, 8 Sep 70, same file.

those now feasible," even though it involved a certain amount of risk. They recommended an early decision on redeployments through 30 April 1971, but they believed that public announcement of the size and timing of the withdrawals should be withheld in order to retain flexibility.[42]

The Secretary of Defense forwarded the JCS views to the White House on 17 September, confirming that Alternative C met military requirements better than any other, under existing manpower and fiscal constraints. He believed the added risk of this course was "minimal, particularly when viewed in the context of the progress of pacification and Vietnamization."[43]

The President accepted the advice of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and on 12 October he announced a 40,000-space reduction in the period between "now and Christmas." Subsequently, the President reaffirmed this public announcement. As relayed by Dr. Kissinger on 27 October, he directed that, until specific decisions were made to the contrary, there should be no withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam beyond those already approved and scheduled.[44]

Earlier, on 7 October, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had notified the Secretary of Defense of approval of CINCPAC's troop list for the 40,000 redeployment for the period 15 October-31 December 1970. On the day of the President's announcement, the Secretary authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to proceed with the execution of Alternative C redeployments. Later, on 8 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded with their approval CINCPAC's troop list for the withdrawal of the 60,000 spaces that constituted the final increment of Alternative C.[45]

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42. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-438-70 to SecDef, 11 Sep 70, App to JCS 2472/669-2, 10 Sep 70, same file.

43. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, "Southeast Asia Redeployments (U)," 17 Sep 70, Att to JCS 2472/669-3, 30 Oct 70, same file.

44. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, p. 836. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secs State and Def and Dir OMB, "FY 1971-1976 Interim Guidance on US Deployments," 27 Oct 70, Att to JCS 2101/574, 28 Oct 70, JMF 374 (27 Oct 74).

45. (~~TS~~-GP 3) CM-268-70 to SecDef, 7 Oct 70, Att to JCS 2472/625-8, 7 Oct 70; (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Redeployments," 12 Oct 70, Att to JCS 2472/625-9, 13 Oct 70; JMF 911/374 (24 Apr 70) sec 2. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-564-70 to SecDef, 8 Dec 70, App B to JCS 2472/690, 30 Nov 70, JMF 907/374 (22 Nov 70).

The actual withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam in 1970 proceeded in accordance with the Washington decisions. Following the President's 3 June announcement, the United States redeployed 50,000 troops between early June and 15 October in Operation KEYSTONE ROBIN (ALFA). Another 40,000 departed in Operation KEYSTONE ROBIN (BRAVO), 16 October through 30 December 1970. As a result, US strength in South Vietnam on 31 December 1970 stood at 335,794, a figure well below the authorized ceiling of 344,000. Major US Army units redeployed during the last seven months of 1970 included: the 199th Light Infantry Brigade; the 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division; the remaining portion of the 4th Infantry Division; and the 25th Infantry Division, minus the 2d Brigade. Principal Marine Corps units leaving Vietnam during the same period were the 7th Marine Regiment, a regimental landing team and associated aviation units, an attack squadron, a medium helicopter squadron, a composite reconnaissance squadron. At the close of 1970, the United States had removed over 205,000 troops in five increments, and another 60,000-man increment was approved and scheduled for redeployment during the first four months of 1971.[46]

In December 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again addressed the question of US force levels in Vietnam for the end of FY 1971 and in FY 1972. They told the Secretary of Defense on 17 December that recent budget and program decisions had resulted in funding constraints and manpower limitations, necessitating significant changes in earlier planning factors. Budget reductions for FY 1971 and lowered draft calls in the months September through December 1970, combined with reprogramming to absorb these impacts, had limited the ability of the Military Departments to support US forces both in Vietnam and throughout the world. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated that the budget and manpower limitations expected in FY 1972 would cause similar if not more serious shortfalls.

Consequently, alternative force levels for Southeast Asia had been reviewed, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented the Secretary of Defense a revised US force structure for Vietnam at the end of 1971. In place of the 260,000 figure approved by the Secretary on 5 June 1970, they now set forth a requirement for a total force of 255,000, including 198,000 Army,

46. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. IV-7, IV-12 - IV 31. For US forces at the beginning and close of 1970, see Table XII at the end of this chapter.

11,600 Navy/Coast Guard, 44,700 Air Force, and 700 Marine Corps. For a year later, at the end of FY 1972, they thought that a US force structure of approximately 200,000 (152,800 Army, 8,400 Navy/Coast Guard, 38,100 Air Force, and 700 Marine Corps) would be needed in South Vietnam, although this figure was subject to validation by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, less the Chief of Staff, Army, recommended that the Secretary of Defense support these force levels. The Army Chief of Staff believed that his Service could not meet the proposed manpower levels in Vietnam without "serious degradation" of force levels elsewhere, including NATO.[47]

The force level question, however, was not to be immediately resolved. The Secretary of Defense replied to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 24 December 1970, promising a final decision for use in FY 1972 planning after his January trip to Southeast Asia. Meantime, he told them, steps had been taken to ensure that funds for the maintenance of the proposed manpower strength were included in the FY 1972 budget recommended to the President.[48]

RVNAF Progress

As US forces redeployed from South Vietnam during 1970, the improvement of the RVNAF proceeded. The South Vietnamese forces continued to expand, though not at the dramatic rate of the previous year. By December 1970 the RVNAF possessed 188 maneuver battalions, while the US force had declined from 93 to 54. In addition, the RVNAF assumed an increasing share of the planning for and conduct of combat, and the Cambodian operation demonstrated an enhanced competence in both of these activities.[49]

47. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-576-70 to SecDef, 17 Dec 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/695, 14 Dec 70, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

48. (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Force and Activity Levels in Southeast Asia for FY 72 (U)," 24 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2339/333-2, 6 Jan 71, JMF 907/323 (7 Nov 70).

49. All information in this section, unless otherwise stated, is from (~~S~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, Chs. I, VII, and IX, and (TS-GP 1) OJCS (J-3) "A Periodic Summary of Progress Toward Vietnamizing the War (U)," Mar 71, PAD-VSUM 1-71.

During the year, the RVNAF significantly enlarged their operating areas throughout South Vietnam. In MR 1, the ARVN assumed responsibility for western Quang Tri Province, formerly patrolled by US Marines, as well as several fire support bases below the DMZ and in southwestern Quang Tri and western Thua Thien Provinces. When the US 4th Infantry Division redeployed in the fall, the ARVN moved into its area, including most of MR 2 except for the coastal region. Similarly, the departure of the US 25th Division from MR 3 in November 1970 left the RVNAF responsible for most of the area. Military Region 4 and Saigon had been the full responsibility of South Vietnamese troops since late 1969.

To meet these increased combat responsibilities, the RVNAF had at the end of 1970 regular land forces consisting of an ARVN of 414,074 and a VNMC of 13,635.[50] During the year, the ARVN was strengthened by the addition of: two armored brigade headquarters to provide command and control elements for armored cavalry squadrons and infantry, artillery, and engineer units in MRs 2 and 3; 176 fire support platoons (105mm) to allow increased fire support for RF/PF, population security, and the protection of key land and water lines of communications and to free ARVN artillery for mobile operations; two 175mm gun battalions to replace US units along the DMZ; and two air defense artillery battalions. During the same period, the VNMC grew by two infantry battalions and a 105mm artillery battalion. These additions completed the planned improvement of the South Vietnamese Marines.

The territorial units, the Regional and Popular Forces (RF and PF), also became stronger during 1970. A reorganization directed by President Thieu in July 1970 made both these forces part of the ARVN. This move, he hoped, would eliminate the "second class" image borne by the territorial forces and would better provide for training and redistributing the RF and PF to replace regular ARVN troops in pacification and territorial security operations. The PF would revert

50. The 1970 year-end RVNAF strength figures are from (S GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VIII-5 - VIII-22. For a comparison of strengths at the beginning and close of 1970, see Table XI at the end of this chapter.

to Ministry of Interior control in the post-insurgency period. By the close of the year the RF strength was 283,106, slightly below its authorized level, while the PF stood at 250,889--a little higher than the planned year-end ceiling.

General Abrams was quite pleased with the RVNAF territorial forces in 1970. He found their performance improved and noted progress on leadership and training problems. They had become increasingly effective in MR 1, resulting in enhanced population security. In MR 3, they successfully shouldered a heavier security burden when the ARVN forces left the area to participate in the Cambodian operations. Their performance also improved throughout the year in MR 4. Only in MR 2 did the territorial forces fail to measure up to expectations. Improvements there in training and leadership did not keep pace with increased terrorist activity.

During 1970, the United States continued to turn over functions to the Vietnamese Navy (VNN), transferring the ships necessary for the enlarged Vietnamese responsibilities. The goal of this program was to develop a VNN capability comparable to the current in-country USN/VNN force. The turnover process, including base transfers, was scheduled for completion in mid-1972, although the VNN would still require US air and logistic support. This transfer program had begun in 1968, and by the end of December 1970 the US Naval forces in South Vietnam had handed over 1,300 operational and 127 support craft to the VNN. In the course of the year, the VNN took over river security operations in MR 3 and along the Cua Viet and Perfume Rivers, as well as harbor defenses for Cam Ranh Bay, Chu Lai, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Tan My, and Vung Tau. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the VNN in September assumed complete responsibility for the MARKET TIME inner barrier, with the United States maintaining only offshore air surveillance of the SVN coast.

The VNN personnel structure expanded in 1970 in accordance with plans, but there was a shortage of qualified officers and petty officers to man the rapidly growing VNN ship inventory. This deficiency was expected to continue into 1972, when training was scheduled to catch up with the expanding VNN. Nevertheless, General Abrams was able to state at the end of 1970 that the VNN was one of the ten largest navies in the world.

Improvement and modernization of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) proceeded ahead of schedule in 1970, and COMUSMACV rated VNAF combat performance on a par with corresponding US units. The competence of the VNAF, he said, was particularly demonstrated in the 1970 air operations in Cambodia in support of ARVN and FANK units. During the year, the VNAF was reorganized to accommodate a 45-squadron force by 1972 composed of five air divisions, 10 tactical wings, five maintenance and supply wings, and seven air base wings. The first air division was activated on 1 March 1970, two more on 1 May, another a month later, and the final one in September. During the year, 525 air crews were formed, and the United States turned over 310 UH-1 helicopters in Vietnam to the VNAF. But by the end of the year, although the number of rated squadrons had increased, those in full operational readiness had declined. This situation resulted from a shortage of air crews and from high maintenance requirements resulting from unexpectedly high sortie rates. At the end of 1970, the VNAF still required further helicopter squadrons for combat support, search and rescue, and medical evacuation operations. It needed additional A-1 and A-37 fighter squadrons for fire power support to maneuver battalions and a proportionate increase in forward air controllers.

Throughout 1970, both the Republic of Vietnam and the United States devoted special attention to the problems confronting the RVNAF. As identified from past experience, these problems included morale, leadership, training, and logistics. As already noted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed these areas in developing the Consolidated Phase III RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program and its subsequent revision. They prepared separate annexes covering each of these matters, identifying the problems and proposing remedial measures. In his approval of the Consolidated Phase III Program, Secretary Laird stressed the need to improve the RVNAF in all these areas. Consequently, there was progress during 1970, but none of the weaknesses was eliminated. The buildup of the RVNAF had been so rapid and the problems so enormous and so ingrained that they could not be easily or rapidly eliminated.

Progress in raising morale was difficult to assess, but COMUSMACV judged that there was improvement in 1970. The most positive indication, he believed, was the increased effectiveness of the RVNAF in combat. To raise morale, the Republic of

Vietnam, with US assistance and encouragement, provided better food and living conditions for RVNAF servicemen and their families; instituted a uniform leave program, including transportation to and from furloughs; made available additional uniforms and mosquito netting; and established rest camps with recreation and entertainment. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam granted all RVNAF troops a 19 percent pay increase on 1 October 1970, but, even so, the RVNAF soldiers remained one of the lowest paid groups in the South Vietnamese society. Whether these measures would be sufficient to maintain improved morale was uncertain, since the changing role of the RVNAF brought additional stresses. The RVNAF assumption of a greater responsibility for the war meant increased time in combat with longer periods away from base camps and families--and at a time when US assistance was decreasing.

Closely related to the matter of morale was the high RVNAF desertion rate--a long-standing problem with the South Vietnamese armed forces. Desertions had peaked in 1968 and receded only slightly in 1969. Despite persistent efforts to remove the believed causes of desertion there was no improvement during 1970. In fact, the rate at the end of 1970 was slightly higher than the previous year--11.8 per 1,000 in December 1970 as compared with 11.1 the previous December. The VNMC continued to lead the RVNAF services with a desertion rate of 34.1 per 1,000 in December 1970, while the ARVN rate at the same time was 15.8. Both RF and PF desertions turned upward during the year, reaching 12.3 and 6.3, respectively, by December. High desertions had not bothered either the VNN or the VNAF, and the rate for both in December 1970 stood at slightly less than three per thousand.

In 1970, the RVNAF continued to be plagued by a leadership problem. Not only was there a shortage of leaders, especially at the junior and non-commissioned officer levels, but also low quality performance. Factors affecting the quality of leadership included: combat commanders below the authorized grades with duties beyond their experience and training; insufficient use of battlefield promotion quotas and failure to recognize individual qualifications and performance; slow progress in implementing an officer rotation policy to develop leadership and competence; and diversion of many competent officers to civilian functions. These factors were easily recognizable and efforts were instituted in 1969 and continued throughout 1970 to eliminate them.

United States officials were particularly interested in building effective leadership in the RVNAF. As already mentioned, when approving the Consolidated Phase III RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program, Secretary Laird emphasized the necessity for improved leadership. In the fall of 1970, he again stressed the "extreme importance" of US action to enhance RVNAF leadership, requesting a JCS assessment of efforts to place the best RVNAF officers into key assignments. The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 3 December 1970 with a detailed account of the successful replacement of ineffective RVNAF leaders. They assured the Secretary that the COMUSMACV procedure and policy in this sensitive area were both "appropriate and adequate."[51]

Offering a picture of general improvement during 1970, a MACV report in early 1971 stated:

> Leadership in the Vietnamese Armed Forces is improving at a satisfactory rate quantitatively and qualitatively. The Chief, Joint General Staff and the JGS as a unit are performing in an eminently satisfactory manner. The appointment of new commanders of MRs 2 and 4 during 1970 makes all four commanders excellent choices who are performing well. With few exceptions division and regimental commanders are considered satisfactory. The quality of leadership at battalion and lower levels in both regular and territorial forces is expected to improve as projected force levels are reached. More selectivity will be possible for procurement and promotions and qualified replacements will become available to relieve the ineffectiveness. Current JGS programs of inspections and visits are causing all forces to become more responsive to orders and directives from higher headquarters.[52]

Nevertheless, leadership in the RVNAF still fell short of desired levels at the close of 1970. Like morale, it was a matter that required continued attention.

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51. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "RVNAF Leadership (U)," 13 Oct 70, Att to JCS 2472/675, 15 Oct 70; (S-GP 4) JCSM-558-70 to SecDef, 3 Dec 70, Encl to JCS 2472/675-1, 30 Nov 70; JMF 911/535 (13 Oct 70).

52. Quoted in (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. VII-24.

The scarcity of qualified leaders reflected the lack of adequate training for the RVNAF--yet another endemic weakness in the South Vietnamese armed forces. The RVNAF simply could not keep pace with the training needs of the accelerated force buildup and the demands for qualitative betterment called for in the improvement and modernization program. In 1970, the RVNAF trained 570,740 personnel in 32 national, regional force, popular force, and division training centers and 87,197 personnel in 15 technical, four combat arms, and four academic schools as well as on-the-job training with US units, yet this was, apparently, not enough to fill the gap.

The training organization of the RVNAF remained unchanged throughout 1970, with the Central Training Command overseeing the major portion of the activity. Land forces continued to receive training in three phases (individual, unit, and operational readiness) at centers throughout South Vietnam. Attendance at these centers was consistently above their rated capacity, although many lacked adequate facilities. The VNMC reached its final authorized strength in 1970 and its training program fulfilled the needs during the year. The VNN trained 33,095 personnel during the year, or 80 percent of its goal. Nonetheless, there remained a serious shortage of petty and warrant officers, traceable to a reluctance of commanders to release experienced personnel from operational duty to serve as instructors.

Vietnamese Air Force training also progressed during the year, though it, too, suffered from a lack of experienced and available cadre and instructor personnel. In January 1970, the USAF and the VNAF began an integrated program where both VNAF officers and airmen received on-the-job instruction with US 7th Air Force units. The courses varied from two weeks to two years with emphasis on base operating support functions--an area that had not previously received as much attention as operational support training. Despite the RVNAF training progress in 1970, numerous difficulties remained. There were deficiencies in the quality of the teacher cadre; lack of training standardization; shortfalls in personnel programming; lapses in the quality of the training; and weaknesses in the logistics support for training facilities.

A strengthened and enlarged logistics system was essential to support the expanded forces called for in the RVNAF improvement and modernization program, and provision for this had been

included in the program. At the end of 1969, the RVNAF had been providing "marginally adequate" support for their forces, with continued dependence on US support in such areas as sea and airlift, port operations, and equipment overhaul.

In 1970, improvement of the RVNAF logistics system progressed satisfactorily. No operations were cancelled or curtailed because of a lack of supplies, and the RVNAF successfully supported its operations in Cambodia. Nevertheless, the RVNAF had not attained logistics self-sufficiency at the close of the year. Deficiencies or shortfalls still existed in the areas of airlift, marine maintenance, materiel rebuild, technical training, and supervisory skills.

To overcome these weaknesses, the RVNAF with US advice and assistance proceeded during 1970 with various logistics improvement programs. Some of these had been started earlier. Both the Combined Logistics Offensive Plan (CLOP) and the Country Logistics Improvement Plan (CLIP)[53] had begun in 1969 and continued in 1970; the former dealt with short-term problems while the latter covered longer term weaknesses. In June 1970, the RVNAF replaced CLOP with the Logistics Offensive II, designed to cover remaining CLOP projects as well as newly identified problems. Actually, by this time 101 of the original 121 CLOP projects had been completed and 17 had been deleted; thus only three remained to be transferred to the new offensive. The plan for this offensive, the RVNAF Logistics Improvement Plan 1970, identified 65 new problems with appropriate corrective action. All action was assigned to RVNAF elements with US participation limited to advisory assistance.

The progress in overcoming longer term logistics weaknesses followed a similar pattern. The CLIP actions advanced so well in 1970 that, at midyear, the RVNAF initiated a FY 1971 CLIP with 56 new projects. By December 1970, most of the original CLIP projects had been accomplished.

The RVNAF also proceeded with other programs and actions to improve its logistics capability during 1970. The VNAF reorganized the Air Logistics Wing into an Air Logistics Command designed to maintain overall control of inventory assets. Development of base depots, upgrading facilities,

53. See Ch. 6, pp. 202-203.

utilities, and equipment proceeded in accordance with a plan prepared the previous year. Improvement continued in highway transportation. In 1970 the RVNAF was self-sufficient in this area and even occasionally carried cargo for US and other Free World forces. Limited ability to discharge deep-draft vessels had always been a weakness of the RVNAF, and US military officers or civilian contractors had performed this function throughout the US involvement in Vietnam. But, in 1970, the RVNAF gradually assumed responsibility in this area. The ARVN Saigon Transportation Terminal Command handled all RVNAF general cargo arriving and departing the Saigon area. In addition, the RVNAF operated ammunition barge discharge sites at Binh Thuy and Saigon Newport and conducted all port operations and inland water distribution of cargo in the Delta. At various other South Vietnamese ports, however, the RVNAF still required US assistance both in unloading deep-draft vessels and in ammunition barge discharge.

Despite the remaining weaknesses and problems, the RVNAF were stronger both in numbers and quality at the close of 1970 than ever before. South Vietnamese forces were assuming a growing share of the combat and were extending outposts into areas long held by the Viet Cong. Government control was increasing and pacification gains continued. More importantly, the RVNAF improvement was permitting significant US troop withdrawals without any retrogression in the conduct of the war. Consequently, at the end of 1970, Vietnamization seemed to be succeeding.

United States officials, both in Vietnam and Washington, were pleased with this success. President Nixon expressed his satisfaction in a television interview on 4 January 1971. In responding to a question about achievements during the past year, he cited Vietnam. While admitting that he had not ended the war as he had hoped, he pointed out that "we now see the end of Americans' combat role in Vietnam in sight." Most US ground combat forces, he continued, would be out of Vietnam by May 1971 and US casualties had decreased markedly. "Our Vietnamization policy has been very carefully drawn up," the President said, "and we are withdrawing in a measured way on the basis that the South Vietnamese will be able to defend themselves as we withdraw, and it is working."[54]

54. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 6-23.

TABLE XI

RVNAF Strengths, 1970

1 January 1970[1]

Service	Authorized	Assigned
ARVN	374,132	416,278
VNN	28,700	30,143
VNAF	32,587	36,469
VNMC	10,419	11,528
RF	255,167	260,455
PF	182,725	214,383
Total RVNAF	883,730	969,256

31 December 1970[2]

Service	Authorized	Assigned
ARVN	433,989	414,074
VNN	39,611	40,709
VNAF	38,780	44,997
VNMC	13,462	13,635
RF	294,446	283,106
PF	250,027	250,889
Total RVNAF	1,070,315	1,047,410

1. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VI-2.
2. (~~S~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VIII -5, 7, 15, 18, 21, and 22.

TABLE XII

US Forces in Vietnam, 1970[1]

	1 January 1970	31 December 1970
Army	330,648	250,653
Navy	30,236	16,502
Air Force	58,463	43,137
Marine Corps	55,039	25,394
Coast Guard	433	108
Total	474,819	335,794

1. (~~S~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. IV-7.

Chapter 11

PACIFICATION, 1969-1970

Pacification Before 1969

Pacification was the process of establishing in South Vietnam a stable, prosperous society with effective local governments loyal to the national government in Saigon. It included not only the provision of security to the people in the countryside by more or less conventional military and police operations, but also the voluntary involvement of the people in the creation of viable, self-sustaining political and economic institutions. Even more than many of the other operations in Vietnam, pacification posed a complex set of problems. General Westmoreland indicated in 1968 something of the difficulties involved in the conduct of the pacification programs:

> The objectives of pacification are not so difficult to describe but the attainment of those objectives involves cultural and social forces not so easy to understand and certainly not easy to manage. The aspects of pacification most easy to measure are often not the crucial aspects--and conversely, the less tangible aspects are not easy to perceive, let alone measure.[1]

By 1969 the pacification program in Vietnam had been evolving for many years, with the effort to counter the activities of the Viet Cong at the local level passing through numerous forms. A decade earlier the Diem government had established land development centers and then agrovilles, both of which were protected farming communities. They were replaced by the Strategic Hamlet Program, patterned after British experience in Malaya. The strategic hamlets proved to be vulnerable to attack, infiltration, and subversion, and they collapsed with the end of the Diem

1. (U) CINCPAC-COMUSMACV, Report on the War In Vietnam (as of June 1968), Sec II, Report on Operations in South Vietnam January 1964-June 1968, p. 229. The background information in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, is based on this report.

government in November 1963. The Viet Cong were able to consolidate their holdings in the countryside during the turmoil that followed, even though the government launched a new control effort with the Chien Thang (Victory) National Pacification Plan in 1964. In 1965 pacification support continued to be hindered by political instability; national planning and coordination remained inadequate. Some progress in pacification was achieved, however, with the introduction of US fighting forces. The territorial security they furnished increased the number of people who lived under government control.

In 1966 Ambassador Lodge created the Office of Civil Operations under Deputy Ambassador William J. Porter to consolidate the fragmented civilian pacification effort. At the same time General Westmoreland created a Revolutionary Development Division in MACV to coordinate military participation in pacification. By mid-1966 the Military Assistance staff division of MACV had begun to work jointly for both General Westmoreland and Ambassador Porter. Then in May 1967 all US pacification efforts in Vietnam were consolidated in a single office responsible to COMUSMACV. Mr. Robert W. Komer was assigned as Deputy COMUSMACV for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS).

In 1966 and 1967 the Vietnamese Government itself strove to create or improve a number of programs. Several were combined under the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, which trained and directed the Revolutionary Development Cadre (RDC), to carry pacification to the villages. The Vietnamese also recognized the crucial importance of territorial security and by early 1967 had assigned over 50 regular ARVN battalions as well as almost all the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) to this effort. The regular battalions were supposed to counter any move into their area by the enemy's main forces and to operate against local and guerrilla forces. The RF, generally organized in company-sized units, also operated against enemy local forces and provided security around and between the hamlets of a village. They supported and reinforced the platoon-sized PF units charged with hamlet and village security. The RDC shared the task of defending the hamlet itself with the PF. The National Police (NP) not only provided normal law and order services, but with at least the nominal support of all the military and civilian intelligence agencies, also operated against the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI)--the

underground leadership of the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam, comprising the political, administrative, supply, and recruitment apparatus of the Viet Cong.

The VCI constituted the main internal security problem in the countryside. Only by destroying the effectiveness of this group could there be any hope for lasting success in pacification. To achieve this goal, in 1968 the Vietnamese Government established the Phung Hoang or PHOENIX Program, aimed at eliminating the threat from the VCI (or "neutralizing" it, in the accepted term). Through Province and District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers, the PHOENIX Program coordinated police efforts with the Revolutionary Development Cadre, ARVN, Regional and Popular Forces, and Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), as well as special intelligence agencies.

Special efforts had also been made to persuade Viet Cong to return to the government side through the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program, which had begun in 1963. The success of this program varied in proportion to the military progress of allied forces. The number of Hoi Chanh, or ralliers, rose to 27,000 in 1967, but dropped to less than 20,000 in 1968.

After the creation of CORDS in May 1967, pacification support and direction ran to the field agencies and commands through COMUSMACV channels, although US civilian agencies, such as USIA and AID, continued to deal directly with their Vietnamese counterparts at the national level in Saigon. Below that level, all aspects of the advisory effort came under COMUSMACV's supervision and operational control. By June 1968 approximately 1,600 US civilians and 6,000 US military personnel were engaged primarily in support of the pacification program.

The Tet offensive in 1968 had an important effect in the development of a pacification program in South Vietnam. Immediately thereafter, the Republic of Vietnam organized the People's Self-Defense Force (PSDF), requiring all able-bodied male citizens between the ages of 16 and 17 and between 39 and 50 to participate in the defense of their local areas. In addition, government planners organized and coordinated the existing programs under an Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) in the last two months of 1968 and January 1969. The APC included provision for a Central Pacification and Development Council to determine objectives and to oversee the execution of programs.

The gains realized in this campaign were not always as large as the goals, but they were nonetheless substantial. Almost 2,500,000 people were brought under RVN control; 8,600 Hoi Chanh rallied to the government side; 6,000 VCI were neutralized; and membership in the PSDF, the armed militia in the countryside, rose to more than a million. General Abrams reported that the APC was highly successful and had definitely given the Republic of Vietnam the initiative in pacification.[2]

Thus by the end of 1968, all the important elements in the RVN pacification program had been created and were at last given central direction under the APC. The National Police, the Regional and Popular Forces, and the People's Self-Defense Force all had the task of providing security. Various other programs, such as the Revolutionary Development Cadre, Chieu Hoi, and PHOENIX, had specific roles to play in winning the countryside. By December 1968, 76.3 percent of the rural population lived in areas rated "relatively secure" under the Hamlet Evaluation System.[3]

The 1969 Pacification and Development Plan became effective on 1 February 1969 upon the expiration of the APC and was an extension of it. The Republic of Vietnam hoped to maintain throughout 1969 the momentum created under the APC. The APC and the 1969 plan were the first attempts by the South Vietnamese to present in a unified way the strategy, concepts, priorities, and objectives necessary to guide the total RVN pacification effort.

The 1969 plan, published in December 1968, expressed as its basic theme the need for a community spirit between government forces and the people to achieve maximum results. It defined eight primary objectives:[4]

1. Bring security to 90 percent of the population by the end of 1969 and extend national sovereignty throughout the country.

2. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-5 - VIII-8.
3. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1968, p. 526.
4. (~~C~~-GP 3) RVN, 1969 Pacification and Development Plan, 15 Dec 68, JMF 911/319 (15 Dec 68).

2. Neutralize 33,000 VCI by the end of 1969.

3. Involve additional people in the People's Self-Defense Force to bring its strength up to 2,000,000 members.

4. Establish local government in the villages throughout the country.

5. Rally 20,000 Hoi Chanh.

6. Decrease the number of refugees to less than 1,000,000 and resettle or return to their homes 300,000 people.

7. Increase the information and propaganda effort.

8. Encourage the rural economy.

The goals of the 1969 plan were intended to be reached by the end of the year, but success during the early months led to the introduction of an accelerated plan with a deadline of 31 October. Thereafter a succession of similar plans guided operations through February 1971. Thus in 1969 and 1970 the Republic of Vietnam operated under six different but overlapping pacification plans. Each of these plans had the same basic objectives enumerated in the 1969 plan; they differed from one another chiefly by having higher or lower goals set for each of their component programs. In all of these plans the first objective, territorial security, was by far the most important. In FY 1968, 1969, and 1970 the provision of territorial security, primarily through the operation of the RF and the PF, required 81 percent of the pacification budget. All the other programs, including the headquarters organizations in Saigon, shared the remaining 19 percent.[5]

5. (U) United States General Accounting Office, International Division, Background Information on United States Participation in Pacification and Development Programs in Vietnam Administered by Civil Operations for Rural Development Support, July 1971, p. 136, JMF 911/319 (1 Jul 71).

Policy Review by the New Administration

Upon entry into office, the Nixon Administration had several sources of current information to assist it in reviewing pacification policy. A Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) on Vietnam had just been completed, and other studies were instituted by the new administration. National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 1, 21 January 1969, posed several specific questions about pacification, and on 25 January the President himself requested information on current plans for improving South Vietnam's internal security capabilities. In March 1969, Secretary Laird visited Vietnam and reported to the President on his trip. The information furnished in these reports did little to simplify the formulation of pacification policy by the President and his advisers. Instead it documented the split between OSD-State Department-CIA and JCS-MACV-Embassy Saigon about the nature of the struggle in Vietnam.[6]

The earliest of these studies, the Special National Intelligence Estimate, reflected the more pessimistic views held by the civilian agencies. It indicated to the President that the pacification program as a whole had made a significant contribution to the prosecution of the war and had strengthened the position of the Republic of Vietnam, and that President Thieu's government seemed finally to be aware of the need for a vigorous pacification effort. But the SNIE also advised that a large part of the countryside was still contested, with neither side firmly in control. It was almost impossible, according to the report, to measure directly the loyalty of the people to the Republic of Vietnam, and the most common attitude of the peasants was war-weariness and apathy. Even if security conditions remained good, progress in pacification would be painfully slow. The report warned that "administrative capability of Vietnamese officials is weak; Revolutionary Development is heavily dependent on American advice, assistance, and inspiration. Pervasive corruption is a constant threat to the whole system."[7]

6. (S) SNIE 14-69, 16 Jan 69, DIA files. (S-GP 3) NSSM 1, 21 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/413, 22 Jan 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 1. (S-GP 4) Msg, CJCS 1163 to COMUSMACV, 28 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, March 5-12, 1969," 13 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS to SEA, Mar 69.

7. (S) SNIE 14-69, 16 Jan 69, DIA files.

The responses to NSSM 1 represented both viewpoints. Seven of 28 questions posed by Dr. Kissinger were directed at an evaluation of the pacification program. General Abrams and the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that the Republic of Vietnam was enjoying the greatest degree of control exercised in the current decade. The relatively secure population had improved slowly and unevenly from about 40 percent in early 1965 to more than 75 percent of the total in South Vietnam by the end of 1968, in spite of heavy enemy attacks during Tet and May in that year. The urban population after Tet had taken a distinctly hostile attitude toward the Viet Cong and particularly toward the North Vietnamese Army. In the III CTZ, interviewers found an almost total reliance by the enemy on terrorism and coercion, with the abandonment of attempts to woo the population. The shift from a predominately Viet Cong force in 1967 to one composed largely of North Vietnamese troops in 1968 precipitated a drop in civilian support of the enemy. The increasing urbanization of South Vietnam added to the government's control of its population. Free World Military Assistance Forces, US civil and military advisors, anti-Viet Cong Infrastructure programs, and the Accelerated Pacification Campaign had all contributed to this change. The Joint Chiefs of Staff predicted continuing gains in the 1969-1970 period. They pointed out that

> the Government of Vietnam is stronger and more stable than in the past several years. It has a freely elected, constitutional government which is slowly becoming more responsive to the aspirations of the people. President Thieu is the most knowledgeable Government of Vietnam official concerning pacification and he is highly effective in that role. . . . There have been many pacification programs in the past, but none on the scale and with the resources and the leadership being demonstrated today. . . . the outlook is most favorable.[8]

8. (S) NSSM 1, 21 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/413, 22 Jan 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 1. See Ch. 1, pp. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-58-69 to SecDef, 4 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-2, 1 Feb 69, same file, sec 2.

In contrast to these views, the OSD response to NSSM 1 found very little progress in pacification. The OSD report, for example, said that an

> analysis of the available data tends to lead to the following overall conclusions: (1) The portions of the SVN rural population which was aligned with the VC and aligned with the GVN is approximately the same today as it was in 1962: 5,000,000 GVN aligned and nearly 3,000,000 VC aligned; (2) At the present, it appears that at least 50 percent of the total rural population is subject to significant VC pressure and influence.[9]

These differing views were too far apart to allow a unified response to NSSM 1. Summarizing the replies, the NSC Secretariat thus described the disagreement.

> Two well-defined and divergent views emerged from the agencies on the pacification situation in Vietnam. One view is held by MACV and Embassy Saigon and endorsed by CINCPAC and JCS. The other view is that of OSD, CIA and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) in State. (The East Asian bureau in State lies somewhere in between.) The two views are profoundly different in terms of factual interpretation and policy implication. Both views agree on the obstacles to improvement and complete success. What distinguishes one view from the other is each's assessment of the magnitude of the problem, and the assessment of the degree of improvement likely to take place in the near future.[10]

President Nixon's expressed interest in South Vietnam's internal security was formalized by NSSM 19, issued on 11 February 1969 by Dr. Kissinger. It directed the Secretary of Defense, in cooperation with the Secretary of State

9. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "NSSM No. 1, Situation in Vietnam," 10 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-4, 11 Feb 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 3.

10. (~~TS~~) Memo, NSC Secretariat to Vice Pres et al., "Revised Summary of Responses to NSSM 1: The Situation in Vietnam," 22 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-8, 24 Mar 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 5.

and the Director of Central Intelligence, to prepare a study of RVN capabilities in this area with particular reference to plans for expanding and improving the indigenous police forces.[11]

General Wheeler had already begun preparing a reply to the President's 25 January request. After consulting COMUSMACV, he reported to Secretary Laird that internal security forces in South Vietnam were expanding and improving. The National Police had increased four-fold in the last four years. Its efforts were supplemented by the Regional Forces, the Popular Forces, and the People's Self-Defense Force, all of which were also expanding. There existed problems in leadership, administration, and training, but the current plans for future development, extending into 1972, were considered adequate to meet RVN's internal security needs. The Chairman's report concluded that the existing programs had proved their worth and needed only to be expanded.[12]

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs prepared an initial study in reply to NSSM 19 and forwarded it for JCS consideration in April. This ISA study contrasted sharply with General Wheeler's view. The basic conclusion was the same as that voiced in OSD responses to NSSM 1, namely, that despite gains made in 1968, levels of internal security were very little higher than in 1962. Government and VC forces seemed nearly evenly matched at the critical hamlet and village level. The study raised serious questions about RVN interagency rivalry, about basic Vietnamese attitudes toward their hamlet and their government, and about Vietnamese ability to master a US-style bureaucracy. In contrast to the integrated political-military structure of the VC/NVA, the RVN had "an unintegrated and relatively uncoordinated structure seeking political objectives primarily by military means."

The OSD study offered no solutions for these far-reaching problems. It concluded that total allied forces were large enough to provide an adequate degree of internal security although sufficient forces were not being devoted to internal

11. (S-GP 4) CM-3946-69 to SecDef, 19 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/426-1, 26 Feb 69; (TS) NSSM 19, 11 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/426, 12 Feb 69; JMF 911/233 (11 Feb 69) sec 1.

12. (S-GP 4) CM-3946-69 to SecDef, 19 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/426-1, 26 Feb 69, same file.

security at the local level. To remedy this situation, the report proposed a reorganization of the forces employed. They were to be grouped into two broad types, a quasi-military Territorial Security Force (TSF) and a police-type Internal Security Force (ISF), with control assigned to the proper levels and with lines of responsibility running to the appropriate ministries in Saigon. Regional Forces would constitute most of the TSF, along with National Police Field Forces (NPFF) and Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), which were guerrilla-type forces organized by the US Central Intelligence Agency. The ISF would use the National Police, Popular Forces, Revolutionary Development Cadre, and PSDF as its main elements. The OSD study concluded that this reorganization was a feasible way to accomplish the needed short-term gains in RVN internal security capabilities.[13]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, did not agree with the changes called for in the ISA study. Instead, they supported the evolutionary programs for the development of internal security forces devised by COMUSMACV and already transmitted through the Chairman to the President in March. They considered the reorganization proposed by ISA to be unnecessary and likely to disrupt current progress.[14]

The OSD response to NSSM 19 went through several versions, the last of them appearing in July. The basic disagreements remained unresolved. The NSC Review Group examined the paper on 10 July, but it was never subsequently considered by the NSC and no formal disposition was made of it.[15]

When Secretary Laird met with US officials on his fact-finding trip to Vietnam in March, he was told by COMUSMACV and US Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker that the pacification program had been receiving considerable attention and was on

13. (S) OSD Draft National Security Study: South Vietnam's Internal Security Capabilities, 28 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/426-4, 2 Apr 69, JMF 911/233 (11 Feb 69) sec 2.
14. (S-GP 4) JCSM-221-69 to SecDef, 12 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/426-5, 9 Apr 69, same file, sec 3.
15. (S) JTP for ASD(ISA) and Dir Plans and Policy, 10 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/426-7, 10 Jul 69, JMF 911/233 (11 Feb 69) sec 4. Interview, Robert J. Watson with COL William F. Lackman, Jr., OASD(ISA), 10 May 73.

the verge of making great progress. Ambassador Bunker explained to him that President Thieu had instilled "great energy, vigor and imagination into the pacification program. He has by far the most comprehensive grasp of pacification of anyone in the government." The Ambassador thought that progress had been made and was continuing at an accelerated rate. "This has been true especially in pacification which embraces so many aspects of our total effort."[16]

Earlier on the same day, Mr. William E. Colby, Deputy COMUSMACV for CORDS, had presented the Secretary with a more detailed, more cautious, but nevertheless optimistic report on the conduct of the pacification program. He did not ignore the problems. There was a perpetual shortage of trained manpower; many of the RVN attempts to draw the Vietnamese into participation in local government ran against their Confucianist background; the VCI still flourished; and corrpution was a problem. But in each case he outlined the steps being taken to overcome the problems and cited the recent gains made by the Republic of Vietnam. He assured the Secretary that COMUSMACV "believes that the strengths outweigh the vulnerabilities, and that a continuation of this kind of effort can result in a stronger Vietnam that can face the VC, though perhaps not the NVA in the future."[17]

Secretary Laird's report to the President on his trip contained none of Ambassador Bunker's optimism and none of Ambassador Colby's plans for the future. The Secretary did not believe that "true pacification and RVN control over its own population can be achieved while our own forces continue such a pervasive presence in South Vietnam." He concluded, apparently agreeing with the OSD position on NSSM 1, that despite the high figures reported on the level of RVN control, "some appreciable VC influence continues to exist for the major share of the Vietnamese people." He found the task of extending government control over the people difficult under peaceful circumstances and "herculean while hostilities continue at the present level."[18]

16. (C) Presentation by Amb Ellsworth Bunker, SecDef Briefing, 7 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/448, 14 Mar 69, JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 1.

17. (C) Briefing for SecDef and Party, MACV Hq, 7 Mar 69, by Amb Colby, Att to JCS 2472/448, 14 Mar 69, same file.

18. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, March 5-12, 1969," 13 Mar 69, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS to SEA, Mar 69.

The President, however, took no action to resolve the differing views concerning pacification in South Vietnam. Rather, his attention in the conduct of the war seemed concentrated on negotiations and on Vietnamization, both of which were aimed at reducing US involvement. In any event, the lack of presidential action gave tacit approval to the existing pacification efforts.

Concern over the PHOENIX Program

Nevertheless, one specific aspect of the pacification program had to be considered at the policy level in Washington during 1969. This was the PHOENIX program, formally created by RVN presidential decree on 1 July 1968. Until then the Republic of Vietnam had given only lukewarm support to the elimination of the pervasive political infrastructure of the VC. Indeed, according to US intelligence analyses, RVN intelligence and police activities had all too often been directed against noncommunist groups rather than against the VC. There had been, in addition, "a reluctance of the army and other governmental groups, especially the police, to work effectively together." Until 1968, the only agencies specifically operating against the Viet Cong infrastructure were the Chieu Hoi program to rally individual VC to the government side and the Provincial Reconnaissance Units, a guerrilla organization sponsored by the CIA.[19]

The purpose of the PHOENIX program was to destroy the VCI, which constituted the political, administrative, supply, and recruitment apparatus supporting VC operations against the Republic of Vietnam. The core of the VCI consisted of the members of the Peoples Revolutionary Party and included the leaders of the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam. General Abrams estimated the strength of VCI in November 1969 at approximately 75,000.[20]

The PHOENIX program involved many different RVN agencies. The National Police and its components, the National Police Field Force and the Special Police, together with the Provincial Reconnaissance Units, were mainstays of the new

19. (S) SNIE 14-49, 16 Jan 69, DIA files.
20. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 16592 to CINCPAC et al., 24 Dec 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 69.

program, but the military also contributed through its intelligence and security services as well as through the operations of regular, regional, and popular forces. The People's Self-Defense Force, the Revolutionary Development Cadre, the Information Services, local officials, and other governmental elements were also included.

The key organizations in the program were the District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers (DIOCC), which were established at each of the 250 or so Vietnamese districts to serve as a central point for collecting information and for coordinating operations against the VCI. Counterparts were established at provincial and regional areas, and at the national level in Saigon. United States participation in PHOENIX proper was limited to the provision of military advisers for the district centers.

The Republic of Vietnam established numerical quotas for the neutralization of VCI personnel by PHOENIX agencies in each geographic area. A member of the VCI could be neutralized in any one of three ways: he could be killed in the course of security operations; he could be captured; or he could be induced to rally to the Republic of Vietnam. Government policy stressed the desirability of capture and rallying over killing in meeting operational goals.

The PHOENIX program was beset with difficulties and criticisms almost from its beginning. Ambassador Colby reported to Secretary Laird in March 1969 that although PHOENIX officials claimed 16,000 neutralizations in 1968, nearly all the losses had been replaced. Some of these replacements doubtless came from within the VC organization, but "the quagmire of the GVN administrative-judicial system" also on occasion allowed VCI members to return to their former activities. In a report for the President, General Wheeler stated that suspects had been released by local officials prior to their trials; moreover, even when cases were tried, lenient sentences had been given by provincial security committees for various reasons, including lack of evidence, corruption, inadequate prison space, or even failure to appreciate the danger of the VCI. Once the local officials had processed a VCI member through the PHOENIX program and counted him against their quota, there was no workable records system to keep track of him. Early in 1969 US officials could

not establish how many VCI were still in jail or how many had been released.[21]

The PHOENIX program experienced these difficulties in part because the program was new. Only in 1967 did US or RVN planners begin to give major attention to the neutralization of members of the enemy infrastructure, and not until mid-1968 did the program begin to function. In 1969 Mr. Colby thought that the Republic of Vietnam still needed to teach "a lot of people what the infrastructure was, that the enemy really is a political as well as a military force."[22]

In October 1969 the Secretary of the Army, Stanley R. Resor, expressed his concern to the Secretary of Defense that in US attempts to make the PHOENIX program more efficient, the social and moral costs involved might be ignored. He recommended a review of the program to determine if emphasis should shift from the present dragnet method to a more selective attack on the VCI. He was particularly concerned with the provision of US military advisers for the Provincial Reconnaissance Units, which the press had accused of carrying out a program of political assassination.[23]

The Secretary of Defense was also concerned about US military participation in the PRU program. He wished to reduce activities that might prove both "embarrassing to the Department of Defense and counter-productive to our efforts in Vietnam." He asked the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to conduct an immediate review of the PRU program, including not only the

21. (C) Briefing for SecDef and Party, MACV Hq, 7 Mar 69, by Amb Colby, Att to JCS 2472/448, 14 Mar 69, JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 1. (S) SNIE 14-69, 16 Jan 69, DIA files. (S-GP 1) CM-3946-69 to SecDef, 19 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/426-1, 26 Feb 69, JMF 911/233 (11 Feb 69) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Memo, "Trip Report, SEA, 9-23 February 1969," Att to SACSA M-133-69S, 3 Mar 69, in SEA Briefing Book for CJCS, Mar 69, Operational SecW, OCJCS File 337 SecDef/CJCS to SEA, Mar 69.

22. (C) Briefing for SecDef and Party, MACV Hq, 7 Mar 69, by Amb Colby, Att to JCS 2472/448, 14 Mar 69, JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 1.

23. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecA to SecDef, "The Phoenix and Provincial Reconnaissance Unit Programs in Vietnam," 20 Oct 69, Att to JCS 2472/541, 21 Oct 69, JMF 911/310 (20 Oct 69).

value of the program but plans for reducing US participation in it. He thought "we should divest ourselves of this mission as early and as completely as possible, unless you find overriding reasons to the contrary."[24]

General Wheeler replied that the PRU had been quite effective in neutralizing the VCI and that steps were already being taken to correct the abuses in the program. The PRU was a CIA-funded and directed operation, he continued, and General Abrams had himself been concerned for some time with a situation in which he was ultimately responsible for military advisers but had no control of their activities within the program. In September 1969 General Abrams had begun to withdraw the 108 military advisers by a process of attrition, and all would have departed by October 1970. The Secretary of Defense made no objection, and the withdrawal of US military personnel from the PRU program continued.[25]

Pacification in 1969

Meantime, progress was being reported in the pacification effort. When Secretary Laird visited Saigon in early March 1969, Ambassador Colby told him that the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) rating for relatively secure hamlets had risen by more than one percent during February and that progress in expanding and training the RF, PF, and PSDF was proceeding according to plan. Ambassador Colby stressed that the most important strength of the program was the momentum of success. The military forces had pushed the big war away, he said, so that pacification could continue behind this shield.[26]

In mid-March President Thieu reorganized his cabinet to strengthen his government. The most significant feature of

24. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Evaluation of US Involvement in the Provincial Reconnaissance Unit Program in the Republic of Vietnam," 29 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2472/557, 1 Dec 69, same file.

25. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-752-69 to SecDef, 8 Dec 69, Encl to JCS 2472/557-1, 6 Dec 69, same file. Interview with COL R.A. Wyatt, J-3 (SACSA), 19 Feb 71.

26. (C) Briefing for SecDef and Party, MACV Hq, 7 Mar 69, by Amb Colby, Att to JCS 2472/448, 14 Mar 69, JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 1.

the reorganization was the creation of a Deputy Premier for Pacification and Reconstruction. President Thieu named his old and trusted friend, Lieutenant General Tran Thien Khiem, to the new post. General Khiem, who continued as Minister of Interior, was now subordinate only to President Thieu and the Premier and had authority to call upon any of the government's agencies for pacification support. President Thieu also appointed Nguyen Van Vang Minister of Revolutionary Development, a post that had been vacant for some months.[27]

By mid-year considerable gains were reported in pacification. The Hamlet Evaluation System showed a relatively secure population of 85.6 percent, an increase of over six percent since initiation of the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan on 1 February. Ambassador Colby reported that pacification had a program, an organization, a certain momentum of its own, and enough resources to keep going. He praised the support given by President Thieu, who had done "a very fine job." At mid-year the Ambassador reported to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on various weaknesses in the program, but he continued to maintain that credits outweighed the debits, resulting in "nothing outstanding, nothing spectacular, but a steady increase."[28]

In the light of the progress made thus far, the Republic of Vietnam decided to accelerate the program. A directive from the Prime Minister on 26 June announced Phase II of the 1969 Pacification and Development Campaign to cover the four-month period 1 July through 31 October 1969. This Phase II program, subsequently designated the 1969 Accelerated Pacification Campaign (1969 APC; not to be confused with the original November 1968-January 1969 APC), called for the fulfillment, or over-fulfillment of the eight objectives originally scheduled for the earlier 1969 campaign.[29]

27. NY Times, 12 Mar 69, 12; 13 Mar 69, 19.

28. (C) MACV, Material for CJCS, 20 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/509, 24 Jul 69; (S-GP 4) Pacification Briefing by Amb Colby for CJCS, 17 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/513, 29 Jul 69; JMF 911/080 (17 Jul 69).

29. (C) Prime Ministerial Directive No. 924, "Phase II Goals of 1969 PD Plan," 26 Jun 69, Encl to Memo, DepCORDS/MACV, 28 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/499, 9 Jul 69, JMF 911/319 (26 Jun 69) sec 1.

Pacification work under the 1969 APC made significant progress, and by 31 October most of the goals of the campaign had been achieved, including a relatively secure population of 90 percent and a fully secure population of 50 percent. These objectives, originally set for the end of the year, had been attained while US troop withdrawals from Vietnam were beginning. The expiration of the 1969 APC on 31 October 1969 left the RVN without a formal plan or schedule for the remainder of the year. Efforts during November and December centered principally on consolidating previous gains and upgrading hamlet security.[30]

Although the improvement during 1969 resulted largely from favorable trends on the battlefield, it was in part at least attributable to the growing strength of forces involved directly in pacification. The Regional and Popular Forces had the crucial role of providing territorial security in support of pacification. Both consisted of volunteers recruited from the local population. A program to build them up had begun in 1968 with President Johnson's decision to improve and modernize the RVNAF. At the beginning of 1969 strengths stood at 220,900 for the RF and 173,200 for PF. At the Midway Conference in June, the Republic of Vietnam requested an accelerated RVNAF expansion, including additional RF and PF troops. After reviewing the RVN proposals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the PF be increased by 36,700 in FY 1970 and by 24,550 in FY 1971 while the RF should be enlarged by 15,570 and 5,170 in the same years. The Secretary of Defense approved these increases, and during the four months of 1969 APC the territorial security forces expanded rapidly. By 1 November 1969 strengths stood at 253,892 for the RF and 206,545 for the PF, a total of 460,437.[31]

30. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Combat Analysis Group, J-3, CAG-VSUM 1-69, "A Periodic Summary of Progress Toward Vietnamizing the War (U)," Nov 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 5A. (The periodic summaries published by the Combat Analysis Group in this numbered series will be cited hereafter by their CAG-VSUM short title.) (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-33 - VIII-36.

31. (~~S~~-GP 4) CAG 3-69, "Analytical Supplement to Statistical Digest of Military Developments in SEA (U)," 15 Aug 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 69. (~~TS~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-27, VIII-31. (~~S~~-GP 4) JCSM-462-69 to SecDef, 29 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/497-3, 26 Jul 69, JMF 911/535 (8 Jun 69) sec 2. (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 12 Aug 69, Att to JCS 2472/497-5, 13 Aug 69, same file, sec 3.

The desertion rates for the Regional and Popular Forces were lower than the RVNAF average during the year, and the RF/PF kill ratio rose in each quarter of 1969. There were problems, of course, particularly in leadership. Both RF anf PF were below authorized strength in NCOs and in officers, and even though the charts showed RF officer strength near 100 percent of the authorization by 31 December 1969, 80 percent of these were lieutenants or aspirants.[32]

Another important element in providing territorial security was the Peoples Self-Defense Force, which had been organized in 1968 as a kind of home guard. The RVN Mobilization Law of 19 June 1968 required the participation of all able-bodied males aged 16-18 and 39-50, with youths 12-15, men over 50, and women serving as volunteers in support groups. The PSDF was created to improve the maximum number of citizens in support of the government by having them actually engaged in its defense as well as to provide the population a means to defend themselves and to promote a sense of community development. The 1969 Pacification and Development Plan called for a PSDF of two million members, with 400,000 members armed. By the end of the year, PSDF membership stood at 3,219,000, with 1,098,000 trained and 399,500 armed.[33]

The MACV Chief of Staff reported that the PSDF had come a long way in the course of the year. He thought a good measure of its success, and of its future potential, was that the VC had found the PSDF important enough to make it a target. He also saw certain problems. There were delays in obtaining and servicing weapons and a lack of standarization in training. Although the Ministry of Interior had issued broad guidelines for the PSDF, there was considerable local variation in the implementation of these standards. The PSDF was, he believed, a temptation for politicians who might wish to gain control of it for partisan purposes.[34]

32. (S-GP 4) CM-4260-69 to SecDef, 24 May 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 69. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-69, Nov 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 5A. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS Hist Div files.

33. (S-GP 4) J-5 BP, "Arming PSDF (U)," 3 Dec 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VIII-49.

34. (U) Ltr, C/S MACV to CINCPAC, 27 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2472/565, 9 Dec 69, JMF 911/319 (12 Nov 69).

The purpose of the Revolutionary Development Cadre was to develop a sense of leadership and community spirit in the local communities. The RDC consisted of teams sent to the villages and hamlets after the RF or PF had established a minimum level of security. There they were to identify the VCI, to organize and train the PSDF, to assist in the organization of local elections, and to initiate self-help programs. In February the Republic of Vietnam reduced the size of each RDC team from 59 to 30 men, thus doubling the number of teams. This reduction theoretically did not degrade team performance since one half the function of the larger teams was security, and this function was being assumed by the RF and the PF. During 1969, the RDC strength rose from 43,900 at the end of January to 51,300 by the end of the year.[35]

South Vietnam had suffered throughout its existence from a lack of police forces. There was no nationwide police force at all until the National Police (NP) was formed in 1962. The NP grew from 19,000 in 1963 to 78,000 by the beginning of 1969. The latter figure included a special organization known as the National Police Field Force, which numbered about 15,000 by the end of 1969 [redacted] The rapid growth of the NP had resulted in a leadership problem, and the percentage of trained and experienced officers in the NP was low. According to Mr. Colby, the NP had tended to stay in towns, protecting the government from the population in the traditional way of a colonial police, and had left the countryside without police protection. The increased pacification efforts in 1968 and 1969, however, stressed not only the expansion of the NP, but also its extension into the hamlets and villages.[36]

35. (S-GP 4) CAG 2-69, "Analytical Supplement to Statistical Digest of Military Developments in SEA (U)," 15 Jul 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69. (S-GP 3) MACV Fact Book, Vol II, Item 1B, Att to JCS 2472/448-4, 17 Mar 69, JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS Hist Div files.

36. (S) Briefing for SecDef and Party, MACV Hq, 7 Mar 69, by Amb Colby, Att to JCS 2472/448, 14 Mar 69, JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS Hist Div files. (U) "Progress of the Pacification Program," Rpt by Subcom of H. Com on Armed Services following a visit to RVN, 15-17 Jan 70, H-3-38, 9 Feb 70, 91st Cong, 2d sess (hereafter cited as H. Rpt, "Progress of the Pacification Program").

The United States was particularly interested in the strengthening and expansion of police forces in Vietnam. President Nixon had expressed interest in this subject, and Secretary Laird discussed the matter with President Thieu during his visit to Vietnam in March. President Thieu assured Mr. Laird of his determination to establish police forces in the villages.[37]

The goal for the NP in 1969 was to increase its strength from 78,000 to approximately 92,000, but by mid-year the NP had actually declined to 76,800. The decrease resulted from attrition and the effect of the RVN mobilization decree, which restricted NP recruitment to men over 35. The Republic of Vietnam authorized in September 1969 the transfer of 13,000 men from the RVNAF. Nevertheless, the NP strength on 31 December had reached only 85,200, just seven thousand more than at the beginning of the year.[38]

The Chieu Hoi program had been persuading members of the Viet Cong to return to the government side since 1963. The 1969 RVN Pacification and Development Plan set a goal of 20,000 Hoi Chanh. Despite a slight decline during the 1969 Tet campaign, progress was above expectations. As a consequence, the Republic of Vietnam raised the goal to 25,000 and eventually to 29,600. By mid-year the number of ralliers had already reached 20,924, and by the end of the year 47,023. The great majority of these returnees came from the Delta, where authorities attributed the outstanding success of the program to the expansion of security into contested and VC-controlled areas of the countryside. The closing weeks of 1969, however, saw a slight fall in the number of Hoi Chanh. This trend continued into 1970 as the Republic of Vietnam slowed its expansion into VC territory.[39]

37. (S) Memo of Conv, SecDef et al., and Pres Thieu et al., Saigon, 8 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/463, 8 Apr 69, JMF 911/075 (CY 69).

38. (C) MACV Material for CJCS, 20 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/509, 24 Jul 69, JMF 911/080 (17 Jul 69). (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS Hist Div files. (U) H. Rpt, "Progress of the Pacification Program."

39. (S-GP 4) CAG 2-69, "Analytical Supplement to Statistical Digest of Military Developments in Southeast Asia (U)," 15 Jul 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 69. (C) MACV Material for CJCS, 20 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/590, 24 Jul 69, JMF 911/080 (17 Jul 69). (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS HIst Div files.

After a period of indoctrination at a Chieu Hoi Center, each Hoi Chanh was given the option of returning to his home village if it was secure, of going to a Chieu Hoi resettlement village, or going elsewhere to an area of his choice. He was also given a chance to serve with the Republic of Vietnam. Under the "Turnabout" program, the government sent groups of volunteer Hoi Chanh (known as Armed Propaganda Teams, or APTs) into contested areas or back to their local villages to induce further ralliers. Another employment of Hoi Chanh, which made use of their intimate knowledge of the enemy at the local level, was as members of US or RVNAF combat units, where they helped to search out enemy supply caches, to interrogate captives and suspects, and to identify members of the Viet Cong. By December 1969, some 2,245 of these "Kit Carson Scouts" were serving with allied forces in South Vietnam. In mid-1969, Mr. Colby proposed to the Republic of Vietnam the recruitment of PF platoons directly from the Chieu Hoi centers as a possible means of easing the overcrowding of these centers. This proposal produced much discussion, but no final action in 1969.[40]

The US Embassy in Saigon pointed out that many of the Chieu Hoi ralliers might better be described as refugees rather than enemy soldiers who had abandoned the fight. Embassy officials believed that perhaps as many as 50 percent of the ralliers were refugees, persons who had served the VC for a period of a month or so as laborers or guerrillas, who did not bring any weapons with them, and who had been induced to rally by a third person who received a financial reward for bringing them in. Moreover, little was known about the ralliers after they left the Chieu Hoi centers. Many reportedly returned to their hamlets, where they might again be impressed by the VC, making them eligible for a second rally. There was also abuse of the Third Party Award Program, under which the government paid rewards for inducing VC members to defect. Numerous reports of collusion between prospective ralliers and third parties for sharing of the rewards led to the termination of the program in November 1969.[41]

Other vital aspects of pacification were the establishment of local rural government and the resettlement of refugees.

40. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. VIII-67. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VIII-56.

41. (S-GP 4) ODASD(SA) SEA Analysis Rpt, Jun 69, pp. 31, 32, JMF 911/337 (Jan 69) sec 1c. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VIII-60.

The Republic of Vietnam held elections in 749 villages and 4,461 hamlets in March and June 1969, with voter turnout averaging 89 percent. In September 1969, the RVN sponsored elections in another 147 villages and 933 hamlets. By the end of December HES figures showed that more than 2,000 of 2,117 villages and 9,800 of 10,706 hamlets had elected officials.[42]

At the beginning of 1969, there were about 1,328,500 registered refugees in South Vietnam. The 1969 Pacification and Development Plan called for the reduction of this number to less than one million, even while making allowance for the possibility that additional refugees might be generated in the course of the year. The first half of 1969 saw a steady reduction in the number of refugees to a total of roughly 1,200,000. Accelerated resettlement under the 1969 APC reduced the total to 536,800 by the end of October. In November and December the reduction continued and by the end of the year only 268,300 refugees remained on government rolls, far surpassing the original 1969 goal. Overall during the year 488,200 refugees were returned to their native villages and 586,300 were resettled in new areas, totaling 1,074,500 either returned or resettled.[43]

The Republic of Vietnam considered the psychological and information effort as an integral part in the development of political support. The 1969 Plan set no specific goals for this area, but rather announced an increased effort to explain the 1969 pacification programs to the entire population, particularly in rural areas, and to encourage the people to participate actively in local government and in pacification efforts. However, the information program in 1969 was not a success. General Abrams called the information program overly mechanical and not "infected with the dynamism which had caught the rest of the pacification program." He thought it had not really reached the people who counted, the uncommitted peasants and workers to whom the VC had potential

42. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-69, Nov 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 5A. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-39 - VIII-41.

43. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS Hist Div files. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-88 - VIII-92.

appeal. A Joint Staff evaluation of the 1969 information program stated that a great deal more needed to be done; it cited as an example the unsatisfactory status of the village and hamlet information cadre who had received no pay since April 1969.[44]

The increased security achieved in the countryside during 1969 stimulated the development of the rural economy by facilitating improvements in transportation. During the course of the year, the Republic of Vietnam completed 161 kilometers of roads, while it built 2,400 meters of new bridging and repaired about 1,300 meters. By the end of the year, 3,785 kilometers of roads, 546 of railroad, and 1,754 of waterways were open. Trade and traffic increased between country and town, and press accounts told of highways clogged with trucks and cars.[45]

In the production of rice, the Republic of Vietnam hoped not only to attain self-sufficiency but to resume its status as an exporter of the crop, by increasing annual production from five to six million tons. The government set as a goal for the year the planting of 200,000 hectares in "miracle" rice, a five-fold increase over the 44,000 hectares planted in 1968. In fact, 240,000 hectares were so planted during 1969. Other steps to increase agricultural production were taken. In 1969, the government made 400 loans totaling over four billion piasters to assist agricultural and fishery projects. The government also distributed plows, pumps, and other farm equipment in increasing numbers and attempted to import tractors and other mechanized farm machinery. Because of the improved security conditions, the Republic of Vietnam was able to remove certain restrictions on fishing in coastal waters that had originally been imposed to prevent enemy infiltration.[46]

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44. (C) Briefing for SecDef and Party, MACV Hq, by Amb Colby, 7 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2572/448, 14 Mar 69, JMF 911/075 (14 Mar 69) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 1285 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 28 Jan 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 70. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS Hist Div files. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, p. VIII-78.

45. NY Times, 16 Oct 69, 1. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 1285 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 28 Jan 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 70.

46. (TS-GP 1) CAG-VSUM 1-70, Mar 70, JCS Hist Div files. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-80 - VIII-81, VIII-88. (U) H. Rpt, "Progress of the Pacification Program."

Despite the assurances made by President Thieu, one area of rural economic development in which the Republic of Vietnam made little progress in 1969 was land reform. In a country where landless tenants tilled 60 percent of the land, there was large opportunity for the government to offer a genuine reform program to gain the support of the tenant farmers. Land reform plans for South Vietnam dated back to 1954, but little had been accomplished. In a New Year's speech, President Thieu promised to assist the people in acquiring property "through a truly vigorous and revolutionary land reform program," and in May the Republic of Vietnam announced the distribution of 147,200 hectares of government-owned rice land, much of it expropriated from French owners. But only 74,700 hectares had been transferred by the end of 1969 in spite of a special effort made during the 1969 APC.[47]

On 2 July 1969, President Thieu presented the SVN National Assembly with a revolutionary new proposal. Under the title "Land-to-the-Tiller," the government would give one million hectares of privately owned land free of charge to the tenants who currently worked it, with the government compensating the absentee landlords for their expropriated property. The program would virtually prohibit anyone from owning more land than he or his family could cultivate, and would give title to any tenant who filed application for the land he worked. The United States, having pressured the Republic of Vietnam for years to implement an effective land reform policy, was highly pleased with the proposed program. President Nixon at the Midway conference in June had pledged $10 million for the purpose, and he wrote President Thieu a personal letter reaffirming US support and assistance for the program. The "Land-to-the Tiller Program" held great promise for the future, but it did not begin until well into 1970.[48]

Thus broadly viewed, US officials in Vietnam as well as the RVN had cause to feel considerable satisfaction with the progress of the pacification program by the end of 1969. If available statistics and indications were reliable, the

47. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-83 - VIII-85.

48. NY Times, 28 Jun 69, 3; 17 Mar 70, 12; 25 Mar 70, 15; 27 Mar 70, 3. (U) Ltr, Pres Nixon to Pres Thieu, 11 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, pp. VIII-86 - VIII-87.

situation should grow steadily brighter. This optimism over the progress and future prospects of the pacification program was shared by a congressional subcommittee that visited Vietnam in January 1970. Three members of the House Committee on Armed Services reported that the pacification program "is going in the right direction and has made some significant progress down a long and difficult road." The subcommittee noted that anyone who had followed reports on Vietnam over the years had learned the value of skepticism. Nevertheless the members found that the signs for the future were good, stating that the "leadership at the top" appeared to be giving increased attention to pacification and exerting a genuine effort to make government more responsive at the local level.[49]

The two US officials most directly responsible for US support of the pacification program, General Abrams and Ambassador Colby, were particularly pleased with the results in 1969. General Abrams believed that the Republic of Vietnam during the year had taken the strategic and political initiative from the enemy, and both of them cited the growing momentum of the program and the beginning of political awareness and cohesiveness among the population. Their experience with overly optimistic claims of success led them to add that the progress had yet to be tested by a sustained enemy attack. Nevertheless, noting the continued high priority placed on the program by President Thieu, General Abrams predicted that the current level of pacification would be maintained in 1970.[50]

Policy Review in 1970

After the success in the pacification effort during 1969, neither the White House nor the Defense Department planned any major evaluations of overall pacification policy in the early months of 1970. Secretary Laird's 15-page report to the President on his February 1970 visit to Vietnam scarcely mentioned pacification. The only study in progress at the

49. (U) H. Rpt, "Progress on the Pacification Program."

50. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 13589 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 19 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 1285 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 28 Jan 70, same file, Jan 70. (S-GP 4) CM-5304-70 to SecDef, 18 Jun 70, same file, Jun 70.

beginning of the year was one undertaken by the Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG), which the National Security Council had created in September 1969 to conduct systematic analyses of US programs and activities in Vietnam. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was a member of this group along with the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Director of Central Intelligence.[51]

In an effort that extended well into the spring of 1970, the VSSG had under continuous development a report on "The Situation in the Countryside." The objective was not only to understand the situation in the countryside and the factors affecting it but to develop a methodology for predicting changes in the situation. The study evaluated the pacification program and its relation to military developments and other factors. Draft versions of this report emphasized the interrelated nature of military and pacification operations. "If the enemy gets the upper hand in the main force war, he is more capable of preventing GVN control gains and causing the GVN to lose control [of the population] . . . . The GVN can also capitalize on the mutually reinforcing aspects of the control and main force wars."[52]

The VSSG figures showed a rapid expansion of government control in 1969, followed by a slowdown in the rate of expansion in 1970. The study revealed in addition the essentially military nature of the RVN control of the civilian population. It concluded that "the GVN has made little social or economic progress, at least of the sort that might be relevant to increasing its political support and viability. This is not immediately important in terms of its ability to exercise a high degree of physical control over the people. For the longer run, however, these failures make the control gains tenuous."[53]

51. (S) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, February 10-14, 1970," 17 Feb 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 70. (TS) NSDM 23, 16 Sep 69, JMF 001 (CY 1969) NSDMs.

52. (S) VSSG, "The Situation in the Countryside," 10 Jan 69 [i.e., 70], Office for NSC Affairs files, J-5.

53. (S) VSSG, "The Situation in the Countryside," 15 Apr 70, Office for NSC Affairs files, J-5.

"The Situation in the Countryside" never reached a final form, and it was not submitted to the NSC for formal consideration. Like the responses to NSSM 19, the information in this VSSG study was thus not considered by any higher policymaking body.[54]

In another forum, however, Senator J. William Fulbright directed attention to the overall pacification policy. In February and again in March 1970, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee under his chairmanship held hearings on the US role in pacification. The Committee heard testimony from Ambassador Colby, from John Paul Vann, Deputy for CORDS, IV Corps, and from others involved in pacification in Vietnam.

The two main witnesses provided the Committee with a picture of growing strength in the program. Ambassador Colby reported that the Republic of Vietnam was "organized to conduct a people's war and is showing the leadership and drive to create a better and safer society for its citizens." He acknowledged that the success of pacification in the future depended on the participation of the people as well as the government of South Vietnam. Mr. Vann, with seven years of experience in Vietnam, told the Committee that he had been dissatisfied with the manner in which the war was conducted until 1968. But he indicated that with the changes made since then on both the allied and enemy sides, "our objectives, and coincidentally the objectives of the majority of the Vietnamese people, will be achieved."[55]

In the first four months of 1970, gains in pacification came at a slower rate than in 1969. From December 1969 to January 1970, the number of hamlets under government control increased by only 0.7 percent. For January 1970, the HES rating actually showed a drop from the previous month, but this resulted from the adoption of a revised Hamlet Evaluation System; when measured by the old system there was still a slight gain. Under the revised system, small gains of 0.6 and 1.2 percent were reported for February and March, respectively, but a drop of 0.8 percent was recorded in April.

54. JCS records reveal neither a final draft of "The Situation in the Countryside" nor any indication of its disposition by the VSSG.

55. Hearings, Vietnam, Policy and Prospects, 1970: Civil Operations and Development Support Program, S. Com on Foreign Relations, 91st Cong, 2d sess, pp. 13-14, 98.

On 26 May 1970, Secretary Laird asked General Wheeler to have COMUSMACV and CINCPAC prepare a plan to regain momentum. The impending return of allied units from Cambodia, the Secretary believed, would provide an opportunity to reverse the unfavorable trend.[56]

General Wheeler forwarded the COMUSMACV reply to the Secretary's request on 18 June 1970. The field commander acknowledged that pacification then presented a spotty picture and suggested that it reflected a change in the nature of the pacification struggle. In many places the excitement of expanding into new territory, with measurable success, was being replaced by the routine and inconclusiveness of the activities necessary to solidify the pacification gains made in 1969. The President and the national leadership had been distracted by new economic, political, and international problems, while the Communists had just now begun to oppose the pacification effort effectively. General Abrams reported that most of the goal set for Phase I of the 1970 Pacification and Development Plan would not be met. But the Republic of Vietnam was aware of the problems involved and was taking steps to correct them in a Special Pacification Campaign. He recommended that US forces "move to include development-type activities within our range of priorities in order to consolidate and sustain gains made." He also noted that "security-related programs such as improvement of RVNAF, Territorial Security, PHOENIX, PSDF, and the expansion and improvement of the National Police will continue to receive high priority."

The Chairman added that the "Pacification Program is critical to the future of Vietnam and must remain essentially Vietnamese in character if it is to be successful." He suggested seven specific areas that needed continuing emphasis. Among them were the PHOENIX Program, improvement in the quality of RVN leadership and reduction of corruption, expansion of territorial forces, and fulfillment of the "Land-to-the Tiller" program.[57]

56. (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. VIII-16 - VIII-19. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Momentum of Pacification," 26 May 70, Att to JCS 2472/628, 28 May 70, JMF 911/319 (26 May 70).

57. (S-GP 4) CM-5304-70 to SecDef, 18 Jun 70, same file.

Of the seven areas suggested by General Wheeler, the only one to receive serious attention in Washington was the PHOENIX Program. Although the definitions of VCI were tightened and there was steady reporting of VCI neutralizations throughout 1970, performance continued to lag behind expectations. On 24 June 1970, Mr. David Packard, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, asked the Chairman to consider the problem. The conflict in Vietnam was becoming increasingly more political, he said, making an effective effort to eliminate the VCI "essential" to a wide range of RVN programs. He asked General Wheeler for recommendations that might stimulate the PHOENIX Program. The Assistant Secretary (ISA), Mr. G. Warren Nutter, followed up this memorandum with a request for certain information. What was being done, he asked, to improve the leadership of the PHOENIX Program? To make it better known? To ensure that VCI members were incarcerated, and that those released from prison did not return to the VC? To provide better exchange of information at various levels?[58]

In reply, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense on 15 August 1970 that the weaknesses of PHOENIX had been fully recognized in both Washington and Saigon. In the past, the program had been somewhat neglected and too many separate agencies had been involved. In response to Mr. Nutter's specific questions, they supplied detailed information furnished by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC. Among their recommendations for improvement of the program were the following: that the Federal Bureau of Investigation be asked to provide a team of experts to advise on the neutralization of important VCI; that it be made clear to both US and RVN agencies that the PHOENIX Program was fully as important as the tactical operations; that the US Army provide more experienced officers to assist the PHOENIX Program; and that COMUSMACV and the US Embassy in Saigon strongly urge the Republic of Vietnam to institute a number of specific reforms.[59]

58. (S-GP 4) Memo, DSecDef to CJCS, "Phung Hoang/Phoenix Program," 24 Jun 70, Att to JCS 2472/635, 26 Jun 70; (S-GP 3) Memo, ASD(ISA) to DJS, "The Phoenix/Phung Hoang Program," 15 Jul 70, Att to JCS 2472/635-1, 15 Jul 70; JMF 911/319 (24 Jun 70).

59. (S-GP 4) JCSM-394-70 to SecDef, 15 Aug 70, Encl to JCS 2472/635-2, 4 Aug 70, same file.

The last of these recommendations received the full endorsement of the Secretary of Defense on 7 November 1970. At the same time Mr. Laird directed that General Abrams set up a special review group headed by Ambassador Colby to take "a fresh, unconstrained look that goes to the heart of the problem and develop an action program designed to solve the basic GVN and US deficiencies on a top priority basis." He stressed the extreme importance of improving internal security in South Vietnam and agreed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that neutralizing the VCI was as important as tactical operations.[60]

The special review group reported its findings to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 December 1970. The members concluded that while the VCI continued to be a serious threat, it had been reduced in effectiveness. The PHOENIX Program, however, had contributed little to this reduction. Some of the problems the program faced were "in the nature of facts of life, e.g., the military one-year tour and the civilian staffing limitation." The review group offered 27 specific recommendations for improvement, but warned that "no dramatic and sweeping actions can promise a rapid change in the overall atmosphere." But the government and the people of South Vietnam needed to understand better the nature of the VCI and the necessity of operations to protect the nation from it. The Republic of Vietnam must make a sustained effort to select and train the proper personnel. "This effort should be encompassed," they said, "in a program to build a professional and responsive National Police to contribute over the years to the internal security of South Vietnam." On 17 December Ambassador Colby briefed Secretary Laird on the results of the study.[61]

Pacification in 1970

The conduct of the Pacification Program in South Vietnam during 1970 followed very closely the pattern of 1969. The objectives were similar, the programs were very nearly the same, and a steady refinement of these programs produced by

60. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "PHUNG HOANG/Phoenix Program," 7 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2472/635-3, 9 Nov 70, same file.

61. (C) Fact Book, DEPCORDS, "Internal Security in South Vietnam," 12 Dec 70, cited in (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. VIII-48 - VIII-54. NY Times, 11 Dec 70, 8. (U) 1st N/H of JCS 2472/635-3, 23 Sep 71, JMF 911/319 (24 Jun 70).

the end of the year a higher level of security for South Vietnam as a whole. The 1970 Pacification and Development Plan became operative on 1 January of that year. The plan originally divided the year into three phases, the first ending on 30 June 1970 and the second on 31 October. The last two months of the year were designated as a "supplementary" phase to serve as a link with the 1971 plan. In May 1970, President Thieu initiated a Special Pacification and Development Plan to cover the July-October 1970 period in an attempt to stimulate enthusiasm for and effort in the pacification program. Subsequently, the supplementary phase of the 1970 plan was extended through 28 February 1971 in order to bring pacification planning into alignment with the Vietnamese calendar.[62]

The 1970 plans called for territorial security levels high enough to bring 100 percent of the villages and hamlets into the relatively secure category, with 90 percent enjoying full security. At the same time a new set of criteria was introduced into the HES that made those goals more difficult to achieve. The changes were made to improve the accuracy and reliability of the HES, but they also produced a drop in the relatively secure rating from 92.7 in December 1969 under the old system to 87.9 in January 1970 under the new. As mentioned above, territorial security made only small gains in February and March and then suffered a drop in April. Thereafter, the Republic of Vietnam managed to reverse the

62. (C) RVN Pacification and Development Plan for 1970, n.d., JMF 911/319 (26 Jun 69) sec 2. (C-GP 4) Memo for Record, Amb William E. Colby, Dep COMUSMACV/CORDS, "Presidential Meetings with Corps Commanders and Province Chiefs (22 and 24 June 1970)," 25 Jun 70, Att to DJSM-981-70 to CJCS, 16 Jul 70, JMF 911/319 (25 Jun 70). (S-GP 1) RVN, Presidential Guidance No. 31, "1970 Pacification and Development Plan," 8 May 70; (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 53290 to CG XXIV Corps et al., 12 Oct 70, cited in (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. VIII-8 - VIII-11. (S) Memo, "Current Status of the Pacification Program in South Vietnam," 7 Oct 70, Att to Memo, Dep DCI to CJCS, 7 Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep-Oct 70.

trend, and there were slight gains each successive month throughout the remainder of the year. By December 1970, 95.1 percent of the hamlet population lived in relatively secure areas and 84.6 percent in fully secure areas. Though showing an improvement, these figures were still short of the ambitious 1970 goals.[63]

The increasing level of security was provided by larger and better local forces. The Regional, the Popular, and the People's Self-Defense Forces all made substantial gains in 1970. They carried an increasing burden of territorial security as US forces withdrew and the ARVN took over the "big war."

The Joint General Staff proposed to strengthen the RF and the PF by authorizing for FY 1970 the strength increases originally planned for FY 1971. Secretary of Defense Laird approved this acceleration and ordered the necessary equipment to be supplied from existing command resources and from stocks left behind by departing US units. Regional and Popular Force strength rose by more than 59,000 men in 1970 to a total of almost 534,000. The People's Self-Defense Force demonstrated an even larger gain in reported numbers. In December 1969 there were 3,200,000 men and women organized in the PSDF. At the end of 1970 there were almost 3,900,000, of whom some 2,900,000 were trained and 445,000 armed. There was some doubt as to the accuracy of the figures and of the military effectiveness of these units, but the increase over 1969 remained impressive. In 1970 the PSDF began organizing key interteams (KIT) of 35 men each who were trained at PF training centers and then returned to their hamlets to instruct other PSDF members. By the end of the year, over 434,000 PSDF combat members had been organized into KITs.

Unlike the PSDF, the National Police continued to suffer from manpower problems in 1970. The Republic of Vietnam did succeed in stationing half of the force in district-level or lower offices, but the goal of 108,000 NP was not even approached. The infusion of 13,000 men from the RVNAF, begun in 1969, was completed in June, bringing the NP to 88,400.

63. The material on the conduct of pacification in 1970 has been drawn from Chapter VIII of (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, and from (TS-GP 1) Plans & Analysis Div, J-3, PAD-VSUM 1-71, "A Periodic Summary of Progress Toward Vietnamizing the War," 24 Mar 71, JCS Hist Div files, unless otherwise stated.

No progress was made in the expansion of the NP during the latter half of the year. In fact, by the end of 1970 the force was still more than 20,000 men below authorized strength, with 87,900 on its rolls.

The loss of momentum noted by the Secretary of Defense in early 1970 was particularly apparent in the Chieu Hoi Program. Returnee rates were well below the levels that produced 47,000 ralliers in 1969. The numbers rose and fell in response to the tactical situation, falling during Tet and rising again during RVN operations in Cambodia. Phase I produced only 17,200 ralliers against the 30 June goal of 25,000. By the end of the year the total had risen to 32,700 returnees, a sizable number although still well below the previous year.

One reason cited for the Chieu Hoi drop was the lower overall level of combat activity in 1970. Exposure to government forces gave individuals in the enemy ranks a chance to rally, and the opportunity decreased when the forces remained out of contact. Another possible reason was a tightening of the enemy organization; each VC member had become responsible for the conduct of his immediate associates.

As part of the PHOENIX Program, the Republic of Vietnam had begun a poster campaign to identify and to facilitate the capture of important VC late in 1969. In spite of this new activity, PHOENIX suffered the same lag as the pacification effort as a whole. In the first quarter of 1970, neutralizations were well below the 1969 level. Part of the decrease resulted from a new, more stringent definition of neutralization. In order to be counted, a captured VCI member must also be sentenced to a jail term of at least a year. The use of this new definition did not end the practice of releasing VCI members without a trial, but it prevented them from being counted toward the quota in such cases. The government was still having problems in judicial administration, and long delays before trial were common. Nevertheless the number of neutralizations increased, especially during the special and supplementary pacification campaigns in the latter half of the year. December set a monthly record of 2,600; for the year there were 22,300 neutralizations, compared to 19,500 the year before.

The three-year terms of local government officials elected in 1967 expired in 1970. During the year, elections were held for these offices and elections occurred for the first time in some other hamlets and villages. As a result, 2,100 villages and 10,200 hamlets, or 97 percent, had elected governments at the end of the year. Seventy-five percent of the registered voters participated in these local elections. In June, elections were held for provincial and municipal councils to fill 554 available seats. Only a small number of VC terrorist incidents occurred around the polling places, and enemy forces mounted no concerted effort to interfere with the elections.

After the large drop in refugee totals during 1969, only relatively small improvements took place in 1970. In fact, the number of Vietnamese considered refugees rose to 428,000 at the end of 1970 compared to 268,000 the year before. This apparent increase was the result of a change in the reporting method, under which those en route to their villages were added to the refugee rolls. In figures more nearly consistent with 1969 data, the number of refugees dropped during 1970 to 214,000. More than 525,000 persons were processed and removed from refugee status in 1970.

The lower refugee levels attained in 1969 and 1970 compared to earlier years also reflected an effort to avoid making refugees out of the people. On 8 February 1970 General Abrams re-emphasized to his commands the importance of not creating refugees. He said:

> The policy of the GVN and this command requires that the relocation of people to regroup them for greater security or to remove them from enemy control be kept to an absolute minimum. Such relocations generally work against US and GVN policy objectives. Not only do the people become a burden on the Government, which must house, feed, and resettle them, but their allegiance or potential allegiance to the GVN is undermined by the hardships which they undergo.[64]

64. (C-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CG, DMAC, 8 Feb 70, cited in (C-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. VIII-75, VIII-77.

The various psychological and information programs were pursued without any great enthusiasm again in 1970. There were few changes in the programs for economic development. The "Land-to-the-Tiller" program was passed in March 1970, and 345,000 hectares were scheduled to be transferred by December. But President Thieu did not transfer the first parcel of land until late in August. Landlords, particularly loyal absentee military men, resisted the program, and only slightly more than a third (125,000 hectares) of the 1970 goal was reached. Miracle rice planting rose from 250,000 to 306,000 hectares, well below the goal of 500,000 hectares. The more favorable but unquantifiable elements of economic activity were summarized by Ambassador Colby: "the re-opened roads, busy markets and solvent farmers, especially in the populous delta . . . marked the atmosphere resulting from expanded security, revived production and reopened circulation."

Growing RVN Presence in the Countryside

In 1969 and 1970 considerable progress had been made in pacification. Nearly 42,000 VCI had been neutralized under the PHOENIX Program; almost 80,000 Hoi Chanh had rallied to the government; more than 1,600,000 refugees were removed from the rolls; the RF had expanded from 221,000 to 283,000 and the PF from 173,000 to 250,000; the PSDF had grown from 1,000,000 to 3,900,000. More and more of the necessary pacification tasks were performed by RF, PF, and PSDF personnel; even the National Police had increased from 77,000 in June 1969 to 88,000 and had distributed more of its men into the countryside; 97 percent of the hamlets and villages had an elected government; and 125,000 hectares had been distributed in "Land-to-the-Tiller." The Hamlet Evaluation System showed a steady increase in the proportion of relatively secure population, from 76.3 percent at the end of December 1968 to 95.1 percent at the end of December 1970.

General Abrams looked confidently ahead to 1971. As he told CINCPAC in February of that year:

> The GVN seems aware of [its] problems, and its government-wide and carefully structured 1971 . . . plan contemplates a continued drive to improve territorial security, a major effort in internal security through a strengthened National Police and a more effective PHOENIX Program, a continued program of political development from the local communities upward, and an extensive effort at local economic and social development throughout the country to convince the population of the better life that lies ahead through the GVN . . . President Thieu is obviously resolved to press [pacification] as a part of his overall program of demonstrating the increased security and benefits his administration has brought to Vietnam.[65]

Despite this hopeful outlook, there remained some unresolved doubts and questions concerning the effectiveness of the pacification programs. Experience indicated that the degree of success corresponded very closely to allied military activity. For example, pacification regained momentum in 1970 only after the enemy had been engaged during the Cambodian cross-border operation, and the July-October Special Pacification Campaign successes coincided with the height of a campaign against enemy sanctuaries in Vietnam.

There were other forces at work that did not seem to be adequately evaluated by the statistical tools at hand. In III Corps, population security had been largely dependent upon the presence of friendly troops on the avenues of approach to the north and west of Saigon. In II Corps the high level had sometimes been achieved by forcing people into secure areas. The Central Intellignece Agency reported that the prime cause of the reported pacification progress in 1970 was the lack of enemy military activity. "Significant intangibles such as the impact of terrorism and threats on popular attitudes, enemy proselyting efforts and VC penetrations," according to the CIA report, "are not

65. (Ø) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 9 Feb 71, JCS IN 98932.

measured by HES to any acceptable degree, even though they might have decisive impact on long-run allied objectives."[66]

Nonetheless, with a minimum of supervision from the Joint Chiefs of Staff or any other Washington agency, the Republic of Vietnam, aided by US advisers, succeeded in extending its control over the countryside. Critics could and did reveal weaknesses and shortcomings in individual programs; they pointed out the subjective nature of the HES and the possible fragility of pacification gains. But the conclusion seemed inescapable that in spite of a diminishing US presence, the Republic of Vietnam had established a firmer control in the countryside than it had exercised in many years.

66. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV 13589 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 19 Oct 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 69. (S) Memo, "Current Status of the Pacification Program in SVN," 7 Oct 70, Att to Memo, Dep DCI to CJCS, 7 Oct 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep-Oct 70.

Chapter 12

NEGOTIATIONS TO END THE CONFLICT, 1969-1970

The Setting

Almost from the beginning of its combat involvement in Vietnam in 1965, the United States sought a negotiated settlement of the war. Its leaders had presented appeals for peace in talks with numerous world figures and heads of international organizations and had arranged private contacts with North Vietnamese officials. Hanoi, however, steadfastly rejected all overtures. Finally, on 31 March 1968, President Johnson restricted the bombing of North Vietnam to the area immediately north of the Demilitarized Zone where enemy buildup was threatening allied positions. This action was taken, he told the American public, in an attempt to get talks started on a settlement of the conflict. On 3 April Hanoi declared it was ready to establish preliminary contact with US representatives. Following the exchange of numerous proposals, the United States and North Vietnam finally agreed on Paris as the site for the talks. There, on 13 May 1968, under the great crystal chandeliers of the ballroom of the old Majestic Hotel, representatives of the two nations met for the first time. Ambassador W. Averell Harriman headed the US delegation, and former foreign minister Xuan Thuy led the North Vietnamese. The Republic of Vietnam did not participate in these talks but did send observers.[1]

During the succeeding five months, the bilateral Paris talks made no progress. The primary issue was the US bombing of North Vietnam. Xuan Thuy wanted an unrestricted cessation while the United States insisted on certain conditions--observance of the DMZ, absence of attack on major South Vietnamese cities, and inclusion of the Republic of Vietnam in the negotiations. Finally, on 27 October 1968, an agreement was reached. In return for a bombing halt, North Vietnam consented in a secret minute to begin serious discussions toward peace in Vietnam. The United States made clear that continuation of the bombing halt would depend on respect of the DMZ and the South Vietnamese cities. Four days later, on 31 October, President Johnson publicly announced the end of all bombardment of North Vietnam effective

1. (TS-GP 1) JCS Hist Div, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, pp. 49-23 - 49-25, 53-1 - 53-9.

at 0800 (Washington time) the following morning. Expanded talks, he said, would begin on 6 November and include both the Republic of Vietnam and National Liberation Front (NLF). He also declared that the talks could not continue if North Vietnam abused the DMZ or shelled South Vietnamese cities.[2]

The United States had consulted the Republic of Vietnam on the bombing halt, but President Thieu would not approve the agreement. He adamantly refused to engage in talks that included the NLF. To do so, he believed, would imply official recognition and could lead to the formation of a coalition government in South Vietnam. A five-point program, broadcast by the Front on 4 November, tended to confirm President Thieu's fears. This program provided for the removal of the current Saigon government, formation of a broad coalition government, and the holding of free elections. In his 31 October announcement, President Johnson had stated that attendance of the NLF representatives at the talks in no way involved recognition. After receiving further US assurances on this point, President Thieu announced on 26 November 1968 that the Republic of Vietnam would join the peace talks.[3]

The RVN delegation, led by Vice President Ky, arrived in Paris on 8 December, but procedural issues still had to be resolved. The questions of flags, name plates, and the shape of the table all became obstacles. The issue of the table was particularly troublesome. Should it be square, oblong, round, or oval? One table or two? These questions reflected the contention among the participants about the nature of the talks. The Republic of Vietnam insisted they were two-sided, objecting to any arrangement that might imply recognition of the NLF. The United States supported that position, but North Vietnam maintained that the NLF was an equal party and, hence, the talks were four-sided. Finally, after long and tedious discussions, agreement was reached on a circular unmarked table, flanked by two smaller rectangular tables, for secretarial purposes, at opposite points on the circle. Now the contending parties could speak of either two- or four-sided conference as suited their preferences. Speaking order was also arranged, with the South Vietnamese taking the lead for the US/RVN side, and it was decided on 18 January 1969 to hold the first plenary session

2. Ibid., Chs. 53 and 54.
3. Ibid., pp. 54-10 - 54-12, 54-16 - 54-17. NY Times, 5 Nov 68, 16. Dept of State Bulletin, 16 Dec 68, pp. 621-622.

the following week. Thus, by the time the Nixon Administration took office, the only progress toward negotiating a peace was agreement on procedural matters.[4]

The Nixon Administration Begins Development of a Negotiating Position

Richard M. Nixon had called for a settlement in Vietnam while seeking the presidency in 1968, but throughout the campaign and during the period between the election and his inauguration, he consistently refused to comment on how he would proceed with the negotiations. He opposed an immediate US withdrawal or a coalition government in South Vietnam, but he would go no further. Public pronouncements about his intended actions, he maintained, might jeopardize the discussions currently under way. But Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, designated by the President-elect to be his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, was not so reticent. He published an article about the Vietnam negotiations that appeared in the January 1969 issue of Foreign Affairs. He charged that there was a lack of US planning for the negotiations and a US inclination to deal with cases as they arose. He called for an "agreed concept of ultimate goals and how to achieve them."[5]

Dr. Kissinger's criticism of the absence of US planning for negotiations somewhat overstated the case. With the North Vietnamese agreement in October 1968 to begin serious talks, the responsible US agencies in Washington, Paris, and Saigon had begun consideration of varying approaches to the negotiations. Ambassador Bunker had submitted to Washington a series of planning papers developed in conjunction with COMUSMACV, and General Wheeler supported these positions in Washington discussions. The US delegation in Paris had also sent back positions on various aspects of the negotiations. There was a lack of agreement, however, within the US Government on the issues of mutual withdrawal and verification.

4. (S) Msgs; Saigon 45262 to State, 20 Dec 68, JCS IN 81817; Saigon 45344 to State, 21 Dec 68, JCS IN 85560; Saigon 45839 to State, 31 Dec 68, JCS IN 98798; Saigon 59 to State, 2 Jan 69, JCS IN 11558; Saigon 154 to State, 4 Jan 69, JCS IN 15070; Saigon 527 to State, 10 Jan 69, JCS IN 25386. (S) Msg, Paris 788 to State, 18 Jan 69, JCS IN 42584.

5. Henry A. Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," Foreign Affairs, Jan 69, pp. 211-234.

The Paris delegation stressed the need for flexibility, while the military commanders, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, counseled adherence to an unyielding stand. With respect to a cease-fire, both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of State believed any agreement must include verified NVN withdrawal from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Analysts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, on the other hand, concluded that a cease-fire could, in itself, facilitate a political settlement. As a result, when the Johnson Administration left office, there was no final, definitive US negotiating position.[6]

Upon his entry into office, President Nixon and his advisers began an immediate review of the US negotiating strategy. As related in Chapter 1, on 21 January the President directed a thorough review of the entire Vietnam situation, addressing a series of questions to concerned departments and agencies. The first four questions related to the negotiating "environment." Why, the President wanted to know, had North Vietnam come to Paris? He also asked about the impact of possible outcomes in Vietnam on other Southeast Asian countries, the influence of Moscow and Peking on Hanoi, and the existence and possible significance of factions within the NVN leadership.[7]

The preparation, submission, and refinement of the answers to the Vietnam questionnaire have been described in Chapter 1. Negotiations were not a matter of direct JCS concern or expertise, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had little to contribute to this area of the review. They thought that a number of purposes had brought the North Vietnamese to Paris, the most important being to secure a complete halt of the bombing in the north and to

6. (S) Msgs, Saigon 41539 and 43180 to State, 30 Oct and 7 Nov 68, JCS IN 78880 and 89554. (S) Msg, State 287493 to Saigon 14 Dec 68, JCS IN 72086. (S-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 020536ZDec 68, JCS IN 45199. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 39647 to JCS, 3 Dec 68, JCS IN 47955. (S) SACSA PP 68, 6 Nov 68; (S-GP 3) Msg, MG Seignious to CJCS, 30 Nov 68; OCJCS file 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Oct-30 Nov 68. (S) "Brief of Paris Message on Mutual Withdrawal...with CINCPAC and COMUSMACV comments," n.d., J-5 Bamboo File. (S) Msg, Paris 25688 to State, 23 Dec 68, JCS IN 86440. (TS) J-5 Paper, "Vietnam: Cease Fire," 17 Dec 68, J-5 Working Files.

7. (S-GP 3) NSSM 1, 21 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/413, 22 Jan 69, JMF 911/399 (21 Jan 69) sec 1.

attempt to drive a wedge between the United States and the Republic of Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff declined to speculate on the impact of various Vietnam solutions on the rest of Southeast Asia, stating that it was necessary "to lean heavily on past national reactions to critical situations and overall evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of the nations of the area." They cited a lack of information on Soviet and Chinese influence over North Vietnam, but offered the general opinion that neither major Communist power was exerting serious pressure on Hanoi nor enjoyed the assured support of a stable faction with the NVN leadership.[8]

In the final consolidated interagency submission on the Vietnam questions, it was suggested that a variety of motives had brought North Vietnam to the Paris talks; weakness, however, was not one of them. The JCS opinion on Soviet and Chinese influence and factions was shared by most other elements of the US Government. Additionally, there was agreement that Peking opposed the negotiations, while the Soviet Union preferred an early negotiated settlement on terms as favorable as possible to Hanoi. There was no consensus, however, on the question of the impact of possible Vietnam solutions. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the questionnaire respondents divided generally into two groups. One was hopeful of the current and future prospects in Vietnam and included the military (COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and the US Embassy in Saigon; the other, comprising the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of State, was more skeptical. While not forecasting victory, the first group believed that the US negotiators should "know that the tides are favorable." The second group recognized that US negotiators were in a stronger position than previously, but considered a compromise settlement the only feasible outcome for Vietnam.[9]

Besides the Vietnam questionnaire, another review effort had been set in motion on the first full day of the Nixon Administration. On 21 January 1969, Dr. Kissinger

8. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-58-69 to SecDef, App to JCS 2472/413-2, 1 Feb 69, same file, sec 2.

9. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to NSC Review Group, "NSSM 1 - Vietnam Questions," 14 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-6, 17 Mar 69; (TS-GP 3) Memo, NSC Staff to Vice Pres et al., "Revised Summary of Responses to NSSM 1: The Situation in Vietnam," 22 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/413-8, 24 Mar 69; same file, sec 5

circulated a paper on Vietnam alternatives to the members of the National Security Council, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence; he scheduled it for discussion at a NSC meeting on 25 January. The study included three sections: alternative outcomes in Vietnam (assured RVN control of South Vietnam, mutual withdrawal with or without political accommodation, and territorial accommodation); alternative military strategies (continuation of current operations, actual or threatened escalation, or reduction of US forces); and negotiating and military strategies to attain alternative outcomes.[10]

The Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5), Joint Staff, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) prepared a critique of the alternatives paper for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. This critique found it a basic problem that the paper dealt with Vietnam "in isolation from U.S. national interests and objectives in a worldwide sense." There was need for a determination of objectives and the development of broad negotiating options. Consequently, the staff members recommended to the Secretary and the Chairman that the paper be revised and extended prior to further consideration.[11]

The Joint Staff also prepared a separate point paper for the Chairman on negotiating objectives and strategy for use at the forthcoming NSC meeting. The Joint Staff listed the following as objectives: an effective cease-fire; verified withdrawal of all North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; verified cessation of infiltration; a substantial reduction in terrorism; prisoner repatriation; and restoration of the integrity of the Demilitarized Zone. Further, a US MAAG should be retained, necessary support for the RVNAF continued, and RVN sovereignty

10. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Vice Pres et al., "NSC Meeting, January 25, 1969," 21 Jan 69, Att to JCS 2472/415, 23 Jan 69, JMF 911/077 NSC (21 Jan 69). No evidence has been located to indicate who requested or prepared the study. It may have resulted from a meeting that Mr. Nixon had with key policy advisers on 28 December 1968. According to the NY Times, he assigned Dr. Kissinger the task of coordinating a paper on "realistic" options to be used in selecting courses of action for Vietnam. NY Times, 29 Dec 68, 1.

11. (TS-GP 1) ISA/JS TP for SecDef and CJCS, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/415-1, 28 Jan 69, JMF 911/077 NSC (21 Jan 69).

preserved. While recognizing that negotiating strategy did not lie "within the normal purview" of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Staff nevertheless anticipated that the Chairman might be asked for his views. In that event, the Joint Staff advocated an initial "hard line" US position on negotiations, incorporating the objectives set forth above. During the give and take of the actual talks, the United States could fall back, "slowly and as obstinately as possible without totally blocking progress," toward the minimum conditions considered essential for an end to hostilities.[12]

The available record does not reveal what position the Chairman took on negotiations at the NSC meeting on 25 January, or what disposition was made of the alternatives paper. Apparently this first NSC meeting of the Nixon Administration was only exploratory with regard to the negotiations question, and the concerned departments and agencies continued the development of position papers. Within the Department of Defense, representatives of the Joint Staff and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) jointly prepared papers on mutual withdrawal and cease-fire. It was the Joint Staff/ISA position that any armistice in Vietnam must be linked to explicit agreements regarding withdrawal, that limitations must not be imposed upon allied access to any area, and that a cease-fire agreement need not embrace either implementation and verification machinery or negotiations addressing an internal political settlement.[13]

To facilitate orderly negotiations planning in Washington, President Nixon on 13 February 1969 created the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to prepare policy and contingency papers for consideration by the NSC Review Group and the National Security Council. Ambassador William H. Sullivan, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern and Pacific Affairs, chaired this body, which met twice weekly. Department of Defense members included two representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) and two from the Joint Staff--the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA) and the Chief of the Far East Division, Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5). Later, in June 1969, the membership

12. (S) J-5 PP, "Military and Negotiating Strategy for Vietnam (U)," n.d., Att to DJSM-119-69 to CJCS, 24 Jan 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 69.

13. (S) Draft ISA/Joint Staff Papers; "Cease-fire: Issues and Options," 1 Feb 69; "Mutual Withdrawals: Major Issues," 11 Feb 69; J-5 Working files.

of the group was reduced and the Chief of the J-5 Far East Division became the Joint Staff representative and SACSA the alternate. As a result, the Joint Staff contributed to the preparation and development of all Ad Hoc Group papers on Vietnam negotiations, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or his representative, participated in all NSC Review Group decisions on these papers. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, did not normally review the Ad Hoc Group papers or take a position on them.[14]

Expanded Paris Talks Begin

While President Nixon and his advisers in Washington undertook consideration of a detailed negotiating position, the talks proceeded in Paris. With the entry of the new President into office, the US cast of characters at the talks changed. Henry Cabot Lodge, who had twice served as the US Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam, was named US Representative and Lawrence Walsh the Deputy Representative, supplanting W. Averell Harriman and Cyrus Vance, respectively. Simultaneously, Lieutenant General Frederick C. Weyand replaced Major General George M. Seignious as the Military Adviser to the US Representative. The officer in this position regularly briefed the Paris delegation on the military situation in Vietnam and provided professional advice in support of Defense positions on the negotiations. He had no independent voice in the delegation's decisions, but, in practice, General Weyand became a full participant in its deliberations. He received staff support from the Director of the Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5) of the Joint Staff. This responsibility was carried by a Watch Group of J-5 action officers under the direction of the Chief, Far East Division, J-5.[15]

The first plenary session of the expanded Paris talks convened at the Hotel Majestic on 25 January 1969. In an opening statement, Ambassador Lodge assured the North Vietnamese and NLF delegates that the United States sought no permanent establishment of troops or bases in South Vietnam. Nor did the United States desire to invade North Vietnam or

14. (C-GP 3) NSSM 21, 13 Feb 69, Att to JCS 2472/428, 15 Feb 69; (C-GP 1) DJSM-270-69 to Dr. Kissinger, 19 Feb 69; (C-GP 3) DJSM-897-69 to Dir J-5 et al., 12 Jun 69; JMF 911/001 (13 Feb 69).

15. NY Times, 6 Jan 69, 1, 3. (C-GP 4) Draft memo for SecDef, Att to DJSM-1078-69 to CJCS, 5 Nov 69, JMF 911/305 (CY 1969).

overthrow its government. Ambassador Lodge went on to propose immediate restoration of the DMZ in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement, mutual withdrawal of all external forces from South Vietnam, and discussion of the release of prisoners of war. The RVN delegate, Ambassador Pham Dang Lam, proclaimed the legitimacy of his government and called for North Vietnam to cease aggression against it. In reply Xuan Thuy and Tran Buu Kiem, the NLF delegate, demanded an end to US "aggression," unilateral withdrawal of allied troops from South Vietnam, replacement of the Thieu government with a peace cabinet, and a "political solution" for South Vietnam in accordance with the NLF program.[16]

The positions presented on 25 January proved to be the basic positions that the opposing sides would maintain for many months to come. In weekly plenary sessions throughout February and March, the delegates continued fruitless discussions on these points. The enemy post-Tet offensive in South Vietnam, launched on 23 February, and a related dispute over the bombing halt "understanding" of 1968 further hindered the Paris talks. The North Vietnamese and NLF delegations repeatedly asserted that their offensive had been undertaken in response to US intensification of the war, and the allied side, equally adamant, denied there was any basis for that allegation. Shelling of South Vietnamese cities had launched the offensive, but US objections that these attacks violated the bombing halt agreement elicited the enemy retort that the agreement had been "unconditional."[17]

In addition to the public plenary sessions, there was also the possibility of private talks. In his January 1969 Foreign Affairs article, Dr. Kissinger had suggested such a course. The United States and North Vietnam, he wrote, could hold talks on mutual withdrawal and related issues while Saigon and the NLF representatives could hold parallel meetings,

16. Dept of State Bulletin, 10 Feb 69, pp. 124-125. (S) Msg, State 10775 to Saigon and Paris, 23 Jan 69, JCS IN 48690. (S) Msgs, Paris 1070 to State, 24 Jan 69, JCS IN 51196; 1147, 25 Jan 69, JCS IN 55604; 1155, 26 Jan 69, JCS IN 55603.

17. (S) Msgs, Paris 1430 to State, 30 Jan 69, JCS IN 63152; 1798, 6 Feb 69, JCS IN 76902; 2161, 13 Feb 69, JCS IN 90783; 2552, 20 Feb 69, JCS IN 14248; 2926, 27 Feb 69, JCS IN 27269; 3082, 3 Mar 69, JCS IN 35331; 3642, 13 Mar 69, JCS IN 55324; 4012, 20 Mar 69, JCS IN 69180.

confining their discussion to internal structure of South Vietnam. Under this procedure, the four-sided plenary talks would serve primarily to "legitimize" the work of the two negotiating groups, "which need not be formally established and could even meet secretly."[18]

Prior to President Nixon's assumption of office, the matter of secret talks had been raised at a meeting of the heads of the US and NVN missions in Paris on 17 January 1969. No agreement was reached, but the two delegations anticipated that discussions looking to private talks would continue after the new administration took office in Washington. Several days after the second plenary session on 30 January 1969, Ambassador Lodge informed Secretary of State Rogers that it was unlikely that any progress would be made in the plenary sessions. For any serious negotiations, the Ambassador said, the US delegation would have to move to private meetings, and he hoped to propose such a course by mid-February. With the enemy post-Tet offensive, however, Ambassador Lodge postponed the proposal for secret talks, considering them inappropriate as long as the offensive continued.[19]

Agreement on a Negotiating Position

In Washington, on 12 March 1969, the President directed the preparation of two papers "in connection with private talks at the Paris Vietnam negotiations." He wanted the Vietnam Ad Hoc Group to provide the NSC Review Group with a paper covering the strategy for private talks with North Vietnam and another treating the mutual withdrawal of forces. The NSC Review Group considered initial drafts of the two papers on 20 March. In light of this review, the Ad Hoc Group revised and resubmitted the papers to the Review Group on the following day.[20]

18. Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," Foreign Affairs, Jan 69, p. 323.

19. (S) Msgs, Paris 1172 to State, 27 Jan 69, JCS IN 56057; 1522, 1 Feb 69, JCS IN 67087. (S) Msg, Paris 3388 to State, 10 Mar 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtgs/PLUS, 1 Dec 68-15 Mar 69.

20. (S-GP 3) NSSM 29, 12 Mar 69, Att to JCS 2472/444, 13 Mar 69; (S) Vietnam Ad Hoc Group Draft Papers, "A General Strategy and Plan of Action for Viet-Nam Negotiations" and "US Position on Mutual Withdrawals," n.d., Atts to Memos, AsstSecState to Chm NSC RG, 15 Mar 69; JMF 911/305 (12 Mar 69).

The negotiating strategy paper set forth the general objective as the opportunity for the South Vietnamese "to determine their own political future without external interference." It listed seven specific objectives, including: mutual withdrawal; reduction in hostilities; restoration of the DMZ; eventual cease-fire or total cessation of hostilities; release of prisoners; interim supervision machinery; and restoration of the 17th Parallel as the dividing line between North and South Vietnam. It also set forth 13 lesser priority objectives ranging from a recognized international status for both Vietnams pending reunification to the possibility of US economic assistance for North Vietnam in conditions of peace. On the key issue of the internal political structure of South Vietnam, the Ad Hoc Group reiterated the consistent US position that this was a matter for the South Vietnamese to resolve.

The strategy paper contained a section on "Give and Take" in the negotiations and a "Game Plan" for private talks. The latter envisioned early discussions on a bilateral US/NVN basis, with separate RVN/NLF contacts getting under way as soon as possible. The Ad Hoc Group stated that US efforts should initially stress mutual withdrawal, giving secondary, but significant, emphasis to restoration of the DMZ, and pursue the question of prisoners. A further issue was reduction of the level of hostilities. "In addition to the DMZ," the Group said, "we need to work toward a state of communication between Hanoi and ourselves that might permit us to exchange signals on partial withdrawal." Here opinion within the Ad Hoc Group divided. One faction (Position A) thought that the United States should give single attention to partial withdrawal, while a second (Position B) believed that "other forms of mutual reduction" in the level of fighting might become necessary. A final issue to be resolved in the private talks was the handling of a cease-fire. The Ad Hoc Group believed that the United States should avoid injecting this matter into early stages of the discussions.[21]

The Ad Hoc Group presented the mutual withdrawal paper in the form of an instruction to Ambassador Bunker for use in discussions with RVN officials. As indicated by the Group, the basic US objectives were the withdrawal of NVN

21. (S-GP 3) Vietnam Ad Hoc Group, Revised Draft Paper, "A General Strategy and Plan of Action for Vietnam Negotiations," 21 Mar 69, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/455, 25 Mar 69, same file.

military forces and "other elements" from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and adequate assurances, including inspection and verification machinery, that complete withdrawal had occurred. This withdrawal paper reflected two significant differences of opinion. One concerned the "residual forces" that the United States could leave in South Vietnam following agreed withdrawals, and the second related to the time period for the completion of US and allied withdrawals following the NVN withdrawal. On the residual forces issue, one position in the Ad Hoc Group favored the withdrawal of all US and allied combat or "directly combat-related" forces and units; a second supported retention of selected combat and directly combat-related forces "at least for a period of time." Concerning the time period for the completion of US and allied withdrawals, one faction favored achieving it within six months after the NVN withdrawal, thus adhering to a previously stated US position. The other group believed that commitment to a stated time limit should be avoided, leaving US withdrawals to be completed "as soon as practicable" after the NVN removal.[22]

The National Security Council was scheduled to consider the two negotiating papers on 28 March, and on the day before the meeting, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) and the Director, Joint Staff, submitted a talking paper for the use of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Both considered the strategy paper "a reasonable and useful" listing of objectives. Both also thought that it was necessary to work toward mutual withdrawals, but that "restrictions on specific weaponry or certain types of offensive operations" could be detrimental to US interests in South Vietnam. The Assistant Secretary, however, did not completely rule out other forms of mutual reduction and recommended that the Secretary of Defense support Position B in the divergence on that issue. The Director, Joint Staff, did not agree and recommended that the Chairman support Position A.

With regard to the withdrawal paper, the Assistant Secretary and the Director were in full agreement. They both believed that the United States should be free to leave selected combat and directly combat-related forces

22. (S-GP 3) Vietnam Ad Hoc Group, Revised Draft Paper, "US Position on Mutual Withdrawals," 21 Mar 69, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/444-1, 25 Mar 69, same file.

in South Vietnam for a period of time after NVN withdrawal, but without specifying a time limit. Accordingly, they recommended that the Secretary and the Chairman support this position.[23]

The National Security Council discussions of 28 March on Vietnam have been described in Chapter 1. As a result of that meeting, the President set forth his decisions on Vietnam policy, including the US negotiating position, on 1 April 1969, and resolved the questions at issue in the Vietnam Ad Hoc Group's draft papers. The Unites States would initiate no proposals, the President directed, to "de-escalate" the war. Should North Vietnam raise this issue, the United States would discuss it only in the context of mutual troop reduction. On the definition of US forces subject to withdrawal, he decided that all combat forces could be removed from South Vietnam if North Vietnam met specific conditions for the withdrawal of its forces and gave assurances on verification and maintenance of the agreement. In addition, there would be no public repudiation of the US pledge to complete allied withdrawals within six months of Hanoi's withdrawal. The President pointed out that control over the timing of allied withdrawal was not impaired by this commitment, since in practice the United States would be the one to decide if North Vietnam had, in fact, complied with the terms of the agreement. Subject to these modifications, the President approved the two negotiating papers, and the Secretary of State forwarded them to Ambassador Lodge in Paris and Ambassador Bunker in Saigon on 8 April 1969. Now, at last, the United States had a defined negotiating position.[24]

New Initiatives: The Talks in April and May 1969

Even before the approval of a negotiating position in Washington, Ambassador Lodge had made a beginning on private talks with the North Vietnamese. After obtaining assurance that the RVN delegation did not object, the US Representative met with Xuan Thuy for private discussions for the first

23. (S-GP 3) ISA/JS TP for SecDef and CJCS, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/444-2,27 Mar 69, same file.

24. (S-GP 1) NSDM 9, 1 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/459, 2 Apr 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 1. (S-GP 1) Msgs, State 56525 and 56526 to Paris and Saigon, 8 Apr 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 16 Mar-30 Apr 69.

time on 22 March 1969. He told the North Vietnamese delegate that the United States was willing to begin simultaneous mutual withdrawal of forces. In the process, all NVN forces must evacuate South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Ambassador Lodge avoided any mention of a simultaneous completion of such withdrawals. Minister Thuy rejected the US offer, reiterating the standard NVN demand for a unilateral US withdrawal from Vietnam.[25]

Following this first private meeting, the United States made no immediate effort to continue the private discussions. As Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy expressed it: "Our whole approach to private contacts will remain measured and steady, avoiding any misleading impression that we feel under pressure of time deadlines or public opinion." The United States, nevertheless, had been encouraging secret talks between the Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front. President Nixon, while visiting Europe, met with Vice President Ky in Paris on 2 March 1969 and urged such an approach. Ambassador Bunker pursued a similar tack with President Thieu in Saigon. After some reluctance, President Thieu announced on 25 March the willingness of his Government to begin "unconditional private talks" with North Vietnam and the NLF in Paris, either jointly or separately. National Liberation Front delegate Kiem brusquely dismissed the RVN offer as not "serious" and termed it a Nixon Administration "maneuver."[26]

During April 1969 the United States and the Republic of Vietnam took several additional actions to push the negotiations off dead center. On 7 April, speaking before the National Assembly in Saigon, President Thieu presented a peace platform. The key point was a proposal for a two-party system in South Vietnam and an offer of anmesty to the Viet Cong with a place in the political arena, provided they renounced violence and respected the constitution. They could engage in political activities as the National Liberation Front but not as a Communist party, since Communists were prohibited by law from participation in the government.

25. (S) Msg, Paris 4145 to State, 22 Mar 69, JCS IN 06895. (S-GP 1) Msg, State 47852 to Bangkok, 28 Mar 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 16 Mar-30 Apr 69.

26. (S-GP 1) Msg, State 47852 to Bangkok, 28 Mar 69; (S-GP 1) Msg, State 55060 to Paris, 10 Apr 69; OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 16 Mar-30 Apr 69. (S) Msgs, Paris 3027 and 4426 to State, 2 and 27 Mar 69; JCS IN 00243 and 83326. NY Times, 26 Mar 69, 1.

There was little likelihood of NLF acceptance, but, nevertheless, President Thieu moved closer than ever before to accepting the Viet Cong as a political force in South Vietnam.[27]

To indicate the seriousness of the allied peace efforts, President Nixon and Secretary of State Rogers publicly voiced their support for President Thieu and his overture to the NLF. At a press conference on 18 April, the President cited RVNAF improvement and the increased political stability in South Vietnam as factors that afforded the Saigon government "a better opportunity for negotiating room" at the Paris conference. Three days later, Secretary Rogers commended President Thieu's "constructive initiative" in declaring his readiness to talk with the NLF. The Secretary saw no reason why military and political settlements could not be worked out at the same time.[28]

The simultaneous consideration of political and military issues was a new approach not previously introduced at the Paris talks. Consequently, at the 14th plenary session, on 24 April 1969, Ambassador Lodge presented this proposal. The United States, he declared, would respect whatever political settlement was worked out between the South Vietnamese factions so long as it was reached by free choice.[29]

The North Vietnamese and NLF spurned all these allied proposals when they responded on 8 May 1969 with a 10-point NLF plan for peace in Vietnam. The essential features were unilateral unconditional withdrawal of US forces and liquidation of military bases; free elections, the drafting of a new constitution, and, ultimately, a coalition government in Saigon. The plan made no mention of the withdrawal of NVN forces from the south. It merely stated that the question should be settled by the Vietnamese themselves.[30]

Six days after the presentation of the NLF plan, the United States offered a new proposal. In a televised report to the nation on Vietnam on 14 May 1969, President Nixon reiterated the US position: "mutual withdrawal of non-South

27. Washington Evening Star, 7 Apr 69, A-1.
28. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 299-300. Dept of State Bulletin, 12 May 69, p. 400.
29. (S) Msgs, Paris 5760 and 5931 to State, 22 and 24 Apr 69, JCS IN 44999 and 49617.
30. NY Times, 9 May 69, 6.

Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam and free choice for the people of South Vietnam." To achieve these objectives, he proposed a set of specific measures. The "major portions of all U.S., allied, and other non-South Vietnamese forces" would withdraw from South Vietnam over a 12-month period. At the end of that period the remaining forces would move into designated base areas and refrain from combat operations. Thereafter the US and allied forces would complete withdrawal as the remaining NVN forces were returned to North Vietnam. The President's measures also provided for an international supervisory body, acceptable to both sides, to verify the withdrawals, participate in arranging cease-fires in Vietnam, and oversee elections; a rapid release of prisoners of war; and the observance by all parties of the 1954 Geneva Accords regarding South Vietnam and Cambodia and the Laos Accords of 1962.[31]

In these measures, the President set out publicly several of the objectives of the negotiating strategy that he had approved on 1 April 1969. But the 14 May proposal also contained new elements, indicating some shifts on the issues of withdrawal and political settlement--the basic points in dispute at the Paris meetings. The specific 12-month period for withdrawal of major forces, the repositioning of remaining troops, the tying of completion of US withdrawal to that of the North Vietnamese, and the international supervision of elections were all new developments since the approval of the strategy paper. The President's plan, Dr. Kissinger told the press in a background briefing just prior to the broadcast, was not a response to the NLF 10-point proposal. "We had intended to make this ever since we completed our review of our negotiating position in March," Dr. Kissinger related, "and the only question remaining was the timing." The plan was offered at a time when some movement to end the impasse in the talks seemed possible.[32]

Refinement of the US Position

In Washington, meantime, officials were giving further attention to various issues involved in the negotiations. When President Nixon approved the US negotiating position on 1 April, he also directed studies covering certain

31. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 369-375.
32. (E-GP 1) Msg, State 76873 to all Dipl Posts, 15 May 69, JCS IN 88908.

aspects of mutual withdrawal, verification for such withdrawal, detailed political settlement in South Vietnam, and international guarantees for a Vietnam settlement. The Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam was to prepare the studies, and Dr. Kissinger issued the formal directive on 10 April 1969.[33]

The Ad Hoc Group submitted the studies to the NSC Review Group on 27 June 1969. The mutual withdrawal paper examined both NVN and RVN attitudes toward withdrawal, as well as eight major considerations affecting withdrawal decisions. It then evaluated four specific "scenarios," including one tailored to the President's 14 May peace proposals. In the verification paper, the Ad Hoc Group urged that the United States seek effective international verification machinery since its unilateral capability to monitor NVN withdrawal was limited. The paper reviewed three suitable options for international verification: a UN-sponsored body, a new body established by an international conference, or an improved ICC. As to international guarantees, the Ad Hoc Group pointed out that the objective was to negotiate guarantees aimed at improving chances for peace in Southeast Asia without further US military commitments. Consequently, the international guarantees paper considered six methods not involving direct military commitments.[34]

Finally, an Ad Hoc Group paper considered three possible political settlements in South Vietnam. The first, Alternative A, would retain the current constitution and RVN leadership and would provide for NLF participation in elections as a political party. Alternative B, described as "an interim distribution of local political power," would offer the Viet Cong a degree of territorial control in return for acceptance of RVN national authority. Alternative C was a peace cabinet, substituting noncommunist figures acceptable to the

33. (TS-GP 1) NSDM 1, 1 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/459, 2 Apr 69; (TS-GP 3) NSSM 37, 10 Apr 69, Att to JCS 2472/466, 11 Apr 69; JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) Sec 1. The President also directed study of Vietnamizing the war; preparation of that study is described in Ch. 4.

34 (S-GP 3) Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam Papers; "Phased Mutual Withdrawal," 19 Jun 69; "Verification of Mutual Withdrawal and of Possible Renewed Infiltration in Vietnam," 16 May 69; "International Guarantees," n.d.; Atts to Memo, Chm, Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to NSC RG, "NSSM 37," 27 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/466-1, 3 Jul 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 2.

"other side" for the present RVN leaders. The Ad Hoc Group recommended that the United States maintain a flexible position on the political issue and that further consideration be given to a settlement that lay between Alternatives A and B--one emphasizing division of political power at the local rather than national level, but with the division made on the basis of election results.[35]

The Joint Staff, together with the staff of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), prepared a joint position on the four Ad Hoc Group papers for use by the Defense representatives in NSC Review Group discussions. The two staffs noted that the papers, with the exception of the one dealing with political settlement, were intended to provide background information and broad alternatives and did not require decisions "at this time which will constitute national positions on negotiations matters." On the issue of the future political system of South Vietnam, the staff report supported the Group's recommendation for further examination of a political course lying between Alternatives A and B as presented in the paper. The Ad Hoc Group papers did undergo revision and further refinement during the remainder of the year, but no decision was reached on them.[36]

Summer Doldrums: The Talks May through July 1969

The two conflicting sets of proposals, the NLF 10 points of 8 May and President Nixon's 14 May measures, served as the basis for discussions in Paris during the next several months, but no progress resulted. Although Ambassador Lodge

35. (S-GP 3) Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam Paper, "Internal Political Settlement in South Vietnam, Issues, Positions and Alternatives," 26 Jun 69, Att to Memo, Chm Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to NSC RG, "NSSM 37," 27 Jun 69, Att to JCS 2472/466-1, 3 Jul 69, same file.

36. (TS) TP for ASD(ISA) and Dir, J-5, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/466-2, 10 Jul 69, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 2. (S-GP 3) Memo, NSC Staff to ASD(ISA) et al., "NSSM 37: Supplementary Papers," 31 Jul 69, Att to JCS 2472/466-3, 4 Aug 69, same file, sec 3. (TS-GP 1) Memo, NSC Staff to ASD(ISA) et al., "Paper on Territorial Accommodation in South Vietnam (NSSM 37), "4 Nov 69, Att to JCS 2472/466-4, 10 Nov 69, same file, sec 4. (TS-GP 1) Memo, NSC Staff to ASD(ISA) et al., "NSSM 37: Paper on Phased Mutual Withdrawal," 30 Sep 69, Att to JCS 2472/466-5, 6 Jan 70, same file, sec 5.

saw sufficient common ground in the two positions for productive negotiation, the NVN and NLF representatives did not. They were content to repeat their standard charge that the United States was the aggressor in South Vietnam and must unconditionally withdraw and allow formation of a coalition government, which could then negotiate a peace.[37]

The private discussions between the United States and North Vietnam resumed on 7 May 1969, but they, too brought no advances toward a peaceful settlement. Following the 7 May meeting, Ambassador Lodge reported to Washington that "nothing happened which was inconsistent with the theory that they believed in their hearts that they can get a better deal by waiting." At the next private session, on 31 May 1969, Ambassador Lodge proposed, as he had already done in the plenary sessions, that the United States and North Vietnam consider mutual withdrawal while the Republic of Vietnam and NLF delegates discussed internal political settlement in parallel private meetings. But Le Duc Tho, who represented North Vietnam at the meeting, rejected the suggestion. The private sessions, he declared, must treat all the issues of the NLF 10-point program, not just one specific problem. Nor would the NLF enter into private talks with representatives of the Thieu regime. Le Duc Tho did indicate one change in the NVN position. Previously, the North Vietnamese had insisted that the United States must deal directly with the NLF. Now Tho "made no bones about" the fact that North Vietnam would negotiate on behalf of the NLF on all matters, including those relating to the south.[38]

Meantime, President Thieu had indicated a further shift in his position on political settlement in Vietnam. In a private discussion with Secretary Rogers in Saigon on 16 May, President Thieu stated that the NLF could participate in South Vietnamese elections as a Communist party, as the NLF, or as a new party with a different name. If the NLF ran under its

37. (S) Msgs, Paris 7949 and 8438 to State, 29 Mar and 5 Jun 69, JCS IN 27063 and 39199.

38. (S) Msgs, Paris 8112 to State, 31 May and 1 Jun 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 1 May-30 Jun 69.

own label, rather than as the Communist party, President Thieu said, there would be no need to amend the constitution.[39]

On 8 June 1969, Presidents Nixon and Thieu met at Midway Island and announced the scheduled withdrawal of 25,000 US troops from South Vietnam. In a joint statement the two Presidents confirmed their conviction that "the form of government under which the people of South Vietnam will live should be decided by the people themselves" and declared their respect for any decision the people of South Vietnam arrived at through free elections.[40]

Two days later, on 10 June 1969, the National Liberation Front announced in Paris that a national congress of representatives from all South Vietnam had met several days previously in a "liberated area" of the south and formed the "Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam." The following day, Tran Buu Kiem announced that the PRG would take the NLF's place at the conference table. Mr. Kiem would return to Vietnam while Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, his former deputy at the talks, would serve as PRG foreign minister and head the new government's delegation in Paris. As outlined by Mr. Kiem, PRG policy showed no differences from that of the NLF. The latter had long called for the removal of the "puppet regime" in Saigon, and the PRG also refused to discuss a political settlement with the Republic of Vietnam, dismissing President Thieu and his government as "a handful of traitors."[41]

The United States, of course, had no intention of abandoning President Thieu. At a press conference on 19 June, President Nixon made this point quite clear. He would not accede to enemy demands to dispose of President Thieu. Such an action, Mr. Nixon said, would mean "a surrender on our part, a defeat on our part, and turning over South Vietnam to the tender mercies of those who have done a great deal of damage." President Nixon noted the previous forthright offer of President Thieu to meet with the NLF and alluded to a forthcoming RVN proposal for a political settlement.[42]

39. (S) Msg, Saigon 9541 to State, 16 May 69, same file.
40. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 445-447.
41. NY Times, 11 Jun 69, 1; 12 Jun 69, 1.
42. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, p. 476.

President Thieu made his new political settlement offer on 11 July 1969. In a televised speech, he called for elections in South Vietnam in which "all political parties and groups, including the N.L.F.," could participate. He offered special guarantees that his government would abide by the results of the election and challenged the other side to do the same. Finally, he renewed his earlier offer for unconditional private talks with "the other side."[43]

During his 11-day around-the-world trip, President Nixon made an unscheduled visit to South Vietnam. After meeting with President Thieu on 30 July, Mr. Nixon again called for peace in Vietnam, but he believed "the record is clear as to which side has gone the extra mile" in behalf of that objective. "We have gone as far as we can or should go in opening the door to peace, and now is the time for the other side to respond."[44]

At the end of July, however, the Paris talks remained deadlocked. In the public plenary sessions, the North Vietnamese and the PRG rebuffed all US/RVN offers. They resolutely insisted on complete allied acceptance of their position as expressed in the NLF's 10 points of 8 May 1969. Likewise, the private discussions had proved barren. At a private meeting on 18 July 1969, the first since 31 May, Xuan Thuy dismissed President Thieu's 11 July proposal, insisting that peace could be obtained only through acceptance of the NLF/PRG program. He did suggest to Ambassador Lodge that, in addition to continuing their meetings, similar sessions be held at a secondary level, and Ambassador Lodge agreed. The first such meeting took place on 29 July 1969, but no headway was made.[45]

In mid-July, General Wheeler had expressed his disillusionment with the lack of progress in the negotiations. Writing to the Secretary of Defense on 14 July, he observed that he could see no forward movement at the Paris peace table. In fact he considered the enemy reaction to

43. NY Times, 11 Jul 69, 2.
44. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 585-586.
45. (S) Msgs, Paris 10650, 11017, and 11514 to State, 12, 19, and 29 Jul 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 1 Jul 69-31 Mar 70.

the President's 14 May presentation and to President Thieu's recent offer "regression, not progress." He thought that diplomatic pressures should be exerted upon the Soviet Union to induce the North Vietnamese "to pursue peace negotiations rather than engaging in meaningless polemics." Secretary Laird forwarded the Chairman's suggestion to Dr. Kissinger as worthy of "thoughtful consideration."[46]

In late 1968 and early 1969, Soviet diplomats had displayed a cooperative attitude toward the Vietnam negotiations, and the United States had hoped that the Soviets might be helpful in influencing the North Vietnamese to proceed with purposeful talks. Upon his arrival in Paris, Ambassador Lodge and members of his delegation had met frequently with the Soviet diplomats in the French capital to exchange views on Vietnam problems and discuss the progress, or lack thereof, at the peace talks. After his first meeting with Soviet Ambassador to France Zorin on 31 January 1969, Mr. Lodge reported to Washington that the Soviet Ambassador was obviously interested in getting Soviet endorsement of the NVN position on record. Ambassador Lodge was impressed, however, with the "cordial tone" of the Soviets and their readiness "to talk turkey" with him.[47]

But, as the months slipped by and the talks remained at an impasse, the anticipated Soviet help did not develop. What action was taken on General Wheeler's 14 July 1969 recommendation for pressure on the Soviets is not indicated in the available record. In what may have been an attempt to pass the word indirectly, Ambassador Lodge did complain to the French Foreign Minister in early August about the Soviet Union's lack of disposition to use its influence with the North Vietnamese. Two months later, the Soviet Minister in Washington assured Assistant Secretary of State Sullivan that the Soviets were interested in playing an active role as interlocutors with North Vietnam, but the implied assistance did not materialize throughout the remainder of 1969.[48]

46. (S) CM-4433-69 to SecDef, 16 Jul 69; (S) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, 16 Jul 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Apr - 31 Aug 69.

47. (S) Msg, Paris 1523 to State, 1 Feb 69, JCS IN 67089.

48. (S) Msg, Paris 11905 to State, 6 Aug 69; (S-GP 1) Msg, State 170777 to Moscow et al., 8 Oct 69; OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 1 Jul 69-31 Mar 70.

An Appeal to Ho Chi Minh

By mid-July, President Nixon, too, was convinced that some dramatic step was necessary to get the negotiations moving. In a personal letter of 15 July 1969 (which was not made public until 3 November), President Nixon appealed to Ho Chi Minh to begin serious negotiations. He reviewed his proposal of 14 May, which he believed fair to all parties, and added that the United States was ready to discuss other programs as well, "specifically the 10-point program of the NLF." The time had come, the President wrote, to move forward at the conference table. He promised that the United States would be "forthcoming and open-minded" in a common effort for peace.[49]

Ho Chi Minh flatly rejected President Nixon's initiative. In a letter written on 25 August 1969, just a few days before his death, he accused the United States of increasing military action, B-52 operations, and the use of toxic chemicals in Vietnam. The solution, the North Vietnamese President said, could only be found in the NLF/PRG 10 points. If the United States truly desired peace, it must cease its aggression, withdraw its troops from South Vietnam, and respect the right of the Vietnamese people to settle their internal problems.[50]

In early August, before receiving this reply, President Nixon had made yet another attempt to generate some movement in the negotiations by means of private talks. After consultations with Secretary of State Rogers and Ambassador Lodge and with the approval of President Thieu, he dispatched Dr. Kissinger to Paris on 4 August 1969 as his personal representative to undertake secret negotiations with the North Vietnamese. This trip, however, brought no progress toward a peaceful solution. Dr. Kissinger was to repeat these missions to Paris on twelve occasions during the next 30 months, but his extended discussions with the North Vietnamese principals gained no success. The meetings were treated with extreme secrecy and not publicly revealed until President Nixon described them when reviewing past peace efforts in a television address on 25 January 1972. At that time he acknowledged the personal assistance of French President Pompidou in arranging the secret talks.[51]

49. Ltr, Pres Nixon to Ho Chi Minh, 15 Jul 69, Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, p. 910.
50. Ltr, Ho Chi Minh to Pres Nixon, 25 Aug 69, Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 910-911.
51. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 101.

The death of Ho Chi Minh on 3 September 1969 in no way lessened the enemy's intransigence at the Paris conference. Neither the plenary nor the private sessions brought any forward movement. Not only was President Nixon growing concerned over the lack of progress at the Paris talks, but he was coming under increasing domestic pressure in the fall of 1969 for an end to the war. As described in Chapter 5, the depth of public feeling against the war was visibly demonstrated in the 15 October moratorium and the preparations for a November mobilization. On 13 October, in an attempt to deflect public attention from the approaching moratorium, the White House Press Secretary announced that the President would address the nation on Vietnam on 3 November. Speculation was widespread that the speech would feature some major development toward ending the war.

In anticipation of the President's speech, Ambassador Lodge proposed a new tactic at the plenary session on 30 October. He suggested that, at the next meeting on 4 November, the four spokesmen meet in a "restricted" session and discuss any issue any of them cared to raise. This proposal, the Ambassador had told Washington, would not only help to set the stage for the President's speech, but would allow a means for follow-up. In addition, Ambassador Lodge considered his approach a positive and constructive counter to a 16 October NVN call for a private US/PRG meeting, an eventuality that would exclude the Republic of Vietnam. The NVN and PRG representatives, however, flatly rejected Ambassador Lodge's suggestion.52

President Nixon did not announce any dramatic development in the settlement of the war in his 3 November speech. He reaffirmed his peace proposals of 14 May and reviewed for the public his other "initiatives for peace." He cited US flexibility and good faith demonstrated at 40 public meetings in Paris and mentioned US discussions with the Soviets. He revealed, for the first time, his 15 July letter to Ho Chi Minh, as well as an approach for "a rapid, comprehensive settlement" made through a third party soon after his election. This third party, he said, was in direct contact on a personal basis with the leaders of North Vietnam, but he gave no further details. All these attempts, the President reported, were to no avail. The fault lay in "the other side's absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join us in seeking a just peace."

52. (S) Msg, Paris 16543 to State, 26 Oct 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 1 Jul 69-31 Mar 70. (S) Msg, Paris 16792 to State, 30 Oct 69, JCS IN 33981.

President Nixon offered no additional peace proposals in his 3 November speech. Rather, after reviewing the progress in Vietnamization, he announced the course of action he planned to follow: a rejection of "precipitate withdrawal" and a search for a "just peace," preferably through negotiation, but otherwise by means of continued Vietnamization.[53]

Consideration of a Cease-Fire

When the White House Press Secretary first gave notice that the President would address the nation on 3 November, some commentators anticipated that a cease-fire would be announced. This did not occur, but the possibilities of a cease-fire approach had been under consideration by the Nixon Administration for some time. The basic negotiating strategy paper, approved by the President on 1 April, had listed "an eventual cease-fire or total cessation of hostilities" as a specific objective.

A study of cease-fire issues and options, dated 17 April 1969, had been prepared by representatives of the Joint Staff, ISA, and the Department of State. It showed agreement on the point that a cease-fire must be coupled with mutual withdrawals, but need not be combined with either the establishment of international inspection-verification machinery or progress toward a political settlement. Also, an enemy cease-fire proposal might be accepted and implemented immediately within certain limited areas, such as the DMZ or the city of Saigon, while the practical details of a nationwide cease-fire were being resolved. There were, however, other issues where the three agencies could not agree. The Joint Staff preferred that arrangements for monitoring any cease-fire be agreed upon before the cease-fire went into effect; the ISA staff and the Department of State did not believe such agreement was necessary beforehand. In addition, the Joint Staff wanted no limitation imposed on RVN access to any areas of South Vietnam in a cease-fire agreement. But the other two agencies foresaw the possibility of a tacit understanding between the Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, with each voluntarily refraining from sending its forces into areas controlled by the other. Finally, the ISA staff advocated an allied cease-fire initiative at Paris, the Joint Staff disagreed, and the Department of State reserved judgment.[54]

53. Public Papers, Nixon, 1969, pp. 901-909.
54. (S) ISA/Joint Staff/Dept of State Draft Paper, "Cease-Fire: Major Issues and Options," 17 Apr 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Apr-31 Aug 69.

From Paris, Mr. Philip Habib, a Department of State member of the US delegation, commented on the desirability of preparing possible US counterproposals to enemy tactical cease-fire initiatives. Subsequently, Mr. William Sullivan, Chairman of the AD Hoc Group on Vietnam, created a working committee within the Group to pursue this task, and consideration of cease-fire positions continued.[55]

During the summer of 1969, further divisions of opinion developed within the US Government over a cease-fire position. In May and June, Secretary Rogers twice asked the President to propose a cease-fire, and in Paris, several Department of State members of the delegation argued strongly that a cease-fire would assist in advancing the negotiations. In Ad Hoc Group discussions, however, both the Joint Staff and CIA members asserted that a cease-fire was not, of itself, a valid negotiating goal. A standstill agreement without assurance of progress at Paris, they contended, would divide and "de-stabilize" the Republic of Vietnam. Generals Wheeler and Abrams also opposed an unconditional cease-fire. In August, COMUSMACV told General Wheeler that any enemy cease-fire proposal should be regarded as a request for relief and that the enemy "should have to negotiate, i.e. pay something for a cease-fire under the current battlefield situation." In reply, General Wheeler pledged to the field commander his support in the effort to keep cease-fire tied to withdrawal.[56]

Nonetheless, advocacy of a cease-fire continued. Secretary Rogers still believed that, before public opinion again became restive, "we should get on record [at Paris] with a position on cease-fire, something tied in with withdrawal and supervision." According to General Weyand, Ambassador Lodge advocated a private cease-fire offer "as a ploy to delete the issue and put us on the high side morally." The

55. (S) Ltr, Philip Habib to Heyward Isham, 12 May 69; (S) Memo, William Sullivan to RADM H. H. Epes, Jr., "Revised Paper on Cease-fire," 3 June 69; J-5 Files.

56. (TS) Memo for Record, CAPT R. L. Scott, J-5, "NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam," 9 Jul 69, J-5 Files. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 10174 to CJCS, 6 Aug 69; (S-GP 3) Msg, CJCS 9951 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 12 Aug 69; OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Apr-31 Aug 69.

Ambassador looked upon a cease-fire offer as "a psychological gambit," since he did not believe the enemy would accept.[57]

At a White House meeting on 12 September 1969, President Nixon canvassed his chief advisers, including Ambassador Bunker, General Wheeler, General Abrams, and Admiral McCain, on the matter of a cease-fire. Subsequently, he ordered Ambassador Bunker to begin discussions to determine "specific conditions which the GVN considers essential for acceptance of a ceasefire." The approach should be exploratory, the President said, and should avoid "any hint" of US pressure on the South Vietnamese.[58]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff feared that the growing public agitation against the war might cause the President to decide upon an early cease-fire, and they were apprehensive that his 3 November speech would contain such an announcement. Accordingly, they prepared for the President on 31 October 1969 their recommendations against a unilateral US cease-fire in Vietnam. These JCS views and the delay by the Secretary of Defense in transmitting them have been described in Chapter 5. But, in any event, the President made no mention of a cease-fire on 3 November.

As on past occasions, both North Vietnam and the PRG reacted contemptuously to President Nixon's 3 November address. At the 6 November Paris plenary session, and in subsequent meetings, both Mr. Thuy and Mrs. Binh attacked the President and his speech. They asserted that Vietnamization was merely a maneuver to prolong the war and the US occupation of Vietnam. Repeating their usual accusations against the United States and the leaders of the Republic of Vietnam, they left no doubt that their position on settlement terms was unchanged. Symptomatic, perhaps, of the near-hopeless feeling regarding the negotiations was the 20 November announcement that Ambassador Lodge and his

57. (S) Memo for Record, RADM H. H. Epes, Jr., "Cease-fire in Vietnam," 29 Aug 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Apr-31 Aug 69. (TS) Msg, LTG Weyand to RADM Epes, 10 Oct 69, J-5 Files.

58. (TS) NSDM 24, 17 Sep 69, JMF 001 (CY 1969) NSDMs.

deputy, Mr. Walsh, would resign from their Paris assignments effective 8 December 1969.[59]

In some of his final messages to Washington, Ambassador Lodge suggested that the United States and the Republic of Vietnam take the initiative in proposing holiday truces. Specifically, he called for a standdown extending from Christmas through New Year's. He also believed that the allied side should offer to transform this truce into a permanent cease-fire. Such an initiative, the Ambassador believed, would win worldwide public support and "offer hope of ending the current stalemate as no other proposal can do at this particular time."[60]

Ambassador Lodge's recommendation rekindled debate over cease-fire within the US Government. On 21 November 1969, General Wheeler called to Secretary Laird's attention the JCS views of 31 October against a unilateral cease-fire. He strongly recommended that the Department of Defense oppose any cease-fire that did not include provision for verified withdrawal of "non-South Vietnamese forces." He also objected to Christmas, New Year's, or Tet truces in excess of 24 hours each.[61]

In Saigon, Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams took a similar position. They favored a 24-hour truce at Christmas, as was observed in 1968. Rather than offering to extend the truce, the Ambassador and the General proposed a declaration of US willingness to negotiate a permanent cease-fire. The problem they wished to avoid lay in the possibility that the public might find the distinction between an extension of a holiday truce and a negotiated cease-fire difficult to understand. It was not just a matter of duration. A one-day truce did not require the detailed safeguards that should be negotiated for a permanent cease-fire. "As we see it," they continued, "we would come under pressure to prolong the temporary

59. (S) Msgs, Paris 17230, 17608, and 17969 to State, 2, 13 and 20 Nov 69, JCS IN 46383, 57005, and 69797. Dept of State Bulletin, 15 Dec 69, pp. 549-550.

60. (S) Msg, Paris 17921 to State, 19 Nov 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Sep 69-

61. (S) CM-4743-69 to SecDef, 21 Nov 69, same file.

truce and would find it more and more difficult to explain our position if the enemy responded in some vague or ambiguous manner."[62]

President Nixon resolved the question on 3 December 1969. He did not want the issue of brief holiday truces linked with initiatives for a permanent negotiated cease-fire. In addition, he wanted to avoid speculation that the United States was considering new proposals for a permanent cease-fire in South Vietnam. Accordingly, he approved a 24-hour truce for Christmas and another for New Year's, with a coordinated US/RVN announcement to be made in Saigon. His decision regarding a permanent cease-fire, he directed, should not "preclude continuation of the studies under way on this subject." The results of such studies, including the views of the Republic of Vietnam, would be forwarded through the NSC system for formal consideration before any discussions with Hanoi's representatives. This presidential decision in early December foreclosed cease-fire negotiations for the immediate future.[63]

The Talks at the End of 1969

The Paris talks remained at a standstill in December 1969. At the last plenary session Ambassador Lodge attended, he expressed both his own personal frustration and that of the US Government with the lack of progress in the talks. After 45 weeks, he declared, "the only concrete progress here is agreement on the shape of the table!" In closing remarks, he repeated the US desire for an early negotiated settlement. Although he was leaving Ambassador Lodge told the other side, a representative of the President would continue to participate. "We remain ready for compromise. When you are also ready, progress can be speedy."[64]

62. (S) Msg, Saigon 23502 to State, 24 Nov 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 1 Jul 69-31 Mar 70.
63. (TS) Extracts from NSDM 36, 3 Dec 69, JMF 001 (CY 1969) NSDMs.
64. (S) Msgs, Paris 18402 and 18497 to State, 2 and 4 Dec 69, JCS IN 87976 and 91723.

At a tea break during the 4 December session, Ambassador Lodge and Mr. Philip Habib, Mr. Lodge's senior adviser and designated successor at the talks, spoke privately with Xuan Thuy. For a last time, Ambassador Lodge advanced the US proposals. The next move was up to North Vietnam, he said, repeating that when the North Vietnamese were ready, the United States would be willing to meet them "more than half-way." In reply, Xuan Thuy merely reaffirmed the NVN position as advanced during the previous 45 meetings.[65]

By the end of 1969, the fundamental issues facing the delegates at the Paris peace talks had been clearly set forth, but neither side had found any common ground for agreement. The United States had defined its negotiating position in early 1969. Essentially, the United States proposed a verified mutual withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces from the south and a political settlement arranged by the South Vietnamese themselves. Ambassador Lodge presented this position in Paris in both the plenary and private sessions. In his 14 May speech, President Nixon had refined the position slightly, calling for the withdrawal of all major outside forces within one year. He reaffirmed this proposal in the letter to Ho Chi Minh on 15 July and in his 3 November speech. Meantime, President Thieu had suggested direct private discussion between his government and the NLF and free elections in South Vietnam with the NLF participating.

The United States had not relied solely on negotiations in 1969 to demonstrate its desire to end the war. As Ambassador Lodge reminded the other side at the 4 December Paris session, the United States had "significantly" reduced its presence in South Vietnam. More than 60,000 US troops--20 percent of all US combat forces--had been withdrawn in 1969 and US air operations had been reduced by more than 20 percent.[66]

Yet, during the year, the enemy curtly rejected all allied approaches. The United States was the aggressor, both North Vietnam and the NLF/PRG asserted, and if the United States truly desired a settlement, then it should

65. (S) Msg, Paris 18517 to State, 4 Dec 69, OCJCS Msg Bk, Paris Mtg/PLUS, 1 Jul 69-31 Mar 70.
66. (S) Msgs, Paris 18402 and 18497 to State, 2 and 4 Dec 69, JCS IN 87976 and 91723.

withdraw its forces from Vietnam. Nor would they condescend to discuss a political settlement with the current Government of the Republic of Vietnam, which they labeled a puppet under the pay and control of the United States. During the year, the enemy did lessen the intensity of his military actions in South Vietnam, and infiltration fell off in the latter part of the year. Some persons in the United States, both in and out of government, interpreted this decline in activity as an enemy bid for a mutual reduction in hostilities that should be met with a further lowering of US combat participation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, believed that the drop in enemy action and infiltration resulted from allied military pressure. In any event, if the enemy was truly attempting a signal, he had yet to give any indication of it at the Paris talks.

From his experience as the military representative at the peace talks, General Weyand was pessimistic about the prospects for the negotiations at the end of 1969. He found that the enemy objective had not changed during the course of nearly a year of discussions. If anything, the enemy's negotiating stance had hardened over the year. General Weyand believed that the enemy would refuse to negotiate in Paris on US terms, would not talk with the Republic of Vietnam, and would not deviate from the demand for a coalition government in South Vietnam and rapid and unconditional US withdrawal. Nor would the enemy accept a political settlement based on free elections or the "status quo." The enemy viewed President Thieu's "uncertain" political control in South Vietnam and wavering US public support for the war, the General continued, as vulnerabilities fatal to the US position. He predicted that the enemy objectives would be pursued through heightened military pressure, using military force "to the fullest extent possible in 1970" to discredit the Vietnamization program and force major concessions from the United States at the Paris table.[67]

Reviews Looking Toward a New Peace Initiative in 1970

With Ambassador Lodge's departure from Paris, Mr. Philip Habib became the acting head of the US delegation to the

67. (S) Msg, GEN Weyand to C/S MACV and J-5 Far East Div, 12 Dec 69, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Sep 69-

peace talks. Whereupon Xuan Thuy and Mrs. Binh boycotted the meetings in protest of the failure of the United States to name a top-level replacement for Ambassador Lodge. At the first plenary session of 1970, on 8 January, Mr. Habib called on the other side to engage in "genuine negotiations" and proposed a restricted session for the following week. But the North Vietnamese and the PRG, represented by second-ranking delegation members, rejected the US proposal. Succeeding meetings in January and early February saw no progress in the negotiations, nor would North Vietnam consent to any private sessions. Although Mrs. Binh returned to the talks on 22 January, Xuan Thuy continued his boycott. On 11 February 1970, at a Paris reception, he made clear that North Vietnam would not resume private talks until the United States sent a representative of suitable stature to Paris. President Nixon, who two weeks previously had publicly expressed his confidence in Mr. Habib, took no action to replace him. Although the sessions continued, Xuan Thuy did not return to the table, and prospects for a settlement remained poor.[68]

With the talks in Paris at an impasse, there seemed little need for further development of negotiating positions in Washington, and consideration of these papers slackened in late 1969 and early 1970. This lack of action had led to some difference of opinion within the Joint Staff. Early in February 1970, the Director, Far East Division, J-5, Rear Admiral H.H. Epes, Jr., wrote COMUSMACV's Acting Chief of Staff, stating: "I believe we have gone just about as far as possible in this area [developing positions] pending some movement in the talks which would provide a sense of direction for the development of more specific positions." He was also of the opinion that only a limited number of the 1969 studies on negotiating issues had any merit.[69]

One member of Admiral Epes' staff did not agree. Captain R. L. Scott, USN, the principal J-5 action officer

68. (S) Msgs, Paris 16, 231, 352, 546, 816, 1073, and 1388 to State, 2, 8, 10, 15, 22, and 29 Jan and 5 Feb 70, JCS IN 46277, 55266, 60557, 67270, 78848, 90961 and 12660. NY Times, 12 Feb 70, 3. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, p. 41.

69. (S) Memo, RADM H.H. Epes, Jr., to MG R.F. Shaefer, 2 Feb 70; J-5 Files.

on negotiations, addressed a memorandum to the Admiral on 18 February, expressing his concern regarding the status of US planning for the talks:

> It is sometimes said by those involved in the preparation of negotiations papers that nothing more can be done "until something moves in Paris." I believe this to be incorrect, and a dangerous frame of mind. Basic positions for Paris can be prepared, the details of which might be time-sensitive, but the fundamental aspects of which would be durable.

Despite the current dim prospects for the negotiations, Captain Scott did not believe that the United States could afford to be unprepared for substantive talks. He did, however, agree with Admiral Epes' dissatisfaction with the existing studies. Of the total catalogue of issues, including cease-fire, internal political settlement, prisoners of war, verification, and mutual withdrawal, only a position on the last question was sufficiently developed to allow US response if productive talks proved possible. Captain Scott also criticized the lack of "orderly consultation" with the Republic of Vietnam on substantive negotiating questions.

Recognizing that the Joint Staff had only a limited role in the negotiations, Captain Scott recommended the following: review of JCS and Joint Staff positions on various negotiating issues "to insure that we, at least, have our thoughts in order on all foreseeable issues which lie within our purview"; encouragement of the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to develop "meaningful and useful" guidance for Paris and Saigon; and resumption of regular consultative meetings in Saigon, similar to ones held in 1968.[70]

Of all the various negotiating issues, only the question of a cease-fire was under active consideration within the US Government at the beginning of 1970. In his decision of 3 December 1969, President Nixon had prohibited linking proposals for holiday truces with a permanent cease-fire.

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70. (TS) Memo, CAPT R.L. Scott to RADM H.H. Epes, Jr., "US Negotiations Positions (U)," 18 Feb 70, J-5 Files. A J-5 memo for COL Borman, 6 Apr 70, J-5 Files, indicated that RADM Epes "passed" this memo to OSD.

He had indicated, however, that he wanted the cease-fire planning to continue, and on 15 January 1970, the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam forwarded a draft cease-fire paper to the NSC staff and to the US Embassy in Saigon for comment and recommendation.

The Ad Hoc Group set forth the main issues involved in a general cease-fire, focusing principally on conditions that the United States should insist be met before it would agree to this action. The major issue raised was whether or not the United States would accept a general cease-fire in the absence either of agreement on mutual withdrawals or of a substantial de facto North Vietnamese withdrawal. The Joint Staff position was that a cease-fire must be linked to NVN withdrawal. The ISA representation within the Ad Hoc Group agreed with the Joint Staff on this point but differed on some of the other issues connected with a cease-fire. The Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency would accept a general cease-fire without withdrawal, but with regroupment of forces substituted as the necessary condition.

Regroupment was the assembly of military forces within mutually agreed and clearly defined geographic areas in South Vietnam--a form of disengagement that could become the preparatory stage of withdrawal. In all variants under consideration, regroupment would apply to NVA troops, but it might extend to US and Free World forces as well, in effect leaving the RVNAF to confront the Viet Cong in the remaining active hostilities. Enemy agreement to a cease-fire seemed somewhat more likely if linked to regroupment rather than withdrawal, and there were indications that even some RVN officials had begun to think it acceptable, always assuming that North Vietnamese withdrawal would be the subject of further negotiation. The disadvantages were readily recognized. As the Ad Hoc Group's paper put it, "areas into which the enemy is regrouped can be considered as being for practical purposes ceded to him for what might be a long period of time."[71]

71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, Draft Paper, "An agreed General Cease-fire in Viet-Nam (~~TS~~)," 15 Jan 70, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/466-6, 1 May 70, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 5. (~~TS~~) J-5 Far East Div Paper, "Status of NSC Negotiating Papers," 12 Mar 70, J-5 Files, indicates that the cease-fire paper was circulated to the NSC Staff and the Embassy, Saigon.

The Secretary of Defense was somewhat concerned over the lack of joint US/RVN planning on the cease-fire question. Reporting to the President on 17 February on his recent trip to Vietnam, he noted that little thought had been given to the handling of a situation in which the enemy, achieving a short-term tactical military success, might follow up with a Paris initiative calling for a localized or even a general cease-fire. "In concert with State Department officials--in Washington, Saigon and Paris--and with the GVN leadership--in Saigon and Paris--we must accelerate and solidify our contingency planning."[72]

Shortly thereafter, Ambassador Bunker sounded out President Thieu regarding the possibility of a cease-fire. Mr. Thieu told the Ambassador that if Hanoi should propose a cease-fire, the United States and the Republic of Vietnam would have two alternatives. They could either negotiate all issues before agreeing to a cease-fire, or negotiate a cease-fire at once and then try to resolve the related issues of withdrawal, regroupment, and political settlement. The first alternative was preferable, Mr. Thieu observed, but might not be realistic or feasible. His government was prepared to accept the second, provided North Vietnam would agree to a cessation of its infiltration and terrorism and accept international supervision of the cease-fire. Other aspects, including regroupment, withdrawal, and political settlement, could be worked out after the cease-fire. The RVN President, apparently enthusiastic about the second alternative, suggested that if the United States and his government firmly believed that this approach would lead to an end of the conflict, it might be advantageous to initiate the proposal in Paris.

President Thieu's apparent willingness to defer discussion of withdrawal until after a cease-fire had been concluded was a departure from the previous RVN stand. General Abrams, in relating this information to General Wheeler on 4 March 1970, said he had been concerned at first that the rather unexpected development in RVN thinking had resulted from a change of view among the US diplomatic representatives in Saigon. He had discussed this possibility with Ambassador Bunker, who had assured him that the Embassy view continued to be

72. (S) Memo, SecDef to President, "Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, February 10-14, 1970," 17 Feb 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 70.

consistent with COMUSMACV's position that a cease-fire had to be tied to agreement on verified withdrawal.[73]

Despite the assurances of Ambassador Bunker, General Wheeler was concerned about the possible shift of position in Saigon. On 7 March, he informed COMUSMACV that from an analysis of earlier RVN statements it appeared that President Thieu might not realize all the implications of his latest stand. "As you can imagine," he wrote, "those in Washington and Paris who advocate early US cease-fire initiative were quick to grasp Thieu's statements to support their position." He assured General Abrams that the JCS position stressing the absolute need for mutual withdrawal had strong support within OSD and the NSC staff. Additionally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were pressing for early NSC consideration of the Ad Hoc Group's 15 January cease-fire paper and resolution of the splits contained therein. Only after the US Government established its own position would it be possible to work out a suitable agreement with the Republic of Vietnam. To back up the JCS views, General Wheeler requested General Abrams' comments on the cease-fire paper as soon as possible. Fortunately, he concluded, the NSC staff had assured him that the White House considered the matter merely an exercise in contingency planning, not a "forerunner of early initiative for cease-fire."[74]

Responding to the Chairman's request, COMUSMACV repeated his long-standing belief that the United States should not permit the cease-fire issue to be separated from a negotiated agreement on verified mutual withdrawal. Any such separation, he declared, "would inevitably result in the progressive erosion of our relative military balance, as well as the over-all security and political situation throughout SVN." Moreover, it would represent "another concession to the enemy" even before any meaningful progress on settlement of basic issues had been achieved.[75]

73. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 2843 to CJCS, 4 Mar 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam (Negotiations), 1 Sep 69-

74. (S-GP 3) Msg, CJCS 3336 to COMUSMACV, 7 Mar 70, same file.

75. (TS-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 3120 to CJCS, 10 Mar 70, same file.

Meantime, because of his dissatisfaction over the lack of progress in developing consolidated US/RVN negotiating positions, Secretary Laird had requested an assessment of the status of the current negotiating positions, together with proposals for further action. The Joint Staff and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) prepared the assessment. Noting that nearly a year had elapsed since the strategy and withdrawal papers were approved by the President on 1 April 1969, the two staffs thought it was time to review them to assure readiness for possible opportunities. Accordingly, they recommended that the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam act "with dispatch" on the current cease-fire paper and, in addition, be tasked to revise the other negotiating papers as appropriate. After obtaining Secretary Rogers' concurrence, Mr. Laird wrote Dr. Kissinger on 11 March 1970. The question of cease-fire had become more urgent as a result of the recent conversations in Saigon, he said, and it was important to reach positions on issues that might become critical when and if true negotiations began in Paris. He endorsed the Joint Staff/ISA recommendation for Ad Hoc Group action on the cease-fire paper and review of the negotiating papers developed during 1969.[76]

As an apparent result of the Secretary's recommendation, the President directed a comprehensive review of all existing negotiating studies "in order to be fully prepared for substantial negotiations in Paris." Dr. Kissinger informed the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence of the decision on 19 March, directing the Ad Hoc Group to review the overall strategy and mutual withdrawal papers, as approved on 1 April 1969, and the studies directed by the President shortly thereafter, including the questions of political settlement, verification, and international guarantees.[77]

76. (~~S~~-GP 1) DJSM-391-70 to CJCS, 18 Mar 70, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 70) sec 6. (~~TS~~) Memo to SecDef, "Vietnam Negotiations," n.d., J-5 Files. (J-5 memo for COL Gorman, 6 Apr 70, J-5 Files, indicates that SecDef requested the study and that it was written by ISA and the Joint Staff.) (~~S~~) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, "Vietnam Negotiations," 11 Mar 70, OSD Files.

77. (~~TS~~) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecState et al., 19 Mar 70, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 5.

Over the next three months, the Ad Hoc Group carried out the review. In comments on the strategy paper, submitted to the NSC Review Group on 27 March, the Group pointed out that should the decision be made to accept a cease-fire without NVN withdrawal, portions of the strategy paper would have to be revised. Until that issue was resolved, the Group recommended a delay in revision of the strategy paper. A revised mutual withdrawal paper of 14 May 1970 updated the alternative scenarios of the 1969 paper on the basis of current force levels and the recent advice of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV. Other results of the Ad Hoc Group's efforts were a new verification study and an updated international guarantees paper, both completed in May. A revision of the internal political settlement paper, together with elaboration of the supplementary studies on mixed electoral commissions and territorial accommodation, was finished in early June.[78]

While this work was in progress, on 29 April 1970, the NSC staff circulated the Ad Hoc Group's cease-fire paper of 15 January, with additions incorporating comments from the Embassy in Saigon and a statement of the current RVN position on cease-fire. In the latter, the new line of thought that had first emerged during the Thieu-Bunker conversations of late February was dominant. President Thieu no longer listed NVN withdrawal among his conditions for a cease-fire. In his view withdrawal, and probably regroupment as well, could be expected only as part of a final settlement.[79]

78. (TS) Memo, Chm, Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to Chm, NSC Rg, 27 Mar 70, J-5 Files. (TS-GP 3) Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam Paper, "Phased Mutual Withdrawal," 14 May 70, Encl to JCS 2472/466-7, 21 May 70, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 5. (TS-GP 3) Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam Papers, "Verification of Mutual Withdrawal and Possible Renewed Inflation," 28 May 70; "International Guarantees," 28 May 70; "Mixed Electoral Commissions," 27 Apr 70; Encl to Att to JCS 2472/466-8, 12 Jun 70; (TS-GP 1) Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam Papers, "Internal Political Settlement in South Viet-Nam," 5 Jun 70, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/466-9, 18 Jun 70; "Territorial Accommodation in South Vietnam," 9 Jun 70; same file, sec 6.

79. (TS-GP 1) Memo, NSC Staff to ASD(ISA) et al., "Cease-Fire: NSDM 36," 29 Apr 70, Att to JCS 2472/466-6, 1 May 70, JMF 911/305 (1 Apr 69) sec 5.

No action, however, was forthcoming on the various revised Ad Hoc Group papers. One reason, perhaps, was the President's directive of 25 May 1970 for a study of diplomatic initiatives on Vietnam that might be taken following completion of the withdrawal of US forces from Cambodia on 30 June 1970. The President wanted the study to consider US strategy for convoking or participating in an international conference on Indochina, the types of forums for such a conference, and proposals that the United States might put forward there as well as the relation of these proposals to the "on-going" Paris negotiations. The study was also to include US strategy for possible regional conferences and other initiatives that could be taken to move toward a settlement. The President had directed preparation of the study by an ad hoc group chaired by the Department of State and including members from Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the NSC staff.[80]

A special interagency group prepared the study on diplomatic initiatives on Indochina, and after one revision presented it to the NSC Review Group for final consideration on 16 July. After discussing the desirability and scope of new initiatives to enlarge negotiations through some sort of international conference, the group examined possible forums for such an approach. These included a Geneva conference, consultations among interested nations, the United Nations, a conference of Asian states, and an expanded Paris conference. The group then considered means of enlarging the scope of the negotiations and the possible "price tag" for a new initiative. The group believed that North Vietnam would be reluctant to engage in more active negotiations at that time, since world opinion might view it as tacit acknowledgment of the success of the recent allied operations in Cambodia. Therefore the group thought that some further price would have to be paid to get negotiations started in the near future. This price was likely to include public commitment to a total US withdrawal by a specific date and US acquiesence in a political settlement that gave the Communists "a powerful voice" in South Vietnam.

80. (TS-GP 3) NSSM 94, 25 May 70, Att to JCS 2339/322, 10 Jun 70, JMF 907/530 (25 May 70) sec 1.

With regard to specific proposals the group stated that, first, a decision must be made on whether to link any new approach to some substantive move by the other side. Proposals that the United States might advance included: various forms of cease-fire; a "package" including a general cease-fire throughout Indochina, US pledge of withdrawal, POW exchange, ICC reactivation, and enlarged negotiations; new attempts to formulate the withdrawal issue by linking it with further concessions; and an indication of readiness to discuss political issues. If an international conference could not be arranged, another possibility was the involvement of other Communist states, such as the Soviet Union and Poland, to work out a cease-fire, prisoner of war exchange, and ICC re-establishment. The interagency group had not been asked to present recommendations on possible initiatives, but it clearly leaned toward an expanded Paris conference as the most favorable option. On the questions of presentation and timing of new US initiatives, the group thought that the President should be the spokesman but that no move should be made until after the senior NVN representative returned to Paris.[81]

Meanwhile, at the direction of Dr. Kissinger, the Vietnam Special Studies Group had prepared a new cease-fire paper during June and early July 1970. This paper presented three "packages." The first called for a main force cease-fire in place, with no regroupment or withdrawal; the second added NVA regroupment to defined areas; and the third included withdrawal of NVA, US, and Free World main forces (excluding advisers) within one year. All three packages required a ban on terrorism and reprisals, on extension of control, and on infiltration. The paper did not recommend any one of the packages, but did conclude that, whichever

81. (TS-GP 3) Interagency Group Report, "Diplomatic Initiatives on Indochina," 4 Jun 70, Encl to Att to JCS 2339/322-2, 25 Jun 70, same file. (TS) Interagency Group Report, same subj, 14 Jul 70, J-5 Files, NSC/SRG #11 (16 Jul 70) Indo-China NSSM 94. (TS-GP 3) ISA/JS TP for SecDef and CJCS, n.d., Att to JCS 2339/322-5, 23 Jul 70, JMF 907/530 (25 May 70) sec 2.

was adopted, a "concerted" effort should be made to improve verification and enforcement capabilities.[82]

The NSC Review Group considered both the diplomatic initiatives and the new cease-fire papers on 16 July in preparation for a full Council meeting on 21 July 1970. During the discussion on the former, all members agreed that if the enemy suggested an Indochina conference, the United States should accept. Furthermore, the United States might find it advantageous to initiate such a proposal, but should not offer any concession or pay any price for its acceptance. In consideration of a Soviet role in the negotiations, Admiral Moorer expressed the opinion that "any positive action by the Soviets is unlikely." Although Dr. Kissinger tended to agree, he would not exclude the Soviets as a channel to North Vietnam. But the decision to use them as an intermediary, he added, should be made on a case-by-case basis rather than as a general policy. Dr. Kissinger informed the Review Group members that the President did not want to put forth any new initiative immediately, preferring to wait until the new US representative to the talks arrived in Paris and the plenary sessions with all members present got under way again. Then he would consider proposals in August or September.

The Review Group members then turned to a lengthy discussion of the cease-fire paper and its three packages. All agreed that the third (mutual withdrawal) presented the most favorable predicted results. There was some question as to General Abrams' preference, and Admiral Moorer clarified the matter. The field commander also favored the third alternative and considered the second (regroupment) the worst. Dr. Kissinger observed that, even though the third package would be the best choice for the Republic of Vietnam, it appeared unattainable since North Vietnam had already refused to discuss mutual withdrawal.[83]

82. (S) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, et al., "Future Vietnam Special Studies Group Work," 25 May 70; (PS) VSSG Cease-fire Paper, 13 Jul 70; Atts to JCS 2472/648, 23 Jul 70, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 1.

83. (TS) Memos for Record, BG J.E. Glick, J-3, "National Security Council Special Review Group Meeting, 16 July 1970," 17 Jul 70; LTC C.M. Tronsure, Jr. (ISA), "Senior Level Review Group/VSSG Meeting, 16 July 1970," 16 Jul 70; same file, sec 1A.

For the 21 July 1970 NSC meeting, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) and the Director, Joint Staff, prepared talking papers on the diplomatic initiatives and cease-fire studies for the use of the Secretary of Defense and Admiral Moorer. The talking paper on cease-fire made quite clear that the basic split within the US Government over the withdrawal of NVN forces had not been resolved. The two Defense officials anticipated that the Department of State, supported by the Central Intelligence Agency, would take the position that NVN withdrawal was not vital to an acceptable cease-fire. It was recommended that the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman hold to the Defense position that NVA withdrawal was a necessary condition of any cease-fire. In a separate point paper, the Joint Staff strongly recommended that Admiral Moorer support the JCS position that any cease-fire proposal made or accepted by the United States should be with full concurrence of the Republic of Vietnam and be attendant upon verified North Vietnamese withdrawal from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and the sanctuaries of Laos.[84]

For the NSC discussion of the diplomatic initiatives paper, the authors of the talking paper recommended that Secretary Laird and Admiral Moorer emphasize that there was little the United States could do at that time to bring about "real movement" in the negotiations without making major concessions. If a new approach was made, they continued, consideration should be given to achieving "maximum propaganda advantage" from the initiative, but in a way that did not prejudice future initiatives. The two Defense officials also told their superiors that there was little likelihood of Soviet assistance in getting the negotiations moving. Finally, they thought an expanded conference covering Laos and Cambodia as well as South Vietnam, if it should become feasible, would be advantageous.[85]

84. (TS-GP 3) ISA/JS TP for SecDef and CJCS, "Vietnam Special Studies Group Ceasefire Paper (8)," n.d., Att to JCS 2472/648, 23 Jul 70, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 1. (TS) J-5 PP for CJCS, "Recommended Position on Cease-fire," n.d., J-5 Files, NSC Mtg, No. 44 (21 Jul 70) Paris Talks.

85. (TS-GP 4) ISA/JS TP for SecDef and CJCS, "Response to NSSM 94," n.d., Att to JCS 2339/322-5, 23 Jul 70, JMF 907/530 (25 May 70) sec 2.

On the eve of the NSC meeting, Secretary Rogers pointed out to the President that a fairly broad consensus had developed within the group preparing the diplomatic initiatives paper to the effect that the United States should propose a package initiative. Such a package, he thought, should concentrate primarily upon the military aspects of the problem, leaving the political issues unresolved. It should include provision for a cease-fire in all of Indochina, international supervision, acceptance of the "principle" of US withdrawal, POW exchange, and an international conference on Indochina.

To implement his proposal, Secretary Rogers offered a detailed scenario with specific actions and timing. He would begin with immediate NSC approval of the negotiating package, followed by consultation with the Republic of Vietnam and then with other Asian allies and Laos and Cambodia. The President would publicly announce the proposal on 12 August. He would deliberately leave the nature of the cease-fire vague, but would stress the need to include Laos and Cambodia. He would also avoid any suggestion of a US timetable although making clear the US willingness to negotiate an agreed schedule for withdrawal. The President should emphasize the requirement for international supervision and "leave the impression that we consider the ICC alone to be inadequate for a satisfactory control." On the question of an Indochina conference, Secretary Rogers would have the President avoid specific details. He should, however, indicate preference for broader participation than the current four-sided composition of the Paris talks while making clear that the United States was "not willing to pay any price to obtain that new structure." If North Vietnam turned down this offer, the United States would simply continue negotiations in the Paris forum.[86]

The available record does not indicate what occurred at the NSC meeting on 21 July. The diplomatic initiatives and cease-fire studies had not been presented in the format of decision papers, and no decision was made on them.

86. (S) Memo, SecState to Pres, "NSC Consideration of Diplomatic Initiatives," n.d. (received by White House on 20 Jul 70), Att to Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Vice Pres et al., 20 Jul 70, J-5 Files, NSC Mtg No. 44 (21 Jul 70) Paris Talks.

Nor is there any record of specific action on Secretary Rogers' scenario, though it is clear that subsequent events did not follow his suggested timetable. Dr. Kissinger had already indicated that the President did not wish to launch an immediate initiative but would give the matter consideration at a later stage. As will be recounted, in early October the President did offer a new peace proposal; in substance it resembled the one advocated by Secretary Rogers in July.[87]

The Talks in 1970

As President Nixon and his advisers considered various new initiatives for the negotiations, the Paris talks remained at an impasse. Xuan Thuy's boycott of the sessions continued throughout the spring of 1970. The ouster of Prince Sihanouk and expanded fighting in Laos during March brought enemy allegations of US escalation of the war.[88]

Subsequently, on 1 April 1970, France called for a general peace conference for all of Indochina. Unexpectedly, the Soviet Union showed interest in the idea. At the United Nations on 16 April, Soviet representative Yakov A. Malik observed that only "a new Geneva conference" could bring a solution and relax tension. But the Soviet enthusiasm was short-lived, and within a week, Mr. Malik termed his suggestion unrealistic in the current circumstances. He had, apparently, exceeded his authority in supporting a proposal for a Geneva conference.[89]

President Nixon on 20 April 1970 announced the withdrawal of an additional 150,000 US troops from South Vietnam during the next year. This announcement was accompanied by a warning to the enemy that increased military action anywhere in Indochina risked "strong and

87. See below, p. 499.

88. (S) Msgs, Paris 3295 and 3630 to State, 20 and 26 Mar 70, JCS IN 87479 and 98132.

89. (U) Msgs, Paris 1387 and 1394 to State, 2 Apr 70; (S) Msg, Paris 1403 to State, 2 Apr 70; (S) Msg, State 4865 to Saigon et al., 3 Apr 70; (S) Msg, UN 1189 to State, 18 Apr 70; J-5 FE/South Asia Div Files, #83, Expanded Conference. NY Times, 17 Apr 70, 10; 19 Apr 70, 1; 21 Apr 70, 11, 30 Jun 70, 1.

effective measures" to meet the situation. The President went on to report that no progress had been made in the Paris talks. He repeated that the overriding US objective was the withdrawal of all outside forces from South Vietnam and a political solution there reflecting the independent choice of the South Vietnamese. President Nixon renewed the pledge that the United States would abide by whatever decision emerged from a free exercise of the political process agreed upon.[90]

As related in Chapter 7, President Nixon decided that the increasing North Vietnamese activity in Cambodia threatened US forces in South Vietnam, and at the end of April, US forces accompanied RVNAF units into Cambodia to clean out enemy base areas near the border. In protest, North Vietnam and the PRG cancelled the plenary session of the Paris talks scheduled for 6 May. Xuan Thuy and Mrs. Binh thereupon departed Paris for Vietnam as a further protest.[91]

In an attempt to achieve a settlement in Cambodia, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik in early May 1970 called for a meeting of Asian foreign ministers to work out arrangements to preserve the independence and neutrality of that beleaguered country. Twelve nations, not including any Communist states, met in Djakarta on 16-17 May. A concluding communique recommended respect for Cambodian sovereignty and neutrality, immediate cessation of hostilities, reactivation of the international peace-keeping machinery in Cambodia, and the early convening of a new international conference to resolve the conflict in Indochina. United Nations Secretary-General U Thant also proposed an international conference to settle the war in Indochina. The United States welcomed both proposals, but the North Vietnamese rejected an international conference as "sheer hypocrisy" on 13 June 1970.[92]

In announcing completion of the US withdrawal from Cambodia on 30 June, President Nixon said that the United

90. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 373-377.
91. NY Times, 7 May 70, 1; 11 May 70, 20.
92. Ibid., 17 May 70, 1; 18 May 70, 1; 14 Jun 70, 4. Dept of State Bulletin, 25 May 70, p. 653; 8 Jun 70, pp. 710-711.

States would renew efforts to bring about genuine negotiations. All previous US proposals remained "on the conference table to be explored." Addressing the leaders in Hanoi, the President once more declared that "the time has come to negotiate." On the following day, the President acted to restore the high-level status to the Paris talks, announcing the appointment of David K.E. Bruce as head of the US delegation. He described Ambassador Bruce as "one of America's most distinguished diplomats" and said that the Ambassador would have "great flexibility" in the conduct of the talks.[93]

There had been speculation that Ambassador Bruce might bring a fresh initiative to the Paris talks, but at the first session he attended, on 6 August 1970, he merely referred to the various proposals put forth by both sides over the previous 18 months. What was required now, the Ambassador said, was an effort to narrow the differences and find a basis for agreement. "I am here," he told the other side, "to discuss all of the proposals we have made both in public and in private as well as to discuss the proposals you have made."[94]

Ambassador Bruce's arrival in Paris did prompt the return of Xuan Thuy and Mrs. Binh to the talks. On 17 September 1970, after a 10-month lapse, the principals of all four parties once again assembled at the table in the Majestic Hotel. On that occasion, Mrs. Binh presented an eight-point PRG solution to the conflict. Her proposals, however, contained nothing new. The PRG still insisted on total withdrawal of US and other non-Vietnamese troops and a coalition government in Saigon. On the issue of the withdrawal deadline, the PRG did relax its position slightly. The US removal of troops must be completed by 30 June 1971; formerly the PRG had allowed only six months. In addition, Mrs. Binh pledged that the Viet Cong would refrain from attacking the withdrawing troops.[95]

Ambassador Bruce initially characterized the Communist proposals as "old wine in new bottles." At the next plenary session, on 24 September, the US Ambassador told

93. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 540-541, 543.
94. Dept of State Bulletin, 24 Aug 70, p. 219.
95. NY Times, 18 Sep 70, 2.

the other side that the eight points represented only rearrangement of earlier proposals and the addition of some detail, but with the basic demands unchanged. He asked for further clarification, but in the following days none was forthcoming from either the PRG or the North Vietnamese delegation.[96]

On 7 October 1970, President Nixon launched the new peace initiative that had been under development since May. His televised address opened with a statement that the set of proposals had been discussed with the Governments of Laos, Cambodia, and the Republic of Vietnam. "All support it," the President said. He then detailed an offer that contained the following elements: a cease-fire in place; an international conference to deal with all of Indochina; the withdrawal of all US forces from Vietnam on an agreed timetable as part of an overall settlement; a political settlement that truly met the aspirations of all South Vietnamese and reflected "the existing relationship of political forces in South Vietnam"; and the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war held by both sides.[97]

By offering a cease-fire in place the United States had now detached that issue entirely from the question of withdrawal. The President said the proposal was put forth without preconditions, but subject to the following general principles: the cease-fire "must be effectively supervised by international observers, as well as by the parties themselves": it should apply to the fighting in all of Indochina; it should halt all types of warfare, including terrorism; and no further outside forces should be infiltrated into any of the states of Indochina under cover of the standstill agreement. Finally, the cease-fire should not occur in isolation, but as part of a general move to end the war. "I ask that this proposal for a cease-fire-in-place be the subject of immediate negotiation," the President said. "And my hope is that it will break the logjam in all the negotiations."

Withdrawal was treated as a separate point. The President introduced it by saying "The third part of our peace initiative has to do with the United States forces in South

96. Dept of State Bulletin, 12 Oct 70, pp. 408-410.
97. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 825-828.

Vietnam." He reviewed the reduction of US troop levels there over the past 20 months and then announced the willingness to withdraw "all our forces" under the terms of a final settlement. Mr. Nixon made no direct reference to the enemy forces in South Vietnam, but a careful reading of his words would reveal that the goal of mutual withdrawal had not been abandoned by the United States. He declared his readiness to negotiate a timetable "for complete withdrawals," as part of a settlement "based on the principles I spelled out previously and the proposals I am making tonight." The President's statement was the first unequivocal acknowledgement that the United States contemplated a total withdrawal of its forces, but it was not the unconditional pledge of such action that the enemy had been demanding.

The President's peace initiative elicited a favorable reaction in the Congress. Both Democrats and Republicans, whether hawks or doves, applauded his effort, and the Senate adopted a resolution of support for the President's "fair and equitable proposal." But response from the enemy was less than enthusiastic. Ambassador Bruce presented the President's proposal at the 86th plenary session of the Paris talks on 8 October. While avoiding outright rejection, Xuan Thuy and Mrs. Binh denounced President Nixon's peace plan as "a maneuver to deceive world opinion." The "absurd" insistence on mutual withdrawal continued to be part of the US position, they noted, and they held fast to their demands for total and immediate US withdrawal and for overthrow of the "puppet" leaders in Saigon. Two days later, on 10 October, the Soviet Union dismissed the President's initiative as "a great fraud" and voiced support for North Vietnam and the PRG. Its spokesman charged that the offered cease-fire would simply freeze "the position of the American interventionists in an alien land."[98]

During October 1970, the United States continued to hope that there might be some move by the other side to negotiate on the President's proposals. Ambassador Bruce repeatedly stressed US flexibility and willingness to compromise, but to no avail. His efforts along this line culminated at the plenary session on 5 November 1970, when he told the

98. NY Times, 9 Oct 70, 1; 11 Oct 70, 1. Dept of State Bulletin, 26 Oct 70, p. 468.

other side: "I have listened carefully to your statement this morning. Unfortunately, you continued to adhere to your habitual formula of self-serving propaganda and preconditions to negotiations." In contrast, the United States had offered proposals that were "not put forth on a take-it-or-leave-it basis" but as a starting point for serious discussion. Whenever the other side was ready to engage in such discussion,it would find the United States responsive and reasonable. The other side, however, was not ready then or in succeeding weeks, and the talks remained stalled throughout the remainder of the year.[99]

The Prisoner of War Issue

The return of prisoners of war was a continuing allied goal in the Paris talks throughout 1969 and 1970. Release of captured personnel was one of the specific objectives of the negotiating strategy paper approved by President Nixon in April 1969, and the United States and the Republic of Vietnam repeatedly called for the exchange of prisoners during 1969. Public concern over the fate of the prisoners mounted in 1970, and the United States and the Republic of Vietnam pursued the matter with increased emphasis in the Paris negotiations. Given the contrast between their own intense interest and the apparent indifference of the other side, the leverage available to the two governments on this issue was slight. Their representatives in Paris sought to build a case on the ground that the matter was one of human decency as well as legal obligation under the 1949 Geneva convention on prisoners of war. This subject, they argued, should be kept distinct from the political and military aspects of the negotiations. The US and RVN delegates reiterated these points at almost every plenary session in 1970, making the issue the sole subject of their presentations on several occasions.[100]

In the hope of achieving at least a partial release of prisoners, Secretary Laird suggested a course of action to the Secretary of State on 31 January 1970. An attempt should be made to persuade President Thieu to offer the

99. Dept of State Bulletin, 23 Nov 70, pp. 652-653.
100. Ibid., 23 Feb 70, pp. 202-204; 20 Apr 70, pp. 726-727; 28 Dec 70, p. 773.

repatriation of a substantial number of NVN personnel held by the Republic of Vietnam. The release, which could be proposed during the approaching Tet period, would be unconditional but the announcement could "imply additional release as a quid pro quo if any sign of reciprocity were shown by the North Vietnamese." Hanoi's leaders then would be faced with three alternatives, the Secretary of Defense reasoned. They could refuse to accept the prisoners, but in doing so they would appear "inhuman both in this country and abroad." Second, they could accept their own men while refusing to release any captured Americans. The public in the United States would be expecting Hanoi to respond on an equal basis; its failure to do so, the Secretary thought, should help to "solidify opinion behind our effort in Vietnam." The final alternative open to the enemy would be to accept their prisoners and release some allied captives or, at the minimum, permit communication with them.[101]

Ambassador Bunker discussed the proposal with President Thieu, but no decision was reached in time for Tet. Subsequently, on 26 March, the head of the RVN delegation in Paris, Ambassador Phan Dan Lam, announced his government's willingness to release 343 sick and wounded detainees. The NVN representatives ignored the offer. At the next plenary session, on 2 April, Mr. Habib told the enemy that all that was required on their part was the simple step of making the necessary arrangements for the repatriation. He charged that the enemy's silence in the face of efforts to open "some meaningful discussion of the treatment and disposition of prisoners of war" showed an utter lack of humanitarian consideration.[102]

In a new approach, RVN Ambassador Lam announced on 11 June 1970 that his government intended to repatriate 62 disabled war prisoners and 24 captured NVN fishermen simply by transporting them by sea to a North Vietnamese area and releasing them. Subsequently, a spokesman for Hanoi indicated that his government would raise no objection since no discussion of repatriation procedures was involved.

101. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 31 Jan 70, Att to JCS 2472/591, 4 Feb 70, JMF 912/170 (31 Jan 70).

102. (S) Msgs, Saigon 2056 and 3824 to State, 11 Feb and 14 Mar 70, JCS IN 22528 and 76512. NY Times, 27 Mar 70, 3. Dept of State Bulletin, 20 Apr 70, pp. 526-527.

On 11 July the prisoners were delivered in VNN shipping to a point off the coast of North Vietnam. Transferred to two junks with Red Cross markings, they reached shore by beaching the vessels.[103]

Meanwhile the Secretaries of Defense and State had been giving thought to further steps beyond this modest exercise. On 11 July 1970, Secretary Laird forwarded to Admiral Moorer a draft State-Defense message for Ambassador Bunker in Saigon proposing a large release of prisoners held by the Republic of Vietnam. This release would be spaced over a period of six months or longer with a goal of generating "sufficient momentum behind the notion of 'prisoner release' to bring irresistible pressure to bear on North Vietnam to return our PWs." Since the proposal involved the possible establishment of a corridor through the DMZ to facilitate the return of the prisoners, the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare a plan for such a corridor.

The draft State-Defense message indicated appreciation of President Thieu's reluctance to release able-bodied men who might return to battle but suggested that the risks would be outweighed by the potential gain. Despite the appearance of giving something for nothing, there could be immediate gains as well. There were grounds for believing that "enemy prisoners will do us more good returned than held." Their departure would relieve the drain on resources involved in managing and caring for prisoners, and it would reduce overcrowding in the camps, lessening the possibility of serious disturbances. A further thought was advanced. The draft message showed an intention to ask Ambassador Bunker for comment on the following question: Might President Thieu's reluctance to release able-bodied prisoners stem from "a belief that US engagement in SEA and support of GVN will be prolonged if US PWs remain in enemy camps and MIA remain unaccounted for?"[104]

103. NY Times, 12 Jul 70, 3. (TS-GP 1) JCS 2472/645-1, 20 Jul 70, JMF 912/170 (11 Jul 70). (S-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. X-53 - X-55.

104. (S-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Establishment of a DMZ Corridor," 11 Jul 70, Att to JCS 2472/645, 13 Jul 70, JMF 912/170 (11 Jul 70).

At JCS direction, CINCPAC prepared the DMZ corridor plan, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted it to the Secretary of Defense on 23 July 1970. They told the Secretary that the plan was feasible for execution provided a local truce could be arranged. In addition, COMUSMACV would need expansion of his current operating authorities in the eastern area of the DMZ to accomplish required tasks both before and during the actual exchange.[105]

No action resulted on the proposed release, nor were there signs in Paris of agreement on any of the issues involved in the prisoner of war question. Lieutenant General Julian J. Ewell, who had replaced General Weyand as the Military Adviser to the US delegation at the Paris talks in June 1970, reported to Admiral Moorer on 31 July that there had been "a little lower level activity" on the prisoner issue but without positive results. There were differences in the interpretation of the matter as set out in the NLF 10 points of May 1969. The enemy claimed that his 10 points provided for disposing of prisoners of war after the conclusion of hostilities. The US delegation maintained that, in the first place, the proposal did not say that, and even if it did, many questions relating to the prisoners needed settling during the war rather than after. General Ewell also referred to the recent RVN release of sick and wounded prisoners. Within the US delegation consideration had been given to other proposals that might provide an effective followup, but the effort was now suspended in anticipation of the new instructions Ambassador Bruce might bring from Washington when he arrived in early August.[106]

Admiral Moorer responded to General Ewell on 14 August, expressing deep concern for the Americans in captivity and stressing the primacy of this issue in the negotiations.

> I would like to have it clearly understood by all military personnel who are in any way related to the negotiations, that I consider early return of our men to be of paramount importance. Their release, in my opinion, should be an essential

105. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 170202Z Jul 70; (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-354-70 to SecDef, 23 Jul 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/645-1, 20 Jul 70; same file.

106. (~~TOUO~~) Ltr, LTG Julian J. Ewell to CJCS, 31 Jul 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam Negotiations, n.d.

prelude to any further military concessions on our part. I would appreciate it if this were to be the tenor of your advice to Ambassador Bruce on this subject.[107]

On 2 September 1970, Secretary Laird renewed his proposal for large-scale prisoner releases. Saying that he wanted a "dramatic sequel" to the return of the sick and wounded North Vietnamese in July, he requested JCS views on how to influence President Thieu and his advisers to move rapidly ahead on an offer to release 500 to 1,000 enemy prisoners, including able-bodied men.[108]

Both General Abrams and Admiral McCain supplied the Joint Chiefs of Staff their views on the Secretary's proposal. The former saw two major obstacles to large releases--President Thieu's opposition to the return of able-bodied North Vietnamese and refusal of the prisoners to be repatriated. He suggested that a new approach to President Thieu might take the form of a proposal to repatriate older prisoners or those longest in captivity, or to arrange for interment of the able-bodied in a neutral country. General Abrams noted that in arranging for the earlier release of 62 sick and wounded prisoners it had been learned that relatively few in this category were willing to accept repatriation prior to the end of hostilities. No effort had yet been made to determine how many able-bodied North Vietnamese would volunteer to leave the prison camps. Responding to a subsidiary question that CINCPAC had raised, General Abrams presented a strong case against resort to forcible repatriation.[109]

Admiral McCain was in substantial agreement with COMUSMACV. While not necessarily favoring forced repatriation, he considered that any program contemplating the return of as many as 1,000 prisoners would inevitably bring that policy question to the fore. To induce President Thieu to offer large-scale repatriation, he suggested that the United States develop a firm plan beforehand, be ready to

107. (S-GP 4) Ltr, CJCS to LTG Julian J. Ewell, 14 Aug 70, same file.
108. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Enemy PW Repatriation," 2 Sep 70, JMF 911/170 (2 Sep 70).
109. (S-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 12133 to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 7 Sep 70, OCJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep-Oct 70.

foot the bill, come to an early decision on whether to use forcible repatriation, and see to it that the Republic of Vietnam received the principal credit in any favorable publicity arising from the operation.[110]

After considering the comments of the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense on 18 September of their support for his desire to secure a sizable repatriation of NVN prisoners held by the Republic of Vietnam. They believed such a release was "needed" and would serve the best interests of US servicemen held captive. They touched briefly on the forcible repatriation question, merely noting that "large-scale release efforts could require an early decision on this policy."

In particular, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended consideration of interning enemy prisoners in a neutral country under the auspices of an international body such as the United Nations or the Red Cross. This approach appeared to meet President Thieu's objections. If successfully implemented, it could generate strong world opinion conducive to similar action by the North Vietnamese, to the ultimate benefit of US prisoners. The Joint Chiefs of Staff thought the internment proposal might offer the opportunity for "a significant breakthrough in this highly perplexing and frustrating situation."[111]

In his 7 October peace initiative, President Nixon called for the immediate release of prisoners held by both sides. He proposed that "all prisoners of war, without exception, be released now to return to the place of their choice." For the first time, he included civilian as well as military prisoners, suggesting that "all journalists and other innocent civilian victims of the conflict be released immediately as well." The United States was ready, he said, to discuss in detail the procedures necessary for rapid completion of the release.[112]

110. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 080310Z Sep 70, same file.
111. (S-GP 4) JCSM-449-70 to SecDef, 18 Sep 70, Encl to JCS 2472/672, 18 Sep 70, JMF 911/170 (2 Sep 70).
112. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, p. 827.

The enemy's subsequent denunciation of all aspects of President Nixon's effort brought forth an angry comment from Ambassador Bruce at the 88th plenary session on 15 October. Tying discussion of prisoners to US acceptance of the enemy's political and military demands was "an unconscionable attempt to use the prisoners and their families as bargaining pawns."[113]

Secretary Laird's idea for a "dramatic step" had lain dormant for several months, but following the President's October initiative he revived his repatriation plan. In a memorandum for the President on 18 November, he expressed the belief that it was essential to keep the October proposals before the enemy and the world and, when feasible, to initiate further actions that would highlight them anew. The prisoner of war situation, he thought, presented such an opportunity. He recommended that the US and RVN delegates in Paris propose to "release all North Vietnamese POWs desiring to return to the North in exchange for the release of all US and Free World POWs held in Indochina and all GVN POWs in North Vietnam." Since the enemy would probably reject the proposal, the allied delegation then should propose the unilateral release of all NVN prisoners who desired to return home. The Secretary suggested that the International Committee of the Red Cross be asked to poll the NVN prisoners to identify the willing returnees; their passage to the North could then be accomplished by opening a corridor through the DMZ. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, he told the President, had already prepared a contingency plan for such a corridor. The Department of State agreed that the objectives being pursued by Secretary Laird were desirable but wished to delay the decision until Ambassador Bunker could join the discussion during a forthcoming visit to Washington.[114]

At the Paris talks three weeks later, on 10 December 1970, the senior RVN delegate and Ambassador Bruce proposed an immediate general exchange of prisoners. Their approach was essentially a reiteration of the last point in the President's 7 October address, since Secretary Laird's phraseology--"all

113. Dept of State Bulletin, 2 Nov 70, pp. 553-556.
114. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Prisoner of War Initiatives," 18 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2095/66, 20 Nov 70, JMF 170 (CY 1970).

North Vietnamese POWs desiring to return"--was not used. Ambassador Bruce pointed out to the other side that this offer gave it the opportunity of securing the release of some 8,000 NVA troops in return for the freeing of far fewer allied prisoners. He suggested that the two sides meet the following morning to discuss specific procedures to implement the proposal.[115]

North Vietnam and the PRG, however, rejected the offer, and for the three remaining meetings of the year, they continued their uncompromising demands that the United States meet their preconditions for serious negotiation. President Thieu, apparently, would not consent to any release of prisoners held by the Republic of Vietnam without assurance of reciprocal action by the enemy, and the allies made no move toward unilateral repatriation. At the final session of the year, on 30 December 1970, Ambassador Bruce reviewed the record and found that Hanoi had consistently ignored appeals to provide the humane treatment of prisoners required by international law. The North Vietnamese had refused to permit inspection of detainee camps or to provide for regular exchange of mail between captives and their families, and the list of prisoners that they had recently furnished was obviously incomplete. By this record, he told the opposing delegates, "you made clearer than ever before that humanitarian considerations counted little with you and that you intended to use the helpless men you hold and their families as political pawns." Thus, at the end of December 1970, the United States was no closer to obtaining the release of its prisoners than it was when the substantive negotiations began two years previously.[116]

Conclusion

As with the prisoner of war question, so it was with all the other negotiating issues. At the conclusion of 1970, the two sides were no nearer a diplomatic settlement than in January 1969.

The primary objective of the United States during the two years of negotiations had been the withdrawal of all external

115. NY Times, 11 Dec 70, 5. Dept of State, Bulletin, 28 Dec 70, p. 773.
116. NY Times, 11 Dec 70, 5. Dept of State Bulletin, 18 Jan 71, pp. 75-77.

forces from South Vietnam and a political settlement decided by the South Vietnamese themselves free of outside interference. Throughout 1969 and in 1970, the United States had invariably insisted on mutual withdrawal of allied and North Vietnamese troops. In President Nixon's latest peace initiative, however, this stand had received only an indirect expression, since his address on 7 October 1970 highlighted the offer of complete withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam on an agreed timetable as part of an overall settlement. Despite the President's avoidance of the term "mutual withdrawal," the enemy delegations in Paris had no difficulty in detecting the unaccented reaffirmation of this principle that his speech contained.

With regard to a political settlement, the United States initially preferred to deal first with such military aspects as cessation of infiltration, restoration of the integrity of the DMZ, and withdrawal, reserving consideration of the post-hostilities political structure in South Vietnam for later. Subsequently, however, it offered to discuss military and political settlements at the same time.

The US negotiating strategy approved in early April 1969 had listed an "eventual" cease-fire as an objective for the Paris talks. For some months there was virtual unanimity within the US Government on the position advocated strongly by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV: no cease-fire should be contracted for that was not contingent upon an agreed and verified mutual withdrawal. By early 1970, however, representatives of the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency in the policy discussions were seeking other, less demanding conditions to be attached to the prospective cease-fire. When it became apparent in early March that President Thieu no longer insisted on NVN withdrawal in connection with a standstill agreement, US policy took a new turn. In his peace initiative of 7 October 1970, President Nixon proposed a cease-fire in place throughout Indochina. And it was no longer to be an "eventual" cease-fire, but a first step that he hoped would "break the logjam in all the negotiations."

Throughout the two years of Paris meetings, however, North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government steadfastly rejected all allied proposals. With unvarying rigidity, they demanded immediate and unconditional US withdrawal from Vietnam without mention of a parallel removal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam, Cambodia, or

Laos. Any political solution, they insisted, must be on their terms. They refused any serious discussion of the political question with the Republic of Vietnam and continually called for the overthrow of President Thieu. Moreover, both North Vietnam and the PRG accused the United States in 1970 of perpetuating the war in South Vietnam, intensifying it in Laos, and expanding it into Cambodia.

Dr. Kissinger had been hopeful that progress could be made in private talks, if not in the plenary sessions. The senior NVN representative did meet secretly with Ambassador Lodge during the spring and summer of 1969, but only to reiterate the uncompromising stands already on record. Thereafter, North Vietnam rebuffed all suggestions for private meetings with the principal US delegate during the remainder of 1969 and throughout 1970. Other unpublicised talks were occurring, however. Since August 1969, Dr. Kissinger had traveled periodically to Paris for secret discussions with the North Vietnamese, though again without achieving any forward movement in the negotiations. Publicly the enemy spokesmen also scorned the idea of a broader peace conference to deal with Indochina as a whole, when it was proposed successively by the French Government, the Djakarta foreign ministers' meeting, the UN Secretary-General, and President Nixon.

After reviewing the futile course of the Paris talks, Ambassador Bruce told the NVN and PRG delegates at the last plenary session of 1970: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a record of serious negotiations."[117] But the Communists, apparently, thought time was on their side and saw no reason to negotiate. They need only wait, they must have concluded, until the United States, wearied of its unproductive insistence on mutual concessions and weakened by rising dissent and disillusionment at home, accepted a settlement of the war on their terms.

Consequently, by the end of 1970, President Nixon had been unable to obtain a negotiated end to the Vietnam war. He had, however, in the first two years of his Administration reversed the ever increasing US commitment to the Southeast Asian conflict that had occurred in the period 1964 through 1968. Upon his assumption of office, President Nixon and his advisers had reassessed US policy in

117. Dept of State Bulletin, 18 Jan 71, pp. 75-77.

Vietnam. Realizing that US public support of the effort was no longer assured and that the United States could no longer afford the financial drain of the war, President Nixon decided to end US involvement in Vietnam. This would be accomplished through negotiations, if possible, or by means of Vietnamization, if necessary. Since the Paris talks brought no success in 1969 or 1970, the President had come to rely on Vietnamization to achieve his goal.

By December 1970, it appeared that the President's policy was succeeding. During 1969 and 1970, the United States withdrew over 205,000 men from Vietnam, and the number of US servicemen killed in action dropped from 14,500 during 1968 to 4,200 in 1970. "We now see the end of Americans' combat role in Vietnam in sight," President Nixon declared at the beginning of 1971.

> We are on the way out and we are on the way out in a way that will bring a just peace . . . that will build, I hope, the foundation for a generation of peace.[118]

In addition, the United States had reduced its air operations in Indochina and was turning over an increasing share of the fighting to the RVN troops. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces assumption of the combat role bore witness to the success of Vietnamization. At the end of 1970, the RVN forces were not only larger but also better equipped and trained than ever before. In addition to the expanded participation in the fighting, the Republic of Vietnam had gained a definite momentum in pacification, exerting a growing control over the countryside and the rural population of South Vietnam.

What the coming year would bring in the negotiations the allies could not foresee at the end of 1970. The enemy appeared to believe that time was on his side, but for him to continue stringing out the negotiations was not without certain risks. The months expended in this way might be the very time necessary for the success of Vietnamization. Conceivably the last US forces might depart, leaving in place RVN forces that were fully capable of preventing North

118. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, p. 7.

Vietnam from imposing its will on the south. Another uncertainty for the enemy was the question of how long the United States would tolerate the indignity of stalemated negotiations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders were united in recommending less restrictive authorities and expanded operations against North Vietnam. Might not the President, exasperated by the lack of progress toward a peaceful settlement, finally come to accept their advice and seek to influence the outcome by military action?

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THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM 1971 - 1973

PART I

By
WILLARD J. WEBB

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

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AUTHORITY

This volume is the final one in a series comprising the official history of the actions and activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff relating to the war in Vietnam. It has been prepared by historians in the Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat in accordance with professional standards of historiography. Since the content of the volume has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is to be construed as descriptive only and not as constituting the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

Harold D. Neeley

HAROLD D. NEELEY
Colonel, USAF
Secretary, JCS

FOREWORD

The series of volumes entitled The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam provides an account of the activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with regard to Vietnam from 1945 to the final withdrawal of US military forces in early 1973. The first volume describes the beginning of the US involvement through the Geneva Conference in 1954, and the second volume carries the story on through 1959. The third volume, in three parts, traces the great expansion of the US commitment resulting in full-scale war in the years 1960-1968. The fourth volume covers the period 1969-1970--the adoption of the policy of Vietnamization and the beginning of the withdrawal of US forces. This, the final volume, in two parts, describes the continuing US withdrawal and the negotiation of a political settlement and concludes with the final withdrawal of all US forces in the period January through March 1973.

This volume was planned and written by Mr. Willard J. Webb, Chief of the Special Projects Branch, with the assistance of Mrs. Helen Bailey, Mr. Lee Nash, and Mr. William Tobin. Mrs. Bailey did the research and wrote initial drafts of Chapters 3, 4, and 6. Mr. Nash did the research and wrote the initial draft of Chapter 1 and did much of the research for Chapter 7. Mr. Tobin did the research and wrote the initial draft of Appendix 1. Final revision and historical editing proceeded under the direction of Dr. Robert J. Watson, Chief of the Historical Division. Mrs. Janet W. Ball, Editorial Assistant, directed all aspects of the final preparation of the manuscript for publication.

Help was received from many sources during the preparation of this volume. The extensive research in the official JCS files that was required would not have been possible without the willing support of Mr. Sigmund Musinski and his staff of the JCS Records and Information Retrieval Branch, Documents Division, and the assistance of Mr. John Knold and Mr. Ross Anderson of the Declassification and Archival Branch, Documents Division. Special thanks are also due to Mr. Amos Good and his staff in the Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Major Robert Kimmet, USA, of the NSC staff for assistance with the records of their respective offices.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

The documentary sources that provide the basis for this history are almost exclusively contemporary with the events described and are found primarily in the master files of the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Other sources included records maintained in the Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in the Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5), Joint Staff. Limited access was granted to the minutes of the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), the crisis management body of the National Security Council, for the period March through August 1972.

The security classification of all information in this volume is derivative. Each paragraph is marked in accordance with the most highly classified source used in that paragraph. Since many of these documents are, in fact, already downgraded in accordance with automatic procedures, the paragraph classifications reflect the actual status of the documents as of 1 January 1979. The classification of the documents cited in the footnotes, however, is the original classification since none of the files for the period of the volume had been formally reviewed for downgrading and declassification.

The security classification of all citations in this volume indicate the applicable downgrading procedure when it was indicated on the original document, and the following brief explanation is provided for the convenience of the reader. All classified JCS documents through May 1972 were marked with a group designation: Group 1, not subject to automatic downgrading or declassification; Group 3, automatically downgraded but

not automatically declassified; and Group 4, automatically downgraded and declassified after 12 years. All citations in the volume indicate the group where it was available. Beginning in June 1972, a new general declassification schedule entered into effect, and all JCS documents, unless specifically exempted, are subject to the following downgrading and declassification schedule: TOP SECRET documents are downgraded at 2 year intervals and declassified after 10 years; SECRET documents are downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL in 2 years and declassified in 8 years; and CONFIDENTIAL documents are declassified in 6 years. All documents cited in this volume dated in June 1972 and thereafter and that have no indication other than the basic security designation are subject to the general declassification schedule. Those exempted from automatic downgrading and declassification are indicated in the citations by an "EX" following the classificatin, e.g. "(S-EX)."

With regard to the citation of command histories, the classification preceding the title is that for the entire volume. That following the title and preceding the page numbers is the classification of the information actually used when it differs from the overall classification, e.g. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. V-11.

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INTRODUCTION

(U) As the year 1971 began, the US involvement in Vietnam was over twenty years old and US troops had been fighting there for more than six years. To that point, 44,249 members of the US armed forces had lost their lives in hostile action in a war that had cost the United States an estimated $104.4 billion.* Moreover, the war had stirred great political dissent at home and reaped public criticism of the United States around the world from friends and enemies alike.

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff had participated in the decisions on Vietnam from the very start of the US commitment. At each stage in the deepening involvement, they gave the Secretary of Defense and the President their opinions and recommendations and, once the combat phase began, they directed the operations. But the ultimate objective in Vietnam was a political one and, in the final decisions, political rather than military factors prevailed. This was true not only in the period when the United States gave only assistance and advice but subsequently when the United States was engaged in ground and air combat in Vietnam.

(U) The US commitment in Vietnam dated back to 1950 when the United States began a program of economic and military aid for Indochina. The military portion was

*The casualty figure is from (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. F-14. The cost figure is the estimated "full costs" for the six year period 1965-1970 from (U) DOD Comptroller, The Economics of Defense Spending, A Look at the Realities, July 1972, p. 149.

channeled through the French to assist in building indigenous Indochinese forces to oppose the communist-controlled Viet Minh who were fighting to oust the French from Indochina. President Truman and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had hoped this aid would prevent Indochina from falling under communist domination. The initial contingent of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), consisting of 38 US Army, Navy, and Air Force officers and men, arrived in Vietnam during August 1950.

(U) Despite the US assistance, the French position in Indochina deteriorated during the next several years. An international conference of concerned nations meeting in Geneva considered the Indochina problem during the spring and early summer of 1954. The resulting Accords, signed on 20 July 1954, confirmed the independence of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which France had already granted, and provided for an end to hostilities throughout all three Indochinese states. With regard to Vietnam, the Geneva Accords divided the country along the 17th Parallel with the Viet Minh regrouping to the north and the French forces to the south. No new foreign military personnel or equipment would be introduced into Vietnam and an International Control Commission would ensure compliance. Further, the question of a final political settlement for all of Vietnam was to be resolved by internationally-supervised elections two years hence. The United States did not sign the Accords, but did pledge to respect them.

(U) The Geneva Accords ended the French control of Indochina. Thereafter, in Vietnam, pro-Western factions formed the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) below the 17th Parallel under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem while, to the north, the Viet Minh established the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam headed by Ho Chi Minh. But the communists did not abandon their objective of taking over all of Vietnam, and the insurgents remained active in the south. As a consequence, the provisions of the Geneva Accords for political settlement in Vietnam were never implemented, and Vietnam remained divided. The United States provided the Republic of Vietnam military assistance under the terms of the Accords. The objective was to build an indigenous South Vietnamese armed force that could meet both the continuing internal insurgency and the external threat from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

(U) The latter years of the decade of the 1950s brought a period of relative calm to Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam appeared to be succeeding in controlling the communist insurgency. But beneath this calm, the insurgents, now called the Viet Cong, were carefully organizing and planning and by 1957 had launched a campaign of terrorism and subversion. Encouraged and supported by Ho Chi Minh and his government to the north, the Viet Cong slowly, but steadily, increased their activities and were ready for full-scale warfare against the Republic of Vietnam by the beginning of 1960. Evidence of this turn of events came in January 1960 when the Viet Cong successfully attacked a RVN regimental command post in Tay Ninh.

(U) In the succeeding months, the Viet Cong pressed ahead with their campaign and the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. The Geneva Accords had restricted the presence of foreign military personnel in Vietnam and, to this stage, the United States had meticulously limited the number of military advisers sent to Vietnam. Now, however, the United States increased military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam, supplying additional equipment and more advisers, and soon all pretense of compliance with the Geneva restrictions was abandoned.

(U) Still the military situation deteriorated and, in November 1961, President Kennedy approved greatly expanded assistance for South Vietnam on condition that President Diem would carry out various internal political and social reforms. Specifically, the United States undertook actions to increase the airlift available to the South Vietnamese, to improve air reconnaissance and air-ground support, to supply better coastal surveillance and control, to enhance the RVN intelligence capabilities, and to train paramilitary forces. Although no US combat forces were involved, US advisers, for the first time, began to accompany RVN forces on combat missions. Consequently, the United States experienced the first casualties as the result of hostile action in Vietnam in 1961.

(U) The President's November 1961 decisions governed the pattern of US involvement in Vietnam well into 1963, and the United States sent vast quantities of materiel and increasing numbers of US advisers. The rapidly expanding US presence in Vietnam required revised command arrangements, and on 8 February 1962

the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV), replaced the MAAG. The new organization was a subordinate unified command under the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), who in turn reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the new commander, COMUSMACV, exercised operational command over all US military forces in Vietnam.

(U) President Diem never carried out the promised internal reforms, and any military progress achieved in South Vietnam by 1963 was dissipated by the growing political turmoil and opposition to Ngo Dinh Diem. The dissatisfaction culminated in a coup and the assassination of the South Vietnamese President on 1 November 1963, but the removal of Diem did not bring political stability to the Republic of Vietnam. The Viet Cong took advantage of the situation, increasing military activity throughout South Vietnam, and North Vietnam stepped up assistance to the insurgents in the south.

(U) To meet the worsening situation, the United States augmented existing efforts and undertook additional ones during the early months of 1964 to assist the Republic of Vietnam. Specifically included was support for the South Vietnamese pacification program to win control of the countryside. It was at this point that the United States began to consider possible retaliatory action, including air strikes, against North Vietnam.

(U) General William C. Westmoreland, USA, who became COMUSMACV on 20 June 1964, immediately requested almost 5,000 additional forces and more cargo aircraft and helicopters to give the RVN forces increased logistics and airlift support. The request was quickly approved with the added troops arriving in Vietnam during the period August 1964 through February 1965. When the movement was complete, the United States had more than 23,000 men in Vietnam.

(U) Meantime, on 2 August 1964, and again two days later, North Vietnamese patrol craft had attacked US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam. In retaliation, the United States carried out air strikes against targets in North Vietnam. In further reaction to the North Vietnamese attacks, President Johnson asked the Congress for and received, with only two dissenting votes, authority "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."

(U) During the fall of 1964, political instability in South Vietnam continued and the Viet Cong showed no letup in their drive to take over the country. A Viet Cong attack on 1 November on Bien Hoa Air Base outside of Saigon, which killed four US servicemen and wounded 72 more, brought an immediate recommendation by the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for reprisals against North Vietnam. President Johnson did not approve such action, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC proceeded with plans for both retaliatory strikes and an extended air campaign against North Vietnam to check the continuing flow of war materiel to the south.

(U) By the beginning of 1965, the communists seemed headed toward victory in South Vietnam. Political turmoil hindered the effectiveness of the Republic of Vietnam, and the Viet Cong clearly held the initiative. They controlled one quarter of the population and half of the territory of South Vietnam. No longer restricting themselves to hit-and-run tactics, they were beginning to operate in regiment-size forces, portending a more intense phase of the war. Materiel support of the Viet Cong flowed in by land and sea from the north in increasing quantities, and captured

documents and other sources indicated that policy direction and strategy came from Hanoi as well. Moreover, by January 1965, though still undetected by the US and South Vietnamese forces, regular North Vietnamese units were in the south for the first time. Clearly, stronger action would be needed if South Vietnam was to be prevented from falling under communist domination.

(U) On 7 February 1965, the Viet Cong shelled a US adviser compound and airfield at Pleiku, killing eight US military personnel, wounding 108 others, and destroying 20 US aircraft. This time a JCS recommendation for reprisal was heeded, and the United States responded with air strikes in the lower portion of North Vietnam, the movement of a HAWK missile battalion to Vietnam, and the evacuation of all US dependents from Vietnam. Another Viet Cong attack against a US installation at Qui Nhon three days later brought the US decision for a sustained bombing campaign against the north. After several delays, regular bombing of North Vietnam began on 2 March 1965. Nicknamed ROLLING THUNDER, the initial missions were against military targets in the southern portion of North Vietnam.

(U) Facing the threat of continuing Viet Cong attack of US installations, as well as possible North Vietnamese reprisals against the ROLLING THUNDER bombing, General Westmoreland wanted US combat troops to protect US personnel and installations. Accordingly, in mid-February 1965, the United States began deployment of combat forces to Vietnam. In the following several months, both US Marine Corps and Army troops were sent, raising the US force level in Vietnam to more than 50,000 men by early June. In July, further deployments were approved to provide a force of approximately

187,000 men by the end of the year. Accompanying this buildup came the decision to commit US forces to combat operations in South Vietnam. As early as 22 April 1965, a small patrol of US Marines and RVN troops engaged in a fire fight with the Viet Cong near Da Nang and by June US forces were regularly participating in search and destroy missions.

(U) From mid-1965 through early 1968, the United States waged a full-scale war in South Vietnam and a gradually expanding air campaign against the north. In that period, US troops strength rose to almost 500,000 men and the ROLLING THUNDER bombing grew from initial strikes against military targets in the lower part of North Vietnam to unlimited bombing throughout the entire country except for prohibited areas around Hanoi and Haiphong and a buffer zone along the Chinese border. During these years, the United States followed a policy of gradualism with the escalation proceeding in steps. At each one the President, usually against the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, limited the US commitment only to decide some months later that additional US forces or expanded bombing, or both, were needed to force the enemy to cease his aggression. But, by the time these actions were implemented, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had similarly increased their strength.

(U) Nonetheless, the military situation in South Vietnam by the beginning of 1968 had been turned around. The US and South Vietnamese forces now held the initiative. They had pushed enemy main forces back to border areas, and enemy control of the population and territory had been slowly but steadily reduced. Even so, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese showed no readiness to give up the struggle. Both public and

private peace initiatives by the United States had been bluntly rejected in the years 1965 through 1967.

(U) Dramatic evidence of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese determination came in February 1968. During the Tet holiday, enemy forces launched massive surprise attacks throughout South Vietnam. The offensive was quickly repulsed at great cost to the enemy, but the sudden show of enemy strength, combined with the shock the offensive engendered in the United States and around the world, proved a psychological victory for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Public disenchantment in the United States with the war, which had grown steadily as the US combat involvement increased, reached new heights.

(U) President Johnson now decided on a major change in US policy. In late March 1968, he halted further large troop deployments to South Vietnam, limited the bombing of North Vietnam, and called for negotiations to end the war. Further, to preclude his quest for peace from becoming involved in th forthcoming US presidential campaign, President Johnson decided not to seek reelection. Accordingly, the bombing of North Vietnam was restricted to the area below 20° north and the United States and North Vietnam began talks in Paris in May. The talks quickly deadlocked on procedural matters, and in a further effort to stimulate meaningful negotiations, President Johnson suspended all bombing of North Vietnam on 31 October 1968, five days before the US presidential election. At that time, he also announced the expansion of the talks to include both the Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF), the political arm of the Viet Cong.

(U) Richard Nixon assumed the presidency in January 1969 convinced that the United States must end its involvement in Vietnam. The ever spiraling expenditures required by the US presence there were needed for other programs and the American public no longer supported the war. The one question, and a major one, was how to to withdraw from Vietnam without sacrificing South Vietnam to communist domination. President Nixon decided upon a two-faceted approach: the United States would proceed with negotiations in the hope of reaching a political agreement; failing that, the United States would rely on Vietnamization--building up the South Vietnamese forces to assume the combat responsibility while gradually withdrawing US military forces. Accompanying this policy decision came a slight, but subtle, change in the US objective in South Vietnam. No longer did the United States call for defeat of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese aggression and attainment of a "stable non-communist government" in South Vietnam. Rather the United States now sought the "opportunity" for the South Vietnamese to determine their own political future free from "outside interference."

(U) In implementation of this new policy, the United States proceeded with the Paris talks throughout 1969 and 1970 and made several secret initiatives as well, but North Vietnam showed little interest in a negotiated settlement. Consequently, the United States moved forward with Vietnamization. Improvement of the South Vietnamese forces was accelerated and, in July 1969, the United States began the first withdrawal of forces and had removed slightly more than 205,000 by the end of 1970.

(U) Now, at the beginning of 1971, the United States was well on the way to reducing its combat involvement in Vietnam. In the months ahead, the United States

would undoubtedly proceed with the negotiations and, in the absence of a political agreement, would press on with improvement of the RVN forces while continuing its troop withdrawals. But despite the reduction of forces, the United States was no nearer to ending the fighting or achieving free choice for the people of South Vietnam to decide their own future than when the combat commitment was undertaken. The enemy was, apparently, willing and ready to carry on the war as long as necessary to achieve his goals. Obviously, something was needed to dissuade him from prolonging the fighting. One possibility was action to stem the continuing flow of supplies from North Vietnam. Since a return to the bombing of North Vietnam was unlikely for political reasons, there was the alternative of destroying the supplies as they moved through Laos and Cambodia. This had been the purpose of the US and RVN invasion of Cambodia during May and June 1970, and some sort of similar operation into Laos was a prospect in the coming months.

CHAPTER 1

LAMSON 719: GROUND ATTACK ON THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL

(U) One of the many factors that made the war in Southeast Asia so difficult and frustrating was the lack of defensible borders throughout the area. Consequently it was relatively easy for communist forces from North Vietnam to penetrate South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in a number of places to deliver supplies and reinforcements to the Viet Cong (VC) and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

(~~S~~) During much of the US involvement in the war in Indochina, the North Vietnamese used three major lines of communication (LOC) to support their forces in the Republic of Vietnam. From October 1966 to January 1970, communist forces relied heavily on the port of Kompong Som (Sihanoukville) to bring supplies through Cambodia into the southern part of RVN. This supply route was closed with the establishment of Lon Nol government in March 1970. A second major LOC ran from ports in North Vietnam down the South China Sea to many points on the South Vietnamese coast, but by the fall of 1970, MARKET TIME operations had effectively interdicted this sampan-borne source of supply. The one vital link left in 1971 between enemy troops in the south and resupply from the north was their mountain trail network through the Laotian panhandle.[1]

(~~S~~) Although it was called the Ho Chi Minh Trail, this supply route was in fact a spidery, ever-changing,

1. (~~S~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9125 to CINCPAC, 301347Z Jan 71, JCS IN 74184.

network of paths and primitive roads, which extended from North Vietnam (NVN) through southern Laos into South Vietnam and Cambodia. The Ban Karai and Mu Gia passes were two important entry points for the trail into Laos. From there supplies moved southward by many different routes, under the cover of dense tropical foliage, to the first large base area in Laos, Base Area 604, near the village of Tchepone, located about 40 kilometers west of the South Vietnamese border on the old French Route 9. Supplies from Base Area 604 then moved southeast into Base Area 611 or south to Base Area 612 near Saravane, or to other large depots, and from there into South Vietnam and Cambodia.[2]

(S) With the closing of the ports in Cambodia, it became evident that the enemy intended to step up the use of the routes through Laos. During the spring of 1970, the communist forces intensifed military activity in southern Laos, seizing Attopeu and Saravane and threatening the pro-government guerrilla forces holding the Bolovens plateau, apparently with the intention of making use of additional routes farther west of the border of South Vietnam. In the north, fighting was inconclusive as usual, but the enemy's intention to make greater use of the Laotian supply line was shown by a southward shift of supplies within North Vietnam, evidently in order to build up stock-piles from which to support a "crash" logistical campaign. In September the enemy began repairing the roads leading from southern North Vietnam to the base areas of northern Laos. Bulldozers and work crews were seen at Ban Karai pass and at Tchepone. To staunch the

2. (S) Ibid. NY Times, 5 Feb 71, 11.

flow of supplies down the trail, a US air interdiction program, COMMANDO HUNT V, began on 10 October, with planes striking targets just west of the passes leading from NVN into Laos. This program reduced the flow of supplies southward, and the movement of trucks in the Laotian panhandle fell below the 1969 rate. But more than air power was needed to close the trail.[3]

Planning for a Cross-Border Operation

(TS) A ground operation against the Ho Chi Minh Trail began to take shape in November 1970, when Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked CINCPAC to provide a plan to meet possible major enemy efforts in Indochina, including the Laotian panhandle, over the next six months. CINCPAC (Admiral John S. McCain, Jr. USN) replied that in Laos the enemy was planning to reopen and expand his supply routes to Cambodia and RVN. The NVA had already resumed use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and CINCPAC anticipated a massive dry season logistics effort during the next six months. He offered two plans to counteract these enemy efforts. The first consisted of coordinated operations between Laotian, Thai, and South Vietnamese forces, operating inside their own national boundaries, to destroy the enemy and prevent him from expanding his supply capability in Laos. The second was contingent upon the degree to which the Royal Laotian Government observed the 1962 Geneva Accords that had established the neutrality of Laos. If the Laotian government was willing to "denounce and abrogate" the Accords, then CINCPAC called for a

3. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9125 to CINCPAC, 301334Z Jan 71, JCS IN 74184. (S NOFORN-GP 1). COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. III-105, III-214 - III-227.

combined operation by the Royal Laotian and Royal Thai Governments together with South Vietnamese forces inside the Laotian panhandle to cut the trail and destroy enemy security forces in the eastern sector of southern Laos.[4]

(~~TS~~) Available documents do not indicate how CINCPAC's two plans were received in Washington. It appears, however, that the plan for a Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) operation into Laos, despite its political delicacy, was tentatively approved. Early in December CINCPAC asked General Creighton W. Abrams, USA, COMUSMACV, to start planning in coordination with General Cao Van Vien, Chairman of the Joint General Staff, for major Republic of Vietnam Army (ARVN) ground operations into the Laotian panhandle with maximum US air support. The plan COMUSMACV submitted to CINCPAC provided for

> a coordinated air-ground attack . . . to sever the enemy LOC at Tchepone . . . and deny to the enemy the logistic corridor vital for continued prosecution of the war in RVN, Cambodia, and the southern Laos panhandle areas. A multi-regimental task force will attack to seize the Tchepone area, conduct operations within Base Area 604 to destroy enemy stockpiles and facilities and block major routes both north and south of the Tchepone area.

(~~TS~~) The COMUSMACV plan called for an operation of four phases, lasting approximately three months and terminating during "the monsoon transitional period." Phase I, consisting of preparatory operations, would take place entirely within South Vietnam. United States ground forces would participate by

4. (~~TS~~) Msg, CJCS 15006 to CINCPAC, 071926Z Nov 70. (~~TS~~) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 100556Z Nov 70.

securing a forward operating base and airfield in western Quang Tri Province from which to support RVN operations in Laos. During Phase II the RVNAF task force would enter Laos and seize Tchepone, supported by all available tactical air, gunships, flak suppression missions and artillery. ARC LIGHT (B-52) saturation bombing missions would be conducted in Base Area 611 and both north and south of Tchepone in Base Area 604. In Phase III RVNAF forces would destroy enemy forces, stockpiles, pipelines, and facilities. Phase IV, the withdrawal, would be conducted either along Route 9 or by new attacks to the southeast into Base Area 611. During this last phase, "stay-behind" guerrillas and other forces would be inserted into Laos to hamper the enemy's efforts to rebuild his logistic structure. No US ground forces were to be used inside Laos, but helicopter troop and cargo lift and helicopter gunship support would be provided as needed. General Abrams thought these proposed operations, "striking at the heart of the logistic/infiltration network in the Laos panhandle, would substantially disrupt the enemy timetable for 1971 and significantly impact on his effort in 1972."[5]

(C) Admiral McCain wholeheartedly endorsed the plan. "It offers," he told Admiral Moorer on 15 December 1970, "an excellent opportunity to strike the enemy where he least expects it, to destroy his resupply effort at the heart of the system and establish a blockade across the land and river routes that have heretofore been untouchable on the ground."[6]

5. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 15808 to CINCPAC, 120952Z Dec 70.
6. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 150236Z Dec 70.

MAP 1

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. E-18.

(TS) The plan for the Laotian operation was discussed in the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), together with a possible RVNAF attack into Cambodia against enemy base areas in the Chup Plantation area and special operations against North Vietnam. President Nixon concurred in general terms with the Laotian action, directing appropriate planning to continue, and both Nguyen Van Thieu, President of the Republic of Vietnam, and General Vien had approved the plan by early January 1971. Consequently, on 4 January, Admiral Moorer requested Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird to approve the operation. He noted that, as US troop strength and air assets decreased, the RVNAF would be increasingly committed to security within South Vietnam. "Hence, this may be the last opportunity available to the RVNAF for a cross-border, dry season operation" into the Tchepone logistics hub.[7]

(TS) During a trip to South Vietnam, Secretary Laird met on 11 January 1971 with President Thieu, who told him that a military operation in the Laotian panhandle would shorten the war. President Thieu's only reservations dealt with the public justification, and he was especially concerned that Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma not appear to disapprove of or reject the proposed RVNAF actions.[8]

(TS) A COMUSMACV briefing team explained the Tchepone operation to Washington planners on 18 January, and the Chairman again asked the Secretary

7. (TS) CM-488-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71. (TS-GP 1) SM-449-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71.

8. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1958 to COMUSMACV, 210105Z Jan 71.

of Defense to approve the plan, which he called "pivotal" for current dry season contingency operations in Southeast Asia. The Secretary gave his approval on 19 January 1971 provided no US ground personnel were employed outside South Vietnam and so long as no ARC LIGHT missions were flown north of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL) in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) or in North Vietnam. Admiral Moorer then informed CINCPAC that "the concepts for and outline of the Tchepone Operation have been reviewed and concurrence with RVNAF execution is granted."[9]

(~~TS~~) The issue of Laotian approval for the Tchepone operation was a difficult diplomatic question. Premier Souvanna Phouma's public position on the proposed ARVN operation would have to be based on careful consideration of his own position relative to the 1962 Geneva Accords as well as possible North Vietnamese and Chinese reactions. Secretary of State William P. Rogers had given specific instruction to Ambassador George M. Godley on how to approach Souvanna Phouma to prevent his public disapproval of the operation. But when Souvanna Phouma was told of the upcoming ARVN operation in the Laotian panhandle, instead of giving approval, he wanted to know why the operations were not

9. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-516-71 to SecDef, 19 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1475 to CINCPAC, 192121Z Jan 71. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not as a body formally review or concur in the Tchepone operation, the Chairman furnished each of them with copies of the relevant documents. There is no reason to assume that this operation, or others like it, was approved by the Secretary of Defense without the knowledge and tacit approval of all of them.

planned for the tri-border areas and the highlands south of Route 110. Moreover, he was concerned about the duration of the operation, and he said the size of the ARVN force would cause him great difficulty within Laos because of the reported excesses of the SVN troops in Cambodia. He concluded that he must publicly protest the operation, and he would expect the South Vietnamese to withdraw within a week or two. He feared that if he did not vigorously protest, then the Chinese would act in the north.[10]

(~~TS~~) Because of Souvanna Phouma's reaction coupled with opposition from the Department of State, a number of questions were raised in Washington about the Laotian invasion. As Admiral Moorer related to CINCPAC on 26 January, these included: could the ARVN conduct the thrust without US helicopters and what was the latest date that the operation could be cancelled without entering Laos? The thinking behind the second question was that planning might continue for Phase I pending a final decision on the actual crossing into Laos. The President definitely wanted to go ahead with the Chup Plantation operation in Cambodia, but wanted to know what "we can do" in northern Cambodia if the Tchepone plan was not carried out. Admiral Moorer responded that a Tchepone operation was superior to any action further south. The President agreed "from a military point of view" but then asked: "If you compare a northern Cambodian operation not to Tchepone

10 (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, USecState to Dr. Kissinger, "ARVN Operations with Tchepone," 22 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2075 to CINCPAC, 262240Z Jan 71.

but to nothing, which do you prefer?" Admiral Moorer sought the comments of the field commanders on this question.[11]

(TS) In view of Souvanna Phouma's attitudes, General Abrams recommended cancellation of the Laotian operation on 27 January and opposed substitute ones elsewhere because they would be of no more than nuisance value. There was no point, he said, in continuing preparations for Phase I any longer, and he was planning to cancel them on 290200Z January 1971. He continued to emphasize, however, the importance of Tchepone to the enemy. "North Vietnam is almost totally dependent on the LOC network in Laos for movement of men and materiel into RVN, southern Laos, and Cambodia," he advised CINCPAC, and "almost all the LOC's network pass [sic] through the Tchepone area." Admiral McCain endorsed the recommendation for cancellation although he noted that only a ground campaign could permanently disrupt NVA LOCs in southern Laos. "Thus if it is to be U.S. policy to support the 1962 agreement on Laos and not to support ARVN operations in southern Laos we must accept that . . . NVN will be capable of supporting NVA/VC forces in SVN and Cambodia for an indefinite period of insurgency and low intensity combat," he concluded.[12]

(TS) Admiral Moorer acknowledged the field commanders' comments immediately on 27 January, stating that the problem with regard to the Laotian operation" is primarily a political one." "We are working

11. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2075 to CINCPAC, 262240Z Jan 71.

12. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, COMUSMACV 9103 and 9106 to CINCPAC, 270620Z and 271145Z Jan 71, JCS IN 64715 and 65507. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 271153Z Jan 71, JCS IN 65273.

hard on the problem," he continued, requesting further views based "on military considerations alone." He asked for a prompt reply for use in a meeting with the President that same afternoon. On that basis, COMUSMACV gave unqualified support to the operation, and CINCPAC called it "an exceptional opportunity to inflict the maximum damage against enemy personnel, materiel, and psychological posture."[13]

(~~TS~~) The President met with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of the Central Intelligence, and the Chairman on the afternoon of 27 January to discuss proposed ARVN operations in Cambodia and Laos. All of them fully supported the Chup Plantation operation in Cambodia, but opinions remained divided on the proposed Tchepone operation. The Secretary of State pointed out that there would be an impact on the Laotian political situation that could affect the survivability of Souvanna Phouma; Chinese reactions might be triggered; and an unsuccessful operation would influence the South Vietnamese elections. In addition, he feared an uproar in Congress and the press. The Secretary of Defense and the Chairman held, on the contrary, that "great benefit would accrue from the success of the Tchepone Operation." The President ordered that all actions connected with Phase I proceed. Regarding subsequent phases, he withheld his decision, though he made it clear that any cancellation of these must come from Washington.[14]

13. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2126 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 271421Z Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9108 to CINCPAC, 271550Z Jan 71, JCS IN 65670. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 271644Z Jan 71, JCS IN 65787.

14. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2225 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 280125Z Jan 71. (According to Richard Nixon in

(~~TS~~) Secretary Laird again asked the Chairman for possible alternatives to the Laotian incursion. The Chairman told him on 29 January that there was "no direct substitute for the Tchepone Operation in terms of anticipated results and effect on the enemy," but he did submit a list of possible alternative proposals, including additional operations in northeast Cambodia and Special Guerrilla Unit operations in Laos, together with the augmentation of current and approved operations. Two days later the Chairman gave the Secretary another list of options, which included extensive CIA participation. But his opinion was the same: there was no substitute for the execution of the Tchepone operation.[15]

(~~TS~~) Just before Phase I was scheduled to begin, "high level interest" was expressed about the danger of increased US casualties resulting from the planned operation. Admiral Moorer passed this concern to the field, and General Abrams replied that he expected only a slight increase in US casualties "in view of the limited enemy capacity in the area at this time and the limited scope of the mission assigned to the US force."[16]

his Memoirs, p. 498, he authorized "a major military operation to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail by attacking enemy forces in Laos" at a meeting on 18 January 1971 with Admiral Moorer, Secretary Laird, and others. No other record of such a meeting or such clear-cut approval was found in the official files available at the time this account was prepared.)

15. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-544-71 to SecDef, 29 Jan 71; (~~TS~~GP 1) CM-549-71 to SecDef, 31 Jan 71; CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71.

16. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2550 to CINCPAC, 300100Z Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9132 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 310610Z Jan 71, JCS IN 75671.

(~~TS~~) Still the decision to cross the border into Laos was delayed. In accordance with President Nixon's authorization on 27 January Phase I, to secure an operating base in South Vietnam, began on 30 January, while discussions on the military and political ramifications of moving into Laos continued among President Nixon and his advisers. Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC assured the Chairman that Phase II could still begin by 8 February and neither recommended delaying it. Finally, on 4 February, the Chairman authorized US support of the RVNAF in Phase II and later phases extending through 5 April so that the move into Laos could continue on schedule. The operation was subsequently named LAMSON 719.[17]

(~~TS~~) In light of recent public statements that no US personnel operated inside Laos, the Secretary of Defense was particularly anxious that no US ground combat troops take part in the Laotian operation. To avoid even the appearance of such participation, Mr. Laird decided on removal of the very few US personnel carrying out reconnaissance intelligence collection, or exploitation operations in Laos as part of the PRAIRIE FIRE anti-infiltration effort. The Chairman ordered their extraction from Laos by the beginning of Phase II, and all had been removed by 7 February.[18]

17. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2927 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 012313Z Feb 71, JCS IN 80628. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9158 to CINCPAC, 020830Z Feb 71, JCS IN 80628. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 021255Z Feb 71, JCS IN 81073. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3106 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 022238Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3244 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 041600Z Feb 71.

18. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3360 to CINCPAC, 052332Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 060242Z Feb 71, JCS IN 93322. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9200 to CINCPAC, 070817Z Feb 71, JCS IN 95986.

Deteriorating Press Relations

(~~TS~~) In the meantime, late in January, General Abrams proposed a measure that strained the never very cordial relations with the press corps in South Vietnam. He believed that the beginnings of Phase I of the Laotian operation would "cause press speculation and misinformation" and endanger the security of the entire action. Therefore he suggested a news embargo of the Tchepone operation until significant contact was established by the ARVN in Phase II. He also proposed positive action in the form of "a complete briefing" on 29 January to inform the press of the rationale for the operation. The briefing would explain the importance of cutting enemy supply lines and emphasize the limited nature of the incursion. He thought that "by taking the US press into our confidence, we have a better chance of the story holding until we can lift the embargo."[19]

(~~TS~~) Admiral McCain endorsed both the embargo and the briefing for the press. He himself had been concerned over a muckraking tendency in the US press, which he feared would promote additional Congressional restrictions on operations in Southeast Asia and have an unfavorable impact on the military budget. The press would obtain information of a cross-border operation of this scale in any event, whether briefed or not, he argued, and he thought the briefing would be "a major factor in increasing the probability that the media obeserves the embargo."[20]

19. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 0775 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 240802Z Jan 71.
20. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 260143Z Jan 71, JCS IN 62020.

(~~TS~~) Admiral Moorer aproved COMUSMACV's approach for dealing with the press and COMUSMACV announced to the press corps on 29 January that:

> All military operations in MR 1 are embargoed immediately except for those operations contained in the MACV daily release. . . . The embargo will remain in effect until further notice and will be lifted as soon as military security permits. Your cooperation is solicited. This announcement constitutes part of the embargo and is not for publication.

Shortly thereafter, officers of COMUSMACV's headquarters briefed the press. After describing the enemy infiltration system and explaining the rationale for the operation, the briefing officers outlined the actions planned in Phase I. They said that US and ARVN troops would secure Route 9 and then conduct operations north and south to destroy enemy forces and supplies. No mention was made, however, of Tchepone or the ARVN push into Laos. The briefers promised every cooperation in covering the action once the embargo was lifted and cautioned that "security and surprise" were critical to the success of the operation.[21]

(U) The press reaction was immediate and might, perhaps, have been predicted. General Abrams' hopes for press cooperation in holding the story were disappointed. The New York Times on 31 January 1971 quoted a London Observer article about the news embargo and linked it with "speculation" that South Vietnamese troops had invaded Laos.[22]

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21. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2394 to CINCPAC, 290148Z Jan 71. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUCMACV 9118 to CINCPAC, 291130Z Jan 71. (~~S~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9125 to CINCPAC, 301347Z Jan 71, JCS IN 74184.

22. NY Times, 31 Jan 71, 1.

(TS) Moreover, with the institution of the embargo in Vietnam, reporters turned to sources in Washington for information. The pressure grew so strong that on 30 January Admiral Moorer asked General Abrams about the possibility of a partial lifting of the embargo. The field commander was opposed, considering it "absolutely imperative for the safety and security of this command and the success of operations underway that the strict embargo as now in effect be held." He wanted to maintain this censorship until substantial contact had been made with the enemy in Laos, and no immediate change was made in the handling of press coverage of LAMSON 719.[23]

(U) Nevertheless, the press persisted in prying information out of Washington officials. One example was a report by Marvin Kalb of CBS news on 2 February who cited "reliable sources" as follows:

> The current operation involves overall 25,000 South Vietnamese troops and 9,000 American troops all supported by massive U.S. air power. The initial military objective is said to be the clearing of Highway 9 running east to west across the northern part of Vietnam. Both American and South Vietnamese soldiers are fighting in this part of the operation. Then the South Vietnamese are supposed to continue along Highway 9 into Laos towards the communist controlled town of Sepone (Tchepone), a focal point for North Vietnamese men and supplies moving

23. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2614 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 300526Z Jan 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9122 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 300820Z Jan 71, JCS IN 73289. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2634 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 300947Z Jan 71.

> from north to south. . . . President Nixon under Pentagon pressure gave his final approval last Wednesday [27 January].[24]

(S) In view of these developments, it became evident to the Washington Special Actions Group that the censorship could not last much longer. In extended discussions on 3 February, Admiral Moorer presented COMUSMACV's position, but the other members of the Group felt that the embargo had become unmanageable and unproductive. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer directed General Abrams to lift news blackout at 1630 Saigon time on 4 February (040830Z). President Thieu concurred and the embargo was removed as directed.[25]

(TS) Even then the reporters' problems were not over. In contrast to the almost unlimited mobility given them by travel aboard US military craft within the borders of RVN, the press was dependent in Laos on the far less numerous Vietnamese helicopters operating in support of ARVN troops in LAMSON 719. Finally, with Secretary of Defense approval, COMUSMACV authorized newsmen on 23 February to fly aboard AC-119 and AC-130 gunships over Laos. He also set aside one of the US helicopters dedicated to supporting the ARVN for US press use with the ARVN supplying English-speaking escort officers. These measures fell short of the

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24 (C-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3099 to COMUSMACV 022217Z Feb 71.

25. (TS) Msg, JCS 3224 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 040106Z Feb 71. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9170 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 040432Z Feb 71, JCS IN 86155. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV 9174 to CINCPAC, 041030Z Feb 71, JCS IN 86992.

freedom allowed inside South Vietnamese borders but did give the newsmen an opportunity to follow operations in Laos.[26]

Operation DEWEY CANYON II

(TS) While the decisions on the Laotian incursion were still being formulated in Washington, the Chairman urged CINCPAC to "drive ahead with Phase One actions on schedule. We do not want to convey either to the enemy or to our own people that we are not going to conduct the full operation." Accordingly, Phase I, began at 0001 local time on 30 January. United States troops pushed west along Route 9 from Vandegrift base camp toward the old Marine Corps base at Khe Sanh and conducted the other necessary maneuvers to secure western Quang Tri Province.[27]

(TS) Phase I was designated DEWEY CANYON II after an earlier USMC operation, but the Chairman objected to use of that name. Not only was this to be a predominately South Vietnamese operation, he said, but such a title implied that US ground combat troops were simply repeating the old search and destroy operations. He suggested the use of an appropriate Vietnamese designation, but by this time, the name

26. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9264 to CINCPAC, 120110Z Feb 71, JCS IN 14830. (S-GP 1) Msg, SecDef 4539 to COMUSMACV, 221921Z Feb 71. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9427 to SecDef, 231550Z Feb 71, JCS IN 35905.

27. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2443 to CINCPAC, 291423Z Jan 71; (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9141 to CINCPAC, 311145Z Jan 71. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. E-24 - E-27.

had already been released to the press. DEWEY CANYON II, however, applied only to US actions during Phase I, while the Vietnamese operations in Laos were called LAMSON 719.[28]

(C) Operation DEWEY CANYON II proceeded according to plan. An assault airstrip was operational at Khe Sanh by 3 February, and Route 9 was secure to the Laotian border by 5 February. Behind this cover of US troops, the better part of two South Vietnamese divisions assembled at Khe Sanh in preparation for assaults across the border. Enemy reaction to Phase I was light and sporadic. There were no major ground contacts and only 14 enemy KIA reported.[29]

(U) In all 20,000 South Vietnamese and 9,000 US troops participated in DEWEY CANYON II. Reports of the operation were not released by COMUSMACV, of course, until 4 February when the US command lifted its six-day news blackout to announce that DEWEY CANYON II was under way. The operation was described by COMUSMACV as a reaction to a "North Vietnamese buildup threatening the western regions of Military Region I." The US role, according to the COMUSMACV announcement, was to clear the roads leading to the frontier, to repair abandoned airstrips, to provide air cover and highway security, and to airlift South Vietnamese troops to the area.[30]

28. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2788 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 311622Z Jan 71. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9144 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010720Z Feb 71, JCS IN 77597.

29. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. E-24 - E-27.

30 Washington Post, 4 Feb 71, 1; 5 Feb 71, 1. NY Times, 4 Feb 71, 1. Lester A. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973), p. 25 (hereafter Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam).

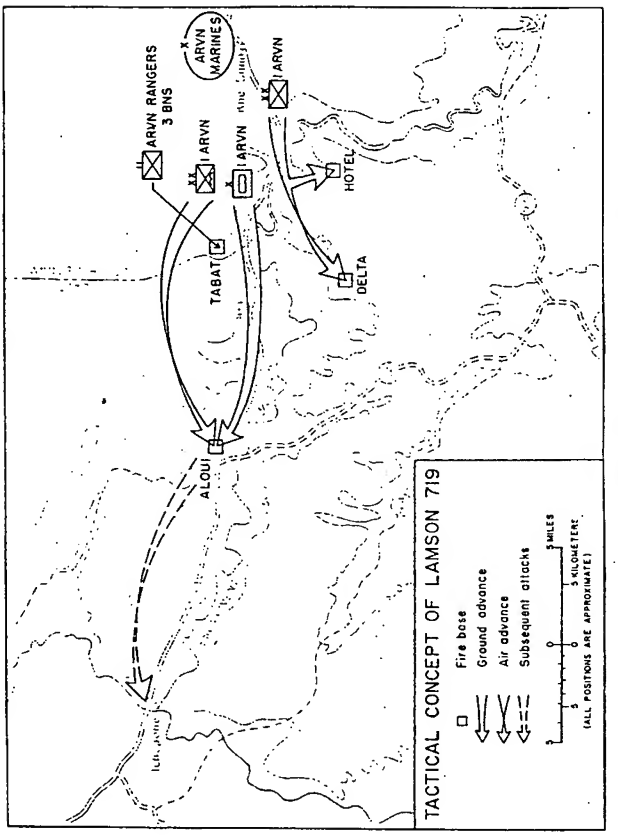
Entry into Laos

(S) Phase II, the actual push into Laos, began as scheduled on 8 February. The plan was for the 1st ARVN Airborne Division, with the 1st Armored Brigade attached, to launch a ground and airborne attack along Route 9 to seize Aloui, which would then serve as the launching point for the final assault on Tchepone, some 15 miles to the westward. Meanwhile, the 1st Infantry Division would advance in parallel south of Route 9 to protect the left flank of the main force, and the ARVN Rangers would protect the right flank by establishing fire bases north of Route 9. (See map, p. 33.) The airborne operations went off successfully, but the armored force ran into difficulty because, contrary to expectations, the condition of Route 9 seriously hindered the movement of vehicles, while the adjacent terrain and vegetation made it impossible for armor to operate off the highway. Nevertheless the initial objective, Aloui, was taken on 10 February by an airborne force, which then succeeded in linking up with the armored task force moving along Route 9.[30]

(TS) The armored brigade was unable to keep Route 9 open for ground resupply and all units, including the armor brigade itself, had to depend on US helicopter support for resupply. As the operation progressed, enemy antiaircraft fire grew heavier, and helicopters landing and taking off were subjected to fire from small arms, rocket launchers, mortars, artillery, and 12.7mm machine guns. The North Vietnamese initially employed

30. (S) Armor in Vietnam Monograph, Fort Knox, Kentucky, nd, pp. 29, 30. (U) LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept of the Army, 1973, pp. 240, 241.

MAP 2



Source: LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept. of the Army, 1973, p. 239.

weapons and troops already present in the operational area against the RVNAF forces, using many of their service troops in a combat role. Initially the enemy had about 22 combat battalions in or near Base Areas 604 and 611, with an estimated strength of 11,000 to 14,000, and an additional 10,000 personnel in administrative units, and South Vietnamese forces were outnumbered about 1.5 to 1 in combat troops and 2 to 1 overall.[31]

(U) Public announcements of the incursion into Laotion territory were made in Saigon and Washington on the day it began. President Thieu made it clear that the South Vietnamese troops were not seeking to occupy Laotian territory, calling the operation limited in time as well as space and stressing that he had no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Laos. The purpose of the incursion was to disrupt "the supply and infiltration network of the Communist North Vietnamese in Laos, which territory has for many years been occupied by North Vietnamese Communists and used as a base to launch attacks on our country." It was, he said, a "necessary act of legitimate self-defense of South Vietnam against the Communist North Vietnamese aggressors." Rather than an expansion of the war, President Thieu called this action one "taken to help end soon the war in Vietnam and restore peace in this part of the world."[32]

31. (C) 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), Final Report--Airmobile Operations in Support of LAMSON 719, 8 February-6 April 1971, p. I-12. (S) OASD/SA, "LAM SON 719 --Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71.
32. Washington Post, 8 Feb 71, 1.

(U) The Department of State made a similar announcement the same day. A Department spokesman stressed that the incursion was aimed at protecting the security and safety of US forces in South Vietnam, weakening the enemy's ability to mount offensives, and strengthening South Vietnam's ability to defend itself as US forces were withdrawn. He gave assurance that the operation was not an enlargement of the war and was fully consistent with international law. He did admit that the Laotian Government had been "critical of the current military action," but he also pointed out that Vientiane had held North Vietnam most responsible for the continued violation of Laotian neutrality.[33]

(U) Premier Souvanna Phouma had indeed carried out his intention, indicated earlier, to protest the incursion. In a statement made on 8 February, he asserted that there was no justification for the South Vietnamese invasion of his country, even though he acknowledged that the North Vietnamese had been using that part of this country for years as a supply route into South Vietnam. He appealed for the withdrawal of all non-Laotian troops, lamenting that "once again . . . foreign troops belonging to countries and governments that have pledged to guarantee and defend the sovereignty, neutrality and inviolability of Laos have chosen to deliberately use our territory as a field of battle."[34]

33. Washington Post, 9 Feb 71, 1. NY Times, 9 Feb 71, 1.

34. (U) "Statement by the Royal Government concerning the South Vietnamese Incursion into Laos, February 8, 1971," Royal Embassy of Laos News release, 10 Feb 71.

(U) In Washington, high ranking officials of the Administration moved quickly to assure the Congress that the Laotian incursion was not an expansion of the war. On 9 February Secretary of State Rogers briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Secretary Laird appeared before the Armed Services Committees of both Houses. In each case they assured the Congressmen that the Administration did not intend to send US ground combat troops into Laos even if the South Vietnamese troops encountered difficulties there. Secretary Laird publicly declared that the incursion would not widen the war, but on the contrary would shorten it. It would, he said, insure the success of Vietnamization and make possible the withdrawal of additional US troops.[35]

(U) The initial reaction of the Senate to the incursion was relatively quiet. Long time supporters of the US involvement in Southeast Asia, such as Senators John C. Stennis of Mississippi and Henry M. Jackson of Washington, voiced approval, while Senator J. William Fulbright of the Foreign Relations Committee only expressed "very grave reservations" about this course of action.[36]

(U) Scarcely had Secretaries Rogers and Laird finished explaining LAMSON 719 to the Congress than stories in the press began surfacing about US ground combat troops in Laos. On 10 February, US papers quoted members of Troop D, 7th Battalion, 17th Air Cavalry that 100 or more US ground troops had been fighting in Laos for three days. On 11 February,

35. NY Times, 10 Feb 71, 1, 15. Washington Post, 10 Feb 71, 1.
36. Ibid.

Howard Tuckner of ABC reportd that he had seen an American bathing with South Vietnamese troops 25 miles inside Laos. That same day, Walter Cronkite reported that US Special Forces were accompanying some of the South Vietnamese forces flown into Laos in US helicopters. The White House Press Secretary promptly issued denials for each of these stories and assured the public that there would be neither US ground troops nor advisers participating in the South Vietnamese operation across the border.[37]

(TS) Meanwhile, in the early stages of Phase II of the operation, General Abrams was satisfied. He reported to Admiral Moorer that the performance of the ARVN troops was "a very good and professional one. Their kill ratio is on the order of ten to one . . . ." Still movement westward toward Tchepone was slower than anticipated. The assault along Route 9 to Tchepone had been planned to take three days, but Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, the South Vietnamese commander of the operation, moved much more deliberately. On 13 February, therefore, President Thieu ordered ARVN forces to move no farther west for another three to five days in order to consolidate their present position and to destroy supply depots in the area they then occupied. This pause was deemed advisable because of the difficulty of armored movement along Route 9, the unexpected enemy strength, weather conditions that hindered aircraft operations, and the need to build up supply reserves further. Nonetheless, General Vien, Chief of

37. Washington Star, 10 Feb 71, 1. ABC Evening News, ABC-TV, 11 Feb 71. CBS Evening News, CBS-TV, 11 Feb 71; NY Times, 12 Feb 71, 4.

the Joint General Staff, hoped that the South Vietnamese troops would reach the high ground leading to Tchepone by 21 February.[38]

(U) General Lam was considerably more optimistic in his public pronouncements. He told the press on 15 February the main part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail had been cut. "We hold the part they need to resupply their troops to the south," he declared. Enemy casualty figures since 8 February were given as nearly 450 enemy killed and about 30 tanks destroyed and large quantities of supplies captured. In fact, the South Vietnamese attributed the slowness of their advance into Laos to the discovery of so many enemy supply caches.[39]

US Air Support

(~~TS~~) Throughout the initial ARVN operations in Laos the United States provided both tactical air and B-52 support, and on 11 February the Chairman authorized an increase in the US monthly TACAIR sortie level as needed to support both LAMSON 719 and the Chup Plantation operations, so long as expenditures remained within FY 1971 funding levels. With regard to B-52 operations, a problem had arisen because the enemy had established troop concentrations and AA sites in an area north of Tchepone that lay between the existing Special ARC LIGHT Operating Areas. General Abrams considered the bombing of this area "essential to ARC LIGHT employment in support of Operation LAMSON 719."

38. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9301 to CJCS, 141435Z Feb 71, JCS IN 19400. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9287 to CINCPAC, 130843Z Feb 71, JCS IN 17892. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9323 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 161140Z Feb 71, JCS IN 21698.

39. NY Times, 16 Feb 71, 1.

He requested authority from American Embassy Vientiane and CINCPAC on 17 February to extend ARC LIGHT strikes into the area. Six POW camps were located in this area, and General Abrams also asked that the operating restriction around them be reduced from 3,000 to 1,500 meters. Ambassador Godley refused to authorize the additional strikes, stating that "the existing ROE permit flexible enough response to tactical emergencies considering the potentially severe political repercussions associated with destruction of POW camps."[40]

(~~TS~~) General Abrams then turned to the Chairman for authority to conduct these air strikes, and Admiral McCain strongly supported the request. The Director of Central Intelligence reported little indication that the POW camps in the area were still occupied, and Admiral Moorer and the Secretaries of State and Defense all supported the requested bombing without restriction. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer requested Ambassador Godley to reconsider his decision. Evidently the Ambassador did so, for on 20 February, CINCPAC approved the bombing of the area in question for the duration of LAMSON 719.[41]

(~~TS~~) At the same time COMUSMACV was asking for authority to extend the range of ARC LIGHT strikes,

40. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3830 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112059Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to AmEmb Vientiane and CINCPAC, 171107Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, AmEmb Vientiane to COMUSMACV, 180504Z Feb 71.

41. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9352 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 190400Z Feb 71, JCS IN 27587. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 191000Z Feb 71, JCS IN 28186. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4455 to AmEmb Vientiane 192352Z Feb 71. (~~TS~~-Gp 1) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 201726Z Feb 71, JCS IN 31248.

he proposed to increase their intensity as well. He predicted that LAMSON 719 could become "one of the most decisive operations of the Southeast Asia conflict" and asked that immediate action be taken to develop a capability to sustain 40 sorties per day through May 1971. General Abrams also wanted a capability to increase the daily rate beyond 40 sorties should the situation warrant it. Admiral McCain supported the proposal, pointing out that the enemy decision to make a decisive effort against the ARVN in the Laotian panhandle would produce the kind of heavy enemy troop concentrations that presented an ideal target for B-52 saturation bombing and that the additional sorties could be critical to the success of the ARVN forces. The Chairman authorized the requested surge on 21 February.[42]

LAMSON 719 Continues

(S) On 17 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wired their encouragement to the South Vietnamese commander of LAMSON 719, citing his superb leadership and splendid performance. They sent a similar message to the commander of the forces operating against the Chup Plantation in Cambodia, a parallel operation which had the same purpose of disrupting enemy logistical facilities.[43] The North Vietnamese intensified their resistance in Laos, however, and a major battle was

42. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 3971 to CINCPAC, 201215Z Feb 71, JCS IN 30900. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 202335Z Feb 71, JCS IN 31633. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4503 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 211625Z Feb 71.

43. The Chup Plantation operation (TOAN THANG 01/71) had been launched on 4 February 1971. It is described fully in Chapter 5.

fought on 19 February 1971, when the 39th Ranger Battalion was attacked by an estimated 400- to 500-man enemy force. After a fierce fight the Rangers were driven from their position with losses of 178 men killed or missing and 148 wounded, although they claimed to have killed 639 of the enemy.[44]

(U) Back in Washington, Administration spokesmen were still optimistic. White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler reported that President Nixon thought that the operation was going well, and the Press Secretary denied reports that the traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail had in fact increased since the beginning of the incursion into Laos. He insisted that the main objective of LAMSON 719, disruption of the enemy logistics network, was being met. Across the Potomac at the Pentagon, Jerry W. Friedheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, now explained that Tchepone itself was not the principal objective of the operation. "I realize that that particular city gets written about because it sits in the middle of Route 9," he said, "but this is an airmobile operation with a great deal of flexibility permitted and it would be incorrect to pick out a specific single geographic point and call it the objective."[45]

(U) In South Vietnam President Thieu announced that LAMSON 719 had been instrumental in preventing an intended North Vietnamese plan to invade the five northernmost South Vietnamese provinces in an effort to seize territory to improve their bargaining position in Paris. Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser

44. (~~TS~~ GP 4) Msg, JCS 4258 to CINCPAC, 180052Z Feb 71; (~~S NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. E-27.

45. (U) Washington Post, 23 Feb 71, 1.

for National Security Affairs, told members of Congress that the drive into Laos had cut several of the North Vietnamese routes into that country.[46]

(U) On 23 February, Secretary Laird issued a statement that the operation across the border was proceeding on schedule and that its purpose of cutting of the communist supply lines was being achieved. He warned newsmen to expect tougher, more difficult fighting in the area in the future. The next day he said that the drive had been deliberately slowed in order to assess the enemy reactions, and not in response to North Vietnamese counterattacks. The Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General John W. Vogt, Jr., USAF, reinforced this view at the same news conference. He declared that the enemy had not stopped the South Vietnamese movement along Route 9. Secretary Laird reemphasized the objectives of the operation by declaring that "the key thing is to disrupt the logistic supply routes. I believe that this operation, even if it were to terminate, and there is no fixed time limit on it now, has been successful in disrupting the logistic supplies." He, too, stated that Tchepone, as such, had never been a objective.[47]

(~~TS~~) By 22 February, after two weeks of hard fighting, Tchepone still had not been taken. On that day, US Ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, and General Abrams met with President Thieu and the South Vietnamese President outlined a new approach. He wanted to abandon the original plan for a ground advance from Aloui along Route 9 in favor of an airborne effort. On or about 25 February, two airborne

46. NY Times, 21 Feb 71, 1; 24 Feb 71, 1.
47. NY Times, 24 Feb 71, 1; 25 Feb 71, 1. Washington Post, 25 Feb 71, 1.

brigades would make an assault with heavy B-52, tactical air, and helicopter support. Once the objective was taken, and the area cleaned out, President Thieu then favored withdrawing through Base Area 611.[48]

(~~TS~~) Enemy actions, however, did not fall in with the South Vietnamese plans. On 25 February, the North Vietnamese launched an armor attack against ARVN troops at Fire Base 31, moving their Soviet-made T-34 tanks over concealed routes into final asault positions without being discovered. At daylight the tanks and supporting infantry attacked forcing the South Vietnamese to abandon a major position guarding their right flank.

(~~TS~~) The enemy also continued to build up his combat forces and doubled his strength to about 28,000 by the end of February. The North Vietnamese then outnumbered the 8,500 ARVN combat forces more than 3 to 1. Ultimately elements of five NVA divisions, twelve infantry regiments, at least two battalions of an armor regiment, and at least nineteen antiaircraft battalions were brought into the area from North Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam, and other parts of Laos.[49]

(~~TS~~) By the end of the month ARVN troops had still not reached Tchepone. General Abrams reported that:

> the fighting in LAMSON 719 continues to be characterized by sharp solid contacts. While some ARVN units have sustained heavy casualties, the enemy is taking a tremendous beating in terms of personnel and material

48. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9407 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 221355Z Feb 71, JCS IN 33504.

49. (U) LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept of the Army, 1973, pp. 241, 242. (~~C~~) 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), Final Report--Airmobile Operations in Support of LAMSON 719, 8 February-6 April 1971, pp. 1-12. (~~TS~~) OASD/SA, "Lam Son 719 - Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71.

> casualties. ARC LIGHT, TACAIR, and helo gunships are assisting the ARVN in exacting a significant toll. The ARVN performance to date continues to be gratifying. The displayed willingness to fight, to fully commit their resources and to take necessary steps to insure success have been amply demonstrated.

On 1 March both President Thieu and General Vien expressed determination to carry through with the campaign, and President Thieu again put forth his suggestion for an airborne seizure of Tchepone.[50]

(TS) Even though the objective of Tchepone had not been attained, the effects of LAMSON 719 were beginning to tell on the enemy supply chain by early March. In the current dry season 14,000 tons of supplies had moved out of Base Area 611 compared to 17,000 tons in the same period of 1970. This traffic was being channelled into more western supply routes, especially Route 914 west of Tchepone, and Admiral McCain recommended that Route 914 also be cut. "The opportunity remains great," he concluded, "for LAMSON 719 to deal a crushing blow to the enemy's future combat capability in the South." Subsequently General Abrams met with General Vien and emphasized that the flow of supplies must be stopped. This included cutting Route 914. "A major battle, which might even be the decisive battle of the war, must be won."

(TS) Meantime heavy fighting continued. From 24 February through 3 March the enemy harassed ARVN resupply and MEDEVAC efforts by ground attack and antiaircraft fire, and South Vietnamese search and

50. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9500 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 281239Z Feb 71, JCS IN 45545. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9017 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 011225Z Mar 71, JCS IN 46629.

destroy missions encountered multi-company enemy forces. Enemy antiaircraft measures made resupply and troop movement operations extremely difficult and often required gunship escorts for single ship missions. Surface-to-air missiles also were encountered in this area for the first time.[51]

The Push on Tchepone

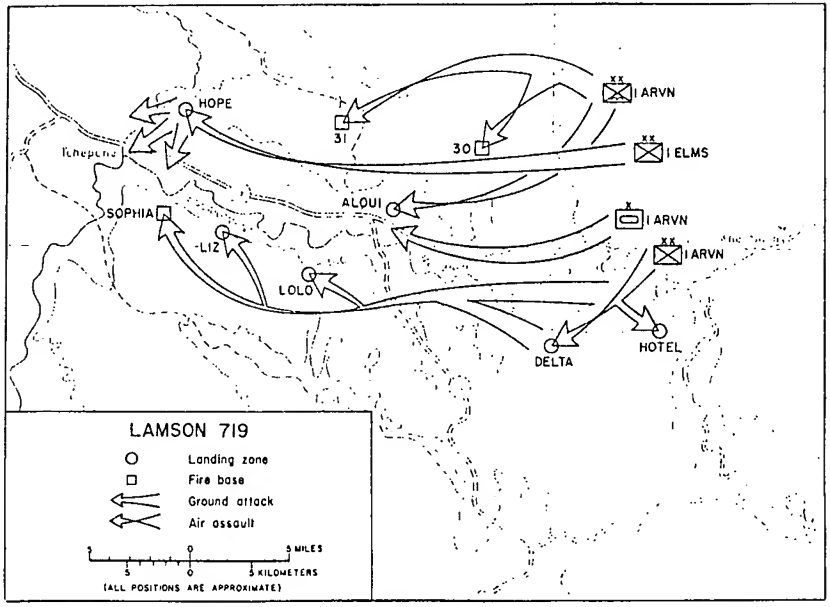
(U) In accord with President Thieu's revised plan of action, the ARVN abandoned the ground advance along Route 9. From 3 to 6 March, the southern force, the ARVN 1st Division, launched a series of successful airmobile assaults westward along the escarpment south of Route 9, into landing zones LOLO and LIZ and Fire Base SOPHIA WEST. To the north another airborne force of two infantry battalions from Vietnam, in one grand swoop of 65 kilometers, took landing zone HOPE just five or six kilometers from Tchepone. From HOPE the ARVN forces moved against Tchepone, securing the announced objective of LAMSON 719 on 6 March. (See map, p. 46.)[52]

(U) Even before the South Vietnamese troops reached Tchepone, President Nixon appeared to be satisfied with the progress of LAMSON 719. At his 4 March news conference he told reporters that

> General Abrams tells me that in both Laos and Cambodia his evaluation after three weeks of fighting is that--to use his terms--the South Vietnamese by themselves

51. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 032311Z Mar 71, JCS IN 52031. (~~TS~~) Msg, COMUSMACV to Sutherland, 061014Z Mar 71. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. E-27.

52. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, p. 242.



Source: LTG John J. Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies, Dept. of the Army, 1973, p. 243.

> can hack it and they can give a better account of themselves even than the North Vietnamese units. This means that our withdrawal program, our Vietnamization program can continue on schedule, and we trust even ahead of schedule, assuming that there is more progress in Laos.[53]

(S) Ambassador Bunker was also pleased with the ARVN operations. On the day Tchepone was at last entered, he told the Secretaries of State and Defense, in a statement that had General Abrams' concurrence, that the operation had demonstrated its value even though it had not matched the planned scenario. The objective was not Tchepone but the enemy supply network, he continued, and:

> enemy southward traffic has been viturally eliminated on Routes 9 and 92 and greatly reduced on 914. The enemy has been forced to accept combat away from the territory of South Vietnam. As General Abrams has said, we once fought the NVA 9th Division around Saigon, and we are now fighting it in Cambodia; we once fought the NVA 308th and 320th divisions around Hue and Danang, and they are now being fought in Laos.[54]

(TS) With the seizure of Tchepone, Phase III of LAMSON 719 began. Company-sized patrols, supported by the ARVN fire support bases, US artillery from

53. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), p. 387 (hereafter cited as Public Papers, Nixon, 1971).

54. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9097 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 061010Z Mar 71, JCS IN 57739.

across the border in South Vietnam and a 24-hour US tactical air cover, located and destroyed supply depots around Tchepone. By 9 March, General Lam announced that his forces held three of the main junctions along the North Vietnamese supply routes--Tchepone itself, Ban Dong on Route 9 halfway between Tchepone and the border, and Muong Nong about 30 kilometers south of Ban Dong.[55]

(~~TS~~) The ARVN troops now continued operations in the LAMSON 719 area, defending their positions in Laos against increasingly heavy enemy artillery and rocket fire. Elements of the 1st Division physically interdicted Route 914, the key supply route south and west of Tchepone, for about two days beginning 16 March, and additional ARVN and VNMC units inserted into LAOS during this phase of the operation raised RVNAF strength to about 17,000. But this additional strength was partially offset by continued enemy reinforcement. Another North Vietnamese regiment and division headquarters were tentatively identified, raising the number of enemy combat battalions opposing the RVNAF to about 47. Thus the South Vietnamese combat troops were outnumbered about 2 to 1 as Phase III drew to an end in mid-March.[56]

(~~TS~~) On 11 March COMUSMACV asked for an extention of US support for the Laotian operations beyond 5 April; CINCPAC endorsed the extension. The Chairman authorized General Abrams only "to continue discussions

55. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9134 to CINCPAC, 081130Z Mar 71, JCS IN 60079. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973), p. 35.

56. (~~TS~~) OASD/SA, "Lam Son 719 - Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71.

with the SVN to insure them of full U.S. support and to influence the operation according to your good judgement " Earlier, the Secretary of Defense had direced that General Abrams keep LAMSON 719 a basically RVNAF operation and not let "a situation develop in which the GVN could charge the US with either depriving the RVNAF of implicitly agreed upon support or coercing the RVNAF into military operations which are contrary to the better judgements of the GVN."[57]

Withdrawal from Laos

(~~TS~~) Admiral Moorer took this opportunity to emphasize to General Abrams that he, the President, and Dr. Kissinger all wished to avoid the appearance of a premature withdrawal from Laos, and they hoped that the South Vietnamese would not develop

> such a momentum in their movement to the east that they appear to be bugging out or that they fail to take full advantage of this opportunity to damage the enemy. . . . The SVN have met the best that the NVN have to offer and have gotten the better of the fight. . . . We must be careful to guard against allegations from the press and others that the SVN are being forced to retreat.[58]

57. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9171 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 111150Z Mar 71, JCS IN 66626. (~~TS~~) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 111933Z Mar 71, JCS IN 67371. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6037 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112104Z Mar 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6049 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112220Z Mar 71. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Support for LAMSON 719," 11 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos - LAMSON 719.

58. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6049 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 112220Z Mar 71.

(~~TS~~) On the following day, 12 March, President Thieu met with Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams to outline his plans for the remainder of LAMSON 719. He wanted to continue current operations along Route 914 and the area around the hub where Routes 914, 92, and 922 joined and to attack Base Area 611 and the Ashau valley. Generals Lam and Vien, he said, wanted to withdraw the troops for a rest and then go back into Laos into Base Area 611 and the Ashau, but he foresaw "international difficulties" in pulling out and then returning. His solution was to stay in Laos by rotating units and temporarily withdrawing some of them. Both the Ambassador and General Abrams thought President Thieu's approach was not only militarily sound but took into account the need for a good public image after the operation was concluded.[59]

(Ø) At just this time the enemy increased his efforts against South Vietnamese forces in Laos. Initially, the enemy had not reacted to the thrust against the Tchepone area. Soon, however, enemy forces began to concentrate against the 1st ARVN Division positions south of Route 9. Enemy troops grew notably more aggressive as ARVN troops withdrew from SOPHIA WEST and LIZ to positions around SOPHIA EAST and BROWN. On 14 March NVA forces mounted an attack against LOLO, at first by fire, then with infantry. On the night of 15-16 March, they drove the SVN forces out of LOLO.[60]

(U) The following day in Washington, Secretary Rogers reminded the press that the Laotian operation

59. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9184 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 120905Z Mar 71, JCS IN 68538.

60. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9291 to CJCS, 191235Z Mar 71, JCS IN 83247.

was temporary and flexible. "We think to date the operation has been successful," he stated. "The total success of it will depend on subsequent events. But I think up to the present time it has achieved the purposes that we started out with."[61]

(~~TS~~) The major question in the minds of US officials in mid-March concerning LAMSON 719 was how long the South Vietnamese would and could continue the operation. On 16 March, Admiral Moorer told Secretary Laird that "Phases I and II can be said to be completed, and Phase III is in progress." The original plan had called for the action to continue until "the monsoon transitional period," and the Chairman hoped that the month and a half remaining before that time would permit "full execution" of Phase IV, including an attack into Base Area 611.[62]

(U) On that same day, 16 March, General Lam told Lieutenant General James W. Sutherland, USA, the US commander in MR 1, that although redeployment of some troops would occur earlier, Phase III would not terminate before 10 to 15 April, when Phase IV would begin. General Lam's plans, however, still made no provision to continue the interdiction of Route 914 nor to move eastward through Base Area 611. The South Vietnamese commander's comments provoked Admiral Moorer to observe that "the redeployment of RVNAF forces as outlined . . . could add fuel to the current pessimistic press reports claiming a rout of Vietnamese units from Laos. . . . we run the risk of losing most of our high-level

61. Dept of State Bulletin, 5 Apr 71, p. 483.
62. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-702-71 to SecDef, 16 Mar 71, CJCS CM Chron File.

political support for prosecuting LAMSON to a successful conclusion, and of undermining widespread confidence in the success of Vietnamization to date."[63]

(TS) On 18 March, General Abrams reminded General Vien that "after much hard fighting, with no question of the significant military results achieved so far, there was still much to be gained by reinforcing efforts in LAMSON 719." He suggested again "the infusion of fresh troops to maintain the initiative and to preclude the adverse psychological and political potential of the enemy claiming victory and the press claiming defeat of the ARVN forces in Laos." But the South Vietnamese were not convinced by these entreaties, and President Thieu moved ahead with the withdrawal plans. In his judgment the basic mission in Laos had been accomplished. The ARVN troops had had a strenuous and successful campaign and required rest and refitting, and he was apprehensive that the enemy might launch a significant attack on Khe Sanh.[64]

(TS) President Nixon was as anxious as his military leaders for the South Vietnamese to continue the Laotian operations and avoid the appearance of a hasty withdrawal. As Admiral Moorer related to Admiral McCain and General Abrams on 18 March, the President hoped some actions could still be conducted in Base Area 611, at a minimum, by the reinforcement or rotation of troops. The President believed that if the press was able to create an impression that the ARVN

63. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9259 to CINCPAC, 171045Z Mar 71, JCS IN 77535. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6505 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 172317Z Mar 71.
64. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9273 to CINCPAC, 181218Z Mar 71, JCS IN 80062.

withdrawal was in fact a rout, then President Thieu's prestige would be seriously impaired, both internally and externally. That same day, Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., USA, the Military Assistant to the President, who was visiting South Vietnam, confirmed President Nixon's position. General Haig told General Abrams that "Washington would like to see the ARVN stay in Laos through April."[65]

(~~TS~~) At a meeting the following day with General Abrams, Ambassador Bunker, and General Haig, President Thieu was still professing to consider a rotation of troops, but because of the unexpected enemy strength and the rate of ARVN casualties he had already directed the withdrawal of South Vietnamese forces from Laos, a process that would take until 5-8 April. Toward the end of this period he wanted to execute a three-battalion raid against logistical targets at Muong Nong. President Thieu remained confident of the success of the operation, stating that he would work out the details of the raid with Generals Lam and Vien on 20 March.[66]

(U) While the South Vietnamese were thus withdrawing, President Nixon strongly defended the Laotian incursion in an interview with Howard K. Smith of ABC broadcast from the White House library on 22 March. During the six-week duration of the operation, he said, the North Vietnamese

> have had chewed up great amounts of ammunition, great amounts of materiel that otherwise would have

65. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 9274 to CJCS, 181555Z Mar 71, JCS IN 80359. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6565, to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 182135Z Mar 71.

66. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Msg, COMUSMACV 9294 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 191325Z Mar 71, JCS IN 82397.

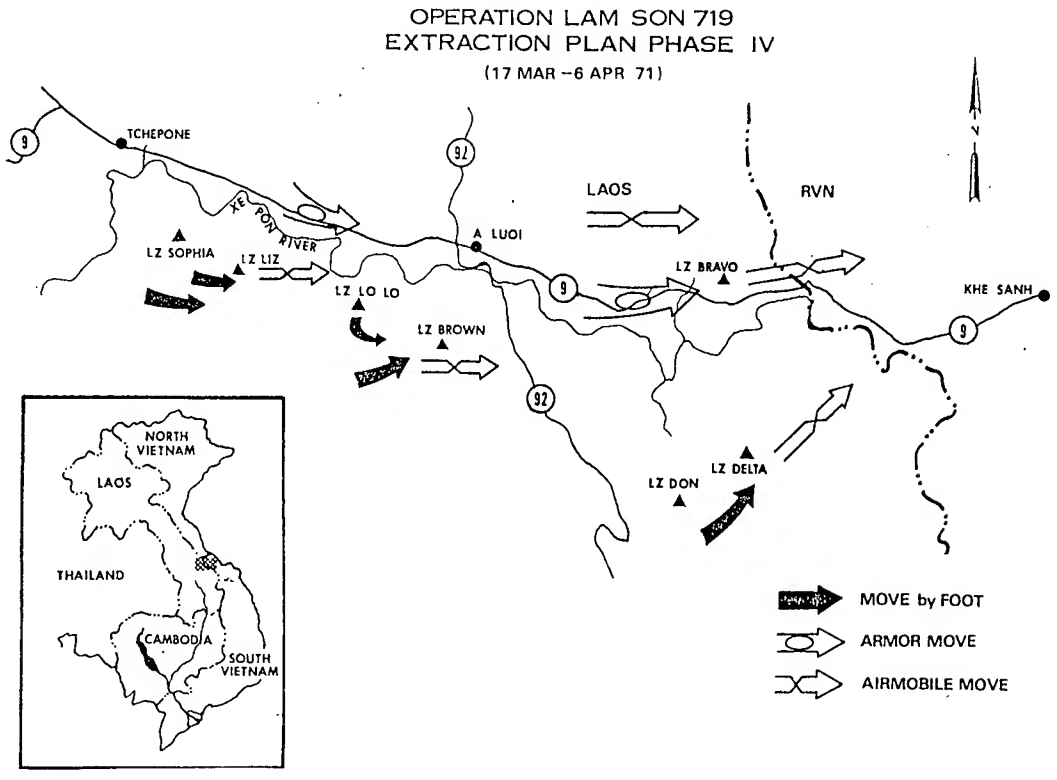
> gone south and would have been used, incidentally, against many Americans fighting in South Vietnam--and also in that 6-week period the South Vietnamese have developed a considerable capability on their own and considerable confidence on their own. They are better units to handle the situation as we withdraw."

The President cited General Abrams' expert opinion that "18 out of 22 battalions conducted themselves with high morale, with great confidence, and they are able to defend themselves man to man against the North Vietnamese." At the same time he pointed out that press coverage of the operation had "shown only those men in the four ARVN battalions of 22 that were in trouble. They haven't shown people in the other 18 battalions. That is not because it has been deliberate. It is because those make news." It was much too early to pronounce final judgment on the operation, but he did assure the American people that "the American withdrawal will continue . . . [and] the danger to America's remaining forces has been reduced."[67]

(C) The South Vietnamese withdrawal from Laos, the fourth and final phase of LAMSON 719, began on 17 March when the ARVN armored task force began to return to Vietnam along Route 9. (See map, p. 55.) The enemy attacked and inflicted heavy losses on the withdrawing force, reducing some units to "ineffective combat status." An ambush on 19 March caused extensive damage to armored and wheeled vehicles and the resulting debris littering the road further hindered the withdrawal. All other RVNAF units were extracted by helicopter and these troop lifts were subjected to extremely heavy antiaircraft fire. This fire became

67. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, p. 451-453.

MAP 4



Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. E-32.

so intense that artillery pieces had to be spiked and left behind rather than risking helicopters and crews to save them, and some South Vietnamese troops had to withdraw on foot to break contact for extraction. The last elements of the ARVN 1st Division were out of Laos on 21 March and all South Vietnamese units had withdrawn by 24 March. LAMSON 719 was not officially terminated, however, until 6 April, and after the final troop withdrawal, the South Vietnamese did plan and carry out some raids into Laotian territory. As will be subsequently described, these raids presented the United States with a real difficulty.[68]

(U) On 24 March, Secretary Laird announced that LAMSON 719 was being brought to a close because of the "tremendously vicious and violent reaction on the part of the North Vietnamese and also the fact that the South Vietnamese feel that they have carried out a primary objective of the operation--that is, to disrupt the logistic supply routes." A day earlier Mr. Friedheim had acknowledged that some South Vietnamese units had not performed as they should, but concluded that the South Vietnamese troops had won the overall battle.[69]

Continued US Support

(~~TS~~) When the original agreements for support in LAMSON 719 were negotiated, US support was firmly committed only through 5 April. There was nothing hard

68. (~~S NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. E-33. (U) Tolson, Air Mobility, 1961-1971, pp. 242-244. (TS) OASD/SA, "Lam Son 719 - Preliminary Evaluation," 2 Apr 71. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9378 to CJCS and CINCPAC 242000Z Mar 71, JCS IN 92768.

69. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973) p. 39.

and fast about this date, but to extend US support much beyond it required additional negotiations. On 11 March Secretary Laird authorized General Abrams to negotiate with President Thieu for US support beyond 5 April. The Secretary also wanted Admiral Moorer's evaluation of the options still available. In reply, the Chairman summarized the accomplishments through 16 March and recommended, along with General Abrams, that the remainder of LAMSON 719 as well as the Chup Plantation operation in Cambodia "must be directed toward inflicting unabated, maximum damage on the enemy by destruction of his installations, by the application of maximum firepower against his troop dispositions and supporting weapons."[70]

(~~TS~~) The South Vietnamese withdrawal, under circumstances suggesting a precipitate retreat in the face of superior forces, made it necessary to reopen the question of US support for future operations in Laos. On 26 March, Secretary Laird asked the Chairman "what, if any, further phase of LAMSON 719 should be undertaken after the current authority expired on 5 April." The Secretary realized that the tactical decisions on when and how to carry out such actions must rest with General Abrams and the South Vietnamese. He believed, however, that the complete withdrawal of South Vietnamese troops from Laos had created a new situation and, if they were to be sent back there, "resource commitments and political imperatives" would require a new

70. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Support for LAMSON 719," 11 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos - LAMSON 719. (~~TS~~) CM-702-71 to SecDef, 16 Mar 71, CJCS CM Chron File.

study and a decision at the Washington level before any US support could be provided.[71]

(TS) Admiral Moorer passed the Secretary's request to General Abrams, who, in reply urged full US air support for the remaining operations in Laos planned as part of LAMSON 719. Admiral Moorer relayed this reply to Secretary Laird on 29 March adding various justifications. The Chairman considered that the attack on the enemy logistic system in Laos had succeeded thus far and should be continued to the end of the dry season in order to realize maximum benefit; that failure to continue US support would imply a lack of confidence in the RVNAF and in Vietnamization; and that a successful attack on enemy logistics, by helping to stabilize the military situation, would facilitate further US redeployments.[72]

(TS) On 3 April, the Chairman again asked the Secretary of Defense for authority to continue US support of Laotian operations beyond 5 April. Secretary Laird ultimately authorized continued US support of Vietnamese cross-border operations in Laos through 15 May 1971, provided they were approved by General Abrams. He stipulated that US forces should minimize the use of US helicopters for troop lift and logistics missions and put maximum reliance on South Vietnamese air resources. "In this way," he declared, "I believe

71. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Planning for LAMSON 719 and TOAN THANG 01/71 NB," 26 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos - LAMSON 719.

72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7334 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 270046Z Mar 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-759-71 to SecDef, 29 Mar 71; CJCS File 091 Laos LAMSON 719. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 281100Z Mar 71.

we will bolster the confidence of the South Vietnamese in their own capabilities to carry out these operations in the future."[73]

(~~TS~~) Looking beyond the current US support operations, Secretary Laird had noted the "large role" played by US commanders in the decisions related to LAMSON 719 and the Chup Plantation operation. This was appropriate, he commented, in view of the great importance of US support in the Laotian operation, but he wanted to know what the proper US role should be in the decision making process for future operations as US participation decreased. Admiral Moorer replied that "within the bounds of good judgment and common sense, our efforts should continue to foster [in the South Vietnamese] a feeling of independence as well as a natural desire to make their own decisions." The degree of US participation in decision making was dependent upon the degree of US support, and the Chairman saw it becoming more selective as Vietnamization and US withdrawals progressed. Even at the end, however, there should be some US role in plans involving unilateral RVNAF actions, such a role being limited, in his opinion, "to an advisory capacity to assist as necessary and to help preclude obvious miscalculations."[74]

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73. (~~TS~~) CM-777-71 to SecDef, 3 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1), Msg, COMUSMACV 9487 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 030940Z Apr 71, JCS IN 24388. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Planning for Operations Following LAMSON 719," 3 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Laos-LAMSON 719.

74. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Planning for LAMSON 719 and TOAN THANG 01/71 NB," 26 Mar 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-833-71 to SecDef, 16 Apr 71; CJCS File 091 Laos-LAMSON 719. (Why Admiral Moorer waited three weeks to reply to the Secretary is not indicated in available documents.)

Further Raids into Laos

(TS) While these discussions were taking place in Washington, plans were proceeding in Vietnam for additional raids on enemy installations in Laos. In fact, two cross-border, airmobile raids were conducted in late March and early April against Ho Chi Minh Trail installations. Plans for the first of these, a raid on Muong Nong, were agreed upon by General Lam and Lieutenant General Sutherland, on 21 March. The raid force, consisting of two battalions, would receive US B-52 and 24-hour tactical air support, and would last from two to five days. The proposed operation had already been reported to Washington and had been endorsed by President Nixon, who declared that "the conduct of the Muong Nong raid is vital if we are to end LAMSON 719 on an upbeat note and give the South Vietnamese a credible image as a continuous threat to the enemy.[75]

(TS) Despite President Nixon's general approval of this new foray into Laos, US air support required a specific decision by the Secretary of Defense in accord with the instructions given the Chairman by Secretary Laird on 26 March. Two days later, on 28 March, the Chairman presented Secretary Laird with the ARVN plan to raid Muong Nong in Base Area 611 now scheduled for 29 March. The US participation in the operation would consist of B-52 strikes, 24-hour coverage of FAC aircraft, and helicopter support including both "slicks" (troop carrying helicopters) and gunships. A South Vietnamese force of 450 men would operate for about

75. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9346 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 221044Z Mar 71, JCS IN 87239. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6820 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 211823Z Mar 71.

three days in the objective area to destroy supplies and disrupt the flow of materiel. In approving the plan, the Secretary of Defense warned that the operation must be described as a "raid" from the beginning, in order to avoid giving the press a pretext for repeating the allegation made during the earlier withdrawal that ARVN troops were being forced out of Laos.[76]

(TS) General Lam and General Sutherland cancelled the Muong Nong raid on 29 March, however, when an overflight of the proposed area revealed intense AAA fire along the approaches to the landing zone and surrounding the objective area. The two commanders anticipated that execution of the operation would have produced unacceptable casualty levels. General Lam proposed instead that the raid be shifted elsewhere in Base Area 611 to Cua Viet, and the raiders landed there on 31 March. The raid produced 85 enemy killed by air, one killed in action, and a moderate amount of supplies destroyed. The raiders were extracted on 1 April. President Thieu announced the Cua Viet raid on 31 March, declaring that "Operation Lam Son 719 is still going on, and the South Vietnamese army is still on the attack despite the pullback of some units into Vietnam."[77]

76. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7334 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV 270046Z Mar 71. (TS) CM-751-71 to SecDef, 28 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, Jan-Jun 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7395 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 290313Z Mar 71.

77. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9434 to CJCS and CINCPAC 290845Z Mar 71, JCS IN 11273. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9442 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 300735Z Mar 71, JCS IN 13461. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9447 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 310350Z Mar 71, JCS 15805. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9452 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 310622Z Mar 71, JCS IN 16029. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9459

(~~TS~~) A second raid, similar to the first, was staged on 6 April. One hundred fifty RVNAF troops landed in Laos with US air support. When the raiders were extracted seven hours later, they reported 15 North Vietnamese killed, as well as destruction of 20 weapons and 10 tons of rice. This raid was the last military action in LAMSON 719. On 6 April the Secretary of Defense officially ended the use of the name LAMSON 719 by US personnel, effective with the extraction of the South Vietnamese troops from their Laotian raid.[78]

Results of the Operation

(U) The media were quick to react to the ARVN withdrawal from Laotian territory. Most of the stories were unfavorable. Newsweek, for example, reported that

> the North Vietnamese mounted what Defense Secretary Melvin Laird described as a "tremendously vicious and violent" counterattack, and soon the ARVN was rushing pell-mell for home, at least four weeks ahead of schedule. By the end of last week, according to a knowledgeable source in Saigon, all branches of the Ho Chi Minh trail were back in operation, just as though LAM SON 719 had never taken place.

The New York Times reported that:

to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010227Z Apr 71, JCS IN 18156. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9465 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 010715Z Apr 71, JCS IN 18567. NY Times, 31 Mar 71, p. 3.

78. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9497 to CINCPAC, 050420Z Apr 71, JCS IN 27008. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 9006 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 051220Z Apr 71, JCS IN 27567. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9010 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 060340Z Apr 71, JCS IN 28899. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV 9013 to CJCS and CINCPAC, 061048Z Apr 71, JCS IN 29504. NY Times, 7 Apr 71, p. 9. (S-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9194 to CINCPAC, 062027Z Apr 71.

> It was a test, and now most South Vietnamese veterans frankly admit that their forces failed. They had no chance, these men say. . . . What has dramatically demoralized many of the South Vietnamese troops is the large number of their own wounded who were left behind, begging for their friends to shoot them or leave them hand grenades so they could commit suicide before the North Vietnamese or the B-52 raids killed them.

Life reported

> . . . Operation Lam Son 719 ended in a rout. . . . there is no question that the North Vietnamese sustained much greater losses than the ARVN. Yet by all appearances the NVA drove the invading forces out of Laos with their tails between their legs.

All the networks broadcast footage of South Vietnamese soldiers clinging to the skids of evacuation helicopters. The withdrawal phase of the operations was generally charactrized as a South Vietnamese defeat. The stories were based on the heavy contact experienced by the South Vietnamese troops, but their implications went beyond what the individual reporters and sources could observe.[79]

(U) In response to this kind of coverage, President Thieu, at a rare press conference on 31 March, spoke out against press reports that "the redeployment of the Vietnamese troops from Laos is a defeat--disorder, disaster." He maintained that the operation was "the biggest victory ever." He told his airborne forces: "You have caused a psychological breakdown to the Communists, you have hurt their morale seriously."

79. Newsweek, 5 Apr 71, p. 25. NY Times, 28 Mar 71, 1, 14. John Saar, "An Ignominious and Disorderly Retreat," Life, 2 Apr 71, p. 24.

The decision to end LAMSON 719 in March was, he said, "a decision of the Vietnamese and we ended it because we judged the objectives of the operation to have been achieved."[80]

(U) President Nixon assessed LAMSON 719 in his 7 April 1971 speech, which announced continued troop withdrawals. It was, he said, evident that Vietnamization was succeeding. He drew three specific conclusions:

> First, the South Vietnamese demonstrated that without American advisers they could fight effectively the very best troops North Vietnam could put in the field.
>
> Second, the South Vietnamese suffered heavy casualties, but by every conservative estimate the casualties suffered by the enemy were far greater.
>
> Third, and most important, the disruption of enemy supply lines, the consumption of ammunition and arms in the battle has been even more damaging to the capability of the North Vietnamese to sustain major offensives in South Vietnam than were the operations in Cambodia 10 months ago.[81]

(C) General Abrams reported soon after the conclusion of the operation that "although it is too early to make a final judgement, LAMSON 719 may well prove to have been a pivotal point in the Indochina conflict." It demonstrated to the enemy that his remote sanctuaries were vulnerable and that he must position troops for their defense, well away from

80. NY Times, 1 Apr 71, 1, 12.
81. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 523-524.

South Vietnam's population centers. As the enemy massed his forces to oppose the ARVN, he exposed them to allied ground and air power, and he lost heavily in both men and materiel. The ARVN had itself gained experience in the command and control of large combat formations. The operations, according to General Abrams, "underlined the progress which has been made in Vietnamization. The RVNAF continued to demonstrate an ability to carry the fight to the enemy, outside the boundaries of South Vietnam. They have shown an ability to mount a complex, multi-division operation, in conditions of difficult and unfamiliar terrain, adverse weather and against the best forces that determined enemy could muster."

(C) The six weeks' exposure to heavy enemy contact and new enemy tactics, General Abrams said, taught a number of lessons for the RVNAF improvement and modernization program. Unified command over all forces engaged in an operation; proper security of plans and orders; combined training for all units; careful and complete planning for withdrawal; aggressive use of armor once committed; location of fire support bases within mutually supporting range--all these were shown to be important. Other lessons were that the B-52 could be effectively used as a close support weapon but that helicopters were of limited value in a support role and had to be supplemented with a ground LOC.

(C) General Abrams also reported significant damage inflicted on the enemy by LAMSON 719. The ARVN, he said, claimed 18,000 enemy dead compared to 1,530 of their own. The enemy he continued, had lost 4,000 individual weapons, 2,000 crew-served weapons, 500,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 20,000 tons of other

ammunition, 528 vehicles, 200,000 gallons of POL, and 1,200 tons of rice. Intelligence reports estimated that the equivalent of 16 enemy maneuver battalions had been eliminated and 75 to 80 of an estimated 110 tanks destroyed. General Abrams believed that the North Vietnamese loss of supplies through destruction, capture, and expenditure had drastically depleted already limited stocks in the area. Already there was evidence that the volume of enemy supplies reaching South Vietnam and Cambodia was less than one-fourth that for the same period of the preceding year.[82]

(U) Secretary Rogers gave a cautiously optimistic final public evaluation of LAMSON 719 to a British interviewer, concluding that

> General Abrams has told us--and I have great respect for his judgment--that some of the units in South Vietnam fought exceptionally well and their morale is good. They're very proud of the fact that they were able to invade a territory that's been controlled by the enemy for many years--5 or 6 years--and do it reasonably successfully.[83]

82. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 131115Z Apr 71, JCS IN 43904.

83. Dept of State Bulletin, 31 May 71, p. 687.

CHAPTER 2

POLICY AND STRATEGY, 1971-EARLY 1972

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff no longer sought expanded military operations in South Vietnam during 1971 and early 1972. The United States was withdrawing from that Southeast Asian country, and the removal of US forces, which had begun in mid-1969 and increased in 1970, accelerated during 1971 and the early months of 1972. At the start of 1971, more than 335,000 US troops remained in South Vietnam. During the course of the year, however, the United States took approximately 177,000 men out of Vietnam; by mid-year, no US forces participated in major ground combat operations; and when the enemy launched his April 1972 offensive, US strength, stood at less than 100,000 men. Although the United States was rapidly reducing its commitment in South Vietnam, there were continuing pressures for even greater reductions in force and activity levels. From within the Government came demands for faster withdrawals in order to reduce Southeast Asian expenditures, and public and Congressional critics of the war wanted expedited reduction of the US commitment in Vietnam. As a consequence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave considerable attention in this period to the determination of the size and schedules for the successive redeployment increments and to reconciling requirements, particularly air sortie rates, with available resources--matters that will be treated in later chapters. But, despite this pressure for larger and faster US withdrawals or, perhaps, because of it,

the President and his principal advisers conducted a series of assessments and reviews during 1971 and early 1972 of US policy and strategy in South Vietnam and the situations in Cambodia and Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, of course, participated in these efforts.

A Vietnam Review, April-July 1971

(U) United States policy toward Vietnam remained unchanged in 1971, President Nixon told the Congress in his foreign policy report on 25 February 1971. The "one irreducible objective" was "the opportunity for the South Vietnamese people to determine their own political future without outside interference." To accomplish this purpose, the President said, the United States would continue to pursue a negotiated settlement. But, failing in that, the United States would proceed with the transfer of combat operations to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and the withdrawal of US troops.[1]

(U) To accomplish this policy, COMUSMACV not only trained and prepared the South Vietnamese forces for the combat mission, but also continued to exert as much pressure as possible on the enemy within existing resources. These resources had declined dramatically by the beginning of 1971 and the South Vietnamese had taken over a large share of the ground war as US units increasingly restricted themselves to support and air operations.

1. Richard Nixon, "Second Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy," 25 Feb 71, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), pp. 219-345.

(U) Events in the spring of 1971 made it apparent that the drawdown of US forces and resources from South Vietnam would continue. On 7 April 1971, President Nixon announced another reduction in US strength. Citing the recently completed LAMSON 719 operation, he declared that Vietnamization had succeeded. Consequently, the United States would remove 100,000 additional troops between 1 May and 1 December 1971, reducing US strength to 184,000. "The American involvement in Vietnam is coming to an end," the President said. "The day the South Vietnamese can take over their own defense is in sight." Although the President did not publicly so state, all US ground personnel would be out of offensive combat operations by the summer and the United States would no longer have a combat reserve in South Vietnam. Heretofore, the United States had retained air and ground reserves in Vietnam capable of assisting the Vietnamese either against an attack or in an offensive of their own. By December, however, the Vietnamese would be more nearly on their own.[2]

(~~TS~~) In addition to the accelerated withdrawal of forces, budget considerations also affected US strategy and operations in South Vietnam in 1971. On 21 April 1971, the Secretary of Defense furnished the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Military Departments with the following planning guidance for the forthcoming FY 1973-1977 Defense program, including planning assumptions for South East Asia:

2. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 522-527

	End FY 1971	End FY 1972	End FY 1973
Maneuvers battalions	33	5	0
Tactical air sorties (per month)			
Air Force	10,000	5,000	0
Navy	3,600	1,800	1,800
Total	13,600	6,800	1,800
B-52 sorties (per month)	1,000	1,000	300[3]
Military manpower	254,700	100,000	43,400

(TS) The continuing US withdrawals as well as the limitation of funds would have an effect on operations in Vietnam, and shortly before the Secretary of Defense issued the budget guidance, he had asked for a review of military strategy for Vietnam. On 12 April 1971, he had noted that, since the last JCS assessment on this matter in July of the previous year, a number of major developments and trends had become evident. He listed: the sharp reduction of US forces, with a further reduction already announced by the President; the sustained improvement of the RVNAF and its recent successful operation in Laos; the continuing decline in the size and effectiveness of enemy forces and the reduced level of combat; and the economic, political, and pacification progress in South Vietnam. Accordingly, the Secretary wanted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reassess US strategy in light of these changes. Although the review should focus on the period mid-1971 through mid-1973, he instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff not to ignore the longer term. It was important, he told them, to consider fully the constraints

3. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2458/780, 23 Apr 71, JMF 555 (21 Apr 71) sec 1.

within which the United States must operate. The costs of any proposed strategy must be borne within available resources, and proposals for the RVNAF should not require significant added financial or manpower resources.[4]

(TS) The President at the same time wanted a complete assessment of the situation in South Vietnam covering the period from the current time through 1972. Accordingly, on 15 April 1971, Dr. Kissinger initiated a NSC review of Vietnam, tasking the Vietnam Special Studies Group and its member agencies to prepare a number of preliminary studies. Included were an estimate of possible enemy strategies, to be prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, and development of alternative RVNAF improvement packages,[5] the responsibility of the Department of Defense. Dr. Kissinger's tasking included several studies on political and economic matters in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, including a projection of economic stabilization prospects for the area, an assessment of possible regional cooperation, and an analysis of the political situation in South Vietnam.[6]

(S) The Senior Review Group considered several of the preliminary studies on 27 April, including the Central Intelligence Agency paper on the enemy options

4. (~~TS~~ GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/342, 14 Apr 71, JMF 907/520 (12 Apr 71).

5. The RVNAF improvement aspects of the Vietnam assessment are covered in Chapter 6.

6. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not participate in the preparation of the economic and political papers nor did any action result from them. Hence consideration of them has not been included herein. (~~TS~~ GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USec State, DepSec Def, DCI, and CJCS, 15 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/739, 16 Apr 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1.

and probable strategy choices during the given period. The Agency foresaw the following options: continued protracted war; a major offensive in Military Region 1, in Military Region 2, or in Cambodia; simultaneous offensives in both Military Regions 1 and 2; simultaneous offensives in Military Region 1 and Cambodia; or a major offensive throughout South Vietnam and in Cambodia. The Central Intelligence Agency believed that all of the options, except the last, were possible during the 1971-1972 dry season (October 1971 through May 1972). Summing up, the Central Intelligence Agency foresaw "progressively higher levels of combat over the next 12-18 months," probably focused upon MR 1, which was close to enemy supply lines, and MR 2, where the balance of forces was favorable to the enemy. By the early part of the next dry season (October-December 1971), North Vietnam could support an offensive in either region. By the middle of the season, the enemy would be able also to support an offensive in Cambodia or a simultaneous offensive in MRs 1 and 2. By June 1972, MR 1 and the highlands of MR 2 were the "most likely area for offensive action."[7]

(~~TS~~) Dr. Kissinger found the CIA estimate "helpful" as far as it went, but wanted it refined. He was concerned about the possible outcomes of the various options. He hoped to be able to advise the President not only on what the enemy might do, but also what the remaining US and South Vietnam forces could do if the

7. (~~S~~) CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "Hanoi's Options and Probable Strategy Choices During the Period from April 1971 through December 1972," 26 Apr 71, Encl to Att to (~~JCS~~-GP 3) JCS 2472/739-2, 30 Apr 71; (~~JCS~~-GP 1) J-5 Memo for Record, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on 27 April 1971 Concerning Vietnam Assessment (U)," 29 Apr 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-1, 3 May 71, same file.

enemy executed these options. Admiral Moorer volunteered to have an estimate prepared that would answer these questions.[8]

(TS) The study promised by Admiral Moorer was prepared by the Joint Staff and submitted to the Senior Review Group for a meeting on 24 May 1971. The Joint Staff reviewed the seven possible enemy options advanced by the Central Intelligence Agency and concluded that the enemy could meet the manpower requirements for all of the options. Logistics, however, would be the principal constraint on enemy capabilities. The Joint Staff believed an enemy offensive in the northern part of South Vietnam was possible as early as October 1971. Moreover, the Joint Staff expected the North Vietnamese to attempt "at least one dramatic tactical victory" in South Vietnam or Cambodia during 1972 in order to improve NVA morale and diminish US and RVN resolve.

(TS) In assessing the friendly situation and courses of action, the Joint Staff used a US force level of 184,000 on 1 December 1971 in accordance with the President's 7 April announcement. For the later period, three alternative forces were projected: 150,000 on 30 June 1972 declining to a MAAG level (roughly 50,000) by 30 June 1973; 100,000 on 30 June 1972 reducing to a MAAG level by 31 December 1972; and 50,000 on 30 June 1972 remaining at that ceiling. Within these varying force levels, the Joint Staff listed approaches available to the allies: to meet the

8. (TS-GP 1) J-5 Memo for Record, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on 27 April 1971 Concerning 'Vietnam Assessment' (U)," 29 Apr 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-1, same file.

varying enemy threats by temporarily redeploying RVNAF units from low-threat areas or from the General Reserve, by permanently redistributing RVNAF forces, or by deploying ROK forces; to conduct a preemptive offensive; or to accelerate further the improvement of the RVNAF.

(TS) After comparing enemy capabilities against friendly courses of actions, the Joint Staff concluded that the forces remaining in South Vietnam on 1 December 1971 could meet the assumed threat without a major redistribution through normal use of the RVNAF General Reserve. It appeared unlikely, therefore, that the enemy could significantly set back pacification progress or RVN security prior to that time. Thereafter, the situation in South Vietnam would vary in accordance with the alternative US force structure assumed. At the 150,000 level, the enemy threat could be met through normal use of the General Reserve; at 100,000, the enemy could be contained with "some difficulty" by permanently strengthening selective RVN forces in Military Regions 1 and 2 and using the General Reserve in those regions as required; at 50,000, the threat could be met in 1972 but with increased risk because of major reductions in US support available to the RVNAF. Regardless of the US force size, the Joint Staff considered air power crucial to allied success and advocated an aggressive air interdiction program, at least through the 1972-1973 dry season.

(TS) With respect to enemy courses of action, the Joint Staff concluded that, although an attack in Military Region 1 in 1972 was the easiest course for the enemy to support, chances for success were limited. The enemy would be engaging not only the best of the

RVNAF forces but also forces that could easily be reinforced by the RVNAF General Reserve. Prospects for the enemy were better in Military Region 2, where the RVN forces were "less capable." A simultaneous enemy offensive in both Military Regions 1 and 2, though unlikely, could cause "political reprecussions" in both Saigon and Washington. An offnsive in Cambodia, for which the enemy had only marginal capabilities, could increase the direct threat to the lower portion of South Vietnam. The Joint Staff concluded with a caveat that the conclusions were not valid for 1973 and might in any case be invalidated by political developments, which had not been considered.[9]

(TS) The Senior Review Group considered the Joint Staff assessment on 24 May 1971. The members decided that further studies were needed, which should focus on the two lower alernative US manpower figures assumed by the Joint Staff (100,000 and 50,000); by implication at least, the 150,000-man strength was rejected. The VSSG working group was instructed to prepare a new paper to analyze probable enemy strategies; the adequacy of friendly forces to meet each strategy (in terms of deficits or surpluses of battalions); the ability of the currently planned RVNAF to meet the probable threats through temporary redeployments with mid-1972 US force levels of 100,000 or 50,000; and ways of improving the RVNAF to cope with the situation in 1972. The Department of Defense was to study alternative force structures for the 100,000 and 50,000 manpower levels. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were to submit by

9. (TS) JCS RVN Assessment, May 1971, Encl to Att to (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/739-6, 27 May 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 2. The record indicates that the assessment was prepared by the Joint Staff and submitted directly to the Chairman, without being formally

10 June 1971 a study of ARVN cross-border actions that might be taken in 1972 to disrupt enemy supply activities in southern Laos and Cambodia.[10]

(TS) The study of alternative US force structures was undertaken by the Joint Staff at the request of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). On 2 June 1971, the Director of the Joint Staff gave the Assistant Secretary illustrative models for US structures at levels of 50,000 and 100,000 in mid-1972. The models assumed alternate mission priorities of "support" or "retrograde." The former placed emphasis on the provision of combat and service support for the RVNAF while the latter stressed increased combat service support for accelerated retrograde of US materiel at the sacrifice of combat support, adviser, and intelligence functions. The Director cautioned the Assistant Secretary that the models were illustrative only and relayed the COMUSMACV position that while a mid-1972 force level of 100,000 could be met with acceptable risks, a 50,000 level could not. The Director's paper was sent to the SRG members on 8 June 1971.[11]

considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There is no indication how the assessment was transmitted to the Senior Review Group.

10. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, DCI, and CJCS, 26 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-4, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1.

11. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 27 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-7, 27 May 71; (TS-GP 3) DJSM 1023-71 to ASD(ISA), 2 Jun 71, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/739-7, 21 Jun 71; JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger et al., 8 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-11, 10 Jun 71, same file, sec 3.

(TS) On 8 June 1971, the NSC staff circulated a VSSG working group summary paper on the Vietnam assessment, as requested by the Senior Review Group on 24 May 1971. The group first reviewed the probable threat to South Vietnam in 1972. Although enemy intentions were not known, it was probable that the tempo of enemy action would exceed that of the previous three years. The paper set forth as the "most probable" enemy option in 1972 the conduct of a major multi-battalion offensive of 5 to 10 days' duration in Military Region 1 while continuing protracted war throughout the remainder of South Vietnam and in Cambodia; the worst case was a multi-battalion attack simultaneously in Military Regions 1 and 2 or in Military Region 1 and in Cambodia, though the working group believed such possibilities were only marginally feasible.

(TS) The working group next analyzed the relation between these threats and the balance of forces and projected a shortfall in friendly main force strength in Military Region 1. The RVNAF would need a permanent force augmentation there even for protracted war. On the other hand, if friendly forces in Cambodia operated effectively enough to hold the enemy to protracted war in Military Regions 3 and 4, the RVNAF should have a surplus amounting to as much as one division in Military Region 3 and up to 1 1/2 divisions in Military Region 4, in addition to the current 18 battalion general reserve. On balance, it seemed likely that the RVNAF might be able to cope with the most probable enemy threat, but should the worst threat develop, loss of substantial areas in Military Region 1 and Military Region 2 was likely.

(TS) The summary paper concluded with a discussion of possible improvements in the RVNAF to counter the shortfalls in Military Regions 1 and 2. It considered qualitative improvement of existing forces, redistribution of existing units, and possible increases in the RVNAF to 1,200,000 men, but no conclusions or preferences on the alternatives were included.[12]

(TS) The Senior Review Group resumed its discussion of the threat in Vietnam on 9 June 1971. Dr. Kissinger expressed the belief that the recent discussions had provided "a much better understanding" of present and projected situations. The Senior Review Group agreed that the threat facing the RVNAF at probable US force levels in 1972 (that is, 100,000 or 50,000 men) was serious and that urgent measures must be taken to strengthen further the South Vietnamese forces. Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard agreed to provide a final set of alternatives for RVNAF improvement for Presidential consideration.[13]

(TS) On 10 June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to Secretary Laird's request for a study of possible RVNAF cross-border operations against enemy supply activities in southern Laos and Cambodia. They assumed that the war would continue more or less as before

12. (TS) Memo, Director, Program Analysis, NSC Staff to members of VSSG, 8 Jun 71, Encl to Att to (TS-GP 1) JCS 2472/739-12, 14 Jun 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 3.

13. (TS-GP 1) Memo for Record by BG Adrian St. John, Chief, Strategic Plans and Policy Div., J-5, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on 9 June 1971 Concerning 'Vietnam Assessment' (U)," 11 Jun 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-15, 14 Jun 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to DepSecDef, USecState, CJCS, and DCI, 15 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-17, 16 Jun 71; JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 4.

through 1972, that the RVNAF would continue to improve, and that monthly air sortie rates would be maintained at the following levels: tactical air, 10,000 in FY 1972, 8,000 in FY 1973; B-52, 1,000 through both FYs; gunship, 700 for 1972, with the 1973 rate still to be determined. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that additional funds would be required to support these sortie levels.

(~~TS~~) In presenting their alternatives for cross-border operations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that the ideal method of shutting off enemy supplies would be to interdict them "at or near the source," meaning North Vietnam; however, they recognized that such an operation was out of the question. The three alternatives that they submitted for actual consideration were as follows:

1. A major offensive into southeastern Cambodia, followed or accompanied by one into northern Cambodia, plus multi-battalion raids into southern Laos and unconventional warfare in Laos and northern Cambodia at present or higher levels.

2. Same as the preceding, except for omission of the offensive into northern Cambodia.

3. Continued operations at reduced levels in the border areas of southern Cambodia, with small-scale raids against specific targets in border areas of southern Laos and northereastern Cambodia and continued unconventional warfare in Laos and northern Cambodia.

(~~TS~~) Of the three, the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred the first, but observed that it would probably become infeasible in early 1972 because of limited resources. The second was less desirable, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered it the most effective

choice possible in 1972. They dismissed the final alternative as not prudent since it would foster a long-term decline in RVN security.[14]

(U) The Secretary of Defense forwarded the JCS study to the Senior Review Group, stating that it was intended to supplement the earlier Joint Staff assessment. No action, however, was taken by the Senior Review Group on this study.[15]

(TS) Also on 10 June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense their review of military strategy in Southeast Asia as requested on 12 April. They took note of the favorable developments that the Secretary had cited: the progress of allied forces, the improvement of the RVNAF, the decline of enemy strength, and the general improvement in the situation in Vietnam. Nonetheless, they pointed out, the enemy retained the capability to continue offensive and defensive operations, and there was no evidence that the North Vietnamese had relinquished their goals of unification of Vietnam and domination of all of Indochina. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assumed that the Peoples Republic of China and the Soviet Union would continue to supply materiel and training assistance and advice to North Vietnam. In an assessment of possible enemy operations in the FY 1972-1973 period, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave much the forecast as

14. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-270-71 to SecDef, 10 Jun 71 (derived from JCS 2472/739-8), JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 2.

15. Memo, SecDef to USecState, CJCS, DCI, and Dr. Kissinger, 22 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-20, 23 Jun 71, same file, sec 4.

the one contained in the earlier Joint Staff assessment--continued protracted war with periodic "high points" in South Vietnam and Cambodia and, possibly, a major offensive in late 1972 or early 1973.

(TS) As to allied capabilities for the same period, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that US redeployment was proceeding at a faster rate than had been assumed during the planning for RVNAF development. As currently projected, US withdrawals during the next several months would reduce US forces to a point where the ground troops could only defend the remaining US forces and installations. They added, however, that the RVNAF combat elements, together with US combat and air support remaining through December, could still meet the threat in South Vietnam, support operations in Cambodia, and interdict enemy lines of communications. Under the planned redeployments from 1 December 1971 to the fall of 1972, US capability would be reduced "dramatically." At a force level of 100,000, the US combat support for the RVNAF would be restricted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated. Below a 60,000-man level, US support would be "minimal." The Joint Chiefs of Staff also warned that the air activity levels prescribed in the Secretary's budget planning guidelines of 21 April were inadequate.

(TS) In considering military strategy for Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff maintained that continued effective air interdiction would be essential. In addition, they said, any adequate allied military strategy must include ground interdiction operations "at the maximum level of intensity" reasonable with the resources available. They then provided three military strategies, designated I, II, and III, which differed

primarily in the level of interdiction envisioned. All three provided for continued in-country operations by national forces, supplemented in each case by one of the three proposals for RVNAF cross-border operations as already set forth by the Joint Chief of Staff.[16] Of the three combinations the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred Strategy I, which called for the highest level of military activity, through the third quarter of FY 1972, and thereafter Strategy II, with a somewhat lower level. They also recommended provision of US air support levels of 10,000 monthly tactical air sorties in FY 1972 and 8,000 in FY 1973 and 1,000 monthly B-52 sorties throughout both fiscal years. Additional costs for these air activity levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, should be offset with supplemental funding.[17]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense evidently disapproved the JCS recommendations, which received no further consideration.[18] Meantime, on 18 June 1971, the Deputy Secretary of Defense provided the other members of the Senior Review Group the final set of alternatives for RVNAF improvement as he had agreed to do on 9 June. The Deputy Secretary summarized the Group's general agreement that the enemy could support protracted war with associated high points throughout 1972. The greatest threat was toward the northern part of the Republic of Vietnam (Military Region 1), although offensives in Military Region 2 or in Cambodia were

16. See pp. 79-80.

17. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-269-71 to SecDef, 10 Jun 71, Encl A to JCS 2339/342-1, 5 Jun 71, JMF 907/520 (12 Apr 71).

18. OSD files indicated that JCSM-269-71 was referred to the ASD(ISA) who, subsequently, determined that no further action was required.

also possible. This threat, coupled with continuing US redeployments, would result in "a potentially significant shortfall" of South Vietnamese units in the two northern military regions of South Vietnam. This situation could lead to a short term enemy success in that area, such as the capture of a major population center or the defeat of a major ARVN unit, and, in turn, to a temporary reversal of progress in Vietnamization and pacification. To prevent such an occurrence, the Deputy Secretary presented three alternative methods of strengthening the RVNAF:

> 1. Continued efforts to improve the RVNAF, plus temporary redeployment of forces from the General Reserve (normally based in Military Region 3) to meet the projected threat in Military Regions 1 and 2.
>
> 2. Same as the preceding, plus a permanent increase in the forces allotted to Military Regions 1 and 2 within the current ceiling of 1.1 million men, by moving forces from other Military Regions or by inactivating units elsewhere to make men available for new units in those Regions.
>
> 3. Expansion of the RVNAF to 1.2 million men, permitting the creation of two new divisions from the 100,000-man increase.

The Deputy Secretary also presented two US redeployment options for 1972: withdrawal at an approximate rate of 12,500 men per month to reach a level of 100,000 by the end of FY 1972 and a 50,000 to 100,000 level at the end of the first quarter of FY 1973; or withdrawal at a monthly rate of 17,700 achieving a 50,000 to 70,000

strength by the close of FY 1972. The latter was preferred by the Secretary of Defense.[19]

(TS) On 23 June 1971, Admiral Moorer suggested to the Secretary of Defense another possible means of reducing the enemy threat to Military Regions 1 and 2. He relayed a suggestion by COMUSMACV to create a buffer zone around Military Region 1 in order to deny the enemy free access to its northern portion. The zone would extend from the DMZ to 18° north and into the Laotian panhandle, and tactical air would be employed within this zone to eliminate surface-to-air missile sites, antiaircraft artillery installations, airfields, and transshipment points. Although Admiral Moorer judged the concept "militarily feasible" and believed that it could increase the security of the northern portion of the Republic of Vietnam, he forwarded it to the Secretary only for information. He doubted that it could be implemented because of the current "domestic and political situation." The Secretary concurred in this opinion a few days later, and the suggestion received no further consideration.[20]

(S) After consideration of the Senior Review Group's assessment of the military situation in Vietnam, the President decided on 3 July that the United States would provide additional support to strengthen the RVNAF. He selected the second alternative set forth in the Deputy Secretary of Defense's 18 June paper; the United States would provide quality improvement in

19. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger, CJCS, USecState, and DCI, 18 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-19, 21 Jun 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 4.

20. (TS-GP 1) CM-995-71 to SecDef, 23 Jun 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Actions Which Would Reduce the Risks to MRs 1 and 2, RVN (TS)," 29 Jun 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 71.

RVNAF plus reallocation of forces within the regions of South Vietnam. The President directed immediate implementation of this decision, but he did not act at this time on the question of the rate of US redeployment, which the Deputy Secretary had raised.[21]

(U) Finally, after nearly three months of effort, the NSC Vietnam assessment was complete, but it brought no changes in US strategy. In fact, the United States had reached the point where it no longer had a choice of military strategies in Vietnam. United States troops no longer participated in offensive ground operations, and US influence on strategy was restricted to the conduct of air operations, the provision of combat support for the RVNAF, and leverage on the South Vietnamese through the amount of assistance furnished for improvement and modernization of their forces.

A Review of the Cambodian Situation

(~~TS~~) Assessment of policy and strategy for the war in 1971 could no longer be restricted to South Vietnam alone. The previous year had seen the conflict move into neighboring Cambodia when US and SVN forces had invaded that country to flush out enemy forces and bases. Although all US forces were withdrawn by 30 June 1970, RVNAF operations in Cambodia with US air support, proceeded throughout the remainder of 1970 and during 1971. Moreover, the United States continued the air interdiction operations in Laos that had begun in 1964, and the RVNAF with US support launched the massive LAMSON 719 attack into Laos in February 1971 (described in the preceding chapter). Now the war had

21. (~~S~~-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 118, 3 Jul 71, JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs. For implementation of the President's decision for improvement of the RVNAF, see Chapter 6.

spread to both Cambodia and Laos--a factor that US officials had to consider in any review of the situation in the spring of 1971.

(~~TS~~) In April 1971, just a few days prior to his call for the Vietnam assessment, the President also directed an "on the ground" investigation of the military situation in Cambodia. Dr. Kissinger informed the Secretaries of State and Defense on 8 April 1971 that the President wanted a "small elite team" of not more than three persons to study the capabilities of the Forces Armees Nationales Khmeres (FANK) and their proper role in the Vietnam war.[22]

(~~TS~~) The assessment team, consisting of three Department of Defense representatives,[23] visited Cambodia and submitted its findings to the Secretary of Defense on 14 May 1971. The team reported that, during the past year, the enemy had been deprived of his Cambodian sanctuary and forced to withdraw over half of his forces from MR 3 in South Vietnam to protect supply lines in Cambodia. Already the ARVN had seized the initiative by deploying troops into Cambodia, forcing the enemy onto the defensive. The FANK, however, had not been able to gain the offensive, and much smaller NVA forces held the initiative over a much larger FANK. Of more concern to the assessment team was evidence that the NVA was undertaking to build up the small communist group in Cambodia (the Khmer Rouge)

22. (~~TS~~) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secs State and Def, "Assessment of Military Situation in Cambodia," 8 Apr 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

23. The representatives comprised an officer from the Plans and Policy Directorate, J-5, of the Joint Staff; a military officer from the office of the ASD-(ISA); and a civilian from the office of the ASD(ISA). (~~TS~~) JCS 1730 to CINCPAC, 182245Z Apr 71.

and other dissident elements into a strong Khmer Communist Party. This effort posed the danger of a civil war in Cambodia that would tie down the FANK and threaten the existence of the noncommunist government. Such a danger was more to be feared than possible NVA high point attacks in Cambodia.

(TS) The team noted the light tempo of combat in Cambodia. Eighty-five percent of the FANK had defensive missions and operations were short ranged. The team considered only 35 percent of the Cambodian forces trained and ready for combat. Artillery and air support was inadequate and satisfactory communications and transportation systems did not exist. The team predicted that the period through November 1972 would be used by both sides for preparation.

(TS) The team believed that the government of Premier Lon Nol had failed to mobilize its resources to carry out its strategy, which called for securing its hold on the main centers of population and extending control as its military and economic strength increased. If the Cambodian Government did not meet its goals within approximately a year, the team warned, the probability of success would decrease "with each passing day." Cambodia's three major needs were for a training capability, an adequate logistics base, and an overall strategic plan. Proper US support was also essential. So far, the team complained, the objective of US policy in the country appeared to be to maintain a "low profile," rather than preserving the Cambodian Government. It would also be necessary for the United States to develop adequate measures of progress against

military objectives, such as had been done in South Vietnam.

(~~TS~~) The assessment team also examined the US Military Assistance Program (MAP) for Cambodia. The United States had initiated this effort the previous year and the current objective was the creation of a FANK of 220,000 men by the end of FY 1972. But the team found some conflict over this goal. The US Military Equipment Delivery Team (MEDT), the agency responsible for administering the program in Cambodia, favored the 220,000-man force; the US Embassy, on the other hand, opposed it as requiring too large and conspicuous a US advisory effort.[24]

(~~TS~~) On 7 June 1971, the Senior Review Group, after hearing a presentation of the findings of the team, discussed the Cambodian situation at some length. The Department of State representative spoke of a need to determine US objectives in Cambodia and warned of political constraints against a large US presence there. Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, representing the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described Cambodia as having military potential but stressed the need for a larger US aid effort, including an increase in the small US advisory force there. Dr. Kissinger commented that Cambodia had not made effective use of the assistance already furnished. After some further discussion, the Group reached the following decisions:

24. (~~TS~~) Report of Assessment Team, "A Department of Defense Assessment of the Military Situation in Cambodia, 18 April 1971-15 May 1971," n.d., Att to memo of transmittal to SecDef, 14 May 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

1. The Joint Chiefs of Staff would prepare a military assistance plan aimed at improving the logistics and training capabilities of the FANK and supplying additional equipment. The plan would include an examination of strategy alternatives and would give particular attention to the extension of control by the Cambodian Government over the countryside.

2. The United States would emphasize to the Cambodian Government the vital need to strengthen Cambodian military capabilities and to improve operational effectiveness.

3. The question of the number of US advisory personnel in Cambodia would be resolved in light of the military assistance plan. Neither a high nor a low "profile" was desired as such; the size of the advisory group would be based upon the need, tempered by the possibility of stationing some advisors outside Cambodia or, at most, assigning them to Cambodia temporarily.

Three days later, the Secretary of Defense formally tasked the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the preparation of the plan requested by the Senior Review Group, specifying that the proposed aid program should use the planning figure of 220,000 already approved.[25]

25. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, and CJCS, 11 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2366/54, 14 Jun 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1. (~~TS~~-GP 3) ASD(ISA) Memo for Record, "SRG Mtg on Cambodian Assessment," n.d., Att to JCS 2366/54-1, 15 Jun 71, same file, sec 2. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2366/52-1, 11 Jun 71, JMF 880 (CY 1971).

(TS) In preparing their response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had available a CINCPAC report of a conference held at COMUSMACV's headquarters during the period 14-18 May 1971 on the situation in Cambodia. The conference had reached much the same conclusions as the Department of Defense assessment team. The enemy was currently following a protracted war strategy in Cambodia, attempting to restore lines of communications and to interdict major highways to isolate population centers. Should the enemy be able to rebuild depleted stockpiles in Cambodia, he would probably conduct "limited offensive operations" to secure his "logistical lifeline" throughout the eastern part of the country. The conferees agreed that the FANK needed both technical and military assistance, which, however, should aim at providing unsophisticated and basic equipment such as the Cambodians could use and maintain.[26]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense on 30 June 1971 recommended programs and actions designed to improve the "productivity of US efforts to assist Cambodia and increase effectiveness of the Cambodian Armed Forces." They cautioned that the task was an "extremely ambitious undertaking."

(TS) With respect to the strategy for Cambodia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff used the one developed the previous fall and approved by the President on 26 October 1970 in National Security Decision Memorandum 89.[27]

26. (TS-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 23 May 71, Att to JCS 2366/51, 26 May 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

27. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 311-312.

Hence the preservation of the Government of Cambodia was judged militarily beneficial to Vietnamization as long as the costs were limited and US forces were not committed to Cambodian defense. Consequently, US efforts would focus primarily on Vietnamization in South Vietnam, while providing economic and military assistance to Cambodia and encouraging RVN and Thai forces to assit the Government of Cambodia in defending its territory.

(~~PS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff recalled that support of Cambodia with Military Assistance Program (MAP) funds began in May 1970. Current planning provided for a MAP-supported FANK of 220,000 men at the end of FY 1972, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted a recommended force structure to meet that goal, together with a paramilitary force structure of 143,000 men. The Department of Defense had asked the Congress for $200 million in FY 1972 MAP funds for that purpose, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff now doubted that such an amount would be sufficient. They expected final MAP costs for Cambodia for FY 1972 to be between $325 and $350 million. They suggested that pressure on the MAP budget might be alleviated by using AID funds where appropriate. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also submitted plans for training the FANK, for logistic support of the Government of Cambodia, for counterinsurgency programs in Cambodia, and for improvement of FANK operational capabilities.

(~~PS~~) More US personnel would be needed to administer an expanded Cambodian MAP, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended 179 additional personnel (83 US military, 2 US civilians, and the remainder third country nationals) for the Military Equipment Delivery

Team. Moreover, they proposed 450 additional personnel (all US military except for 40 contract personnel) in South Vietnam to support the US assistance effort in Cambodia. These increases would raise the number of personnel involved in Cambodian MAP to a total of 202 in Cambodia and 790 in South Vietnam.[28]

(S) On 15 July 1971, the Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of his agreement with their interpretation of US strategy as approved in NSDM 89. At the same time, he believed that several aspects of their submission needed refinement. With regard to the JCS plans for the FANK, Mr. Packard wanted improvement of Cambodian training cadre stressed rather than use of third country facilities and personnel. "The development of early Cambodian self-sufficiency in training," he said, "should be a defined goal of the program." At the same time, he warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was unlikely that additional MAP funds for Cambodia, over and above the $200 million budget request, would be approved. He also viewed the JCS proposals for additional personnel to administer the MAP for Cambodia as "a major change in the character of the assistance program and US involvement. He feared that such increases would receive unfavorable Congressional and public reaction. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to revise their proposals to reflect his comments.[29]

28. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-311-71 to SecDef, 30 Jun 71, Encl to JCS 2366/54-3, 30 Jun 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 2.

29. (S-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 15 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-4, 16 Jul 71, same file, sec 2A.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed their Cambodian proposals and presented the results to the Secretary of Defense on 30 August 1971. They reduced the projected funding requirements for a FANK structure of 220,000 to $275 million and recommended that the FY 1972 Cambodian MAP be funded at that level. Since this figure was $75 million above the current Department of Defense budget request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested several possible reductions in case additional funds could not be provided. These included postponement of various costs to FY 1973 or FY 1974, seeking a transfer of AID funds to the Cambodian MAP, or reducing the FANK manpower goal to 177,000. The number of personnel required to administer the Cambodian MAP was reduced to 402 in South Vietnam while the number in Cambodia was maintained at 202. The number of US personnel, however, could be reduced to 468 (106 in Cambodia and 362 in South Vietnam) by using FANK mobile training teams and third-country nationals. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also revised the plans to improve the FANK in conformance with the Deputy Secretary's guidance concerning self-sufficiency and use of Cambodian facilities and potential. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested a decision on Cambodian assistance by 1 October in order to draw up a "realistic program definition and funding estimates" for the FY 1973 Cambodian MAP before 1 December 1971.[30]

(S) No decision on the Cambodian program had been made by 1 October, but on 16 October, Secretary Laird informed the Secretary of State that he had reviewed

30. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-392-71 to SecDef, 30 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2366/54-6, 23 Aug 71, same file, sec 3.

the JCS recommendations on Cambodia and reached several tentative decisions. Training facilities, within Cambodia and outside, would be established to provide training for a FANK of 220,000 men to be attained by December 1972. For this purpose, eight more persons would be required for the MEDT in Cambodia. A logistics assistance program for Cambodia would be authorized, using third-country contract personnel. Deputy COMUSMACV General Fred C. Weyand, USA, as the US military representative to the Tripartite Committee, would be responsible for improving the effectiveness of military operations in Cambodia.

(C) The estimated cost of this program for Cambodia was approximately $252 million, or $52 million more than the amount in the budget. The Secretary of Defense planned to authorize actions within his department to reduce the shortfall to $40 million, and he asked the Secretary of State for a "firm commitment" to provide this $40 million from funds under Department of State control. Otherwise in order to keep within the $200 million ceiling, it would be necessary to reduce the manpower goal for the FANK to "about 180,000 men," delaying the projected timetable for extension of FANK control of the countryside.[31]

(TS) Secretary Laird's letter served as the basis for discussion of the Cambodian assistance program at a meeting of the Senior Review Group on 18 October 1971. Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard reiterated that $250 million was required for a 220,000-man force in FY 1972, although "it may be possible to adjust somewhat." The Senior Review Group agreed that $310 million FY 1972 economic and military assistance (without breaking

31. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 16 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-8, 19 Oct 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 4.

down that figure) in the President's budget request was essential to achieve US objectives in Cambodia. Further, the Group set a planning goal of a trained Cambodian force of 220,000 by January 1973. Since it was uncertain how much military assistance the Congress would approve for Cambodia for FY 1972, the Senior Review Group asked the Department of Defense to analyze three alternative military assistance programs for FY 1972 at levels of $200, $225, and $250 million, indicating the differences in program composition and in offensive FANK capability at the end of FY 1972.[32]

(C) The Secretary of Defense submitted the analysis of the three alternative MAPS to Dr. Kissinger on 20 October. A funding level of $250 million, which the Secretary recommended, would support a force structure of 220,000, allowing the Government of the Khmer Republic to consolidate control throughout the southern part of the country. At the $225 million level, attainment of the 220,000 goal would have to be postponed until 1973, with resulting increase in costs in that year. A $200 million program would require a reduction of the force objective to 185,000,

32. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SpecAsst to Pres for NSA (signed by BG Haig) to USecState, DepSecDef, DCI, and Admin. AID, 20 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-10, 22 Oct 71; (TS-GP 4) Memo for Record by Dir East Asia and Pacific Region, ASD(ISA), "Senior Review Group Meeting--Cambodian MAP and Supporting Assistance," 20 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-11, 20 Oct 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo for Record by Chief Far East-Southeast Asia Div, J-5, "NSC SRG Meeting on Cambodia," 19 Oct 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/54-12, 22 Oct 71; JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 4.

jeopardizing the ability of the Cambodian forces to extend control over the countryside.[33]

(TS) In the end, no further funds for the FY 1972 Cambodian MAP were approved. On 1 December 1971, the Secretary of State informed Secretary Laird that, even though Congress had not yet completed action on appropriations for FY 1972, it appeared that no additional funds would be available for the Cambodian MAP. Hence, Secretary Rogers continued, "we should plan on a MAX figure ov $200 million." Nor did the Nixon Administration ask the Congress for further MAP funds for Cambodia, apparently anticipating that such an action would elicit adverse reaction. In fact, even the $200 million figure was not accepted by the Congress, which approved only $180 million in MAP funds for Cambodia in FY 1972.[34]

The Management of Military Assistance in Cambodia

(U) Not only the amount of military asistance for Cambodia, but the procedures and organization for the administration of this assistance as well caused

33. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, 20 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-13, 1 Nov 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 4.

34. (TS-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 1 Dec 71, Att to JCS 2366/54-14, 6 Dec 71, same file. (S) ASD (ISA), International Security Assistance Program, Military Assistance Program, Congressional Presentation FY 1972, 9 Mar 71; (S) ASD(ISA) Security Assistance Program, Milivary Assistance Program and Foreign Military Sales, Congressional Presentation FY 1972, 18 Mar 72; OASD(ISA) Files. (U) Interview, Willard J. Webb with F.X. Nelson, Defense Security Assistance Agency, OASD(ISA), 16 Jul 75.

problems within the US Government. This matter was hinted at during the SRG consideration of Cambodia in the JCS recommendations for greatly increased numbers of personnel to support the military assistance effort in Cambodia and in the Deputy Secretary of Defense's direction to limit the number to the minimum necessary. But the question of control and supervision of the military assistance program for Cambodia was more involved and of longer standing.

(~~C~~) To administer the US military assistance in Cambodia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended and the Secretary of Defense had approved in December 1970 the creation of the Military Equipment Delivery Team (MEDT). In their recommendation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had urged a team of approximately 110 personnel, but the Secretary approved only 60, stipulating that no more than ten might be assigned in Cambodia initially. The Secretary recognized that actual experience might demonstrate a necessity for a larger team, implying that he was willing to consider requests for expansion of the team after it was functioning.[35]

(~~TS~~) A joint State-Defense message of 8 January 1971 informed the US Ambassadors in Cambodia and South Vietnam and CINCPAC of the activation of the Military Equipment Delivery Team with an initial strength of 60 people. Of these not more than 16 would be assigned to Cambodia, including six already there; the remainder, including the Chief, would be located in South Vietnam, with temporary duty authorized in Cambodia as needed and as agreed to by the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission in Phnom Penh. Interagency discussions were under way regarding supervision of the MEDT. Since the

35. (~~TS~~-GP 1) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 315-316.

previous fall, the Political-Military Counselor of the Embassy in Phnom Penh had served as the Special Representative of CINCPAC for Military Assistance and that arrangement would continue. The MEDT members permanently stationed in Cambodia would be assigned to the US Embassy for duty on the staff of the Political-Military Counselor. The military command channel would run from the Secretary of Defense through CINCPAC to the Chief of the MEDT.[36]

(TS) Subsequently, on 27 January 1971, CINCPAC submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff terms of reference for the Military Equipment Delivery Team developed by representatives from his headquartrers, from COMUSMACV, and from the US Embassy in Phnom Penh. An accompanying joint table of distribution provided for an initial strength of 60 for the team with an eventual authorization of 113.

(TS) The proposed terms of reference set forth the mission of the Military Equipment Delivery Team as the administration and direction of the military assistance program for Cambodia. The team would be headed by a chief who would serve "under the military command of CINCPAC" and would be immediately subordinate to him. At the same time, the MEDT chief would function "under the supervision of" and "have direct access to" the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission in Cambodia and would keep him fully informed regarding plans and activities of the MEDT. Irreconcilable differences with the Chief of the Diplomatic Mission would be referred by the Chief of the MEDT through appropriate channels "to higher authnority" for settlement.

36. (TS) Msg, Joint State-Def Msg (State 3780) to Phnom Penh, Saigon, and CINCPAC, 8 Jan 71, JCS IN 32557.

(~~TS~~) The proposed MEDT terms of reference named COMUSMACV as the coordinating authority to insure that US military assistance to Cambodia was compatible with the Vietnamization program. The MEDT chief was to coordinate closely with the commander in South Vietnam. The Counselor for Political-Military Affairs, US Embassy Phnom Penh, under the overall supervision of the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission, would continue to serve as the CINCPAC Special Representative for Military Assistance; in that capacity he was authorized direct communication with CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and the Chief of the Military Equipment Delivery Team.[37]

(~~TS~~) While these terms of reference were in the last stages of preparation, CINCPAC and Mr. Emory C. Swank, the US Ambassador in Phnom Penh, exchanged a series of messages on the relationship and responsibilities of the Military Equipment Delivery Team within the US Diplomatic Mission. The Ambassador suggested the MEDT terms of reference be revised to specify that the Chief of the US Diplomatic Mission was responsible for and controlled the military assistance program for Cambodia and that all aspects of the program would be coordinated with the Chief of the Diplomatic Mission or his designated representative before implementation. Admiral McCain, however, did not consider it appropriate to outline the responsibilities of the Chief of the Diplomatic Mission in the MEDT terms of reference. Ambassador Swank concurred in that position provided

37. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 27 Jan 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-2, 1 Feb 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

their message exchange "is considered to constitue part of the agreement," and CINCPAC agreed.[38]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred in both the joint table of distribution and the terms of reference and forwared them to the Secretary of Defense for approval on 23 February. They told him that the joint table of distribution reflected their earlier view that approximately 110 personnel would ultimately be needed to supervise the military assistance program for Cambodia. As the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, was reduced in strength, many functions currently performed by that command in support of Cambodian military assistance would have to be assumed by the Military Equipment Delivery Team, which therefore would need additional personnel.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff brought to the Secretary's attention the message exchange between CINCPAC and Ambassador Swank concerning the functions of the MEDT and its relationship with the US Diplomatic Mission in Cambodia. Since these messages could be considered as abridging the responsibilities of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not consider them to be a part of the terms of reference.[39]

(C) On 16 March 1971, the Secretary of Defense approved the MEDT terms of reference (with minor editorial changes) and the table of distribution. He

38. (C) Msg, Phnom Penh 286 to CINCPAC, 23 Jan 71, JCS IN 57899. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to Phnom Penh, 242142Z Jan 71, JCS IN 60137. (TS-GP 1) Msg, Phnom Penh 337 to CINCPAC, 26 Jan 71, JCS IN 62906. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to Phnom Penh, 270351Z Jan 71, JCS IN 64495.

39. (S-GP 4) JCSM-81-71 to SecDef, 23 Feb 71, Encl A to JCS 2366/44-3, 16 Feb 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

authorized CINCPAC in coordination with the US Ambassador in Cambodia to enlarge the team up to the strength provided for in the joint table as necessary for support of the Cambodian military assistance program. Adjustments to the existing limit of 16 MEDT members in Phnom Penh would be "subject to approval of the Secretary of Defense in coordination with the Secretary of State without reopening the issue of the terms of reference." On the same day, Secretary Laird sent the Secretary of State the terms of reference and the table of distribution. He added that the Department of Defense considered the message exchange between CINCPAC and Ambassador Swank "an acceptable field interpretation of the language of the TOR though not actually constituting a formal part of the TOR." He also informed Secretary Rogers that the terms of reference would become effective four days later.[40]

(S) A week later, the Secretary of State wrote to Secretary Laird: "It is difficult to understand why, on a matter of this importance, we should be presented with a document which is proposed to become effective four days after receipt by us." He was willing to concur in the terms of reference with the understanding that the message exchange between CINCPAC and Ambassador Swank was "an authoritative confirmation" of the language used in the terms of reference. If the message exchange was not so accepted, then he would have to insist on certain changes in the document to reflect accurately the status of the Chief of Mission as

40. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-4, 17 Mar 71, same file, sec 2. The SecDef ltr to SecState was not found, but it is discussed in the above SecDef memo to CJCS and in (TS-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 23 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-5, 24 Mar 71, same file.

defined by Presidential directives. The two most significant changes would make the Chief of the Military Equipment Delivery Team "a part of" the US Diplomatic Mission and would require the entry into Cambodia of all MEDT personnel of the rear echelon to be subject to authorization by the Ambassador, rather than in "coordination with" the Ambassador as set forth in the terms of reference.

(S) The Secretary of State concurred "generally" with the joint table of distribution, noting that certain passages in the statement of functions appeard to be open to misunderstanding. Specifically, he referred to a sentence that gave the Chief, MEDT, responsibility for "operating" the forward element of the Team, whereas the joint State-Defense instruction of 8 January stated that this forward element would be assigned to the Embassy Phnom Penh for duty on the staff of the Counselor for Political-Military-Affairs/Special Representative of CINCPAC for Military Assistance.[41]

(S) Secretary Laird replied on 9 April that Ambassador Swank had received the MEDT terms of reference and table of distribution in draft on 15 January; no subsequent changes had been made in these drafts except a few suggested by the Ambassador. As for messages between CINCPAC and the Ambassador, Mr. Laird considered them "useful field interpretation of the standard language used in such Terms of Reference" and accepted them as such, but nothing more. Mr. Laird believed that the MEDT Chief's functions and relationship to

41. (S-GP 3) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 23 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-5, 24 Mar 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 1.

both the Ambassador and CINCPAC were spelled out clearly in the document as written.[42]

(C) The Secretary of State still would not accept the Defense position. On 25 April he insisted to the Secretary of Defense that the exchange of messages between the Ambassador and CINCPAC must constitute an integral part of the MEDT terms of reference. He based his position on a Presidential letter of 9 December 1969 which specified that the chief of a diplomatic mission should direct and coordinate the activities of all elements of the mission. Secretary Laird, in reply, felt that the Secretary of State was making too much of the matter. After all, they had both agreed on the "fundamental aspects" of the MEDT, including its relationships to the Ambassador and to CINCPAC. The existing arrangements for the MEDT, which appeared to be working satisfactorily, were, in Secretary Laird's view, in accord with the Presidential letter cited by Secretary Rogers. In the light of the crucial importance of military assistance to Cambodia, Mr. Laird urged that present arrangements continue and that the general issue of the control of military assistance groups be left for later consideration. Following a return from an overseas trip, the Secretary of State, in a letter of 19 May, accepted Secretary Laird's position on the matters at issue.[43]

(S) Despite this agreement, it appeared almost immediately that the current arrangements for the

42. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 9 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-6, 28 Apr 71, same file.

43. (S-GP 4) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 25 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-6, 28 Apr 71; Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 27 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-7, 29 Apr 71; Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 19 May 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-8, 21 May 71; JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 2.

MEDT were not satisfactory. On 22 May 1971, Admiral Moorer complained to the Secretary of Defense that Ambassador Swank was hampering the activities of the MEDT. Placing a "very narrow" interpretation on his instructions that the United States should maintain a "low profile" in Cambodia, the Ambassador had imposed "stringent limitations" on the number of US military personnel in Cambodia. The table of distribution, as Admiral Moorer pointed out, which had been accepted by the Secretary of State, gave the MEDT a total strength of 113. The Chief of the MEDT had recommended that 93 of these be permanently assigned to Cambodia as of 1 August. But the Ambassador had restricted the number of permanently stationed military personnel in Cambodia to 16, and would agree to the addition of only seven more by 1 August. The field commanders believed, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed, that the military assistance program in Cambodia could not be properly executed under these limitations. Admiral Moorer urged that Secretary Laird take up the matter with the Secretary of State.[44]

(TS) As mentioned above, the Senior Review Group, in consideration of the Cambodian assessment on 7 June, agreed that the size of the US Military Assistance Group in Cambodia would be resolved in the context of the decision on a military assistance plan for that country. "Neither a high or a low profile is a principal objective," Dr. Kissinger said, but rather provision of the required personnel to do an effective job.[45]

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44. (S-GP 1) CM-919-71 to SecDef, 22 May 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-9, 25 May 71, same file.

45. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, DCI, and CJCS, 11 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2366/54, 14 Jun 71, JMF 880 (8 Apr 71) sec 1.

(S) Before the Senior Review Group could act, the Secretary of Defense brought the matter of increased personnel for the Military Equipment Delivery Team to the attention of the President on 21 June. He recommended that, of the 113 authorized personnel for the team, at least 50 should be based in Phnom Penh, including the Chief who was still in Saigon. Transferring the Chief of the MEDT to Phnom Penh would eliminate the need to designate the Counselor for Political-Military Affairs to the Embassy as the CINCPAC Special Representative for Military Assistance in Cambodia. Mr. Laird appreciated the importance of maintaining a low military profile in Cambodia, but considered it imperative to deploy the additional personnel to carry out military assistance responsibilities.[46]

(S) The Secretary of State did not concur with Mr. Laird's proposal and so informed the President on 28 June. He told the President that Ambassador Swank had recently recommended an increase in personnel from 16 to 23 to supervise the delivery of military assistance material to Cambodia. Moreover, at any one time, an average of five (and at the present time there were 30) additional MEDT personnel were on temporary duty in Cambodia to assist in MAP duties. Secretary Rogers believed these numbers were sufficient. He also noted that the Senior Review Group would shortly be considering a paper prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which he understood would contain recommendations on the future size of the MEDT in relation to strategy for

46. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, "Administration and Supervision of the Military Assistance Program for Cambodia," 21 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Cambodia, Jul-Dec 71.

Cambodia. Any decision on MEDT personnel, Secretary Rogers believed, could await the SRG strategy review.[47]

(TS) The President's decision was relayed to his two Secretaries on 1 July 1971. The President authorized an expansion of the MEDT in Phnom Penh to 50 persons, as Secretary Laird had desired. At the same time, he directed the Secretary of Defense to coordinate with Ambassador Swank the introduction of the additional personnel. The President also desired that the Counselor for Political-Military Affairs in the US Embassy continue as the CINCPAC Special Representative for Military Assistance in Cambodia and that "his position in the Embassy staff be strengthened commensurate with the role of coordination of all security related programs."[48]

A Review of US Activities in Laos

(S) During the spring of 1971, US officials also reviewed developments in Laos as they affected the war in Vietnam. No US ground forces operated in Laos, but over the years, the United States had supported various irregular operations there. [redacted] The President and his advisers discussed this matter at San Clemente on 31 March 1971 and decided that an interagency ad hoc

47. (S-GP 1) Memo, SecState to Pres, 28 Jun 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2366/44-10, 1 Jul 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70) sec 2.

48. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secys of State and Def, 1 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2366/44-11, 6 Jul 71, same file.

committee should study the problem. Accordingly, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff designated Major General Frank B. Clay, USA, Deputy Director for NSC Affairs, Plans and Policy Directorate, Joint Staff, to chair a committee with representatives from the Departments of State and Defense, the CIA, and the NSC staff. The committee would prepare recommendations for actions necessary to support irregular forces in Laos.[49]

(TS) General Clay submitted the committee report on 19 April 1971. The committee set forth US ojectives in Laos as the maintenance of the present neutralist government in that part of Laos that permitted a buffer area between China and North Vietnam on the one hand and Thailand on the other. In addition, the United States wished to interdict NVN lines of communication and base areas in Laos to support Vietnamization in South Vietnam. In pursuit of these goals, US military assistance to Laos had expanded from $12.5 million in FY 1963 to $258 million for FY 1971. With this increase, "the complexion of US operational involvement had changed from the guerrilla to a more conventional form of warfare."

(TS) [redacted]

49. (S-GP 1) CM-792-71 to MG Frank B. Clay, 8 Apr 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Interagency Ad Hoc Cmte Study, "US Support for Military Activities in Laos (S)," 19 Apr 71, JMF 880/495 (25 Jul 70), sec 1A.

[redacted] The United States provided logistic support, through the military assistance program, for the regular Lao forces and for irregular third country forces in Laos. This support was normally provided by the Deputy Chief, JUSMAG Thailand, but on occasion, the Ambassador requested support directly from CINCPAC, the Central Intelligence Agency, or the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense in Washington. [redacted]

(TS) The committee failed to reach a clear agreement on the means of bringing order to this somewhat chaotic situation. A majority of members favored establishing a forward element of MACV in Udorn to review plans and coordinate operations, or, alternatively, a military assistance coordinator at Udorn who would coordinate both operations and logistic support. Other alternatives suggested by the committee were a coordinating committee at Udorn; a CINCPAC representative, disguised as a Defense Attache in Vietnam, to coordinate activities in Laos; or a full-fledged military assistance command in Laos.

(TS) No system existed for regularly budgeting and funding the costs of irregular operations in Laos. [redacted] The committee believed that existing arrangements could be

made to work satisfactorily if requirements were known sufficiently in advance. The members added a warning, however, that any additional funds provided for Laotian operations would come at the expense of existing Department of Defense programs.

(TS) [redacted] This support was furnished by USAF aircraft or by the air forces of Laos or Thailand (RLAF or RTAF), both of which were supported by US military assistance. [redacted] monthly sortie requirements in Laos were projected at 2,500 through FYs 1972 and 1973, whereas tentative Department of Defense fiscal guidance assumed averages for all of Southeast Asia of 10,200 in FY 1972, dropping to 5,300 in FY 1973. [redacted] It was therefore recommended that these forces be provided with additional aircraft (T-28s) and pilots through the military assistance program and that additional USAF A-1 aircraft be provided to operate from Thailand.

(TS) Logistic support in Laos, like funding, was a divided responsibility. The Department of Defense supported the regular Lao forces and [redacted] The committee proposed that the Department of Defense gradually assume responsibility for providing standard military equipment and supplies for all friendly forces in Laos by FY 1973 [redacted]

(~~TS~~) The force available for operations in Laos was being enlarged by the establishment of a force of 24 Special Guerrilla Units (SGUs) in Thailand. [redacted] But the committee considered that the necessary training could be provided within existing personnel ceilings, supplemented as necessary by personnel on temporary duty.

(~~TS~~) The committee concluded its report with an expression of concern over the lack of strategic guidance for operations in Laos. There seemed to be two opposing trends at work: a greater US involvement in Laos coinciding with a general deescalation of US activity in Southeast Asia generally. The committee recommended a review of US policy goals for Laos, both short- and long-term, with a view toward resolving this conflict. The members also called for a military assessment of the relative value of enlarging the irregular forces operating in Laos as compared with improvement of the regular forces of both Laos and Thailand.[50]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the committee report to the Secretary of Defense on 3 May, together with their comments on it. They "generally" concurred with the conclusions and recommendations of the report. To improve the coordination of US support for operations in Laos, they favored a structure "somewhat between" the options of a MACV Forward at Udorn and a Military Assistance coordinator at Udorn. With respect to air support for operations in Laos, the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred the committee's proposal

50. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Interagency Ad Hoc Cmte Study, "US Support for Military Activities in Laos (~~S~~)," 19 Apr 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1A.

to expand the RLAF and RTAF forces, but they opposed any increase in the USAF A-1 force in Thailand, which would "adversely affect Vietnamization." The policy review recommended by the committee they judged to be "of particular importance" in determining the proper course of action in Laos.[51]

(C) On 8 June 1971, the Secretary of Defense resolved the question of coordinating machinery for operations in Laos. He directed CINCPAC to relocate the Deputy Chief, Joint US Military Assistance Group, Thailand (JUSMAGTHAI), to Udorn to provide "closer supervision" of the Laos assistance program and to serve as "the nucleus of a possible military assistance coordinator" at Udorn. CINCPAC was to draw up a detailed plan for the establishment and operation of the new coordinator. Subsequently, the Secretary directed that the military assistance coordinator for Laos continue to use the title Deputy Chief, JUSMAGTHAI, even after relocation in Udorn. Mr. Laird feared that a change in the title to Military Assistance Coordinator for Laos might cause "undue apprehension about the true nature of our limited support effort." Thereafter CINCPAC prepared the requested plan and, on 20 August 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed its implementation. Later, staffing and terms of reference for the office were approved on 5 February and 4 April 1972, respectively.[52]

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51. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-190-71 to SecDef, 3 May 71, Encl to JCS 2344/177, 3 May 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1.

52. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, SecDef (DEF 3860) to CINCPAC, 081700Z Jun 71; (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2344/177-2, 29 Jun 71; (~~S~~-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 120855Z Jul 71, JCS IN 25767; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 5541 to CINCPAC, 20 Aug 71; JMF 895 (7 Apr 71). (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCS 2478/607, 6 Nov 71; (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg,

(C) Meantime, on 8 June 1971, the Secretary of Defense had forwarded copies of the committee report, together with the JCS comments, to the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Director of Central Intelligence, and Dr. Kissinger. He informed them of his action to establish a military assistance coordinator. But even more important than better management of military aid, Secretary Laird thought, was a thorough review of US policy toward Laos. He felt that the United States must avoid increased commitment to Laos, which would be inconsistent with the US policy of withdrawing from Vietnam.

(C) Pending the outcome of such a strategy review, Mr. Laird wrote, the Department of Defense was implementing within existing military personnel ceilings the committee's recommendations for improvement in programming, funding, logistical support, and training. Air support would be provided for friendly forces in Laos from within programmed resources. He was confident that programmed attack sortie levels would be adequate, especially if supplemented with additional T-28 or other trainer aircraft for the RLAF and RTAF and with contractual air support for theater air and helilift, including medical evacuation.[53]

JCS 3872 to CINCPAC, 5 Feb 72; (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 3886 to CSA, 5 Feb 72; (S-GP 4) JCSM-138-72 to SecDef, 4 Apr 72, App B to JCS 2478/607-1, 14 Mar 72; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7308 to CINCPAC, 4 Apr 72; JMF 895/037 (6 Nov 71).

53. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecState, Att Gen, CJCS, DCI, and Dr. Kissinger, "U.S. Support for Military Activities in Laos (C)," 8 Jun 71, JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1.

In February the Joint Chiefs of Staff had provided the SecDef an assessment of the requirement for additional T-28s for the Southeast Asian allies. They

(TS) Despite the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Interagency Committee, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense for a review of policy toward Laos, none took place. The Secretary of Defense did ask the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 8 June 1971 for "an assessment of the relative merits of expanding irregular forces operating in Laos" as contrasted with qualitative improvement of regular Lao forces. But, before the Joint Chiefs had prepared the assessment, the Senior Review Group and the Washington Special Actions Group agreed on 10 August 1971 that emphasis in Laos whould be placed on the Special Guerrilla Unit Program for the near term. As a result, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not proceed with the requested assessment, nor was there any further US Government consideration of policy toward Laos during

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had told him that there was "no acceptable close air support off-the-shelf replacement" for the T-28 aircraft that met the basic need for a cheap, effective, and easy to maintain weapon system. Consequently, on 8 April 1971, the Secretary of Defense approved a T-28D inventory of 18 for Cambodia, 86 for Laos, and 60 for Thailand. At that time he asked the Secretary of the Air Force to review available aircraft to determine if better and cheaper alternative planes might be provided the Southeast Asian allies. On 13 October 1971, the Secretary of the Air Force reported that no one aircraft among available alternatives was "clearly superior from an operational standpoint" and recommended modification of USAF T-28As to fulfill near-term MAP requirements. (S-GP 4) JCSM-65-71 to SecDef, 11 Feb 71, Encl to JCS 2339/337, 8 Feb 71; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecArmy, SecAF, and CJCS, 8 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/337-1, 12 Apr 71; JMF 907/460 (8 Feb 71) sec 1. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 13 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2339/337-4, 26 Oct 71, same file, sec 3.

the remainder of 1971 or in the first several months of 1972.[54]

Public Opinion Pressure in 1971

(U) Another factor that President Nixon and his advisers had to consider in their Southeast Asia policy reviews during 1971 was public opinion. Following the withdrawal of US forces from Cambodia in June 1970, open dissent with the war had dropped off and remained relatively quiet throughout the rest of 1970. In early 1971, however, public criticism once again began to mount.

(U) The first stirrings of renewed dissent came in the Congress. On 27 January 1971, Senator George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, and Senator Mark Hatfield, Republican of Oregon, both avowed critics of the war, introduced an amendment to a Selective Service bill to require withdrawal of all US troops from South Vietnam by the end of 1971. Although the Senate had turned down a similar measure the year before, a new Gallup poll showed increased support for the proposal. Seventy-three percent of those contacted, as contrasted with 55 percent the previous September, now favored withdrawal.[55]

(U) Further support for US withdrawal from Vietnam was reflected in a decision by the Senate Democratic Caucus on 23 February 1971 calling for complete withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam. The Caucus

54. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2344/177-1, 9 Jun 71; (S-GP 1) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/177-1, 19 Jan 72; JMF 895 (7 Apr 71) sec 1. (S-GP 4) CM-1301-71 to SecDef, 8 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2344/185, 14 Jan 72, JMF 895 (8 Nov 71).

55. NY Times, 28 Jan 71, 8; 31 Jan 71, 3.

proposal, however, provided a longer period than the McGovern-Hatfield amendment, requiring completion by 31 December 1972. Just over a month later, on 31 March 1971, the House Democratic Caucus endorsed the withdrawal date set by its Senate counterpart. Adopted after sharp division, the vote of the House group was a compromise; the final resolution substituted for an earlier proposal to complete the withdrawal by the end of 1971.[56]

(U) Meantime, in a further expression of displeasure with the President's Vietnam policy, Senator Jacob Javits, Republican of New York, had introduced legislation in February to limit the President's authority to commit forces to combat. The proposed bill would allow the President to use US troops to meet emergencies but not to continue the use for more than 30 days without Congressional authorization. Another indication of the Congressional dissatisfaction with Vietnam policy came on 30 March when Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced that the committee would hold hearings on "how to end the war."[57]

(U) On 7 April, President Nixon announced the withdrawal of another 100,000 US troops from Vietnam,[58] but the announcement did not mollify Congressional critics. They wanted a definite date for the end of the US commitment, and in succeeding days, three more Senators announced support for the 31 December 1971 deadline. Senators Clifford Case, Charles Mathias, and Edward Brook, all Republicans, endorsed the

56. NY Times, 24 Feb 71, 19; 1 Apr 71, 1.
57. NY Times, 11 Feb 71, 17; 31 Mar 71, 1.
58. See Chapter 3, p. 147.

legislation introduced earlier by Senators McGovern and Hatfield.[59]

(U) Public dissent also resumed during the spring of 1971. The Laos incursion in February, surprisingly, provoked little protest, but the approach of better weather brought anti-war groups back into the streets. In March, a coalition of anti-war and civil rights organizations announced plans for a series of demonstrations duzing April and May.[60]

(U) A group of 9,000 anti-war veterans launched the planned protests on 19 April 1971. For five days they held rallies in Washington, lobbied in Congress and discarded medals won in Vietnam in a ceremony in front of the Capitol.[61]

(U) Then, on Saturday, 24 April, an estimated 200,000 protesters gathered in Washington and marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. There they listened to their spokesmen call on the Congress to stop the war since President Nixon had failed to do so. Several members of Congress spoke, including Senator Vance Hartke and Representatives Bella Abzug and Herman Badillo. The overall tone of the rally was restrained and it was entirely peaceful. On the West Coast, a companion demonstration took place in San Francisco, and more than 150,000 protesters marched to Golden Gate Park. That demonstration was marred by violence when militants seized control of the speakers' platform.[62]

59. Lester A. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, U.S. Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia, Vol. 6, 1971 (1973), p. 104.

60. NY Times, 4 Feb 71, 19; 9 Feb 71, 16; 10 Feb 71, 13; 11 Feb 71, 15; 28 Mar 71, 16.

61. NY Times, 21 Apr 71, 11; 22 Apr 71, 28; 24 Apr 71, 1.

62. NY Times, 25 Apr 71, 1, 6.

(U) Following the rally in Washington, many of the demonstrators remained in the city, camping in West Potomac Park. They carried out small demonstrations during the period 26-30 April on Capitol Hill and at various executive agencies. This action was preliminary to plans by the "Mayday Tribe" for mass civil disobedience, including blocking of highways and bridges to prevent government workers from getting to and from work.[63]

(U) President Nixon commented on the planned protest at a press conference on 1 May. He recognized the right of peaceful demonstration, adding, however, that the thousands of Government employees also had a right to go to their offices without interference. "We will not be intimidated," he said, and should illegal action occur "we are prepared to deal with it. . . .we will arrest those who break the law." The following morning police ordered 30,000 demonstrators from their encampment in West Potomac Park.[64]

(U) The disruption of the camp did not deter the Mayday Tribe and mass demonstrations followed on 3, 4, and 5 May. On 3 May, more than 7,000 protesters battled with police for more than six hours in attempts to block traffic and thwart Government operations. On the following two days, the protesters held mass rallies at the Justice Department and the Capitol. During the three days, over 12,000 people were arrested. Many were detained without proper forms and all were placed in a fenced football practice field because of the lack of adequate detention facilities.

63. NY Times, 1 May 71, 13. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, p. 181.
64. Nixon Public Papers, 1971, p. 606. NY Times, 3 May 71, 1.

The mass arrest procedures were quickly challenged and, on 4 May, a D.C. superior court judge ordered the police to release those not charged with a specific offense, and a Federal appeals court upheld that ruling the following day. Eventually, almost all charges against the protesters were dropped entirely.[65]

(U) The antiwar demonstrations then faded. On 6 May a scheduled march on the South Vietnamese Embassy drew only 60 people, but the protest leaders vowed to carry on their efforts. On 8 May, demonstrators in support of the war marched "for victory" in Washington led by the Reverend Carl McIntire. Police estimated the crowd at 15,000 persons.[66]

(U) With the subsiding of the mass protests, the focus of public criticism of the war returned to the Congress. There the McGovern-Hatfield amendment, calling for withdrawal of all US military forces from Vietnam by the end of the year, awaited action by the Senate. But in a victory for the Administration, the Senate rejected the amendment on 16 June by a 55 to 42 vote.[67]

(U) The defeat of the McGovern-Hatfield amendment was almost completely obscured from public notice, however, by a furor arising over the release of the Pentagon Papers. On 13 June 1971, the New York Times had begun publishing a series of articles and documents based on a secret Department of Defense study

65. NY Times, 4 May 71, 1; 5 May 71, 1; 6 May 71, 1. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 184-187.

66. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, p. 183.

67. NY Times, 15 Jun 71, 3; 17 Jun 71, 1.

of US policy in Vietnam. The study, known as the Pentagon Papers, had been prepared in 1968 and traced US involvement in Vietnam from 1940 through 1968. The Secretary of Defense immediately labeled the Times' action a violation of security regulations and the Justice Department sought court action to halt further publication. On 15 June, a US district court judge did order a temporary halt pending a hearing. Meantime, members of Congress began to demand that the Nixon Administration make the study available to the Congress.[68]

(U) Efforts by the Department of Justice to prevent further publication of the Pentagon Papers did not succeed. On 23 June, the Second US Court of Appeals ruled that the New York Times could resume publication. In the meantime, articles about and excerpts from the secret study had begun to appear in various other papers, including the Washington Post, the Boston Globe, the Chicago Sun-Times, the St. Louis Post Dispatch and the Christian Science Monitor. Thereafter President Nixon ordered release of the 47 volumes of the study to the Congress and, eventually, the Department of Defense declassified all of the study except four volumes dealing with secret negotiations.[69]

(U) The attention given the Pentagon Papers did not divert the war critics in the Congress from further efforts to force a deadline on the Administration. On 21 June 1971, Senator Mike Mansfield introduced another amendment to the Selective Service bill calling for the withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam within nine

68. NY Times, 13 Jun 71, 1. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 121-123.
69. Ibid., pp. 124-134.

months if US prisoners of war were released. The Senate adopted the Mansfield amendment the next day, marking the first time the Senate had voted a definite deadline for an end of US military involvement in South Vietnam.[70]

(U) The House of Representatives defeated the amendment by a vote of 219 to 176, and the matter went to a Senate-House conference. The resulting compromise was a much weaker version. Containing no specific deadline, the conference amendment was worded as an expression of Congressional views rather than policy direction. It declared it to be

> the sense of the Congress that the United States terminate at the earliest practicable date all military operations of the United States in Indochina and provide for the prompt and orderly withdrawal of all US military forces at a date certain subject to the release of all American prisoners of war. . . .

This compromise was eventually approved by both the House and the Senate and sent to the President in September.[71]

(U) Still the Senate critics of the war pressed for a specific deadline. On 28 September, Senator Mansfield introduced another amendment, this time to the Department of Defense procurement authorization. The new amendment was similar to the previous one, differing only in that it called for withdrawal of all US forces within six months instead of nine. The Senate quickly adopted the amendment and passed it on

70. NY Times, 22 Jun 71, 1; 23 Jun 71, 1.
71. NY Times, 29 Jun 71, 1; 31 Jul 71, 1; 22 Sep 71, 1.

to the House on 30 September. The latter body on 10 November approved a weaker version declaring it to be the policy of the United States to withdraw all forces from Indochina by "a date certain" subject to the release of all US prisoners of war.[72]

(U) Upon receiving the bill with the amendment, President Nixon announced that he would disregard the troop withdrawal deadline. "The so-called Mansfield amendment," he said, "does not represent the policies of this Administration." Such legislative actions, he believed, only hindered the search for a negotiated settlement. Subsequently, in December 1971, an attempt to amend the foreign aid bill to include a six-month withdrawal deadline failed.[73]

(U) The anti-war movement attempted more mass demonstrations during the fall of 1971 but with less success than in the spring. Vietnam Moratorium Day protests occurred on 14 October in several cities and colleges. Then on 26 October, more than 800 protesters marched in Washington with 300 arrested when they attempted a sit-down in Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House during the evening rush hour. The last demonstration of any size in 1971 was a march and rally of more than 20,000 people in New York on 6 November.[74]

(U) Neither the public protests nor the Congressional efforts during 1971 to end the war produced any discernible action by the President to change the Vietnam policy. Yet, this unfavorable public opinion

72. NY Times, 28 Sep 71, 3; 1 Oct 71, 9; 20 Oct 71, 1; 11 Nov 71, 1.
73. Nixon, Public Papers, 1971, p. 1114. NY Times, 16 Dec 71, 1.
74. NY Times, 27 Oct 71, 10; 7 Nov 71, 81. Sobel (ed.), South Vietnam, Vol. 6, 1971, p. 189.

created a continuous pressure and a background against which every Vietnam decision was made, and public opinion, undoubtedly, had some influence in all the Vietnam reviews in 1971 whether admitted or not.

Reassessments in Early 1972

(S) The lengthy Washington reviews of the situations in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos during the first six months of 1971 brought no revisions in US objectives in those countries. Consequently, US operations in Southeast Asia during 1971, as described in Chapter 5, proceeded without basic change except for accommodations to the accelerating drawdown of US troops and tightening US budget strictures. By the end of the year, however, there were increasing indications of an enemy offensive, and the NSC staff decided once again to assess the situation in South Vietnam to assist the President in various approaching decisions. Accordingly, the Vietnam Special Studies Group was directed to revise the Vietnam assessment prepared the previous May,[75] particularly the section dealing with the enemy threat, the control and main force situation, and the status of RVNAF improvement. The new assessment was prepared by an interagency task force chaired by a representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was based on information supplied by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded the updated assessment to the Secretary of Defense on 10 January 1972 for transmittal to the Vietnam Special Studies Group. Admiral Moorer pointed out to the Secretary that, although the assessment did not have

75. See above pp. 73-75.

"the formal concurrence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," it had been noted by them and the military Services.[76]

(~~TS~~) The updated assessment indicated that the enemy situation had developed as anticipated although some enemy deployments threatening South Vietnam, expected during the period October through December 1971, were only just then occurring. The new assessment reviewed the seven possible enemy options identified in the earlier study, and the resulting conclusions were much the same as those reached some six months earlier. The updated assessment still considered that the enemy had the manpower to execute any of the options, but that logistics remained a constraint. An attack in Military Region 1 would be the easiest option for the enemy to support, but chances for success of this option appeared limited. The enemy would face the best South Vietnamese troops, which could be reinforced by the RVNAF General Reserve. An attack in Military Region 2 might have a better chance of temporary success, since reinforcement of the widely dispersed RVNAF units would be more difficult. Simultaneous offensives in both Military Regions 1 and 2 could cause "political repercussions in Saigon and Washington" and set back Vietnamization at least temporarily, while an offensive in Cambodia would give the enemy freer access to border base areas and increase the direct threat to the lower half of South Vietnam. But these options, as well as an offensive in both Military Region 1 and in Cambodia, represented the margin of enemy capabilities.

76. (~~S~~-GP 3) Memo, Dir of Program Analysis, NSC Staff to VSSG, 16 Dec 71, Att to JCS 2472/790, 28 Dec 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1440-71 to SecDef, 10 Jan 72; JMF 911 (16 Dec 71).

A simultaneous attack in Cambodia and throughout South Vietnam was judged beyond the enemy's capabilities throughout CY 1972. No single option could be pinpointed, but it seemed probable that the enemy would attempt at least one "dramatic tactical victory" in 1972.

(~~TS~~) The new assessment showed that the allied progress reported in May 1971 had continued over the past six months although the rate of progress had slowed somewhat. The strength of friendly forces had declined, but not to the extent envisioned in May 1971. Certain ROK forces expected to return home had remained in South Vietnam, and some RVNAF reserve elements, formerly in Cambodia, had returned to South Vietnam. Consequently, there were 233 allied maneuver battalions in South Vietnam on 1 December 1971, a decrease of 24 from 1 May 1971. There had also been a slight gain in the "control situation" during the past six months. A loss of control by the Republic of Vietnam in Military Region 1 had been more than offset by gains in Military Regions 3 and 4, while there had been no change in Military Region 2. The Pacification program had also made progress despite losses in one or more provinces in each Military Region. RVNAF improvement had continued, with new units being created ahead of schedule. Further, a new RVNAF division had been activated in Military Region 1, and two brigades of the Vietnamese Marine Corps division of the RVNAF General Reserve had been moved there.

(~~TS~~) After comparing enemy capabilities against friendly courses of action, the assessment team concluded that the allied forces remaining in South Vietnam on 1 July 1972 could meet the expected threat

without a major redistribution of forces through normal use of the RVNAF General Reserve. It was unlikely, therefore, that the enemy could achieve "lasting significant setbacks" to pacification or security in South Vietnam prior to 30 June 1972. After that date, and assuming a 60,000-man US force level, the enemy threat could be met but with increased risk. The use of combined US and RVNAF air power against both enemy forces assembled for offensive action and enemy infiltration systems was considered "crucial" to allied success.

(TS) Once again the evaluation for 1972 would not carry over into 1973. By then, the enemy would have the benefit of another Laotian dry season to infiltrate men and materiel and the US capability would have declined further. How the situation developed in 1973 depended on factors that could not be adequately determined at that time: the effectiveness of US air interdiction, the success of RVNAF preemptive operations in Laos and Cambodia, RVNAF ability to maintain the MARKET TIME barrier, and the degree of improvement in Cambodian forces. Moreover, political and economic developments in Southeast Asia could seriously affect the military situation.[77]

(S) The Senior Review Group considered the updated assessment on 17 January 1972 and requested further evaluation of the military situation in South Vietnam and measures designed to improve US and RVNAF capabilities in light of the enemy threats expected through 1 July 1972. Already, however, the paper had been overtaken by events. The President had announced on 13 January that US forces in Vietnam would be reduced to

77. (TS-GP 3) Updated RVN Assessment, 10 Jan 72, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/790-1, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911 (16 Dec 71).

69,000 by 1 May 1972, thus altering the balance of forces and throwing into question the conclusions of the assessment. Admiral Moorer furnished some information to the Secretary of Defense to be used in responding to the SRG request of 17 January, but it appears that no further action was taken to revise the assessment.[78]

(S) During this same period, the Secretary of Defense had set his staff to reviewing US strategy for Southeast Asia after completion of Vietnamization. A task force in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) considered several alternative strategies for the FY 1973-1976 period, concentrating primarily on the requirements for South Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense forwarded a summary of this analysis, in the form of a draft memorandum for the President, to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, and several Assistant Secretaries of Defense for comment on 22 January 1972.

(S) The OSD task force saw the paramount US interest in Vietnam and mainland Southeast Asia as the retention of US credibility as a national power through demonstration of its capability and will to keep commitments and implement the Nixon Doctrine. United States objectives in South Vietnam were the development of a South Vietnam capability for defense against a communist takeover; release of all US prisoners and an accounting of the missing in Indochina; a ceasefire for Southeast Asia; and withdrawal of all US forces from Vietnam.

78. (S) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, and DCI, "Vietnam Assessment," 19 Jan 72; (TS-GP 3) TP for Actg DepSecDef and CJCS for SRG Mtg on 17 Jan 72, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/790-1, 19 Jan 72; JMF 911 (16 Dec. 71). (TS-GP 3) CM-1479-72 to SecDef, 24 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 72.

It was doubtful that either the Congress or the American people would be persuaded to accept the continuing outlay of US resources in mainland Southeast Asia at present levels. Political realities precluded either a primarily US or US-supported military solution in Vietnam. North Vietnam, however, showed no indication of abandoning its objectives of controlling South Vietnam, reuniting Vietnam, or extending its sphere of influence over all of Indochina.

(C) With regard to the future, the task force was not optimistic. It did recognize that "Vietnamization has worked militarily and US ground combat forces should not be needed in mainland Southeast Asia beyond the end of FY 1972 for other than political/negotiating purposes." Despite this success, however, no mainland Southeast Asian country, with the possible exception of Thailand, could support the force the United States had helped develop. The RVNAF, even with US efforts to keep it austere, had continued to develop in sophistication in order to deal with the enemy threat. Moreover, current assistance programs would not provide the full interdiction and communication capabilities deemed necessary. Nor did the task force believe that regional cooperation could replace US support in Southeast Asia. Although economic and military coordination was slowly developing among the mainland Southeast Asian countries, adequate regional military arrangements did not yet exist. In addition, there would be heavy financial cost involved in continuing US support to the Southeast Asian allies, amounting probably to some $15 billion in military and economic aid for the period FY 1973-1976.

(C) Three alternative strategies were presented for FY 1973-1976:

1. Total withdrawal of all US forces from Vietnam by the end of FY 1973, with no subsequent military assistance to South Vietnam or other mainland Southeast Asian countries. Estimated cost of this alternative was $5.6 billion.

2. Measured withdrawal, with redeployment of all US combat forces, retaining some 10,000 troops for military assistance and technical support, plus continued economic and military assistance including the use of US out-of-country bombing capabilities, if required. Estimated cost was between $12.9 and $17.9 billion depending on whether a cease-fire developed.

3. Delayed withdrawal, including not only economic and military assistance but retention of certain US combat forces (approximately 60,000 men) through FY 1974. Estimated cost was $14.9 to $20.2 billion.

(C) The task force did not consider the alternatives as mutually exclusive; it would be possible to change from one to another as the situation dictated. The measured withdrawal strategy seemed most likely to meet US goals in Southeast Asia at that time. By withdrawing all combat forces, the United States would place "squarely on the South Vietnamese" the responsibility for defending their country while still providing South Vietnam the means for this task. In addition, the measured withdrawal option would clearly signal to Hanoi further US willingness to reduce its direct involvement in the war and would eliminate US combat casualties and reduce the cost for support of US forces in South Vietnam during the period in question. Domestic objections to US military forces remaining in

Vietnam could be answered by stating that this presence was negotiable.[79]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the alternative strategies and told the Secretary of Defense on 9 February 1972 that a clear-cut estimate of the future situation in Indochina could not be made at that time. The formidable problems facing South Vietnam, the uncertainties about the amount and extent of US support, the question of the South Vietnamese will to persist, the resilience of the communist infrastructure in South Vietnam, and the enemy's demonstrated ability and willingness to pay the price for perseverance--all of these cast doubt upon the long-term prospects for survival of the Government of Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirmed their support for a balanced 1.1 million-man RVNAF structure until hostilities ceased or were considerably diminished. They also recognized that South Vietnam could not sustain nor the United Sttes support a force of that size after the end of the hostilities. They did believe, however, that there would be "a continuing requirement" for US advisory personnel and US air support "in the foreseeable future."

(C) After these general observations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proceeded with specific comments on the strategy paper. Among other things, they suggested elimination of inferences that Vietnamization would be "successfully concluded in all aspects" by the end of FY 1972. They appreciated the fiscal problems facing the United States, but noted that

79. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 22 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2339/351, 24 Jan 72, JMF 907/520 (22 Jan 72).

the cost of the delayed withdrawal strategy, the most expensive alternative, was relatively slight when compared with "the US investment in Southeast Asia over the past 9 years." Moreover, they believed that the ultimate success of Vietnamization could hinge on continued US support of South Vietnam.[80]

(S) Subsequently, on 14 February 1972, Admiral Moorer forwarded to the Secretary of Defense comments by CINCPAC on the strategy alternatives. The field commander proposed an additional alternative, which he called "calculated withdrawal." The object was to retain as many US troops in Vietnam as possible until the South Vietnamese had demonstrated their ability to cope with the threat. CINCPAC recognized that the decision to reduce US forces to 69,000 by 1 May 1972 was probably irreversible, but he urged that subsequent redeployments be tailored to a "cut and try" approach, instead of making a commitment to the rapid drawdown postulated in the task force's alternatives.[81]

(S) The Secretary of Defense did not submit the alternative strategies for Southeast Asia to the President, nor is there any record of further action on them. The Secretary did on 9 March 1972 issue planning guidance for Southeast Asia force and activity levels for FY 1974-1978, directing that this document serve as the basis for consistency in all plans for US operations in Southeast Asia. The Secretary's guidance provided for a US force structure of 43,400 men in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1973. A year later the

80. (S-GP 4) JCSM-50-72 to SecDef, 9 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2339/351-1, 5 Feb 72, same file.
81. (S-GP 4) CM-1542-72 to SecDef, 15 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72.

US forces would decline to 25,000 and remain at that level through 1978. The Secretary also directed a gradual decline in US tactical air and B-52 actions in Southeast Asia with these operations to be terminated by the end of FY 1975.[82]

(S) Later, on 16 March 1972, CINCPAC submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a "political/military assessment" of the situation in Southeast Asia. In sum, he believed that North Vietnam would continue to threaten friendly nations in Southeast Asia during the coming years. Consequently, the United States should provide all possile diplomatic, political, economic, and indirect military assistance in order to create a neutral buffer, composed of Laos and Cambodia, between North Vietnam and Thailand while concurrently giving highest priority to maintenance of "a strong South Vietnamese armed force" and to building a similar counter-balancing force in Thailand. Also essential, the commander said, was "a credible off-shore U.S. deterrent military capability in the Philippines, Okinawa, Korea, Japan and Guam." Again, no action resulted on this assessment, though the Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed their appreciation for it, telling CINCPAC that they would use it in developing "the many studies" concerning Southeast Asia then in progress.[83]

(U) As had been the case with the reviews during 1971, the updated Vietnam assessment in January 1972 and the subsequent OSD strategy reappraisal brought

82. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 9 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2458/824, 13 Mar 72, JMF 555 (9 Mar 72).

83. (TS-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, 16 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2339/355, 22 Mar 72; (U) Msg, JCS 6328 to CINCPAC, 20 Apr 72; JMF 907/300 (6 Mar 72).

no changes in either US policy or operations in South Vietnam. Undoubtedly both the President and Secretary Laird found these efforts helpful as background for their respective decisions on troop redeployments, force and activity levels, and peace initiatives, but no specific actions or directives resulted from these deliberations. With the forces and resources remaining in South Vietnam by March 1972, the United States had little flexibility left to alter either its policy or strategy there.

CHAPTER 3

UNITED STATES AND FREE WORLD TROOP WITHDRAWALS IN 1971

(U) The United States in 1969 had adopted the policy of Vietnamization to strengthen the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam, allowing them to assume the combat mission of the war as US troops withdrew from Vietnam. United States redeployments began in mid-1969 and proceeded steadily thereafter. In 1969, President Nixon had announced three US redeployments--25,000 in June, 40,500 in September, and 50,000 in December--on a "cut and try" basis. Then on 20 April 1970, he announced a longer-range program calling for the withdrawal of 150,000 US troops from South Vietnam to be completed by the end of April 1971. This redeployment was to consist of three additional increments with the timing and pace determined by the existing military situation and the status of diplomatic negotiations. By the end of 1970, the United States had completed two of the three increments and withdrawn 90,000 men of the 150,000 total.

(U) In all during 1969 and 1970, the United States had redeployed five increments comprising 205,500 men, leaving an actual strength in the Republic of Vietnam on 31 December 1970 of 335,794 US troops within an authorized strength of 344,999. In the absence of progress in the peace negotiations, the scheduling and size of the first four redeployment increments had been based solely on the military situation and the progress of the RVNAF. But with the fifth increment in the latter part of 1970, budget and manpower limitations

within the Department of the Army became an important consideration in the withdrawal planning. Thereafter financial and manning constraints, as well as the progress of Vietnamization, would determine the rate of US redeployments. While withdrawals in 1969 and 1970 had been accomplished without major adverse effects on COMUSMACV's operational plans or logistic capability, the point had been reached by the beginning of 1971 where careful planning and coordination would be needed to insure retention in South Vietnam of balanced combat forces and the orderly retrograde of equipment.[1]

United States Redeployments, January-April 1971

(C) Between 1 January and 30 April 1971, the United States carried out Increment 6, nicknamed KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE, withdrawing 60,000 more troops from South Vietnam. This withdrawal, which had been planned in 1970, completed the 150,000 redeployment announced by the President on 20 April 1970. In all, 41,848 US Army, 5,600 US Navy, 373 US Air Force, and 12,179 US Marine Corps personnel departed South Vietnam during the four months. In the course of this increment, the US Army 1st Cavalry Division headquarters and two brigades returned to the United States, leaving only the Division's 3d Brigade and various support elements in Vietnam. Other major US Army units in KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE were the remaining brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (-), the 5th Special Forces Group, and one battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade. The Marine Corps withdrew

1. For the planning and accomplishment of US redeployments during 1969 and 1970, see The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, Chapters 4 and 10.

the major portion of the III Marine Amphibious Force, reducing its strength in Vietnam by half. With the completion of Increment 6, authorized US strength in South Vietnam stood at 284,000 while actual strength sank to 272,073.[2]

Planning for the Next Presidential Announcement

(U) Even though there had been no decision or public announcement of further troop reductions beyond the 150,000 to be withdrawn by April 1971, both the American public and the US Congress expected the redeployments to continue. Accordingly, the first months of 1971 saw a continuing review by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense of the matter of additional US troop withdrawals in anticipation of another Presidential announcement upon completion of KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE. It was unlikely that the Joint Chiefs of Staff could reverse or even slow the momentum of US redeployments, but they did face a number of difficult questions in carrying out their responsibility to insure the safety of those US troops remaining in Vietnam and to protect the goals of the Vietnamization program.

(~~TS~~) Despite the lack of any Presidential decision on redeployments beyond April 1971, the Secretary of Defense had set forth budget guidelines on 5 June 1970 for US force and activity levels in Vietnam for FY 1971 through FY 1973. With regard to force levels, he had directed assumption of a US strength of 260,000 men by 30 June 1971 (end FY 1971) lowered to a 25,000-man MAAG structure with a 19,000-man supplement by the end of FY 1973. But subsequent budgetary and manpower decisions

2. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~C~~) pp. F-4, F-6 - F-9, J-16.

during 1970 convinced the Joint Chiefs of Staff that even an authorized strength of 260,000 could not be attained. They had brought this matter to the attention of the Secretary of Defense on 17 December 1970, showing how budget and manpower restrictions had necessitated changes in earlier planning factors. Consequently, they said, the 5 June 1970 force goals could no longer be met. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, with one exception, recommended a revised US force structure in Vietnam for the end of FY 1971 of 255,000 men (198,000 Army, 11,600 Navy, 44,700 Air Force, and 700 Marine Corps) in place of the 260,000 figure previously approved by the Secretary. For the end of FY 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, again with one dissenter, called for a US structue of 200,000 (152,800 Army, 8,400 Navy, 38,100 Air Force, and 700 Marine Corps) in South Vietnam. The lone dissenter in both instances was the Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, who believed that his service could meet such levels in Vietnam only through serious degradation of force levels elsewhere, including NATO.[3]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense had deferred a decision on the JCS recommendations pending a visit to Vietnam in January 1971, but he did assure the Joint Chiefs of Staff that funds to maintain their proposed manpower strengths were included in the FY 1972 budget recommended to the President. Thereafter, on the last day of 1970, the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved Program Budget Decision 505, which provided funds to support a US Army force level in Vietnam of 198,000 at end of FY 1971, as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of

3. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 392-402.

Staff, but only 115,000 by the end of FY 1972, instead of the 152,800 proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[4]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense did travel to South Vietnam in January 1971. During the course of the visit, he, General Abrams, and Ambassador Bunker met on 11 January with President Thieu, who raised another matter to be considered in redeployment planning. He suggested that the bulk of any additional US redeployments in 1971 be delayed until after the South Vietnamese elections scheduled for the forthcoming August and October. Mr. Laird was noncommittal in reply, indicating that he would raise the matter with President Nixon and US "military leaders."[5]

(~~TS~~) Despite Secretary Laird's earlier promise, he did not make a decision on Southeast Asia force and activity levels upon his return from Vietnam in January 1971, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded further comments on this matter on 16 February 1971. They informed the Secretary that the field commanders concurred in the JCS recommendations of the previous December for total US forces of approximately 200,000, including 151,945 US Army troops, in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1972. This level, according to the field commanders, would be sufficient to reinforce the RVNAF, prevent a serious setback to Vietnamization, and meet contingencies that might develop. It would also provide US military resources to encourage the Republic

4. (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2339/333-2, 6 Jan 71, JMF 907/323 (7 Nov 70). (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCS 2472/695-1 (p. 44), 27 Jan 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

5. (~~TS~~) Memo of Conversation, 11 Jan 71, Att to Memo, MilAsst to SecDef to CJCS, 19 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 71.

of Vietnam to continue combat and combat support assistance to the Government of Cambodia, assistance considered essential to the eventual success of Vietnamization.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff acknowledged a "severe" impact on the US Army in supporting an end FY 1972 manpower authorization of 151,945 in South Vietnam, stating that additional funds and manpower would be required beyond that included in Program Budget Decision 505. Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that "at this point in time," the stated requirements of the field commanders were "prudent planning goals." They promised another assessment of the matter by 30 April 1971 and urged maintenance of the flow of draftees at a high level through the first half of 1971 in order to maintain the option of a 200,000-man strength in Vietnam at the end of FY 1972.[6]

(TS) Meantime, on 10 February 1971, the Deputy Secretary of Defense had issued tentative fiscal guidance for FY 1973-1977 that projected a US force structure in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1972 of 153,600, including 115,000 Army, 8,400 Navy, 29,600 Air Force, and 600 Marine Corps men. Thereafter the Secretary of Defense directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 February to use these figures for future planning. They were well below what the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders had recommended, and the Army strength was the same as that in Program Budget Decision 505, one which the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered inadequate. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out these discrepancies to the Secretary

6. (TS GP 3) JCSM-59-71 to SecDef, 16 Feb 71, Encl to JCS 2472/695-1, 27 Jan 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

on 3 March 1971, reiterating that a US force level of 200,000 in Vietnam at the end of FY 1972 was a prudent planning goal at that time.[7]

Contingency Planning for a Cease-Fire

(~~TS~~) In late 1970 and early 1971, the possibility of a political settlement and a cease-fire arose, adding another factor to be considered in the planning of further US withdrawals. On 18 November 1970, a few weeks after President Nixon had offered a cease-fire in place,[8] Secretary Laird had asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a contingency plan for accelerated US redeployments on a schedule that would provide a secure withdrawal of US forces and an orderly turnover of the US combat role to the Republic of Vietnam based on a cease-fire to take place on 1 January 1971. He wanted the plan prepared "on a close-hold basis," without even the participation of the field commanders.[9]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff had submitted an appropriate outline plan on 12 December 1970. All combat troops would be redeployed by 31 December 1971; a "rollup" force would be retained until the spring of 1972 to dispose of facilities, materiel, and supplies; and a "shortfall" force to offset South Vietnamese deficiencies until completion of the RVNAF

7. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 10 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2458/769, 12 Feb 71; (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-95-71 to SecDef 3 Mar 71, Encl A to JCS 2458/769-1, 26 Feb 71; JMF 550 (10 Feb 71). (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 23 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/695-2, 26 Feb 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

8. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, p. 499.

9. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2472/688, 19 Nov 70, JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

improvement and modernization program would redeploy in the period between 1 January 1972 and 1 July 1973. By the latter date, US forces in Vietnam would be reduced to a MAAG and MAAG supplement[10] and if required, the MAAG and its supplement could be withdrawn by October 1973.[11]

(~~TS~~) Secretary Laird approved the plan on 30 December for planning purposes, but considered it only one option. Since the President had made clear US willingness to negotiate an agreed timetable for complete troop redeployments as part of an overall settlement, Mr. Laird asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study a more rapid redeployment schedule, in which all US troops, including the rollup and shortfall forces, would be withdrawn by 31 December 1971 with retention of a MAAG and MAAG supplement or a Defense Attache Office. This time, at the request of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary authorized participation of the field commanders in the planning.[12]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff furnished the Secretary of Defense their second cease-fire redeployment plan on 30 January 1971. It contained four variants, differing only in the size and functions of the MAAG structure retained in Vietnam upon completion of the US redeployment. The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the plan had "significantly undesirable features," including disruption of the Vietnamization

10. The MAAG supplement would provide intelligence, communications, and other support functions not organic to the MAAG.

11. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-570-70 to SecDef, 12 Dec 70, Encl to JCS 2472/688-1, 9 Dec 70, JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

12. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 30 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2472/688-2, 31 Dec 70, JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

program and the development of the RVNAF. Therefore they recommended that the plan be considered only as an illustrative outline for accelerated US withdrawal in the event of a cease-fire. Subsequently, both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV prepared redeployment contingency plans for a possible cease-fire. No such development was forthcoming in 1971, however, and there was no occasion to use any of these plans.[13]

COMUSMACV Plan 208

(TS) While in Saigon during January 1971, Secretary Laird directed General Abrams to prepare on a very close-hold basis a contingency plan to reduce US troops in South Vietnam to a level of 60,000 by September 1972. General Abrams completed the plan, Contingency Plan 208, on 8 March 1971 and a team from his headquarters presented it to the Secretary of Defense on 16-17 March 1971. The field commander based his plan on a number of assumptions, including the following three with implications for the security of his command beyond 1 January 1972: (1) current and planned cross-border operations would further reduce the capability of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese Army to conduct major offensive action against the Republic of Vietnam; (2) there would be no major political upheavals in South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia; (3) tactical air sortie rates of 10,000 and 8,000 per month through FY 1972 and 1973, respectively, would be available, together with 1,000 B-52 sorties per month in both fiscal years.

(TS) Contingency Plan 208 would retain sufficient US troops in the Republic of Vietnam during the summer

13. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-43-71 to SecDef, 30 Jan 71, Encl to JCS 2472/688-3, 27 Jan 71; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-78-71 to SecDef, 19 Feb 71 (derived from JCS 2472/688-4); JMF 911/374 (18 Nov 70).

and fall of 1971 to provide stability during the South Vietnamese congressional and presidential elections, as President Thieu had requested; would allow acceleration of retrograding of US supplies and equipment; and would facilitate the redeployment of the equipment of one Thai brigade. Under the plan, US troop redeployments would average a little more than 13,300 per month for FY 1972, and resulting US force levels would be: 255,000 by 30 June 1971, 233,000 by 31 October 1971, 95,00 by 30 June 1972, and 60,000 by 31 August 1972. The level of 95,000 on 30 June 1972 would be far below that called for in the tenative fiscal guidance issued by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 10 February 1971.[14]

(C) On 18 March, COMUSMACV provided CINCPAC additional comments on future force withdrawals in response to Admiral McCain's request. As redeployment progressed beyond 1 May 1971, he said,

> the ability of U.S. ground forces to influence the situation in RVN will rapidly decrease and an increasing share of the burden will have to be assumed by the RVNAF. As each subsequent increment redeploys flexibility essential to accommodating changes falls off rapidly and the total spectrum of redeployment actions requires precision and coordination.

With the removal of the bulk of US ground troops by late 1971, General Abrams observed, the US role would

14. COMUSMACV CONPLAN 208 is not found in JCS Files, but it is discussed in: (TS) CM-722-71 to DJS, 19 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71; and (TS-GP 3) JCSM-145-71 to SecDef, 26 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/725-1, 25 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

then be limited to the "dynamic defense" of US installations, protection of equipment and supplies to be retrograded, and assistance in RVNAF improvement. He thought that US force levels as of 1 July 1972 might vary anywhere between 153,000, as provided in the Deputy Secretary of Defense's tentative fiscal guidance, and the 90,000 set forth in his contingency plan. He doubted, however, that forces larger than those in his plan could influence the situation. Moreover, General Abrams believed that in the current "U.S. national environment" US forces remaining in South Vietnam by September 1972 would be down to what he had proposed. Therefore he recommended approval of Contingency Plan 208 for detailed planning with a 1 September 1972 force level goal varying from 60,000 to 90,000 spaces. He also recommended planning for and initiation of necessary long lead-time actions to accomplish transfer and retrograde of excess equipment and stocks, the retention of sufficient air assets in Southeast Asia throughout FY 1972 and FY 1973, and continuation of the "single air war concept" throughout the period.[15]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the COMUSMACV views in executive session, and Admiral Moorer informed both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC on 19 March 1971 that, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized the necessity of taking cognizance of political realities, they believed their recommendation to higher authority on US troop redeployments should be based "primarily" on military considerations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff

15. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 181020Z Mar 71, JCS IN 79909, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

wanted to get an early decision on US troop redeployments through 31 December 1971, but with a public announcement by the President for only the withdrawals in the period May through October 1971.[16]

Further JCS Recommendations

(S) Meantime, on 17 March, the Secretary of Defense requested further JCS consideraton of US redeployments from Vietnam in preparation for a Presidential announcement in April. He wanted evaluation of three alternatives: (1) COMUSMACV contingency Plan 208, providing for a US force in South Vietnam of 95,000 by 30 June 1972 and 60,000 by 31 August 1972; (2) a withdrawal of approximately 12,000 spaces each month reaching a MAAG/MAAG supplement structure of 43,000 by the end of calendar year 1972; (3) the tentative fiscal guidance of 10 February 1971 with the objective of a US structure of 153,600 in Vietnam by the end of FY 1972.[17]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff sought the views of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV before replying to the Secretary. General Abrams reiterated his support for his Contingency Plan 208 with a US force level between 60,000 and 90,000 by 1 September 1972. Admiral McCain, however, recognized the dilemma of reconciling military requirements and political realities and proposed deferral of a final decision on end FY 1972 force levels until a further assessment could be made in late 1971. Pending such a reappraisal, he recommended a "purely military position" supporting a 200,000 force level at the

16. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CJCS 6729 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 19 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

17. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 17 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2472/725, 17 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

end of FY 1972, as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders in February,[18] with reduction to about 120,000 by the end of December 1972. Moreover, he thought any announcement should cover only redeployments through October 1971.[19]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their response to the Secretary of Defense on 26 March 1971. They outlined for him the varying levels of the three alternatives as well as required air sorties to support those levels. They also presented the Secretary a fourth alternative, the "MACV/CINCPAC/JCS Planning Goals," which was the force recommendation presented by them in February, providing for an end FY 1972 force structure of approximately 200,000 (199,000 in this instance). The Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned Secretary Laird that all four withdrawal alternatives involved extremely high risks unless supported by adequate air sorties. They did not favor the adoption of any of the four, but did present the following minimum essential US force levels in South Vietnam through 1971, which corresponded exactly with Contingency Plan 208 figures for 1971: 255,000 on 30 June, 233,000 on 31 October, and 199,000 on 31 December. They recommended the necessary air sorties to support these force levels and requested provision of additional funding and manpower as necessary. Finally, they urged announcement of redeployment plans only

18. See above , pp. 137-138.

19. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 232342Z Mar 71, JCS IN 91002; (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 220310Z Mar 71, readdressed as CINCPAC 232341Z Mar 71, (info CJCS), JCS IN 91011; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

through 31 October 1971 and no decision on redeployments beyond 31 December 1971.[20]

(TS) Three days later, on 29 March 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff met with Secretary Laird and discussed two additional redeployment proposals: one of 100,00 troops between 1 May 1971 and 1 January 1972, and the other of 150,000 troops between 1 May 1971 and 1 May 1972. In this discussion, as Admiral Moorer told CINCPAC and COMUSMACV several days later, Secretary Laird indicated that future US redeployments would proceed at a rate of at least 12,500 per month.[21]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the field commanders both their 26 March recommendations and a description of the additional alternatives discussed with the Secretary on 29 March. On 1 April, Admiral Moorer supplied the Secretary of Defense with COMUSMACV's comments on these alternatives. He concurred in the JCS position, which reflected his own Contingency Plan 208. In addition, he considered the alternative to withdraw 100,000 US troops between 1 May 1971 and 1 January 1972 excessive since this would redeploy 15,000 more troops than proposed in Contingency Plan 208. The withdrawal of 150,000 US forces between 1 May 1971 and 1 May 1972, on the other hand, would be manageable, the General believed, since it would actually redeploy 5,000 less troops than Contingency Plan 208 during the same period. General Abrams also supported periodic

20. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-145-71 to SecDef, 26 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/725-1, 25 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

21. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7576 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 31 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7525 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 30 Mar 71, CJCS msg files.

short term redeployment announcements in preference to one covering a longer period.[22]

The President's Decision

(U) On 7 April 1971, President Nixon made the long anticipated redeployment anouncement, stating that he was increasing the rate of US troop withdrawals. Between 1 May and 1 December 1971, 100,000 more US troops would leave South Vietnam. At the same time, he called upon Hanoi to engage in serious negotiations to end the war and to agree to the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war. Despite heavy pressure to name a date for ending US involvement in Vietnam, the President declined to do so, explaining that such action would throw away the principal bargaining counter to win release of US prisoners as well as remove the enemy's strongest incentive to end the war by negotiation and give enemy commanders information to plan attacks against remaining US forces at the most vulnerable time.[23]

(TS) The President did not follow the military advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this redeployment decision. He chose an option that was both larger and faster than any considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The President's decision would result in a US strength of 184,000 men in South Vietnam by 1 December 1971, whereas the Joint Chiefs had only reluctantly recommended a figure of 199,000 as the minimum level by 31 December 1971. The nearest thing to the President's

22. (TS-GP 1) CM-766-71 to SecDef, 1 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71.

23. President's Address to the Nation, "Report on the Situation in Southeast Asia," 7 Apr 71, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), pp. 522-527.

option considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was the withdrawal of 100,000 troops in the period May through December 1971, a possibility that both COMUSMACV and the Joint Chiefs of Staff judged "excessive." Evidently, as had been the case in 1969 and 1970, political realities influenced the President to decide on redeployments larger than those recommended by his principal military advisers.

(TS) Two days later, on 9 April 1971, Secretary Laird confirmed the President's announcement, authorizing troop levels in South Vietnam of no more than 254,700 on 30 June 1971, no less than 205,000 on 1 October, and no more than 184,000 on 1 December 1971. Several days later, he informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that although the President had not announced US troop redeployments for the period after 1 December 1971, he had committed himself to continuing the current pace of withdrawal until US troops were reduced to the size of a MAAG.[24]

US Redeployments, May-November 1971

(S) Following the President's decision on 7 April, the Services, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV planned and carried out, with JCS approval, the 100,000-man withdrawal in three increments. Increment 7, nicknamed KEYSTONE ORIOLE ALPHA, removed 29,300 troops during the period 1 May-30 June 1971; Increment 8, KEYSTONE ORIOLE BRAVO, 28,700 between 1 July and 31 August 1971; and Increment 9, KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE, 42,000 from

24 (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 9 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/725-2, 12 Apr 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71). (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/342, 14 Apr 71, JMF 907/520 (12 Apr 71).

1 September through 30 November 1971. ALPHA consisted of 15,030 Army forces, 516 Navy, 985 Air Force, and 12,769 Marine Corps; another 821 in-country Marine Corps spaces were transferred to the Air Force. The total Marine Corps reduction of 13,590 consisted of the II Marine Amphibious Brigade, the 1st Regiment of the 1st Marine Division, two attack fighter squadrons of the 1st Marine Air Wing, and remaining combat support and combat service support elements. This withdrawal left only 546 US Marines in South Vietnam on 30 June 1971 and ended the active combat role of the US Marine Corps in South Vietnam. Major Army units in KEYSTONE ORIOLE ALPHA were two battalions of the 23d Infantry Division and one of the 101st Airborne Division (airmobile).[25]

(C) The 28,700 US forces withdrawn in KEYSTONE ORIOLE BRAVO were made up of: 21,769 Army troops including two combat brigades, the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (mechanized) and the 173d Airborne Brigade (-); 1,122 Navy forces associated with three landing craft repair ships, 5,700 Air Force personnel representing one tactical reconnaissance squadron, two tactical airlift squadrons, four tactical fighter squadrons, and one special operations squadron; and 109 Marines.[26]

(~~TS~~) There was some delay in approval of the troop list for KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE because of a question over the final destination of one Air Force unit, the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron. The Air Force wanted to return the unit to the United States while CINCPAC wanted it moved to Thailand. Subsequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the troop list so the

25. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. F-9 - F-11.
26. Ibid., (C) p. F-11.

redeployment increment could proceed on schedule, holding the question of the Air Force squadron in abeyance. Eventually, on 6 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified the field commanders that the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron would return to the United States. Meantime, KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE was proceeding and by 30 November the following forces had left South Vietnam: 35,000 Army troops (two infantry brigade headquarters, six infantry battalions, two armored cavalry squadrons, ten artillery battalions, 12 aviation companies, and five engineer battalions), 1,400 Navy forces (the in-country portion of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5, elements of logistics support units, and spaces associated with miscellaneous staff and unit drawdowns), and 5,600 Air Force personnel (two tactical fighter squadrons, two tactical airlift squadrons, and one special operations squadron).[27]

(C) The withdrawal schedules for KEYSTONE ORIOLE, BRAVO, AND CHARLIE allowed the maximum flexibility in logistics planning while at the same time assuring political stability in South Vietnam during the election period. The completion of KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE on 30 November 1971 accomplished the 100,000 withdrawal announced by the President on 7 April 1971 and brought actual US strength down to 178,266, well below the

27. (~~TS~~-GP 3) MJCS-274-71 to SecDef, 11 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/725-6, 14 Sep 71; (~~TS~~-GP 4) J5M 1690-71 to Secy, JCS, 15 Oct 71; JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. F-11 - F-13. (~~S~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1359 to CINCPAC, 6 Oct 71 (derived from JCS 2339/345-9), JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

184,000 figure authorized by the Secretary of Defense for that date.[28]

(S) In the course of this 100,000 redeployment, the drawdown reached the point where US troops no longer engaged in active ground combat operations. During the summer of 1971, US ground forces assumed a mission of "dynamic defense," protecting US installations, processing equipment and supplies to be retrograded, and assisting the development of the RVNAF.[29] At this time, the RVNAF assumed responsibility for all major ground combat action. General Abrams evolved the dynamic defense concept in late June, and the shift by US forces from active combat to security operations occurred gradually in the succeeding months. It was only in November, however, that President Nixon announced that US forces in South Vietnam were in a defensive position. This turnover of combat responsibility to the South Vietnamese marked the end of the first phase of Vietnamization. Now US forces in South Vietnam would concentrate on the second phase, the development of air, naval, artillery, and logistical support capability necessary for "effective independent security." This second phase had, in fact, already been in progress concurrently with the first, but would take much longer to complete.[30]

28. (~~S NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. J-37.

29. See Chapter 5, pp. 219-223, for a discussion of the changed mission for US forces in Vietnam.

30. (~~S NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. I-5; (~~S~~) p. IV-10. (U) Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, p. 1103. (U) Statement by SecDef Melvin R. Laird Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on FY 1972-1976 Defense Program and the 1972 Defense Budget, 15 Mar 71, p. 31.

Planning the Next Redeployment

(~~TS~~) Immediately after the announcement of 7 April, the President and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, began to consider the size and timing of US withdrawals beyond 1 December. On 21 April 1971, Secretary Laird issued guidance for the FY 1973-1977 Defense Program that included his long promised decision on US force and activity levels for Southeast Asia. He set forth the following US force levels in South Vietnam: 254,700 at the end of FY 1971, 100,000 at the end of FY 1972, and 43,400 at the end of FY 1973. The Secretary anticipated that these force levels would be revised over the next few months. Since the President had approved redeployments only through 1 December, the assumed level for the end of FY 1972, Mr. Laird advised, was subject to "substantial change."[31]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, the President on 15 April had directed a complete assessment of the situation in South Vietnam through calendar year 1972. Carried out within the NSC system, this assessment is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. It examined principally enemy and allied strategies and needed improvements for the RVNAF, though, of course, the subject of US redeployments entered into the consideration. The results of the two-month review were summarized by the Deputy Secretary of Defense in a draft decision paper for the President of 18 June 1971. It was the general agreement of the Senior Review Group, Deputy Secretary Packard said, that the probable enemy threat in the

31. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, et al., 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2458/780, 23 Apr 71, JMF 555 (21 Apr 71) sec 1.

coming period, coupled with continuing US redeployments, required additional measures to strengthen the South Vietnamese forces, and he outlined a series of incremental alternatives to accomplish this objective. The Deputy Secretary also presented two US withdrawal options for 1972: redeployment at a rate of 12,500 men per month, reaching a level of 100,000 by the end of FY 1972 and 50,000-to 70,000 by 30 September 1972; or a monthly rate of 17,700, attaining a 50,000 to 70,000 level by 30 June 1972. In the end, however, the President approved only measures to improve the RVNAF and made no decision at that time on the size of further US redeployments.[32]

(~~TS~~) Subsequently, on 6 August 1971, after returning from another visit to Saigon, Secretary Laird requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for planning purposes, to develop two possible forces of 60,000 US troops in South Vietnam. He wanted a "refined and updated" version of the balanced force called for in COMUSMACV's Contingency Plan 208 and another to be achieved by the end of FY 1972 that would maximize in-country helicopter lift.[33]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff furnished the two force structures to the Secretary of Defense on 20 August 1971. The modified CONPLAN 208 force would provide a reasonable amount of additional helicopter

32. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, Dep SecDef, DCI, and CJCS, 15 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/739, 16 Apr 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger et al., 18 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-19, 21 Jun 71, same file, sec 4. (S-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 118, 3 Jul 71, JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs.

33. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/773, 9 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.

lift--enough to meet requirements--without sacrificing other capabilities. The second force would provide "maximum" lift, but at the expense of other capabilities, and would thereby restrict flexibility. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred the modified CONPLAN 208 force, the more so since it would spread the redeployment over a longer time, i.e. until September, instead of 1 July 1972.[34]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense rejected the modified CONPLAN 208 force endorsed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, apparently because it did not meet the 1 July 1972 target date. United States objectives in Southeast Asia, he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 August 1971, required planning for a US force alternative that included the following: (1) a US strength in South Vietnam of 60,000 by the end of FY 1972 (30 June 1972); (2) priority missions in South Vietnam of helicopter support to permit the equivalent of 1.5 assault helicopter companies and 0.5 assault support helicopter companies for each ARVN/VNMC division, logistics retrograde and RVNAF backup support, intelligence collection, advisory effort, and security; (3) turnover of all functions practicable to the RVNAF, including security for US forces where located close to South Vietnamese facilities; (4) provision of tactical air and tactical airlift by out-of-country and offshore forces as far as possible with extraordinary procedures to insure adequate air defense and timely tactical air support in South Vietnam; (5) maximum base consolidation and turnover to the Government of Vietnam. In conclusion, the Secretary stressed the vital necessity for placing US forces "in a posture to carry

34. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-383-71 to SecDef, 20 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/773-1, 18 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.

out any redeployment plan the President should choose to announce in November." Administrative difficulties, such as logistics retrograde or base turnover, he insisted, must not be allowed to limit the President's options.[35]

(TS) Meantime, General Abrams had prepared and submitted to CINCPAC on 28 August his OPLAN J208, a revision of Contingency Plan 208. This new plan presented alternative US force levels of 100,000 or 60,000[36] in South Vietnam on 1 September 1972. General Abrams observed, however, that the 100,000 level was a "notional" force only, since he expected to reach that level in the first half of June 1972. He considered the 60,000 structure more "definitive" and the plan included a concept of operations and employment for that force level. In OPLAN J208, COMUSMACV assumed a tactical air sortie rate of 8,000 per month through FY 1973 and provided for a balanced force to conduct the air war, to furnish combat support and combat service support to the RVNAF, to provide adviser and assistance, to provide limited US ground security units for dynamic defense of command and vital installations, to allow a sustaining base for the residual US force, and to accomplish orderly retrograde of essential supplies and equipment. General Abrams believed that US redeployment to a 60,000 level on 1 September 1972 could be met with an acceptable risk, but that

35. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 26 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/773-2, 27 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.

36. The plan itself addressed a force level of 62,000, but COMUSMACV in his forwarding letter consistently cited a 60,000 level.

any faster withdrawal would risk the continued success of Vietnamization.[37]

(TS) Admiral McCain forwarded COMUSMACV OPLAN J208 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 7 September 1971, but in the interval since COMUSMACV had prepared the plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had asked the field commanders for an alternative force concept to meet the requirements as outlined by the Secretary of Defense on 26 August 1971. Accordingly, COMUSMACV prepared and submitted to CINCPAC on 5 October 1971 OPLAN J208A, providing for a 60,000 force level in South Vietnam by the end of FY 1972 (30 June 1972). Essentially, OPLAN J208A was the same as OPLAN J208 but compressed to meet the earlier completion date of 30 June 1972 instead of 1 September 1972 and with provision for helicopter support as directed by the Secretary of Defense. Admiral McCain relayed this latest COMUSMACV plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 8 October characterizing it as "reasonable." He warned, however, that any adverse change in the situation in Vietnam might render the plan unduly risky.[38]

(TS) On 22 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded OPLAN J208A to the Secretary of Defense, comparing it in detail with the alternative they had recommended on 20 August, namely the revised

37. (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV OPLAN J208, 25 Aug 71, Encl with (TS) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 28 Aug 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71).

38. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3020 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 27 Aug 71. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6054 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 31 Aug 71. (TS-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, "Future Force Planning (U)," 7 Sep 71; (TS-GP 1) COMUSMACV OPLAN J208A, 4 Oct 71; (TS) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 5 Oct 71; (TS-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 8 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2472/773-3, 10 Oct 71; JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 1.

Contingency Plan 208. They labeled the former the "alternative force" and the latter the "revised MACV CONPLAN 208." Projected US force levels under these two structures were as follows:

Date	Alternative Force 30 June 1972	Revised MACV COMPLAN 208 1 September 1972
1 December 1971	184,000	184,000
1 May 1972	84,000	122,000
1 July 1972	60,300	-
1 September 1972	-	61,803

The Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the "alternative" force would provide the required helicopter lift as desired by the Secretary and that the final major combat force compositions of both forces would be essentially the same. The primary difference was in the timing, with the "alternative" force being reached two months earlier and requiring a more accelerated redeployment of the remaining US major combat and combat support forces between December 1971 and April 1972. The Joint Chiefs of Staff foresaw two major impacts of the "alternative" force. One was the redeployment of US engineer units at a more rapid rate than previously planned, delaying completion of the lines of communication program and, ultimately, hindering the internal development and defense of the Republic of Vietnam. The other was the required closure of air bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Phan Rang during the fourth quarter of FY 1972, necessitating relocation of units in order to maintain the required monthly tactical air sorties through 30 June 1972.

(~~PS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that the "alternative" structure would provide a balanced force by 30 June 1972, but they cautioned that the accompanying accelerated removal of US combat support might adversely affect the RVNAF's ability

to absorb and adjust to increased operational responsibilities. They supported the position of the field commanders that, although the risks involved in execution appeared acceptable at that time, changes in the military situation might make its execution risky with respect to the security of US forces, orderly retrograde, and RVNAF development, and might reduce leverage for negotiating the release of US prisoners of war.[39]

The November Announcement

(U) While the Joint Chiefs of staff and the Secretary of Defense struggled during the summer of 1971 with the issues of the size and timing of further US withdrawals, the President and his national security adviser, Dr. Kissinger, had pursued secret negotiations to end the war.[40] In efforts not publicly revealed until the following year, the United States offered at the end of May 1971 to set a deadline for withdrawal of its troops from South Vietnam in exchange for a prisoner release and a cease-fire. Again in August 1971, the United States offered to withdraw all its troops within nine months of the date of an agreement, providing an agreement was signed by 1 November 1971. But when 1 November 1971 passed with no positive response from the North Vietnamese, the President moved ahead with preparations for the announcement of the next US troop redeployment, dispatching Secretary Laird, Admiral Moorer, and the Assistant of Defense (International Security Affairs), G. Warren Nutter, to Saigon for a firsthand assessment.[41]

39. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-471-71 to SecDef, 22 Oct 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/773-4, 16 Oct 71, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71).

40. For discussion of the secret negotiations, see Chapter 11, pp. 602-604.

41. (~~C-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. J-36. Dept of State Bulletin, 22 Nov 71, p. 579.

(C) One issue confronting the President as he considered further US redeployments was the possibility of assigning only volunteers to duty in Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had opposed such a practice in May 1971, and they reaffirmed this opposition to the Secretary of Defense on 9 November 1971, stating that a volunteer approach to duty in Vietnam was contrary to the best interests of the US armed forces. It was doubtful that a volunteer force in Vietnam could be sustained with the required force mix. Morover, such a policy would establish an undesirable precedent. The hardships to be endured by troops assigned to South Vietnam, as US involvement dwindled there, they believed, would be no greater than, or very much different from, those in other remote areas such as the Republic of Korea. The JCS advice was heeded, and the United States made no effort to introduce an all volunteer force into South Vietnam.[42]

(U) After consulting with Secreary Laird upon his return from Saigon, President Nixon made his decision on further redeployments. At a press conference on 12 November 1971, he announced that 45,000 US troops would leave South Vietnam during the next two months--25,000 in December 1971 and 20,000 during January 1972. The offensive ground combat role for US forces in South Vietnam had ended, he said, and troops remaining were in a defensive position. He promised another redeployment announcement before the first of February 1972,

42. (S-GP 4) JCSM-497-71 to SecDef, 9 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/784-1, 8 Nov 71; (S-GP 4) J-1 Briefing Sheet for CJCS on JCS 2472/784-1, 8 Nov 71; JMF 911/105 (1 Nov 71). (S-GP 4) CM-928-71 to SecDef, 31 May 71, Att to N/H of JCS 2472/740, 1 Jun 71, JMF 911/105 (16 Apr 71).

stating that the size of this withdrawal would be determined by the level of enemy activity and, particularly, the rate and route of enemy infiltration during December and January; the progress of the RVNAF; and movement in obtaining the release of all prisoners of war in Southeast Asia and a cease-fire.[43]

(U) Three days later, on 15 Novemer 1971, the Secretary of Defense authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to proceed with redeployments as announced by the President, reaching 159,000 spaces or below by the end of December 1971 and 139,000 by 31 January 1972. For planning purposes the Joint Chiefs of Staff were to "look towards a US force goal in the Republic of Vietnam of 60,000 by 30 June 1972," while giving consideration to levels above and below that figure in order to maintain flexibility. At the President's request, Mr. Laird directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to take measures to insure against any comment or speculation on what US force levels would be after January 1972.[44]

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on 19 November of the Secretary's guidance. With regard to the 30 June 1972 force structure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that COMUSMACV OPLAN J208A provided an adequate basis for a 60,000 level and J208 for a higher level, but since there was no plan for a structure smaller than 60,000 by the end of FY 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested CINCPAC to prepare an appropriate plan.[45]

43. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 1101-1105.
44. Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 15 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/786, 16 Nov 71, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).
45. Msg, JCS 2990 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 19 Nov 71 (derived from JCS 2472/786-1), JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).

US Redeployments, December 1971-January 1972

(C) Subsequently, CINCPAC prepared and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved on 26 November the troop list for the 45,000-man withdrawal announced by the President on 12 November. Designated Increment 10 (KEYSTONE MALLARD), the redeployment began on 1 December and met the schedule announced by the President with 25,000 forces departing during December 1971 and another 20,000 in January 1972. In all KEYSTONE MALLARD comprised 36,718 Army, 2,017 Navy, and 6,265 Air Force troops. Major Army units included two infantry brigade headquarters, six infantry battalions, five air cavalry troops, five artillery battalions, 13 separate aviation companies, and other combat support elements organic to the redeploying combat units. The Air Force withdrew one tactical airlift and one tactical air support squadron; the Navy removed various minor support elements.[46]

(C) With the completion of KEYSTONE MALLARD on 31 January 1972, the United States had announced and carried out 10 redeployment increments totaling 410,500 troops and including 102 maneuver battalions, 66 artillery battalions, and 33 attack and fighter squadrons. United States strength in South Vietnam at the end of January 1972 stood at 136,505.[47] including only 13 maneuver battalions.[48]

46. (~~TS~~-GP 4) MJCS-355-71 to SecDef, 26 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/786-2, 2 Dec 71, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. F-13 - F-15.

47. US strength in South Vietnam on 31 December 1971, midway through KEYSTONE MALLARD was 158,119, (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. J-39.

48. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. F-15, F-1-1.

Reduction of Free World Military Assistance Forces

(~~PS~~) As the United States withdrew its troops from Vietnam and relinquished its ground combat role, the other Free World troop contributing countries began to consider reduction in their contingents in Vietnam. At peak strength in 1970, the forces of these countries totaled about 70,000 and amounted to more than three full US Army infantry divisions. During 1970, four Free World countries besides the United States had combat forces deployed in South Vietnam. The Republic of Korea was the largest contributor with a Marine brigade, two infantry divisions, and support units for a total of about 50,000 troops. Next came the Kingdom of Thailand with small naval and air force units and the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force (RTAVF), also known as the Black Panther Division, and subsequently the Black Leopard Division, consisting of a headquarters, two infantry brigades of three battalions each, two light artillery battalions, one medium artillery battalion, a cavalry squadron, and engineer battalion, and appropriate support, for a total of approximately 11,000 men. Australia had about 7,600 combat troops in Vietnam, including a combat brigade and support, a squadron of Canberra bombers, a detachment of Caribou aircraft, a guided missile destroyer, and combat advisers, and New Zealand had two infantry companies and some other units, amounting to about 550 men. Australia and New Zealand bore the cost of furnishing and supporting their troops in Vietnam although the United States did supply some selected support on a

reimbursable basis. The ROK and Thai troops in Vietnam, on the other hand, had always been fully supported by the United States.[49]

(~~C~~) With the accelerating US troop withdrawals in 1970, both Australia and New Zealand announced reduction of their forces in Vietnam. The first redeployment of Free World military assistance forces from Vietnam occurred in November 1970 when New Zealand withdrew a combat unit, Company W, and Australia followed that same month with the removal of its 8th Battalion of about 900 men.[50]

(U) At the beginning of 1971 both the Republic of Korea and the Royal Thai Government were contemplating redeployment of some troops from South Vietnam. On 11 January 1971, President Chung Hui Park of Korea announced that his government planned a step-by-step withdrawal of the ROK military forces then in Vietnam. The next day the Prime Minister of Thailand announced plans to redeploy all Thai forces from Vietnam by February 1972, with the first 5,000 troops to leave in July 1971.[51]

(~~TS~~) These announcements, combined with the redeployments already begun by Australia and New Zealand, convinced US officials in Washington of the need for an assessment of the future role of Free World troop contributing countries in South Vietnam. As

49. (~~TS-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~S~~) p. G-1, (~~C~~) pp. IV-31 - IV-38. (~~TS-NOFORN-~~GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, pp. 128-131. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 262309Z Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan-Feb 71.

50. (~~S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~C~~) pp G-8 - G-15.

51. (~~TS-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMCUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. J-2.

the Secretary of Defense told Admiral Moorer on 3 February 1971, the assessment would be an interagency effort within the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam. As the first step in this process, the Departments of State and Defense had dispatched a joint message to the US Embassies in the troop contributing countries requesting responses on this matter. The Secretary told Admiral Moorer that, although Defense participation in the assessment would be within the context of the Ad Hoc Group, he wanted separately the advice and comments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He posed a number of questions to the Joint Chiefs of Staff including, among others, the following: Should the troop contributing countries be encouraged to maintain a presence in Vietnam? If so, to what extent? What should be the nature of the US commitment to the maintenance of the troop contributing country forces if their members were radically reduced?[52]

(~~TS~~) Asked for his views, CINCPAC told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 February 1971 that the military forces of the troop contributing countries should "phase down roughly parallel to US reductions." He favored encouragement of the troop contributing countries to retain a presence in South Vietnam to foster regional cooperation, to assist the development of the RVNAF, and to promote the economic stability of South Vietnam. He believed that the phaseout of Australian, New Zealand, and Thai military forces would have little impact on plans for Vietnamization, but that the departure of the much larger ROK forces was a different matter. Reduction of the Korean forces, he said, should be subject to the same planning factors as US

52. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/706, 3 Feb 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

redeployments--i.e., based on the ability of the RVNAF to assume the areas of responsibility without serious degradation to overall security. Admiral McCain believed it reasonable to assume a withdrawal of one ROK division or the separate ROK Marine brigade first, followed by other elements, on a time schedule that would permit economical phasing of transportation plus adjustments to special support arrangements such as ROKFV combat rations. Admiral McCain also thought that the United States should provide only equipment, operations and maintenance, and incidental personnel costs related to keeping the ROKFV in South Vietnam as opposed to the current extensive US support to the ROK in South Vietnam plus additional expenses in Korea associated with the maintenance of the ROK forces in Vietnam.[53]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 March 1971 gave the Secretary of Defense their views on future troop contributing country forces and roles. They believed that, as the United States withdrew its combat forces from Vietnam, the troop contributing countries should be encouraged to continue their support to the Republic of Vietnam with a shift of emphasis from combat forces and support to civic action, nation-building, and advisory roles. The level of US support for the troop contributing country forces would, they believed, determine the force level retained in South Vietnam, and they noted three courses of action the troop contributing countries might adopt at differing levels of US support. If there was no net cost to the United States, there would probably be no troop contributing country participation in any form with the exception of

53. (~~TS~~ GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 262309Z Feb 71, JCS IN 43286, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

Australia and New Zealand; if the United States furnished military assistance and replenishment costs only, then Thailand and the Republic of Korea would likely retain token support forces; but if the United States supplied military assistance, replenishment, and operations and maintenance costs, Thai and ROK noncombat support units would probably be provided as requested.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged that the redeployment of ROK troops from South Vietnam follow those of the United States, with the ROK Marine brigade, because of its peculiar logistics arrangements, coming immediately after the departure of the US Marines. Then, with RVN concurrence, the first ROK division-equivalent should return home during the last half of FY 1972 (January to June 1972) and the remaining ROK combat forces should redeploy in the first half of FY 1973 (July-December 1972). Agreeing with CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought that the Republic of Korea should be encouraged to shift participation in South Vietnam to increased military civic action and nation-building support. They added, however, that US support for such continued participation should be negotiated separately without involving the United States in "complex, open-ended support arrangements."[54]

(TS) After considering the JCS comments together with responses from the US Embassies concerned, the Secreary of Defense outlined on 26 March 1971 the Department of Defense position on troop contributing country forces in South Vietnam. He believed that the United States should support withdrawal of the combat forces of these countries at "a measured pace" generally parallel with the US reduction, and at the same

54. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-118-71 to SecDef, 12 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/706-1, 10 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

time encourage the troop contributing countries to keep, "at least temporarily," a token military force in Vietnam to foster regional cooperation. As a "second stage," he said, the Unted States should suggest that these countries replace their combat contingents with advisory, training, and medical assistance units. With specific reference to the Korean forces, the Secretary favored the JCS position for withdrawal of the ROK Marine brigade in mid-1971, one infantry division in the January-June 1972 period, and the other division thereafter with withdrawal completed by the end of 1972, but he said a decision should await completion of studies then underway in Seoul. As to the Thai forces, Mr. Laird favored an approach to persuade a symbolic Thai presence in South Vietnam, possibly in the civic action and nation-building area.[55]

(U) Subsequently, an "interagency agreement" was reached within the US Government that the nature and extent of the ROKFV presence in South Vietnam would be a matter for negotiation between the Governments of South Vietnam and the Republic of Korea, with the United States in the role of a "closely interested third party." Then, at the invitation of the United States the foreign ministers of Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand met with the South Vietnamese foreign minister and the US Secretary of State in Washington on 23 April 1971 to review troop contributions in Vietnam. The assembled ministers recognized the "notable progress" accomplished in bringing an end to the North Vietnamese aggression in South Vietnam, which permitted reexamination of the future combat role of the troop contributing countries.

55. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 26 Mar 71, Att to JCS 2472/706-2, 29 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

They noted both the steady assumption of the South Vietnamese forces of their own self-defense and the continuing US redeployments and agreed that it was possible for them to withdraw "some" of their combat forces. They further agreed that, as their combat forces left Vietnam, they should "strive" to provide military support forces for training, construction, medical, and other similar purposes for "a further period." No announcements of actual force reductions occurred at the meeting, but the ministers did note the already announced plans of Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand to reduce their forces, and the Korean foreign minister stated that his government planned to withdraw one division from South Vietnam though he gave no specific date.[56]

ROK Withdrawals

(~~TS~~) The NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam now took up the question of reduction of troop contributing country forces, dealing exclusively with the matter of ROK withdrawals. In a paper prepared in May 1971 for Senior Review Group consideration, the Ad Hoc Group noted that the ROK forces in Vietnam had given a rather "dilatory" performance in the past several years in comparison to their good record in the earlier stages of the war. During 1970, the ROKFV troops had represented 17 percent of the friendly main force strength in MR 1 but had experienced only two percent of the casualties. Similarly, in MR 2, where the ROK troops made up 30 percent of the regular combat forces, they were credited with only 14 percent of battalion days of combat and had taken only 18 percent of the

56. (U) Final Communique, Vietnam Troop Contributing Conference, 23 Apr 71, Dept of State Bulletin, 17 May 71, pp. 635-638. (~~TS~~) NSC Ad Hoc Group Study, "Republic of Korea Forces in Vietnam (ROKFV)," p. 14, n.d., Att to (~~TS~~ GP 3) JCS 2472/706-3, 27 May 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

casualties. All observers, the Ad Hoc Group said, agreed that the ROKFV was not being used to the greatest advantage. The Group then presented four alternatives for ROK forces in South Vietnam for FY 1972: to maintain the current structure intact, to withdraw the Marine brigade alone or with one of the Army divisions, or to withdraw all three major units. Although the Ad Hoc Group indicated no preference among these alternatives, it did urge that, in negotiations with the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Vietnam, the United States oppose any increase in the cost of US support for the ROKFV beyond that estimated for FY 1972. This position did, in effect, amount to a choice since the first three alternatives would all require increases in support costs for FY 1972. In addition, the Ad Hoc Group believed that the United States should get "considerably enhanced military combat returns for our financial contribution" from whatever Korean forces remained in South Vietnam for any period.[57]

(~~TS~~) The Senior Review Group considered the Ad Hoc Group paper on 24 May 1971 as part of the overall assessment of the situation in South Vietnam.[58] In preparation for this meeting, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) and the Director of the Joint Staff recommended support for alternative four, redeployment of all ROK forces parallel to the US withdrawals, with ROK troops remaining in their current areas until withdrawn to Korea. They also recommended no increase

57. (~~TS~~) NSC Ad Hoc Group Study, "Republic of Korea Forces in Vietnam (ROKFV), n.d., Att to (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCS 2472/706-3, 27 May 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

58. For discussion of the Vietnam assessment, see Chapter 2, pp. 68-85.

in the US support of the ROKFV beyond that currently estimated for FY 1972.[59]

(~~TS~~) General William C. Westmoreland, the Army Chief of Staff and former COMUSMACV, attended the 24 May Senior Review Group meeting as Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since Admiral Moorer was in Europe. He was emphatic about the need to retain some ROK forces in South Vietnam through CY 1972. He did not think the RVNAF could contain a large-scale enemy attack in either MR 1 or MR 2 in view of US redeployments and he favored using the ROKFV to strengthen the defense in the two northern military regions. He suggested the possibility of creating a ROK mobile task force of 8,000 to 12,000 men to meet emergency situations in the two military regions. The Senior Review Group reached no consensus on this matter, but did agree that the Vietnam Ad Hoc Group should prepare a paper for the President setting forth the alternatives with probable effects and estimated costs for each.[60]

(~~TS~~) Subsequently, the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam developed a further paper on ROK forces in Vietnam, which was circulated to the SRG members on 18 June 1971. The Ad Hoc Group again noted that the ROKFV was not being used to best advantage. Further, the Group observed that the Korean forces in South Vietnam had been involved in a "continual and well-organized pattern of irregular practices." Investigations had

59. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Joint TP for DepSecDef and CJCS for 24 May 71 SRG Mtg, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/706-3, 27 May 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

60. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, CSA to CJCS, 16 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/765, 21 Jul 71, JMF 911 (2 Jun 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~) NMCC OPSUM, 24 May 71. (~~TS~~) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState et al., "Vietnam Assessment," 26 May 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71.

revealed substantial amounts of US funds and property diverted from intended purposes by the ROKFV. The Ad Hoc Group again presented four ROK redeployment alternatives open to the United States. Three of the four were the same as the alternatives of the Group's earlier paper: (1) withdrawal of the entire ROKFV from Vietnam on a schedule roughly parallel to the US withdrawals; (2) retention of the ROKFV in Vietnam through CY 1972, gradually returning it to Korea in CY 1973; (3) return to Korea of a force equal to a division "(the Marine brigade plus support troops)" beginning in October 1971 and keeping two division equivalents in Vietnam through CY 1972. The final alternative of the 18 June paper, reflecting General Westmoreland's earlier proposal, called for the establishment of a ROK mobile task force of 8,000 to 12,000 men to remain in South Vietnam through CY 1972 with the balance of the ROKFV redeploying to Korea following the South Vietnamese presidential election in October 1971. The group had included this last alternative despite the opposition of General Abrams, who had cited the high level of US support required as well as the higher ROK combat exposure and casualty rates involved. No matter which alternative was selected, the Ad Hoc Group again recommended no increase in already planned US support for the ROKFV and insistence on enhanced military return for the US financial contribution.[61]

(TS) The choice among the ROK force alternatives could not be decided solely on the basis of the forces needed in South Vietnam and the costs involved. In

61. (TS) NSC Study, "Republic of Korea Forces in Viet-Nam (ROKFV)," n.d., Att to Memo, NSC Staff Secy to USecState et al., 18 Jun 71, Att to (TS-GP 1) JCS 2472/706-4, 22 Jun 71, JMF 911/535 (27 Jan 71).

the final decision, the President had to consider current US negotiations with the Republic of Korea. The United States had decided in 1970 to withdraw 20,000 US forces from Korea by 30 June 1971. Although President Nixon had directed in October 1970 that there would be no further withdrawals from Korea, both the Departments of State and Defense agreed in general that US ground forces in the Republic of Korea could be further reduced by the end of FY 1973 (30 June 1973). Officials of the two departments believed it desirable for the United States to notify the Republic of Korea one year in advance if it planned further redeployments from Korea. But in this situation, if the United States should press the Republic of Korea to keep the ROKFV in Vietnam, then the Koreans would be in a position to insist that the United States not reduce its force levels in Korea. Nevertheless, the Ad Hoc Group in the 18 June paper suggested that the United States inform the Republic of Korea, "at about the same time we negotiate the issues concerning the ROKFV," of plans for further reductions in US ground forces in Korea during FY 1973.[62]

(~~TS~~) On 23 June 1971, the President selected what amounted to the third alternative proposed by the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam in the 18 June paper. He tentatively decided that the United States would support the continued presence of the two ROK divisions in Vietnam through CY 1972 (allowing redeployment of ROK forces equal to a division in FY 1971) and would reconsider this position after the 1971-1972 Vietnam dry season. In return for this support, however the United States would insist upon improved combat performance by the ROKFV; moreover, the cost of US support

62. Ibid.

would be limited to the amount already estimated for FY 1972. In order to prevent any linkage between the question of ROK troops in Vietnam and the retention of US troops in Korea, the United States would take the position that, in continuing to support the ROKFV in South Vietnam, it was merely acquiescing in a request by the Republic of Vietnam.[63]

(TS) General Westmoreland was somewhat reluctant to accept the President's decision on Korean force withdrawals. He told Admiral Moorer on 16 July that he wanted to make his position and rationale "a matter of record." He feared that the RVNAF could not contain a large-scale enemy attack in either MR 1 or 2 and that it would be prudent to leave all the ROK forces in Vietnam through CY 1972. He believed that the past performance of the ROK forces had led to an underestimation of their capabilities and he again advocated the creation of a ROK mobile task force of 8,000 to 12,000 men available for movement throughout Vietnam. He recognized General Abrams' opposition to such a force, but argued that the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, took no action on General Westmoreland's proposal, which received no further consideration.[64]

(TS) The United States informed the Republic of Korea through diplomatic channels of its decision to support two ROK divisions in Vietnam until 1973, and the Republic of Korea pressed ahead with plans to reduce ther ROKFV accordingly. Shortly thereafter the

63. (TS-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 113, 23 Jun 71, JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs.

64. (TS-GP 1) Memo, CSA to CJCS, 16 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/765, 21 Jul 71, JMF 911 (2 Jun 71).

Republic of Korea announced its intention to withdraw 10,000 troops from Vietnam by June 1972 in the first phase of a redeployment that would eventually reduce the Korean force in Vietnam to about 5,000 troops. The Republic of Korea planned to deactivate one division plus a Marine brigade in the latter part of 1972 so that its armed forces could remain within the 600,000-man strength ceiling as had been agreed with the United States. The Republics of Korea and Vietnam concluded a working arrangement to carry out the redeployment, and the United States had no direct involvement in that arrangement except to encourage both countries in their task and assist wherever possible. Subsequently, the ROK field commander in Vietnam advised COMUSMACV that the 10,000 ROK troops scheduled for redeployment would comprise the 2d Marine Brigade and elements of the ROK 100th Logistical Command.[65]

(C) The actual withdrawal of the first 10,000 ROK forces did not begin until late 1971. Planning for the redeployment called for seven increments and the first two, consisting of 2,449 Korean troops and associated equipment, departed South Vietnam during December 1971. The remaining five increments left during the next four months. The ROK 5th Marine Battalion and the ROK 2d Marine Brigade Headquarters redeployed on 24 February, and the remainder of the 2d Marine Brigade and the 100th Logistical Command left on 1 April completing the 10,000-man ROK withdrawal.[66]

65. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Encl B, JCS 2472/775, 27 Aug 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, Top Secret Supplement, p. TSS-12. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, p. 143.

66. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. G-9. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. N-1 - N-2.

(C) The announced intention of the Republic of Korea in July 1971 to begin withdrawal of its forces from Vietnam raised the difficult matter of disposition of ROKFV equipment. Much of the equipment used by the Korean troops in South Vietnam, approximately $70 million in value, was on loan to the Republic of Korea with the title held by the United States. The United States was not committed to transfer any of this equipment to the Republic of Korea except as might be used to replace MAP items lost or destroyed through combat or other normal wear. But "from the standpoint of intergovernmental relations and cost effectiveness," the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders generally favored transfer of the equipment. The matter was further complicated by the fact that the US Congress, in passing the Department of Defense appropriation bills for FY 1971, had stipulated a worldwide limit on the disposal of excess defense articles of $100 million, valued at one-third of original cost.[67]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 August 1971 raised the question of ROKFV equipment with the Secretary of Defense. They favored transfer of all US-titled equipment held by the ROKFV to the Republic of Korea except for the following items: those determined by the Services to be unsuitable for transfer; those that could not be used effectively or maintained by the ROK forces; those that were classified material, including classified munitions; those that were politically sensitive, such a toxic or incapacitating agents and associated munitions; and those required for RVNAF

67. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCS 2472/775, 26 Aug 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71). (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, (S) p. 359.

improvement. Cost incident to redeploying the equipment, such as packing and crating, they said, should be applied to the ROK five-year modernization program. The turnover of equipment to the redeploying ROKFV troops should be made in the most favorable possible terms for the Republic of Korea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, since the cost of reequipping them in Korea would have to be paid out of the military assistance program and would thus reduce the money available for modernization of ROK forces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested authority for the timely transfer of US-titled equipment held by the ROKFV to the Republic of Korea, except for exempted items, at one-third of the acquisition cost.[68]

~~(C)~~ The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) on 2 September informed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Secretary of the Navy on 30 August 1971 had determined that US Marine Corps equipment on loan, with the exception of that required by the US Marine Corps and not compatible with the ROK MAP, could be transferred to the Republic of Korea as in long supply and excess. Pricing of US Army nonexcess defense articles at one-third cost, the Assistant Secretary said, would require a determination by the Secretary of the Army that such a reduced price reflected the actual condition and market value of the equipment in question. Therefore the Assistant Secretary asked that the Joint Chiefs of Staff reconsider their one-third pricing formula in light of the special ruling that would be required of the Secretary of the Army.[69]

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68. (~~PS~~-GP 4) JCSM-397-71 to SecDef, 27 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/775, 26 Aug 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).
69. (~~PS~~-GP 4) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 2 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-1, 3 Sep 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

(~~S~~) Thereafter, on 14 September, the Department of the Army ruled that US-titled equipment on loan to the ROKFV that was not excess might be offered to the Republic of Korea at 56 percent of the standard cost. Four days later, on 18 September, the Secretary of Defense informed CINCPAC of approval for the transfer of US Marine Corps equipment on loan to the ROK Marine Brigade as excess.[70]

(~~TS~~) In response to the Assistant Secretary of Defense's request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed their position on the pricing formula for the US Army equipment. They informed the Secretary of Defense on 30 October 1971 that the acquisition cost of US-titled major US Army items in the hands of the ROKFV was estimated at $13.4 million, of which $4.7 million was excess to the US Army and $8.7 million was not. They reaffirmed their previous recommendation on transfer to the Republic of Korea, but with the exception that US Army items not in excess be priced at 56 percent of acquisition value instead of one third. They expected this transfer of US Army equipment to have a minimal impact on the US Army portion of the ROK five-year modernization program and noted that, by the time the ROKFV had redeployed to Korea, the value of the US-titled equipment not excess and desired by the Republic of Korea might be considerably reduced.[71]

(~~S~~) The Secretary of Defense subsequently authorized transfer of US-titled equipment held by the ROKFV to the Republic of Korea as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thereafter, on 2 November 1971,

70. (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, Army OpsDep to DJS, 14 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-2, 16 Sep 71; (~~TS~~-GP 4) DJSM-1810-71 to ASD(ISA), 29 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-3, 1 Oct 71; JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

71. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-483-71 to SecDef, 30 Oct 71, Encl to JCS 2472/775-5, 29 Oct 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard wrote the ROK Minister of Defense confirming the US decision for the transfer of US-titled equipment to the Korean forces.[72]

Redeployment of Thai Forces

(S) The redeployment of Thai forces from South Vietnam began in 1971. The previous fall, Admiral McCain had proposed the return of Thai forces beginning in January 1971 in order to upgrade the Royal Thai Army. His proposal was not adopted, but the possible withdrawal of Thai troops was soon under discussion among Thailand, the United States, and South Vietnam and in November 1970 the three countries agreed to set up a joint committee to supervise the Thai withdrawal. Then on 12 January 1971, Thai Prime Minister Kittikochorn announced plans for the redeployment of the Thai contingent in Vietnam with 4,000 troops to depart in August 1971 and all forces by the following February.[73]

(U) Each year Thai forces in Vietnam had rotated home in two increments, the first in January and the second in August. As each increment redeployed, it was replaced in South Vietnam by a new one. In accord with the Prime Minister's January 1971 announcement, the increment that redeployed in August 1971 was not replaced. This withdrawing increment in August consisted of the brigade and a portion of support elements of the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force (RTAVF), and the remaining elements of the RTAVF in Vietnam were designated a task force. This force began a standdown on 9 December 1971 and redeployed to Thailand during

72. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSKOREA, Annual Historical Report, 1971, (C) p. 95. (C-GP 4) Ltr, DepSecDef to ROK Min of Nat'l Defense, 2 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/775-6, 4 Nov 71, JMF 911 (14 Aug 71).

73. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1970, Vol II, pp. 129-130. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. G-17.

the period 3 January through 4 February 1972. Earlier, on 9 May 1971, the Royal Thai Navy Patrol Gunboat Medium (PGM-12), whose mission was to prevent coastal infiltration, had returned to Thailand, and the 45-man Thai air force unit, Victory Flight, withdrew from South Vietnam during November and December 1971. When the RTAVF completed its redeployment in February 1972, a Thai residual force of about 200 men remained as a temporary headquarters elements in Saigon to complete administrative and logistic actions for the Thai forces with a final phaseout scheduled for April 1972.[74]

(S) The disposition of US equipment in the hands of the departing Thai forces was governed by an agreement signed in 1967. This document, the Unger-Dawee agreement, committed the United States to transfer the equipment furnished to the Thai forces in Vietnam to the Royal Thai Government upon redeployment of those forces to Thailand. Other provisions required the United States to construct and equip an overseas replacement training center in Thailand that would revert to Thai ownership when training of Thai personnel for the RTAVF in Vietnam had been completed, and to furnish Thailand a HAWK missile battery, including training and equipment. With the redeployment of the Thai forces from South Vietnam in 1971, the United States transferred US-titled equipment used by the Thai forces in Vietnam to the Royal Thai Government. At the same time, training at the overseas replacement center ceased, and approximately $.5 million in equipment and consumable supplies were also transferred to the Royal Thai Government. In August 1971, Thailand agreed to accept 18 UH-1 and two CH-47 helicopters as a

74. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) pp. G-17 - G-18.

substitute for the pledged HAWK missile battery, and by the end of the summer of 1971, only two continuing US commitments remained under the 1967 agreement: US support for the Thai residual forces in South Vietnam and personnel liability claims.[75]

(S) At the request of the Department of State and Defense, COMUSMACV prepared during the summer of 1971 an analysis of RTAVF performance in South Vietnam. The two departments wanted the study for use in developing future policy toward Thailand as well as in determining military assistane requirements. On 23 August, General Arams submitted the analysis to CINCPAC, who relayed it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 5 October with his concurrence. According to COMUSMACV, the RTAVF in South Vietnam had been "adequately trained and exceptionally well equipped," but had had little combat experience and had been reluctant to coordinate or conduct combained operations with the ARVN. Commanders of manuever units lacked confidence in their highly capable artillery arm and had chosen instead to employ gunships for close-in support of troops. The RTAVF in South Vietnam, General Abrams concluded, had relied excessively on helicopters for movement of troops and had been hesitant to undertake aggressive operations on foot.[76]

Australian and New Zealand Redeployments

(U) New Zealand continued in the early months of 1971 the redeployment of its forces from South Vietnam

75. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) CINCPAC Command History, 1971, (S) pp. 440-441.

76. (S-GP 1) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 23 Aug 71; (S-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 5 Oct 71; Atts to JCS 2353/194, 13 Oct 71, JMF 910/535 (23 Aug 71).

begun the previous November.[77] In February 1971, the New Zealand Special Air Service, 4 Troop, returned home and the 161 Battery of the Royal New Zealand Artillery redeployed during April and May 1971, leaving a total of 264 New Zealand troops in South Vietnam.[78]

(C) Both New Zealand and Australia announced on 18 August 1971 plans to withdraw all of their remaining combat troops from South Vietnam. Australian Prime Minister William McMahan stated that the bulk of the Australian forces would be home by Christmas, and he pledged economic assistance for South Vietnam over the forthcoming three years in place of active military assistance in the war. Australian forces began a three-phase redeployment the following day, 19 August. On 7 November the Australians turned over the military installation at Nui Dat to the RVNAF and 400 Australian troops departed for home. On 8 December 1971 the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, the last Australian combat battalion, left and by 8 January 1972 all but 1,618 Australian troops had withdrawn from Vietnam. Subsequently, on 7 March 1972, the 1st Australian Task Force stood down, ending the combat role of Australia in the Republic of Vietnam and by the end of March 1972, the Australian Army Force strength in Vietnam had declined to 150. These remaining troops constituted a small headquarters in Saigon and the Australina Training Team, Vietnam, stationed in Phuoc Tuy Province and

77. See above, p. 163.

78. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) pp. G-15, J-12.

scheduled to remain in South Vietnam for an indefinite period.[79]

(U) The final withdrawal of New Zealand combat forces occurred in December 1971 with the redeployment of V Company and the 1st New Zealand Service Medical Team. New Zealand continued to assist the Republic of Vietnam with the New Zealand Army Training Team, Vietnam, a 25-man team stationed at the Chi Lang National Training Center in Chau Doc Province to train Regional Force officers. New Zealand also provided a four-man contingent to serve with the Australian Army training team in Phuoc Tuy Province, whose mission was to train Regional and Popular Forces in jungle warfare techiques.[80]

(S) The actual strength of the free world military assistance forces in South Vietnam declined from 67,400 on 1 January 1971 to 54,497 on 31 December 1971. These redeployments continued in the first half of 1972. The actual strength of the free world military assistance forces had fallen to 38,531 men by October 1972, 38,230 of whom were troops of the Republic of Korea.[81]

79. ~~(S-NOFORN-GP~~ 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. F-15, (U) pp. G-12 - G-13, J-13, J-29, J-36, J-38. (~~TS-NOFORN-~~EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. N-1. Stanley R. Larsen and James L. Collins, Allied Participation in Vietnam, 1975, pp. 103-104.

80. ~~(S-NOFORN-GP~~ 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. G-15.

81. ~~(TS-NOFORN)~~ CINCPAC Command History, 1972, (S) p. 131.

TABLE 1

Actual Strength of Military Forces in Vietnam
1971

	US	FWMAF	RVNAF
January 31	334,850	67,433	1,054,125
February 28	323,797	67,791	1,049,163
March 31	302,097	67,513	1,057,676
April 30	272,073	66,563	1,058,237
May 31	252,210	66,586	1,060,597
June 30	239,528	66,842	1,060,129
July 31	225,106	64,762	1,057,924
August 31	216,528	61,256	1,052,353
September 30	212,596	60,538	1,047,890
October 31	198,683	58,813	1,043,232
November 30	178,266	58,526	1,040,640
December 31	158,119	54,497	1,046,254

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, Annex J.

TABLE 2

US REDEPLOYMENTS IN 1971

INCREMENT	PERIOD	AUTHORIZED CEILING	SPACES REDUCED	COMBAT FORCES MVR BN	COMBAT FORCES ARTY BN	ATK/FTR* SQDNS
VI (KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE)	1 Jan-30 Apr 71	284,000	60,000	15	8	0
VII (KEYSTONE ORIOLE ALPHA)	1 May-30 Jun 71	254,700	29,300	6	2	2
VIII (KEYSTONE ORIOLE BRAVO)	1 Jul-31 Aug 71	226,000	28,700	6	5	5
IX (KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE)	1 Sep-30 Nov 71	184,000	42,000	8	10	2
X (KEYSTONE MALLARD)	1 Dec 71-31 Jan 72	139,000	45,000**	6	5	2

*
** Includes both USAF and USMC squadrons
25,000 spaces in December 1971 and 20,000 spaces in January 1972

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. F-1-1.

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CHAPTER 4

DETERMINING US AIR SUPPORT LEVELS FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA IN 1971

(U) The use of air power assumed mounting importance in Vietnam during 1971. As the bulk of US ground forces departed in the course of the year, remaining US commanders turned more than ever to air resources to find and destroy the enemy and his supplies, to support friendly ground operations, and to protect the residual US forces. But, simultaneously, US budget strictures limited the air activity levels available in Southeast Asia. These monetary restrictions, beginning in 1969, had continued throughout 1970 and would become even more severe in 1971.

(U) Throughout the first half of 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had opposed Secretary Laird's efforts to restrict US air activity levels in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, the President resolved the issue in August 1970 when he directed the Department of Defense to fund a monthly Southeast Asia activity level of 14,000 tactical air (both Air Force and Navy), 1,000 B-52, and 1,000 gunship sorties in FY 1971. By the end of 1970, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff feared that decisions were being made to reduce US sortie rates in Southeast Asia in FY 1972 on the basis of fiscal rather than operational needs and they launched a series of appeals to the Secretary of Defense on this matter. Often they combined these positions on air support with ones dealing with US force levels.[1] In late December 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary to

1. See Chapter 3 for discussion of the force levels question.

continue air activity levels in Southeast Asia for the remainder of FY 1971 as currently programmed and to approve for FY 1972 a minimum of 10,000 (7,300 USAF and 2,700 USN) tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship monthly sorties. In reply, the Secretary of Defense had deferred a final decision, but assured the Joint Chiefs of Staff that funds to fly the sortie levels they had recommended were included in the FY 1972 budget submitted to the President. On 31 December 1970, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard approved an additional $249.1 million in FY 1972 funds for Southeast Asia that included support for monthly sortie rates of 10,200 tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship.[2] Although the Deputy Secretary's decision seemed to fulfill the JCS recommendations for air activity levels, this action proved only temporary, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be occupied throughout 1971 with obtaining necessary funds for adequate air support in Southeast Asia.

Air Support for FY 1972

(TS) On 21 January 1971, Admiral Moorer told Secretary Laird that air sorties for FY 1972 as provided in the Deputy Secretary's recent budget decision were the "minimum" necessary for interdiction operations in Laos and Cambodia and for the security of US forces in Vietnam. The Chairman did not expect the enemy to decrease infiltration into South Vietnam and, consequently, he anticipated increased requirements for

2. For discussion of air activity levels in 1970 see (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 341-345.

tactical air support for the remaining US forces. As he explained to the Secretary:

> As US redeployments continue, the selective application of air power assumes greater importance as a primary means to bring concentrated firepower to bear rapidly wherever and whenever required to counter enemy efforts. Retention of this flexible capability is essential to the successful prosecution of our war effort and the success of Vietnamization.

In order to permit the Services to proceed with planning, Admiral Moorer requested an early decision and announcement to support the air activity levels set forth in the Deputy Secretary's 31 December decision. Secretary Laird replied to Admiral Moorer on 9 February 1971 that he did not want to make "a firm decision" on the FY 1972 levels until results of the current dry season air campaign could be assessed. In the interim, however, he authorized the Services to plan on the basis of the tentatively approved Presidential budget (presumably the sortie rates sanctioned by the Deputy Secretary's 31 December 1970 decision).[3]

(~~TS~~) After receiving the comments of the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed the Secretary on US force and activity levels in Southeast Asia.[4] With regard to the latter, they told the Secretary that the field commanders supported the JCS December recommendations for a rate of 10,000 tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship sorties per month

3. (~~TS~~-GP 3) CM-489-71 to SecDef, 21 Jan 71, Att to JCS 2339/333-3, 22 Jan 71, JMF 907/323 (7 Nov 70). (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 9 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2339/338, 15 Feb 71, JMF 907/323 (9 Feb 71).

4. For the JCS recommendations on US force levels, see Chapter 3.

throughout FY 1972. To meet these requirements, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, it would be necessary to retain five additional tactical air squadrons in Southeast Asia at the end of FY 1972 as well as to retain in the active force one tactical fighter wing then scheduled to be transferred to Reserve status. In addition, one attack aircraft carrier and one aircraft carrier wing tentatively planned for deactivation would have to be retained in the Western Pacific or replaced from forces committed to NATO.[5]

(TS) Secretary Laird was still not prepared to make a final decision on air activity levels. But, in the meantime, on 10 February, Deputy Secretary Packard had issued tentative fiscal guidance for the FY 1973 planning, programming, and budgeting cycle, and Secretary Laird instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 February to use that document for planning. This guidance provided for monthly sorties in Southeast Asia for FY 1972 equal to those in the earlier 31 December decision--10,200 tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship sorties. But these rates were averages and by the end of FY 1972, monthly tactical air sorties would actually drop to 6,800 (though with no change in the B-52 and gunship rates). The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed this tentative guidance and advised the Secretary that the end FY 1972 air activity levels for Southeast Asia as set forth therein were well below those recommended by the field commanders, and they reiterated support for their earlier recommendations on this matter. Since ongoing operations could change the situation in Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of

5. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-59-71 to SecDef, 16 Feb 71, Encl to JCS 2472/695-1, 27 Jan 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70).

Staff did promise to review the air activity questionn again before 30 April.[6]

(TS) At this time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were also considering a "banking" concept for air sorties in Southeast Asia, holding rates as far as possible below authorized ceilings when the military situation permitted in order to allow increased rates in times of particular need. The Secretary of Defense had raised this possibility in February, but on 5 March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended against adoption of such a system. The field commanders already kept sorties at the lowest level possible, they said, and to adopt the Secretary's suggestion would only require additional effort to administer without any real advantages in practice.[7]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed air activity levels for Southeast Asia again on 26 March in recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on force withdrawals. On that occasion, they provided the Secretary evaluation of four possible US redeployment alternatives. All four, they told him, were "critically contingent" upon US air levels of 10,000 and 8,000 tactical sorties per month throughout FY 1972 and FY 1973, respectively, and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month for both fiscal years. Since current programming and fiscal guidance did

6. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 23 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/695-2, 26 Feb 71, JMF 907/372 (14 Dec 70). (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS et al., 10 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2458/770, 12 Feb 71; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-95-71 to SecDef, 3 Mar 71, Encl A to JCS 2458/769-1, 26 Feb 71; JMF 550 (10 Feb 71).

7. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-97-71 to SecDef, 5 Mar 71 (derived from JCS 2339/338-1), JMF 907/323 (9 Feb 71).

not allow for rates at these levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the required additional funding be provided.[8]

(TS) During early April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to press the Secretary for adequate air support for operations in Southeast Asia. In connection with redeployment planning, they informed him on 1 April that COMUSMACV supported the recommendations for air support as previously presented. Moreover, while General Abrams was agreeable to a process of averaging sorties throughout the fiscal year, he believed that sufficient air assets must remain in Southeast Asia to support the authorized sortie level plus a reasonable surge capability as of the last day of each fiscal year, and he did not favor any plans for banking of sorties. On 3 April, Admiral Moorer again presented the JCS position on air activity levels for FY 1972 and FY 1973 to Secretary Laird, stressing the importance of a prompt decision, especially for the Navy, since a lengthy program of carrier and air wing inactivations was involved. Three days later, in an evaluation of RVNAF improvement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary that they, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV all urged support of the air activity levels recommended on 26 March in order to assure the progress of Vietnamization and the secure withdrawal of US forces.[9]

8. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-145-71 to SecDef, 26 Mar 71, Encl to JCS 2472/725-1, 25 Mar 71, JMF 907/374 (17 Mar 71).

9. (TS-GP 1) CM-766-71 to SecDef, 1 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 SEA, Apr-Jun 71. (TS-GP 1) CM-780-71 to SecDef, 3 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-1, 8 Apr 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71). (TS-GP 1) JCSM-165-71 to SecDef, 6 Apr 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/736, 6 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Mar 71).

(TS) Finally, on 21 April, the Secretary of Defense issued planning and programming guidance for the FY 1973-1977 Defense Program that included a separate section on Southeast Asia. With respect to air support, Mr. Laird established the following levels for Southeast Asia:

Tactical air Sorties/Month	End Fy 1971	End FY 1972	Average FY 1972	End FY 1973	Average FY 1973
Navy	3,600	1,800	2,700	1,800	1,800
Air Force	10,000	5,000	7,500	0	3,500
Total TACAIR	13,600	6,800	10,200	1,800	5,300
B-52 Sorties per month	1,000	1,000	1,000	300	650
Gunship Sorties per month	1,000	700	700	0	350

Mr. Laird anticipated that these Southeast Asia assumptions would be revised in the coming months, adding that sortie levels for FYs 1972 and 1973 were under review with a firm decision expected within a few weeks.[10]

(TS) In the meantime, Secretary Laird had also requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Services to consider additional ways of reducing air support requirements in Southeast Asia. On 7 April, the day the President announced the withdrawal of 100,000 more US troops from South Vietnam by 1 December 1971, Mr. Laird noted that planning for air activity levels had

10. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2458/780, 23 Apr 71, JMF 555 (21 Apr 71) sec 1.

reached a critical juncture. The Department of Defense he said, must pursue US foreign policy goals in Southeast Asia while at the same time lessening US involvement. Noting the "pressures and temptations to hold onto the reins" there, especially in the area of air support, he asked the Service Secretaries to take the problem of air support under review. Specifically, the Secretary wanted the Services to review the Chairman's 3 April presentation. Mr. Laird followed up with a further request to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 April to consider a new alternative force posture involving complete withdrawal of Air Force assets from South Vietnam by the end of FY 1972, basing sufficient air assets in Thailand to provide tactical sortie levels of 10,000 per month at the end of FY 1971, and 5,000 at the end of FY 1972, for an average of 7,500 per month.[11]

(~~TS~~) The Secretarty of the Air Force replied on 23 April that his service was prepared to provide the level of air support specified in the tentative fiscal guidance for FY 1972 issued by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 12 February. But additional funds and manpower would be needed, he said, if a decision was made to support the higher sortie rates recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Air Force Secretary saw some advantages in the alternative of early withdrawal of Air Force assets from South Vietnam in terms of security of US forces, but he pointed out that significantly increased manpower authorizations would be

11. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, 7 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-1, 8 Apr 71; (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to SecAF and CJCS, 13 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-2, 14 Apr 71; JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

needed in Thailand as well as additional funds. Moreover air capabilities in Vietnam would be degraded.[12]

(TS) The Secretary of the Navy, on 21 April 1971, had voiced his strong impression that both past and present air sortie requirements had been overestimated. He acknowledged the difficulty in "second guessing" the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff but, based on conversations with combat pilots, he believed sorties could be reduced during the rainy season. Accordingly the Navy Secretary recommended an available monthly Navy tactical air sortie rate of 2,700 with actual executed sorties held below that figure, as opposed to the JCS support for a Navy tactical sortie level of 2,700 without qualification, within the recommended total of 10,000 per month for FY 1972. The Secretary of the Army, a few days later, deferred to Mr. Laird's judgment since he had not been fully exposed to the rationale of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders on Southeast Asian air requirements. In his own review, however, the Army Secretary had found little evidence to support the recommended increase in the programmed sorties levels.[13]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not agree that air support could be reduced in Southeast Asia. They told the Secretary of Defense on 26 April that the sortie levels of his 13 April proposal would not meet foreseen requirements. They repeated their recommendations of 26 March 1971 that 10,000 and 8,000 tactical

12. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 23 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-5, 27 Apr 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

13. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecNav to SecDef, 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-4, 22 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecArmy to SecDef, 27 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2147/527-6, 28 Apr 71; JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

air sorties per month throughout FY 1972 and FY 1973, respectively, and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month through the end of FY 1973 be used for planning and budgeting purposes and that additional funds be supplied to meet these levels. As for the suggestion to remove all US tactical air assets from South Vietnam by the end of FY 1972 with basing in Thailand instead, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw both advantages and disadvantages. While supporting the concept in general, they recommended deferral of any decision pending resolution of redeployments after December 1971.[14]

(TS) The question of US air sortie levels became even more complicated on 28 April When Dr. Kissinger advised the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the other members of the Senior Review Group of requirements for various studies for use in the ongoing NSC assessment of the situation in South Vietnam.[15] Among others, Dr. Kissinger wanted an analysis of the manpower and logistics implications of "air interdiction at the 10,000 tactical air and 1,000 B-52 sortie rates established by the President for CY 1972." The complicating factor here was the question of the time period involved. The most recent authoritative ruling that the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Services had was the Secretary of Defense's planning and programming guidance of 21 April 1971,[16] which specified an average monthly tactical air sortie rate of 10,200 through fiscal 1972, tapering to an actual rate of only 6,800 by the end of FY 1972 (30 June 1972). The President's ruling, if definitive, would have

14. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-199-71 to SecDef, 26 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2147/527-3, 21 Apr 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).
15. See Chapter 2, pp. 68-85.
16. See p. 191.

continued the 10,000 rate through 31 December 1972. The latter approach would, of course, meet the JCS recommendations, but was Dr. Kissinger's statement an announcement of Presidential approval or merely an assumption for study purposes? Dr. Kissinger did not elaborate, and Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., brought this matter to JCS attention on 6 May 1971, pointing out the discrepancy between the Secretary of Defense's 21 April guidance and Dr. Kissinger's request. If, as indicated in the latter, a level of 10,000 tactical sorties per month, of which 2,700 would be Navy, was to be maintained throughout 1972, then the Navy would have to maintain three attack carriers (CVA) off Southeast Asia. Accordingly, Admiral Zumwalt said, the Navy would require additional funds to retain the required number of carriers in the Pacific.[17]

(~~TS~~) Joint Staff action officers apparently interpreted Dr. Kissinger's 28 April memorandum as a Presidential decision to support the higher air support levels as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff; they incorporated the higher rate in briefing papers for the Chairman on 7 May and again on 17 May. This matter was resolved on 17 May when the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the sortie level question and associated Service problems with the Secretary of Defense and Mr. Laird apparently told them that the President had not made a decision on air activity levels. Although no record is available of this meeting, Admiral Moorer on 20 May provided the Secretary, "in accordance with our discussions on 17 May 1971," a summary of incremental costs and manpower increases to support the JCS

17. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState et al., 28 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-3, 4 May 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CNOM-135-71 to JCS, n.d., Att to JCS 2147/527-7, 6 May 71, JMF 378 (1 Apr 71).

recommended levels of 10,000 and 8,000 tactical air sorties through FY 1972 and FY 1973, respectively, and 1,000 B-52 monthly sorties for both fiscal years. These costs amounted to an additional $170 million in FY 1972 and $500 million in the succeeding year. Admiral Moorer then recommended approval of these levels (with additional funding and manpower as necessary) for FY 1972, thereby indicating that no final decision had been made on the sortie levels. He also sought approval of the FY 1973 capability for planning.[18]

(~~TS~~) Secretary Laird advised Admiral Moorer on 11 June 1971 that there was little or no chance of securing additional funds for the air activity rates advanced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In fact, he was making every effort just to avoid reductions below the currently programmed levels. He was impressed, he acknowledged, by the "strong views" of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the necessity for their recommended sortie levels for the success of the Vietnamization effort over the next two years. But if the higher levels were approved, reductions in other programs would be necessary, and he did not think it fair to ask the Air Force to bear the major share of the added air operations costs. Could he have, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the assurance of each of them that he would be willing to make appropriate reductions in his Service programs in order to share the cost of the additional sorties? He also inquired whether attention to

18. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Briefing Sheet for CJCS on JCS 2147/527-5, 7 May 71; (~~TS~~) J-5 BP 39-71, 17 May 71; JMF 378 (1 Apr 71). (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-915-71 to SecDef, 20 May 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 70-Jun 71.

"adequacy and effectiveness, as opposed to any specified or predetermined operating rates," might reduce the number of sorties needed? Specifically, he suggested periodic surges as opposed to flying continuously high rates. The same day, 11 June, the Secretary also approved the retention of the carrier USS HANCOCK through the end of FY 1972 in order to continue the deployment of three carriers in the Western Pacific. Subsequently, the Navy absorbed the additional costs of about $34.1 million and 4,100 manpower spaces required by this retention.[19]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied to the Secretary on 28 June 1971. They still supported the position they had put forth on 26 March (10,000 tactical air and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month in FY 1972 and 8,000 tactical and 1,000 B-52 sorties in FY 1973) as essential for the success of Vietnamization and for the safety of remaining US forces. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to recommend additional funding to meet these levels since reprogramming within current fiscal limitations would require reductions in other programs. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, "with all the Service Chiefs concurring," told Mr. Laird of their willingness to provide for the additional costs by "equitable sharing." Should it still be impossible to achieve their recommended activity levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had considered alternative programs of air operations in Southeast Asia and supplied the Secretary six "resource-constrained" options. All of

19. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 11 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2339/345, 11 Jun 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to SecNav, 2 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-4, 3 Aug 71; JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

them, they told the Secretary, incurred significant risks either in Southeast Asia through undesirably low sortie levels or in other areas because of drawdowns and shortfalls required by necessary reprogramming. Of the six, the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored "Option D," providing for a monthly average of 11,100 tactical air sorties in the first quarter of FY 1972, 10,000 per month in the second and third quarters, and 9,700 (with a surge capability to 10,000) in the fourth quarter. For FY 1973, Option D would supply a monthly average of tactical air sorties of 7,100 (5,000 Air Force and 2,100 Navy) per month for the first three quarters and 6,300 (4,200 Air Force and 2,100 Navy) in the final quarter. The B-52 sorties in this option would average 1,000 per month through FY 1972 and 800 per month through FY 1973; gunship sorties would average 700 per month in both fiscal years, with 300 per month in FY 1973 flown by VNAF gunships.

(~~TS~~) While Option D did not meet all the requirements of the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed it approximated them and involved the least risk of all the alternatives examined. Accordingly, if additional funding could not be provided, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended approval of Option D for planning and programming. They did not address the Secretary's suggestion concerning more effective management of sorties in place of higher levels except to state that the field commanders should have the flexibility to vary sorties within the limits of the force capability so long as total expenditures over the year remained within authorized levels.[20]

20. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-306-71 to SecDef, 28 Jun 71, Encl A to JCS 2339/345-1, 24 Jun 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

A Tentative Decision

(C) On 1 July 1971 the Secretary of Defense informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he was sending a memorandum to the President supporting the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on air levels for FY 1972 as outlined by them on 28 June. The level of air operations for Southeast Asia for FY 1972 and FY 1973 was to be reviewed by the Senior Review Group during July, Secretary Laird continued, and alternatives would be submitted to the President for decision. Pending that action, the Secretary directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to implement the program recommended in their Option D for FY 1972. Secretary Laird also concurred with a proposal by the Secretary of the Navy to maintain two attack aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific during the wet season and three during the dry season, an action he considered consistent with Option D. Finally, he directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to continue to plan on the basis of the fiscal guidance for Southeast Asia for FY 1973. He did not elaborate but, presumably, referred to the planning and programming guidance issued on 21 April.[21] He added that air operations for FY 1973 would be reviewed at the appropriate time in the future.[22]

(C) In his 1 July decision, Secretary Laird also agreed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the field commanders must have flexibility to vary sortie levels according to circumstances. It was important, he said, for COMUSMACV to save sorties in periods of reduced threat and inclement weather to allow surges in periods

21. See p. 191.

22. (~~TS~~ GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 1 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-2, 2 Jul 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

of greater need. Accordingly, he again requested comments on a "banking" procedure, whereby COMUSMACV would prepare an advanced schedule of monthly sortie rates for the fiscal year, varying them in accord with enemy activity patterns and seasonal weather conditions. Total sorties in the schedule, the Secretary said, should be less than the total permitted by the fiscal guidance to allow a reserve available when needed.[23]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff still opposed, as they had earlier in March,[24] any such banking of air sorties in Southeast Asia. They told the Secretary of Defense on 29 July 1971 that neither COMUSMACV nor CINCPAC favored his recent proposal in this regard. While there were seasonal patterns in the air effort, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, prediction of monthly requirements was "difficult and of questionable accuracy." Consequently, they urged that the field commanders be permitted to manage sorties within the total annual authorization as provided in their Option D of 28 June.[25]

(~~TS~~) Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General John D. Ryan, meantime had suggested the possibility of reducing B-52 operations in Southeast Asia. In the preceding 12 months (FY 1971), the field commanders had varied tactical air rates in Southeast Asia with a net savings of over 22,000 sorties, allowing the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assure the Secretary of Defense of the flexibility of the commanders in responding to military requirements. A similar savings, however, had

23. Ibid.
24. See above, p. 189.
25. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-353-71 to SecDef, 29 Jul 71, Encl to JCS 2339/345-3, 23 Jul 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 1.

not been possible for B-52 operations. The sorties flown during the first part of 1971 had averaged more than the authorized 1,000 per month, the surge being initially to support LAMSON 719 operations and then to exploit the lucrative targets that developed as a result of that operation and to limit the flow of supplies to enemy forces operating in Cambodia and the southern part of the Republic of Vietnam. Consequently, the US Strategic Air Command had agreed in February 1971 to increase the daily B-52 rate from 30 to 40 sorties and, at COMUSMACV's request, this higher expenditure continued through May. During that month, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed a return to the authorized 1,000 monthly rate on 1 June to coincide with the start of the southwest monsoon and an anticipated drop in enemy infiltration activities. General Ryan believed that B-52 sorties during the monsoon season were of limited value, especially considering the cumulative effectiveness of previous bombings on the same targets. Therefore on 21 July 1971, he suggested to his JCS colleagues the possibility of reducing B-52 operations in Southeast Asia during the current wet season.[26]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not accept the Air Force proposal for any reduction in B-52 sortie rates in Southeast Asia, but Admiral Moorer on 2 August did urge the field commanders to consider managing the

26. (~~S~~-GP 3) CSAFM 280-71 to JCS, 21 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/768, 21 Jul 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7656 to CINCPAC, 2 Aug 71; JMF 907/323 (21 Jul 71). (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-894-71 to SecDef, 14 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/749, 14 May 71, JMF 895/323 (24 Apr 71). (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (~~TS~~) p. TSS-1, (S) pp. VI-11 - VI-13.

B-52 program to conserve expenditures as the situation allowed. He told the commanders that, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff had succeeded in obtaining Secretary of Defense support for the current B-52 sortie levels through the remainder of FY 1972, the Services were under continuing pressure to make further reduction in operating expenditures with sortie reductions frequently cited as a possible source for savings. Recent studies within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Admiral Moorer continued, had suggested limiting both tactical and B-52 air strikes to known or validated targets to achieve budget reductions. Even though the Joint Staff had resisted such suggestions, Admiral Moorer requested CINCPAC to consider the "negotiating advantages" accruing from management of the FY 1972 B-52 program by varying monthly sorties, without relinquishing any assets, when the military situation permitted.[27]

A Final Decision

(~~TS~~) At long last, on 12 August 1971, Secretary Laird informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the decision on air support levels for Southeast Asia. He told Admiral Moorer that the following monthly sortie rates "will be budgeted" for each fiscal year:

	FY 1972	FY 1973
Tactical air	10,000	8,000
B-52	1,000	1,000
Gunship	750	750

He added that COMUSMACV was "authorized and encouraged" to keep the number of sorties (including B-52s)

27, (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7656 to CINCPAC (info CINCSAC and COMUSMACV), 2 Aug 71, JMF 907/323 (21 Jul 71).

"as low as the tactical situation permits," though it was not necessary to provide an advance schedule of proposed sortie expenditures. The Secretary did not explain how the decision on these rates was reached. He had told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 July that the question of Southeast Asia air levels would be reviewed by the Senior Review Group with alternatives submitted for the President's decision. Available records, however, give no indication of such Senior Review Group consideration or Presidential action. Apparently, the President did approve the levels provided the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 August 1971, for subsequently Secretary Laird referred to the FY 1972 sortie rates approved by the President. In any event, the levels announced by Secretary Laird on 12 August were higher than those reluctantly recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their Option D on 28 June and tentatively approved by the Secretary on 1 July 1971. In fact, these 12 August activity levels were identical to those the Joint Chiefs of Staff had advocated throughout the first six months of 1971 though with the stipulation to hold below those rates to the extent the military situation allowed.[28]

(~~TS~~) When the Secretary of Defense announced the FY 1972 and FY 1973 air activity levels on 12 August, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to recommend the mix of Air Force and Navy tactical air sorties for those two years and the basing plans for Air Force units on two possible assumptions: that the Air

28. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-5, 12 Aug 71; (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 28 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-10, 29 Sep 71; JMF 907/323 (11 Jul 71) sec 2.

Force would withdraw entirely from South Vietnam in FY 1972 or that it would retain two operating bases there by the end of that year. In reply the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted three options for the mix of tactical air sorties in FYs 1972 and 1973. They preferred Option 3, which provided:

	FY 1972 (by quarter)				FY 1973 (by quarter)			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
USAF	8,300	6,900	6,700	6,700	5,100	4,700	4,700	4,700
USN	2,100	3,100	3,300	3,300	2,900	3,300	3,300	3,300
	10,400	10,000	10,000	10,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000

The other two options would have assigned the Air Force larger, though varying proportions of the total.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense that US Air Force squadrons to support Option 3 could be based in Southeast Asia without an increased manpower ceiling in Thailand if two operating bases were retained in South Vietnam at the end of FY 1972. If no bases were retained, they continued, then US Air Force squadrons for Option 3 could be based in Thailand only with an increase of 1,250 US personnel in that country. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the unprogrammed costs for Option 3 could be absorbed without unmanageable impacts on risks in FY 1972, but that the impacts for FY 1973 would be serious, involving "significantly increased risks." They recommended approval of option 3 for execution in FY 1972 and for planning in FY 1973 with provision of additional funds to offset the unprogrammed costs. If such funds were not available, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that these costs be shared equally among

the Services and other DOD activities with exact costs developed "in Secretarial channels."[29]

(S) The Secretary of Defense approved Option 3 for planning purposes on 20 September 1971. He told the Service Secretaries to defer until FY 1973 the procurement of all air ordnance required for the additional sorties involved, stating that other costs for FY 1972 should be reprogrammed from within the current Navy and Air Force budgets. For FY 1973, additional costs would be added to current programs, but Secretary Laird warned that the added costs for FY 1973, like those for FY 1972, might ultimately have to be absorbed. He emphasized the need to reduce the costs of Southeast Asia operations, particularly those of the Navy. Authorization to maintain a sortie-level capability, he said, did not mean the authorized level had to be flown. Rather, "the tactical situation and the availability of valid targets should be the determining factors." He expressed gratification with the recent overall Southeast Asia air effort in this regard, especially the Air Force record, and urged that all benefit possible should be derived from the presence of three attack aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific.[30]

(C) At the end of September 1971, Secretary Laird directed that the transition from the FY 1972 to the

29. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-391-71 to SecDef, 25 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2339/345-7, 25 Aug 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

30 (~~S~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, 20 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-8, 21 Sep 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

FY 1973 sortie levels take place over a three-month period, as had been the practice in previous years, to facilitate planning and to reduce personnel and logistical turbulence. The attack carrier deployment schedules and Air Force deployment and inactivation plans, he said, should reflect this transition during the fourth quarter of FY 1972 (April-June). At the same time the Secretary of Defense directed the Service Secretaries to maintain the capability to fly the 10,000 monthly tactical air sorties "directed by the President for FY 1972." This could be done, he said, by relying on the surge capability of the forces in Southeast Asia or by making temporary use of other CINCPAC resources.[31]

(S) Now after many months of effort, air activity levels in Southeast Asia seemed, at last, to be fixed. But even these rates, so laboriously resolved, were not able to withstand the continuing pressures for further budget reductions in the Vienam war effort. Although the Services had programmed for 8,000 tactical air sorties per month for FY 1973 in accord with the decision of 12 August 1971, the Secretary of Defense on 23 December 1971 approved a new Program Budget Decision providing for an average of 6,000 tactical air sorties per month in FY 1973 while retaining a force structure to support a normal level of 7,100 per month and a surge capability of 9,700 per month. This decision was based on the assumption that there would be three attack carriers available for the first half of

31. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 28 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2339/345-10, 29 Sep 71, JMF 907/323 (11 Jun 71) sec 2.

1973 and two for the second half, and it reduced obligational authority for FY 1973 by $27.3 million. Average monthly sorties for FY 1973 under this new decision were:

Service	Service Estimate	Force Capability		
		Average	Normal	Surge
Air Force	4,800	3,700	4,800	5,500
Navy	3,200	2,300	2,300	4,200
Total	8,000	6,000	7,100	9,700[32]

(U) During 1971, US commanders in Vietnam employed air assets within the activity levels established by the Secretary of Defense even though there was considerable uncertainty throughout much of the year as to what those levels would be in the coming months. The actual conduct of the operations as well as the matter of authorities for air operations are discussed in the following chapter.

32. (S) Program Budget Decision 316, 23 Dec 71, Att to J-5 Briefing Sheet for CJCS on a Memorandum by the CSAF to be Considered at the JCS Meeting on 26 January 1972, 25 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).

CHAPTER 5

THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR, 1971-EARLY 1972

(U) As the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other US officials in Washington struggled to resolve the size and timing of US redeployments and the levels of air support for remaining US forces, the combat continued in Southeast Asia. But in 1971, it was a different war for the United States. By mid-year US forces no longer participated in major ground combat actions; these became the responsibility of the RVNAF as was already the case with naval operations. The United States did maintain supply and support for these actions and continued air interdiction in South Vietnam, in Laos, and in Cambodia to impede infiltration of enemy personnel and supplies. The reduction of US forces in South Vietnam gave added importance to these air operations, and both the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were especially vigilant throughout 1971 and early 1972 in seeking expanded air authorities both to protect remaining US forces and to assist the RVNAF. During this same period, the enemy, while continuing a protracted war strategy, showed no inclination to end the fighting.

The Enemy

(U) The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong pursued objectives in South Vietnam during 1971 unchanged from previous years. The enemy sought to overthrow the existing government of South Vietnam, replace it with a communist regime, and ultimately unify all of Vietnam. This had been the enemy goal since the beginning of the conflict, though the strategy and tactics for achieving it had changed over the years.

(U) The enemy's main force warfare strategy, culminating with a series of unsuccessful offensives in 1968, had proved costly in terms of manpower and resources. Consequently, in 1969, the enemy had abandoned this strategy in favor of one of protracted conflict. In late 1969 and 1970, enemy leaders called for a "two track" policy of building socialism in the north while continuing the war in the south, and North Vietnamese and Viet Cong operations concentrated on rebuilding base areas, conservation of forces, surges of activity, and defeat of the RVN pacification program.[1]

(S) The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong continued to pursue a protracted war strategy in 1971. Directive 01/CT-71, issued by the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) in late 1970 or early 1971, provided general guidelines for the year. The military mission of the directive called for continual attacks to achieve piecemeal victories, to defeat allied efforts, and to counter the pacification program. The directive stressed equal use of main force and guerrilla tactics; main forces would be employed against US and RVN mobile troops with guerrilla warfare developed in both rural and urban areas. The VC/NVA forces would also rebuild secure base areas in remote areas for urban movement. As the United States continued to withdraw its forces, the Republic of Vietnam would be required to increase conscription and taxes. Such action would bring civilian discontent, providing exploitable weaknesses for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Another possible source of exploitation listed by the directive was the vulnerability of the RVN outposts and local

1. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 331-333.

security network manned by the Regional and Popular Forces and by the People's Self Defense Forces.[2]

(S) Further guidance was forthcoming during the year. A second directive, COSVN 06/CT-71, issued in June 1971, set forth guidelines for activities during the RVN congressional and Presidential elections in August and October 1971, respectively. In November 1971, COSVN issued Directive 39 to cover the remainder of 1971 and early 1972. It, in effect, admitted the success of the RVN pacification program and emphasized the importance of regaining political control in the countryside.

(S) At the start of 1971, US intelligence sources estimated that there were 230,060 VC and NVA forces in South Vietnam, or approximately 8,000 fewer than a year earlier. These forces made up some 244 maneuver battalions, 27 less than the previous year, and were directed from Hanoi by the High Command of the North Vietnam Armed Forces. Command over the upper part of South Vietnam was exercised through four major tactical headquarters covering the following areas: The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) Front; Military Region Tri Thien Hue (MRTTH), extending southward from the DMZ almost to Da Nang; Military Region (MR) 5, the central coastal region; and the B-3 Front, the central inland area. North Vietnamese command over forces in the lower part of South Vietnam (roughly the area of RVN MRs 3 and 4) was through the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the military arm of which was known as the South Vietnam Liberation Army (SVNLA) Headquarters.[3]

2. All information in this section, unless otherwise stated, is from ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. III-1 - III-35.

3. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. III-9, IV-12. ~~(TS-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (S) p. III-73.

(S) Enemy forces in South Vietnam were organized into divisions, regiments, battalions, and smaller designations, and assigned to the various military regions mentioned above. All NVA units in South Vietnam were main force units. In addition, there were VC main forces, consisting largely of personnel from North Vietnam. Local forces were organized as battalions or smaller groupings and were usually subordinate to the province or district level organization, and generally did not move outside of the province or district to which they were assigned. Increasing numbers of NVA personnel were appearing in local forces, though in lower ratios than in the main force units. Also included in the local forces were the guerrillas, the part-time soldiers whose main task was terrorism. They were subordinate to the district level organization and, usually, did not operate far from their home areas.

(S) In 1971, the enemy suffered an estimated 98,094 killed in action, including operations in Laos and Cambodia. Allied actions and programs seriously restricted enemy recruitment of personnel within South Vietnam during the year, and the enemy increasingly relied on infiltration of replacements from North Vietnam. United States military authorities in South Vietnam estimated that between 60,000 and 70,000 enemy personnel were infiltrated into Cambodia and South Vietnam during the year and an additional 10,000 into southern Laos, representing a marked increase over similar figures for the preceding year.

(S) In accord with the strategy of protracted war, enemy activity in South Vietnam during 1971 was generally at a low level. There were, of course,

sporadic surges of action in different parts of the country at varying times. In RVN MR 1, allied forces succeeded in keeping main force enemy units out of the lowland areas, but these units operated in strength along the DMZ and in the unpopulated western areas of the region. In addition, throughout the year, there was considerable military and terrorist activity in the southern sector of the region. The enemy forces in RVN MR 2 consolidated and resupplied troops and bases in the Central Highlands in anticipation of the 1972 spring offensive. As a result, the population centers of the region were relatively free of enemy presence. Nevertheless, at the end of the year the greatest enemy threat in South Vietnam remained in the two northern military regions of the country.

(S) In the COSVN area of South Vietnam, enemy forces were fairly active along the Cambodian border. There they resupplied and refitted, avoiding major contacts, employing economy of force tactics and carrying out terrorism and sapper attacks. Elsewhere in MR 3, including Saigon and its environs, enemy activity remained at a generally low level throughout the year. In the Delta, RVN troops had operated since August 1969 unassisted by US ground forces. In accordance with COSVN Directive 01/CT-71, enemy forces during 1971 concentrated on overrunning government bases in outlying areas. In the course of the year, the enemy took 96 such outposts, incurring few losses and achieving valuable psychological gains in terms of the local population's perception of enemy strength.

(S) In the last several months of 1971, US and RVNAF commanders became aware of enemy preparations for a large-scale offensive. Various indicators revealed

a logistical buildup designed to move supplies through the Laotian panhandle to forces in southern Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. One of these was a broadcast by General Cuu Long over the Liberation Radio in late October. He called for annihilation of the "Saigon puppet" main force troops. Aerial reconnaissance showed pre-positioned stockpiles of supplies and petroleum products, numerous new warehouses near infiltration routes, and significant increases in material stored at major transshipment points. Lines of communications in Laos and Cambodia were expanded in the south and west and major enemy transportation units also extended their areas of operation in the same areas. To protect the extended lines of communication in southern Laos, the enemy deployed 45 to 50 antiaircraft artillery battalions, as well as surface-to-air missile units to nearby areas.

The Allies

(C) The most significant aspect of friendly activities in 1971 was the continuing withdrawal of US forces and the RVNAF assumption of all offensive ground combat operations. At the beginning of 1971, the United States forces in the Republic of Vietnam numbered 335,794. During the year, nearly 180,000 US troops departed Vietnam, leaving 158,119 at the end of December 1971. This withdrawal reduced allied maneuver battalions in South Vietnam by 42, from 273 in January to 231 in December. After August 1971, the role of US troops was limited to support and training for the RVNAF and providing security for US bases.[4]

4. ~~(S NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. IV-12, J-1, J-39.

(C) With the continuing US redeployments and the removal of US forces from offensive combat, US combat casualties dropped significantly in 1971. During the year, 1,380 US Armed Forces personnel were killed in Southeast Asia, 1,289 in South Vietnam and the remainder in Laos and North Vietnam. The 1971 total was nearly 3,000 less than the 4,225 combat deaths in the preceding year and over 8,000 less than the figure for 1969.[5]

(C) Non-combat deaths (from accidents, drug abuse, and other miscellaneous causes) showed no such dramatic decline. On 8 February 1971, the Secretary of Defense commended Admiral Moorer on the steady reduction of combat casualties, but questioned the lack of progress in achieving a drop in non-combat deaths. "It seems to me," he told the Chairman, "we might have expected the level of non-combat deaths to decline as our troop strength declines."[6]

(C) Admiral Moorer replied that the level of non-combat deaths was, indeed, "a matter of serious concern to all commanders within MACV." He assured the Secretary that the Services and General Abrams were working to reduce non-combat deaths. Admiral Moorer described recent measures taken to increase emphasis on training, preventive practices, and safety precautions. These actions, Admiral Moorer concluded, should begin to diminish non-combat deaths in Vietnam. True to his

5. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. X-69 - X-70.

6. (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Non-Hostile Deaths in Southeast Asia," 8 Feb 71, JMF 907/175 (8 Feb 71).

prediction, the number did decline from 1,841 in 1970 to 953 in 1971.[7]

(C) The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) assumed greatly expanded combat responsibilities in 1971, but did not attain their authorized force level of 1,100,000. On 1 January 1971, RVNAF strength stood at 1,074,410; at the close of the year, this figure had dropped slightly to 1,046,254. Nonetheless, COMUSMACV judged the RVNAF in 1971 "a strong, broadly based military establishment, an establishment which will be difficult for an aggressor to defeat on its home ground."[8]

(C) In addition to US and South Vietnamese troops, the allied forces included contingents from third country contributors. These forces, together with those of the United States, were known collectively as Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF). At the beginning of 1971, the third country contributor forces in Vietnam totaled 67,444 men, representing seven countries. The Republic of Korea (ROK) contribution was by far the largest. The ROK personnel had participated in combat operations in Vietnam since October 1965, and as 1971 began, 48,537 ROK troops were deployed along Highway No. 1 in central Vietnam. During the year, they took part in three large operations. They carried out DOKURI 71-1, a large search and clear operation between 22 February and 11 March. Subsequently the ROK forces launched an operation on 23

7. (U) CM-633-71 to SecDef, 25 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2339/340, 25 Feb 71, JMF 907/175 (8 Feb 71). (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. X-70.

8. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. I-11, J-1, J-39.

April 1971 to counter enemy plans to disrupt the RVN congressional elections. This operation continued until 14 May and a similar one followed between 21 June and 11 July. As related in Chapter 3, the Republic of Korea began to withdraw forces from South Vietnam during 1971, and by the end of the year, 2,449 men with their equipment had returned to Korea.[9]

(C) Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand all had combat troops in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1971, but as already described, these three countries substantially reduced their contingents during the year.[10] The remaining three contributor countries were the Philippines, the Republic of China, and Spain. The Philippines had reduced its forces from slightly over 2,000 men to 74 medical and dental personnel during 1969 and 1970 and the Philippines contingent in Vietnam dropped further in 1971 to 60 personnel. The Republic of China contribution to South Vietnam was a group of 31 military advisers, and this contribution remained unchanged throughout 1971. Spain had maintained a military medical team in Vietnam since November 1965, but withdrew the last seven members of the team in December 1971, citing a shortage of medical personnel at home.[11]

(S) The guide for the conduct of operations by all allied forces in South Vietnam in 1971 was the Combined Campaign Plan, 1971 (AB 146). The Combined

9. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. G-5 - G-9. (~~S-NOFORN-GP~~ 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (C) p. IV-33.
10. See Chapter 3, pp. 178-183.
11. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. G-20 - G-22.

Campaign Plans dated from 1967 and were published annually for each calendar year. Theoretically, they were combined documents prepared jointly by the RVNAF Joint General Staff and the MACV staff, though in actuality they had in the past been primarily US efforts. The 1971 document, however, issued on 31 October 1970, was for the first time principally a Vietnamese plan prepared with US cooperation. Following the format of previous versions, the 1971 Plan called for the RVNAF and the Free World Military Assistance Forces to assure the security of the Vietnamese people through the accomplishment of two objectives: defeat of the VC/NVA and participation in the RVN 1971 Pacification and Development Plan. Operations to achieve these objectives included sustained, coordinated, and combined mobile operations against VC/NVA forces; ground, sea, and air operations to interdict enemy land and water lines of communication; maintenance of air and naval superiority in the air space and waters of the Republic of Vietnam; and conduct of border and coastal surveillance, including cross-border and counterinfiltration actions. The 1971 plan also provided for operations to build on progress made by the RVNAF in the previous year with "minimum participation" by US and other third country forces.

(S) The 1971 Combined Campaign Plan recognized the diminishing US presence in South Vietnam, stating that the United States would retain minimal combat, combat support, and combat service support capability in South Vietnam to assist the RVNAF. The South Vietnamese forces, meantime, would develop and improve in order to become self-sufficient and capable of assuming the entire responsibility for the war. In a

specific division of responsibilities, the plan assigned the RVNAF: neutralization of enemy main and local forces; conduct of anti-infiltration operations; prevention of enemy main force incursions into secure areas; control and improvement of lines of communication; participation in pacification; defense of key government and military installations; and support of the Phung Hoang program to eliminate the Viet Cong infrastructure. In addition, for the first time, the RVNAF was charged with the conduct of cross-border operations in authorized contiguous areas.

(~~S~~) In accordance with the expanding RVNAF assumption of responsibility for the war, the Combined Campaign Plan, again for the first time, assigned the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) the task of maintaining air supremacy over the Republic of Vietnam and the contiguous areas when authorized. The United States would support the VNAF in both combat operations and in the attainment of self-sufficiency.

(~~S~~) United States responsibilities differed from previous years. No longer would US forces carry out mobile operations to locate and destroy VC/NVA forces, base areas, and resources. Rather, the 1971 Combined Campaign Plan provided that US and third country forces would: conduct operations in support of the RVNAF to reduce the flow of enemy men and materiel; assist in opening lines of communications and in securing designated areas; provide limited combat and combat service support to the RVNAF as required; and support the RVN pacification program.[12]

12. (~~S~~) RVNAF JGS-FWMAF Combined Campaign Plan, 1971, AB 146, 31 Oct 70, JMF 911/350 (30 Oct 70). (~~S-NOFORN-GP 1~~) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. IV-5.

A Revised Mission for US Ground Forces

(~~TS~~) As US forces continued to redeploy from South Vietnam during the early months of 1971, the question arose of the mission for the remaining US troops once responsibility for ground combat operations were turned over to the RVNAF as anticipated on or about 1 July 1971. Asked about this matter by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Abrams responded on 8 March that US ground forces remaining in South Vietnam could not assume a purely noncombat role:

> As long as US forces are stationed in a hostile environment, they must not be placed under the restriction that they cannot engage in offensive combat operations. Instead of restrictions on participating in combat, the degree of participation should be considered as the function of the forces available . . . . To assume a guard-type security posture would be detrimental to the security of the command.[13]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense, too, was concerned with this question and asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 21 April 1971 about the concept for employment of US forces after 1 July 1971. Admiral Moorer replied on 27 April, pointing out the difficulties that would result from a literal interpretation of any statement that remaining US forces would not engage in "any form of ground combat operations." To permit US forces to defend themselves and their installations adequately, he explained, they would have to patrol actively. Moreover, they would have to protect US

13. (~~S~~) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 081135Z Mar 71, cited in (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. TSS-9 - TSS-10.

artillery employed on fire support bases as well as US airfields, helicopter installations, and communication centers. Admiral Moorer also anticipated "severe" leadership and morale problems if US soldiers, having been told that the RVNAF had assumed responsibility for all ground combat operations, were required to conduct defensive patrolling beyond the perimeters of their installations. Consequently, Admiral Moorer recommended that both public pronouncements and official documents not speak of transferring "all ground combat responsibilities," but rather refer to "passing to the RVNAF primary responsibility for ground offensive combat operations."[14]

(TS) Secretary Laird agreed with the Chairman but, as he pointed out to Admiral Moorer on 10 May 1971, the RVNAF assumption of the "primary responsibility" for ground combat operations would mark "a significant change in the relative roles of US and Vietnamese forces." For example, the Secretary did not visualize that US forces would conduct or participate in the ground phase of "major preplanned combat actions" after 1 July 1971 although they would have "an active combat role" in defending the remaining US presence.[15]

(TS) Four days later, on 14 May 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a statement of the role for US ground forces in South Vietnam after 1 July 1971 that provided for: (1) "dynamic defense" of US installations; (2) security

14. (TS-GP 1) CM-855-71 to SecDef, 27 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 21 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/742, 22 Apr 71; JMF 907/374 (21 Apr 71).

15. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Redeployments from Southeast Asia," 10 May 71, JMF 907/374 (21 Apr 71).

and processing of equipment and supplies to be retrograded; (3) development of the RVNAF by supplying essential combat and combat service support. The term dynamic defense, they explained, did not imply static garrison-type defense posture, which would be militarily unsound. Rather the concept encompassed the conduct of operations by US forces out from vital installations and in concert with RVN Regional and Popular Force units, keeping the enemy off balance and disrupting his operations. In addition, US forces would continue to supply artillery, air, engineer, communications-electronics, intelligence, and naval support for RVNAF operations and for the defense of key US, FWMAF, and RVNAF bases. United States naval forces would be positioned offshore to provide naval gunfire, air, and coastal patrol support; US Air Force units would conduct tactical air operations in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos as required; and US advisers would assist in developing and training the RVNAF and in supporting the South Vietnamese pacification effort.[16]

(TS) The adoption of this changed concept of operations for the remaining US ground troops in South Vietnam raised a problem concerning the designation given the operations still conducted by US forces. Admiral Moorer brought this aspect of the matter to the attention of the field commanders on 5 June, requesting them to take a "close look" at the system of reporting the status of US units. He wanted to insure a clear reflection of the type of operations in which the units were actually engaged. Many persons who read and used

16. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-232-71 to SecDef, 14 May 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/742-1, 13 May 71, JMF 907/374 (21 May 71).

those reports, he cautioned, might draw invalid conclusions from the daily portrayal of US activity by employment categories. He instructed the commanders: "we will have to be especially precise in the way . . . we report activities of maneuver battalions." He noted that most of these units were still being reported as engaged in "combat operations" with only a few in "security" or "pacification" actions. He considered it misleading to continue to report as combat operations the activities of units carrying out dynamic defense. "From our point of view," Admiral Moorer said, "dropping the term combat operations would solve the problem." Moreover, Admiral Moorer pointed out that reports were still listing US casualties in "large-scale" operations bearing code names. Possibly, he suggested, the use of code names for operations should be discontinued, since over the years operations so designated had been associated with large offensive ground actions.[17]

(S) General Abrams subsequently issued guidance to his subordinate commanders in June 1971 defining the terms "combat" and "security" operations. The former included those that were "primarily offensive in nature" and normally involved units of battalion size or larger operating against formations beyond striking distance (35-50 km) of US installations, facilities or unit bases. Security operations were defensive actions against enemy incursions of any kind that, if permitted to proceed unchecked, would threaten US installations, facilities, or units. This latter category normally included reconnaissance, ambush operations, reaction to local enemy contact, and other operations involving

17. (TS GP 1) Msg, JCS 1619 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71.

units of company size or smaller. Some US commanders in Vietnam objected to being considered in anything but a "combat" role. But as the Director, Joint Staff, remarked to the Chairman, there need be no stigma attached to the "security" role, since it permitted, and indeed required "aggressive offensive operations."[18]

Ground Operations

(S) In fulfillment of the Combined Campaign Plan, allied forces in 1971 proceeded in efforts to defeat the VC/VNA forces and, thus, to thwart their objective of taking over South Vietnam. To accomplish this goal, the allies pursued a three-pronged attack consisting of coordinated ground operations to locate and destroy enemy main and local forces, a combined interdiction program to prevent infiltration, and attempts to neutralize the Viet Cong infrastructure. The ground war during the year was characterized by a low level of enemy activity resulting, according to COMUSMACV, from significant losses inflicted upon the enemy, allied success in carrying the war to areas outside South Vietnam, and the enemy's need to concentrate on the security of his logistical system.[19]

(S) The ground operations in South Vietnam varied from military region to military region. The enemy threat was greatest in MR 1 and consequently more allied forces operated there in 1971 than in any

18. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV COmmand History, 1971, p. IV-10. (S-GP 1) DJSM-1017-71 to CJCS, 1 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71.

19. All information in this section, unless otherwise stated, is from (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. IV-11 - IV-37.

other region. Regular RVNAF units conducted combat operations to find and destroy enemy main forces and base areas in the foothills and mountains in the western portion of the region, while Regional and Popular Forces provided security and community development support in the populous coastal area. In addition, considerable effort was devoted to prevention of enemy infiltration of main force units across or around the DMZ.

(TS) The first three months of 1971 were quiet in MR 1. During January, maneuver forces pursued search and clear operations against enemy main force units. In February and March, most allied troops in the region were occupied in either direct participation or support of LAMSON 719,[20] the RVNAF incursion into Laos. Launched on 30 January, this operation was the largest ground action of the year.

(TS) No US ground troops entered into Laos, but the United States did furnish extensive air support for LAMSON 719. Even after the operation ended, the United States continued to supply support for RVNAF cross-border operations into Laos. At Admiral Moorer's request, the Secretary of Defense extended such authority, initially, until 15 June 1971 and, eventually, through 30 September 1971. In the second extension, however, the Secretary stipulated that:

> subsequent to 15 July 1971, I desire that US support be limited to planning assistance and coordination, and the use of US TACAIR and B-52's. In emergency situation [sic] which exceed RVNAF ability to react within available resources, additional

20. See Chapter 1.

> authority is granted to employ US helicopter gun ships and logistic helicopter [sic] for extraction purposes.[21]

(S) Meantime on 28 March 1971 Fire Support Base MARY ANN, manned by an element of the 196th Brigade, 23d US Infantry Division, had come under enemy attack. After firing 50 to 60 rounds of 82mm mortar fire into the base, enemy sappers penetrated the base perimeter. Following some initial confusion, the US forces drove the enemy from the base. But, during the 20-minute engagement, 33 US soldiers were killed and 76 wounded, two 155mm howitzers destroyed, and numerous small arms and miscellaneous gear damaged or destroyed. Enemy losses were placed at 12 killed. The Commanding General, 23d Infantry Division, told COMUSMACV that "we may have been the victims of some complacency." There had been no enemy activity in the immediate vicinity of the base for months, he explained.[22]

(C) This apparent complacency by US forces caused concern in Washington. At the request of the Secretary of Defense, General Abrams conducted an investigation, and Admiral Moorer submitted the results to the Secretary on 4 May. The US forces had, indeed, been complacent. There had been no recent local patrolling

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21. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-892-71 to SecDef, 12 May 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8598 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 14 May 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-976-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71; (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Support for RVNAF Cross-Border Operations (C)," 17 Jun 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5200 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 18 Jun 71; same file, Jun 71.

22. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUM 72-71, 29 Mar 71. (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and CJCS 290235Z Mar 71 (transmitting a 28 Mar 71 msg from CG, 23d Inf Div to COMUSMACV), CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. J-11.

to screen the immediate vicinity of the base; observation and listening posts did not exist outside the base; the perimeter guard was undermanned; and there were no interior or roving guards within the base except at the 155mm weapons. In addition, no reaction force had been designated, the alert signal was not sounded at the time of the initial attack, and anti-intrusion devices as well as measures to increase troop alertness were minimal.[23]

(C) Secretary Laird expressed alarm to Admiral Moorer that "any U.S. military organization in Southeast Asia could grow so careless and be so ill-prepared for action." He "assumed" that the military chain of command had insured against further negligence of this kind. The Admiral replied that General Abrams had directed his entire command to review, and improve as necessary, readiness measures. Eventually, after completion of a final investigation, five US Army officers, including one general, received reprimands.[24]

(S) With the end of LAMSON 719 in April, allied commanders in MR 1 launched LAMSON 720, a stepped up action against enemy supply and base areas and infiltration routes. Forces of the US 101st Airborne Division and the 1st ARVN Division took part in this operation in the Da Krong and A Shau valleys of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. LAMSON 720 continued into May 1971. In June, enemy pressure forced the

23. (C-GP 4) CM-873-71 to SecDef, 4 May 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71.

24. (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Interim Report of Attack on FSB MARY ANN," 7 May 71; (C-GP 4) CM-883-71 to SecDef, 12 May 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71. Washington Post, 24 Nov 71, 3.

RVNAF to evacuate Fire Support Base FULLER in Thua Thien Province.

(S) The summer brought continuing redeployment of US forces from MR 1 and the withdrawal of the remaining forces from offensive operations. In late June, US forces began "dynamic defense," with primary attention devoted to defense against enemy incursions. Operations included reconnaissance, ambush patrol, and reaction to local enemy contact.

(S) In September, the RVNAF carried out LAMSON 810, a two-week interdiction campaign in western Quang Tri Province. The following month, two brigades of the US 23d Infantry Division ceased their dynamic defense operations, which they had pursued since July, and began departing Vietnam, along with a US armored cavalry squadron. To compensate for this loss, the RVNAF activated a new combat unit, the 3d Infantry Division, in MR 1. The new division, although not completely activated until the following March, assumed responsibility for an area along the DMZ in northern Quang Tri Province in November. The remainder of the year was quiet in MR 1 and, at the end of the year, the last US Army division in-country, the 101st at Phu Bai, was in a standdown posture.

(S) In all operations in MR 1, the enemy enjoyed the advantage of a sanctuary of sorts in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). He moved men and weapons there at will, positioning them against allied forces in MR 1 just below. The allies could launch artillery attacks against enemy targets in the DMZ below the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL), could return enemy fire from anywhere in the DMZ, and could invade the zone to repulse any large enemy attack emanating from the zone. But they were not allowed to operate at will

in the DMZ, nor could they carry out pre-emptive attacks against enemy buildups or weapons in the DMZ above the PMDL. As a consequence, the enemy was able to launch artillery attacks from the upper half of the DMZ at the time and place of his choosing, with the allies powerless to respond until the attack actually occurred.

(TS) In turning down a JCS request in August 1970 for expanded DMZ authorities, the Secretary of Defense had asked that he be kept informed of activities in or near the DMZ that "significantly" increased the threat to allied forces. On 10 March 1971, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense that there had recently been a number of attacks by fire on allied installations in MR 1. In addition, General Abrams had identified movement of two medium artillery weapons into the upper half of the DMZ. These pieces were not only in a position to attack US and RVN forces below the DMZ, but could also interdict the eastern half of Route 9, the primary line of communication supporting LAMSON 719. In accord with a recommendation of CINCPAC, Admiral Moorer requested authority for an air or artillery strike, as appropriate, to eliminate the artillery pieces, and the Secretary of Defense approved a week later, on 17 March, granting the authority through 31 March 1971.[25]

(TS) Subsequently, on 27 March 1971, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense that recent enemy activities in the DMZ portended an attempt to move his artillery into "previously prepared, widely dispersed,

25, (TS-GP 1) CM-691-71 to SecDef, 10 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operational Authorities (U)," 17 Mar 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

and easily camouflaged positions throughout the sanctuary of the DMZ" above the PMDL. To remove that threat the Admiral requested standing authority to attack NVN artillery targets anywhere in the DMZ.[26]

(TS) On the following day, 28 March, visual reconnaissance was conducted in anticipation of the one-time strike authorized by the Secretary on 17 March. The reconnaissance revealed that the site was empty and the strike was not carried out. Instead, CINCPAC asked for authority to strike three newly identified artillery sites in North Vietnam just above the DMZ as well as for continuing authority for armed reconnaissance to locate and destroy field artillery pieces in North Vietnam below 17°10' north. Admiral Moorer relayed the CINCPAC request to the Secretary of Defense, concurring that the sites in question threatened US forces. "The sanctuary areas in and north of the DMZ must be denied to the enemy," he told the Secretary, "if we are to minimize the risk to our troops operating in northern MR 1 adjacent to the DMZ and reduce US casualties."[27]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense approved neither authority. He told the Chairman that it was not his intention to "create sanctuaries in and north of the DMZ." But, in the absence of "more definitive intelligence" of enemy activity in the DMZ, and until there was more positive evidence of enemy artillery in North Vietnam shelling US forces in South Vietnam, the Secretary declined to grant the recommended authorities.

26. (TS-GP 1) CM-750-71 to SecDef, 27 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71.
27. (TS-GP 1) CM-756-71 to SecDef, 29 Mar 71, same file.

He reminded the Chairman that authority already existed to counter artillery fire from north of or from within the DMZ with heavy ground or naval gunfire and tactical air until the enemy weapons were destroyed.[28]

(TS) Two months later, on 27 June 1971, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense of recent enemy activity in and near the DMZ, including the loss of Fire Support Base FULLER, that significantly increased the threat to allied forces. He told the Secretary that enemy initiative in northern MR 1 presented a grave danger to the security of troops and installations in Quang Tri Province. Recent US troop withdrawals as well as the current RVNAF posture precluded effective defense, the Admiral believed, so long as the DMZ remained an enemy sanctuary. He requested authority to use tactical air, artillery, naval gunfire, area denial air munitions, and B-52 strikes, if SAM defenses allowed, throughout the entire DMZ.[29]

(TS) The Secretary turned down the request on 1 July 1971. Although he shared the Chairman's concern, he saw no indication that expanded authorities in the DMZ were critical to countering the enemy threat in western Quang Tri Province.[30]

(TS) Both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and COMUSMACV were reluctant to accept the Secretary's decision as

28. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Vietnam Demilitarized Zone (U)," 31 Mar 71, same file. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Strikes Against Artillery Positions," 7 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

29. (TS-GP 1) CM-1012-71 to SecDef, 27 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 71.

30. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "DMZ Authorities," 1 Jul 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2.

final. On 8 July 1971, the Chairman forwarded the Secretary a DIA appraisal of the situation in the DMZ, and General Abrams had discussed the matter with Dr. Kissinger a few days earlier when the latter was in South Vietnam. The General stressed the need for a five to ten day air campaign against enemy installations in the DMZ and North Vietnam to a depth of 25 miles north of the PMDL.[31]

(TS) A few days later, General Abrams submitted an updated assessment of the situation in MR 1 and the DMZ, together with a detailed plan for a special interdiction campaign there. Included was provision for a two to three-day air strike of all military and logistics targets in North Vietnam below 17°35' north. A MACV representative briefed both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard on the DMZ situation and the plan, and Lieutenant General Melvin Zais, USA, Director of Operations, Joint Staff, followed with "a very strong and convincing case" in support of the MACV recommendations.[32]

(TS) On 19 July, the Chairman told the Secretary of Defense that the current threat in MR 1 required a major US effort focused on the "total enemy system" within and north of the DMZ. Admiral Moorer believed that a concentrated program launched against this threat at that time would not only diminish the present danger but also the "threat potential" for the next year. Destruction of the enemy capabilities in lower

31. (TS-GP 1) CM-1033-71 to SecDef, 8 Jul 71; (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and CJCS, 041000Z Jul 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 71.

32. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info JCS), 111020Z Jul 71, JCS IN 24815; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1342 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 15 Jul; same file.

North Vietnam and the DMZ sanctuaries was essential to insure safe and orderly US withdrawals and achievement of RVNAF self-sufficiency. Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary the COMUSMACV plan, recommending that it be forwarded to "higher authority" for approval.[33]

(~~TS~~) The Secrtary of Defense did not approve the plan. On 24 July 1971, he told Admiral Moorer that he found insufficient changes in the military situation since their exchange on this matter in June to warrant revising his earlier decision. "Moreover," he told the Admiral, "there are non-military considerations which make the initiation of military actions such as those you propose exceedingly difficult at this time." Although not elaborating on those considerations, he did promise to monitor developments in MR 1 and the DMZ closely. Meanwhile, he assumed that the existing authorities would be used to the "maximum."[34]

(~~S~~) No further action was taken in 1971 to expand the operating authorities in the DMZ. In August, Dr. Kissinger asked the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam to develop a paper on diplomatic and military options available to counter North Vietnamese road building in the DMZ and western Quang Tri Province. The Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a draft for the military portion of the study. After consulting CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Admiral Moorer suggested the following: B-52 strikes below the PMDL; tactical air and fixed and rotary wing gunship strikes in the DMZ; artillery attack from fire bases along the DMZ; and ground interdiction. Both the field commanders and the

33. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1060-71 to SecDef, 19 Jul 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 71.

34. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Bombing Campaign, DMZ North (~~TS~~)," 24 Jul 71, same file.

Chairman believed that, in order to deal effectively with the threat posed by the road network, it would be necessary to carry the interdiction beyond the PMDL into North Vietnam, and Admiral Moorer requested appropriate authorities for that purpose. But no action was taken on his request, nor did any further developments result from the Ad Hoc Group's study.[35]

(S) Ground combat operations in Military Region 2 during 1971 were similar to those in MR 1. The allies faced a significant enemy main force threat throughout the year. Allied maneuver battalions operated against the enemy main force units, usually in the western area of the region while the territorial forces sought out the Viet Cong infrastructure. In addition, the Republic of Korea forces supported pacification efforts in the coastal area.

(S) The year began in MR 2 with a low level of combat activity. The enemy ended the Tet truce with attacks by fire on several cities in the region, and heavy combat followed until mid-April. Thereafter there was a brief lull until early May when the enemy began to increase pressure on allied fire support bases in western Kontum Province. The RVNAF reacted with 14 maneuver battalions. The month of June brought a period of reduced combat activity that lasted throughout the rest of the summer. In August, the US 173d Airborne Brigade, which had operated in the region, left Vietnam. During the remainder of the year, the RVN forces maintained pressure on the enemy, conducting continuous search and destroy operations.

35. (S-GP 3) Memo, Actg ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Possible Military Actions Against Route 103 Extension in Quang Tri Province," 12 Aug 71; (S-GP 4) CM-1137-71 to Sec Def, 17 Aug 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 71.

~~(S)~~ In November, intelligence began to indicate a building enemy threat in the western highlands of the region, and the RVNAF initiated Operation QUANG TRUNG II/4. It consisted of increased border surveillance through the establishment of artillery-supported operational bases for saturation patrolling and ambushing along infiltration routes. When QUANG TRUNG II/4 terminated on 22 December, the RVNAF reported 228 enemy killed, five prisoners taken, and 42 individual and 51 crew-served weapons captured.

~~(TS)~~ In November 1971, the RVNAF Commander of MR 2 planned an interdiction operation into Base Areas 701 and 702 in Cambodia to destroy enemy supplies, equipment, and personnel. Although the RVNAF would conduct the planning, coordination, and execution, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John D. Ryan, advised the Secretary of Defense on 13 November that some US air support would be required. Specifically, General Ryan requested authority to use the assets of two US air cavalry troops for screening the west flank of the area and for armed reconnaissance as well as provision of helicopter medical evacuation, trooplift, resupply, and equipment removal left in emergency situations. The Secretary agreed two days later stating that the authority would expire upon completion of the operation, but no later than 20 December 1971.[36]

36. (~~TS~~) CM-1308-71 to SecDef, 13 Nov 71; ~~(TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Authorities, Base Areas 701/702 Operations ~~(TS)~~," 15 Nov 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

(TS) Subsequently, the RVNAF conducted a battalion-sized raid into Base Area 702 on 14 December 1971. United States B-52 and VNAF tactical air strikes, together with US air cavalry reconnaissance, preceded the attack. The action lasted for seven hours and damaged an extensive logistics storage area. On 17 December 1971, the Chairman notified the Secretary of Defense that the VNAF planned further raids into the two base areas, and Admiral Moorer asked for extension of the US support authorities for a 60-day period. The Secretary approved, but no further operations into Base Areas 701 or 702 occurred in 1971. Despite the success of the cross-border raid into Cambodia as well as of QUANG TRUNG II/4, allied commanders in MR 2 at the end of the year expected an enemy offensive in early 1972.[37]

(TS) There was little combat activity in Military Region 3 during the first nine months of 1971. This situation allowed most RVNAF forces in the region to engage in counter-infiltration operations along the Cambodian border and in Cambodia. The major RVNAF cross-border operation in Cambodia during 1971 was TOAN THANG 01/71 a combined ARVN-FANK effort to disrupt enemy attempts to restore logistics bases along the Mekong River and to remove enemy pressure on populated areas east of the Mekong River and below Route 7 (see MAP 5). The United States participated in the planning, and seven RVNAF multi-battalion task forces were committed to the operation. As recommended by COMUSMACV,

37. (TS-GP 1) CM-1386-71 to SecDef, 17 Dec 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Dec 71; same file, Dec 71. (TS-GP 1) CM-1443-71 to SecDef, 13 Jan 72, same file, Jan 72. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. IV-31.

CINCPAC, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and approved by the Secretary of Defense, the United States provided airlift for TOAN THANG 01/71, both fixed and rotary wing for medical evacuation, logistic movement and troop lift when and where the VNAF resources and capabilities proved insufficient.[38]

(~~TS~~) TOAN THANG 01/71 began on 4 February 1971 when two RVNAF task forces moved into the Chup Plantation area of Cambodia. In the initial phase, RVN and Cambodian forces cooperated in searching out and destroying enemy troops and supplies. Numerous contacts were made with the enemy during the first ten days of the campaign. Thereafter contact was sporadic until 17 March when two RVNAF task forces again became engaged in the Chup area. Heavy fighting lasted for two days, and US tactical air, B-52s, and helicopter gunships supported the battle. Then, the level of action dropped off, except for occasional surges, and a general lull began in mid-April that lasted until late May.[39]

(~~TS~~) On 5 May, the Secretary of Defense questioned the value of TOAN THANG 01/71. From the available reports, he found it difficult to see how the pattern of recent activity had been productive. Moreover, he was concerned about possible "adverse impacts" of

38. (~~S-NOFORN~~ GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. E-5. (~~TS~~) CM-481-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Cambodia, Jan 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9395 to CINCPAC (info COMUS MACV), 6 Jan 71.

39. All information on the operational details of TOAN THANG 01/71 is from (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. E-5 - E-11.

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continuing the operations and asked Admiral Moorer for his views and recommendations.[40]

(~~TS~~) The Chairman replied on 19 May that TOAN THANG 01/71 continued to serve "the underlying purpose of Vietnamization." It had tied down the major elements of three enemy divisions, denying their employment in critical areas in Military Regions 3 and 4 in South Vietnam; it had thwarted enemy plans to restore base areas along the Cambodia-Vietnam border; and it had reduced enemy pressure on the Government of Cambodia during a critical period of FANK development. Although the current action was "more modest" than during the early weeks of the operation, Admiral Moorer expected the ARVN, supported by tactical air, would continue to disrupt enemy intentions in Cambodia. In addition, he believed that the RVNAF had demonstrated their ability to plan and execute a complex operation and would probably pursue TOAN THANG 01/71 until the wet season prevented further action. Premature withdrawal of US support, Admiral Moorer concluded, could undermine RVNAF confidence and the will to conduct such operations in the future. He recommended continued US support for TOAN THANG 01/71 through the current dry season.[41]

(~~TS~~) After reviewing Admiral Moorer's assessment, the Secretary on 11 June approved US air support for TOAN THANG 01/71 through 30 June 1971. Subsequently, on 25 June, the Acting Chairman, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, informed the Secretary of Defense that

40. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operation TOAN THANG 01/71 NB," 5 May 71, CJCS File 091 Cambodia, May 71.

41. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-912-71 to SecDef, 19 May 71, same file.

enemy forces and activities in Cambodia still posed a threat in both the TOAN THANG 01/71 area and in the adjacent portion of South Vietnam. Admiral Zumwalt believed that the original objectives of TOAN THANG 01/71 remained valid and requested further extension of US support through 1 November 1971. Mr. Laird agreed on 30 June and extended authority for US support as requested.[42]

(S) While the RVNAF maneuver battalions operated along and across the Cambodian border, the territorial forces pursued pacification objectives throughout the rest of MR 3. United States troops, meantime continued redeployment from the region. By May, two brigades of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, the remaining brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment had all departed Vietnam, necessitating the assumption of an even larger security role by the RVN territorial forces in MR 3.

(S) The low level of military action in MR 3 continued until late September 1971. Then enemy activity increased markedly in the northwestern part of Tay Ninh Province. Main force units launched coordinated attacks against the RVNAF, apparently hoping to make an impact on the RVN presidential election scheduled for 30 October 1971. Timely RVNAF reinforcement and an integrated fire support plan forced withdrawal of the attacking enemy forces by 26 October, and military activity in MR 3 returned to a low level for the last two months of the year.

42. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Operation TOAN THANG 01/71," 11 Jun 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-1010-71 to SecDef, 25 Jun 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "U.S. Support for Operation TOAN THANG 01/71," 30 Jun 71; CJCS File 091 Cambodia, Jun 71.

(S) The ARVN proceeded with operations in Military Region 4, as they had since August 1969, unassisted by US ground forces. The South Vietnamese forces attempted to saturate the area with search and clear operations in order to eliminate enemy forces and bases. The most important of these operations during 1971 were the 21st ARVN Division's U Minh campaign and the 9th ARVN Division's Seven Mountains effort in the western part of the region. In addition, the ARVN carried out cross-border limited operations into Cambodia throughout the year. As mentioned earlier, the enemy adopted a new tactic in MR 4 of overrunning ARVN outposts, and the number of such posts overrun increased alarmingly during the year.

(S) Following the pattern of earlier years, US and RVN forces observed brief cease-fires to mark Tet, Buddha's birthday, Christmas, and New Year's. In all four instances, the Republic of Vietnam restricted the truces to 24 hours rather than matching longer periods proclaimed by the enemy. Experience had taught that the enemy never respected the holiday standdowns, regardless of the length. Thus shorter periods brought fewer casualties for the allies. As in previous years, US and RVN forces suspended all offensive ground operations during the truces although remaining on alert and patrolling base areas. During the Tet truce, 261800 to 271800 (Saigon time) January 1971, there were 59 major and 58 minor incidents; 18 allied personnel were killed, including one US soldier, eight RVNAF troops, and nine Vietnamese civilians. For Buddha's birthday, the allies suspended action from 081200 to 091200 (Saigon time) May 1971, but enemy observance was little better than in the Tet cease-fire. Three US and ten RVNAF soldiers and ten civilians were killed in

some 78 (45 major and 33 minor) enemy-initiated incidents. The 24-hour Christmas and New Year's standdowns began at 241800 and 311800 (Saigon time), respectively. In both, incidents and casualties were lower than in the previous truces. Thirty major and 18 minor incidents were reported throughout South Vietnam during the Christmas cease-fire and 34 major and seven minor incidents during New Year's. No US casualties occurred during either period, though seven RVNAF soldiers were killed during the Christmas truce and 20 soldiers and one civilian during New Year's.[43]

Naval Operations

(C) Allied naval operations in and around South Vietnam in 1971 followed the pattern of immediately preceding years. The Vietnamese Navy (VNN), with decreasing US support, engaged in two principal operations: MARKET TIME, to interdict seaborne movement of men and supplies into the Republic of Vietnam; and the Southeast Asia Lake-Ocean-River Delta Strategy (SEA LORDS), to prevent waterborne infiltration from Cambodia over internal waters into MR 4 and southern MR 3.

(C) The MARKET TIME operation maintained three barriers: an air patrol to provide an early warning against infiltration of large steel-hulled NVN trawlers; an outer surface barrier that patrolled 12 to 40 miles off the RVN coast to stop large craft; and an inner surface barrier of small patrol craft to interdict junks and sampans. In September 1970, the VNN had

43. ~~(S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) NMCC OPSUMs 22-71, 28 Jan 71; 108-71, 10 May 71; 298-71, 27 Dec 71; and 1-72, 3 Jan 72.

assumed full responsibility for the inner surface MARKET TIME barrier and the operation was renamed TRAN HUNG DAO XV. All vessels of the inner barrier were commanded and operated by the VNN in 1971 though the United States continued to provide advisers. The United States also retained responsibility for both the outer surface barrier and for the air patrol throughout the year.[44]

(S) During 1971, the United States began a program (ACTOVRAD) of building and turning over to the VNN a network of coastal radar stations. These installations, when fully operational, would provide a detection capability equivalent to the US Navy P-3 aircraft manning the MARKET TIME air patrol. The first ACTOVRAD station became operational on 1 July 1971 and was turned over to the VNN a week later. By December 1971, the VNN operated seven of the planned sixteen stations, and the remaining nine would be operational by 30 June 1972.[45]

(S) The Vietnamese Navy forces were active in patrolling the MARKET TIME inner barrier in 1971. They inspected an average of approximately 135,000 craft per month along the South Vietnamese coast from the 17th Parallel to the Gulf of Thailand. Nonetheless there was some increase in sea infiltration after the South Vietnamese took over control.[46]

(C) The Secretary of Defense, on 18 May 1971, noted this decline in MARKET TIME effectiveness. He considered the prevention of significant enemy infiltration by sea to be "crucial to the success of the overall

44. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. I-7, V-32.
45. Ibid., (S) p. V-37.
46. Ibid., (S) V-32 - V-34.

interdiction effort" and asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about additional measures that might be taken to assist the Vietnamese in MARKET TIME operations.[47]

(C) Admiral Moorer replied on 14 June. He told the Secretary that, although the turnover of ships and craft to the VNN was "well planned and orderly," the results of the rapid VNN expansion were beginning to show in the form of preventive maintenance deficiencies and lack of adequate leadership among the young officers. The Commander, US Naval Forces, Vietnam (COMNAVFORV), was implementing appropriate measures, including a greater concentration of advisory emphasis on logistics and maintenance. In addition, COMNAVFORV had recommended to the Vietnamese Chief of Naval Operations several measures to improve MARKET TIME effectiveness. He had proposed a restructuring of the inner barrier and a concept of task units under the command of a senior naval officer to cover high threat areas in order to place boat commanders under more experienced supervision.

(C) Admiral Moorer expected the COMNAVFORV actions to bring some improvement, but he cautioned Secretary Laird that the progress of VNN surface MARKET TIME forces, however great, would not completely stop sea infiltration. The Vietnamization of MARKET TIME did not include a Vietnamese air barrier patrol. Therefore the VNN operations simply could not match MARKET TIME when combined US air and surface forces participated. Should the remedial actions initiated by COMNAVFORV fail to bring improvement, then the United States might be forced, the Admiral believed, to reevaluate

47. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/759, 21 Jun 71, JMF 911/329 (18 May 71).

the "scope" of its involvement in the operational aspects of the program. But for the present, Admiral Moorer favored postponement of any additional action pending further experience with the VNN operation of the MARKET TIME inner barrier.[48]

(TS) After reviewing the Chairman's comments, the Secretary of Defense directed "aggressive" pursuit of the COMNAVFORV MARKET TIME corrective measures. In addition, he thought it might be advantageous to retain the MARKET TIME air barrier beyond the end of FY 1972 when termination was currently planned. Further, he wanted attention given to measures allowing the RVNAF to assume the air patrol mission and capability. Accordingly, the MARKET TIME Operations Annex to the Combined Interdiction Campaign Plan for FY 1972,[49] submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense on 23 August 1971, provided for a MARKET TIME maritime air patrol by US aircraft throughout FY 1972. Although the VNAF would assume a share of the air patrol, it would not be able to support all the requirement. As a consequence, the US Navy P-3 aircraft, currently performing this function, would remain on station and would not be "Vietnamized."[50]

(S) The other major allied naval operation in 1971, SEA LORDS, was, with one exception, completely a VNN responsibility and had been redesignated TRAN HUNG DAO.

48. (S-GP 4) CM-980-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/759, 21 Jun 71, same file.

49. For coverage of the FY 1972 Combined Interdiction Campaign Plan, see Chapter 6, pp. 335-338.

50. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., 2 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-4, 9 Jul 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3. (TS-GP 1) Annex C, MARKET TIME Operations, to Outline Combined Interdiction Campaign Plan for FY 1972, App to JCSM-384-71, 23 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/747-7, 18 Aug 71, same file, sec 4.

The exception was SOLID ANCHOR, a project to establish a base for both coastal junks and patrol craft fast (PCF) at old Nam Can City to assist expansion of RVN control in An Xuyen Province. On 1 April 1971, however, SOLID ANCHOR, the last US Navy operation in Vietnam, was turned over to the VNN and renamed TRAN HUNG DAO IV. Throughout 1971, the US Navy continued to supply limited air support to SEA LORDS, adding to the success of the operation.[51]

(C) All through the US combat involvement in South Vietnam, allied ground actions had been supported by naval gunfire. On 6 April 1971, however, the Secretary of Defense questioned the need for such support in light of the diminishing number of suitable targets in coast areas. In reply, Admiral Moorer objected to any withdrawal of remaining US naval gunfire support capability from South Vietnam. It was too early, he told the Secretary, to judge whether the RVNAF artillery would be able to assume the complete naval gunfire support mission. Moreover, he thought any such withdrawal unwise at that time in view of the accelerated redeployment of US combat forces.[52]

(C) Still not convinced of the need to retain naval gunfire capability off South Vietnam, Secretary Laird asked the Chairman on 11 May 1971 to study the possibility of terminating this support except for emergencies. Admiral Moorer continued to insist that this

51. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, V-11, V-15 - V-19.

52. (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Naval Gunfire Support," 6 Apr 71; (C-GP 4) CM-851-71 to SecDef, 29 Apr 71; Atts to JCS 2472/746, 3 May 71, JMF 911/325 (6 Apr 71).

capability was necessary. It was his "considered opinion," as well as that of the field commanders, that naval gunfire support was a valuable contribution to the total fire support resources available for Southeast Asian operations. He recommended retention of this support until redeployment of US combat forces was completed. At that time, the need for naval fire support would be reassessed. This exchange ended discussion of the matter and no reduction in US naval gunfire support occurred in 1971.[53]

Air Operations

(U) In 1971, COMUSMACV used air operations to support ground action and to interdict enemy personnel and supplies in South Vietnam and in neighboring Cambodia and Laos. With the continuing US redeployment and the removal of US ground forces from combat during the year, air operations became increasingly important. Both the remaining US units and the RVNAF, as they took over the combat operations, depended more than ever on air power to furnish the support that the departing troops had previously supplied. As COMUSMACV aptly put it: "airpower in 1971 literally took up the slack in US offensive power."[54]

(U) Although the employment of air resources for combat support and for interdiction followed the pattern of previous years, the situation in 1971 was different. Not only did US ground forces leave South Vietnam, but US air forces and their equipment were drawn down as well. Fewer airplanes and personnel now

53. (C-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 11 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/746-1, 4 Jun 71; (C-GP 4) CM-941-71 to SecDef, 31 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/746-1, 4 Jun 71; JMF 911/325 (6 Apr 71).

54. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. VI-1.

had to provide the same type of strike missions, support, reconnaissance, interdiction, airlift, and search and rescue as in previous years. Only technological advances and improved weapons made this possible.[55]

(S) United States air activity levels for Southeast Asia remained fixed for the first six months of 1971 at 1,000 B-52 and 14,000 tactical sorties per month, and then tactical levels dropped to 10,000 per month during the last half of the year.[56] The number of US aircraft, however, declined significantly during the year. The 1st Marine Air Wing redeployed to Japan; US Navy aircraft carriers on YANKEE STATION off Vietnam were reduced from three to two; and the last US F-100 fighter bomber squadrons returned to the United States, leaving the F-4 and a few F-105G fighters in Thailand as the main fighter aircraft for tactical air operations in Southeast Asia, aside from US Navy carrier planes. At the end of the year, there were 833 US Air Force planes in Southeast Asia, of which 384 were based in South Vitnam. This total compared with 1,584 in Southeast Asia on 31 October 1971. The United States also turned over several air bases to the South Vietnamese during 1971, including Ban Me Thout, Phu Cat, Nha Trang, and Binh Thuy.

(S) Improvement and expansion of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) proceeded during the year.[57] On 31 December 1971, the VNAF had 42 operational squadrons of all types, including 9 fighter, 15 helicopter,

55. All information in this section on air operations, unless otherwise stated, is from (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VI-1 - VI-33.

56. For planning in 1971 for future air activity levels, see Chapter 4.

57. For improvement planning for the VNAF, see Chapter 6.

7 liaison, 4 transport, and 2 gunship. The VNAF flew gradually increasing numbers of sorties month after month. In all, the VNAF carried out 650,979 sorties in 1971, almost doubling the 383,240 total of the previous year.

(S) United States air forces supported the RVNAF throughout South Vietnam and in Cambodia and Laos in 1971 and assisted the FANK and the Royal Laotian forces. The most significant US air operation in South Vietnam was the support of LAMSON 719 during February and March. United States B-52s bombed the landing zones in Laos prior to RVNAF air assaults; tactical air strikes directed by forward air controllers followed; and before the helicopter assaults, US tactical aircraft laid down smoke screens interspersed with cluster bombs.

(S) In Cambodia, US air resources supported the almost year-long TOAN THANG 01/71 operations. In addition, the United States assisted the South Vietnamese with air support for Mekong River convoys, furnishing air protection for the military and commercial convoys proceeding up the Mekong from Tan Chau in the Republic of Vietnam to Phnom Penh. United States Air Force and Army assets were committed to the initial aerial defense when the convoys began on 12 January 1971, and the 7th Air Force directed continuous aerial coverage. Forward air controllers of the USAF provided day and night coverage, calling in AC-119 gunships as needed. This Mekong River defense proved so successful that in 1971 only one tug and one barge were lost to enemy action.

(S) United States B-52 and tactical air forces carried out interdiction operations in South Vietnam,

Cambodia, and Laos throughout 1971. The largest interdiction program was conducted in the southern part of Laos and was known as STEEL TIGER. There US Air Forces had attempted since 1965 to restrict and halt the movement of men and materiel from North Vietnam over the Ho Chi Minh Trail into Laos and, eventually, into South Vietnam. Following the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam in 1968, particular attention was assigned to the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the STEEL TIGER area. The United States instituted semi-annual campaigns to follow the cyclical dry-rainy seasons of the area. The first such operation, COMMANDO HUNT, covered the dry season during November 1968 to April 1969. Interdiction operations in Southern Laos during the summer of 1969 were designated COMMANDO HUNT II, and COMMANDO HUNT III followed during the 1969-1970 dry season.[58]

(S) Enemy infiltration over the Ho Chi Minh Trail was estimated to be greater in the 1970-1971 dry season than in previous years, and COMMANDO HUNT V was launched in October 1970 to interdict that activity. Continuing into April 1971, COMMANDO HUNT V combined tactical air strikes, gunships, B-57 bombers, and B-52 attacks to disrupt the enemy flow of supplies. Seventy percent of the authorized Southeast Asian tactical air sorties as well as a large portion of the B-52 sorties during this period were allotted to COMMANDO HUNT V.

(S) Although COMMANDO HUNT V ended on 30 April 1971, air interdiction of enemy infiltration through

58. ~~(S-NOFORN-~~GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, (S) pp. V-215, V-220.

southern Laos continued. A summer campaign, COMMANDO HUNT VI, began on 15 May 1971. The mission was the same as the earlier dry season campaign, but monsoon weather precluded a comparable level of activity.

(S) On 1 November 1971, US forces launched COMMANDO HUNT VII, the 1971-1972 dry season interdiction operation in southern Laos. In this campaign, however, the number of available sorties was reduced almost a third from the previous year, reflecting the continuing reduction of US forces.

(S) United States Air Forces also conducted interdiction in Cambodia, especially in the eastern portion to assist in the campaigns against the Ho Chi Minh Trail movement. Use of B-52s in the southern Laos-eastern Cambodia for interdiction missions was particularly heavy both at the beginning and the end of 1971.

(TS) There was some question among US officials in Washington as to the effectiveness of the US and allied interdiction in Southeast Asia. On 28 June 1971, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard submitted to the Senior Review Group a DOD paper that presented both sides of the issue. Although there was consensus that the interdiction campaigns waged since 1965 had destroyed supplies and disrupted the flow of enemy materiel into South Vietnam, disagreement centered on the extent to which this disruption had influenced North Vietnamese strategy. While one side argued that the enemy had been neither "resource-constrained" nor severely limited by the bombing of the Laotian road net, the other side held that this interdiction had been a key factor in the enemy switch from a main force to a protracted war strategy. The Defense study did not resolve the argument, but officials in Washington

did agree on the need to continue the effort and to provide the South Vietnamese with an interdiction capability. With the continuing drawdown of US forces, it was essential that the VNAF take over the interdiction. Consequently, the United States initiated in October 1971 an accelerated program, CREDIBLE CHASE, to test and evaluate a concept to improve the RVN air interdiction capability.[59]

(S) In addition to the interdiction in southern Laos, the United States also conducted air operations in northern Laos in 1971. There, in operations that had begun in 1964, US tactical air and B-52 forces provided interdiction, armed reconnaissance, and ground support to Major General Vang Pao's forces against the communist troops. The United States also continued to use its air resources in Southeast Asia during 1971 for reconnaissance and the collection of intelligence and for search and rescue operations. The latter category was credited in 1971 with 250 "saves," of which 142 were "combat saves."

(TS) All US air operations in Southeast Asia at the beginning of 1971 were conducted under consolidated authorities issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with Secretary of Defense approval, on 5 November 1970. In Laos, these authorities provided for air strikes in the BARREL ROLL area of northern Laos and for tactical air, B-52, and armed reconnaissance operations in

59. (TS) DOD Paper, "Air Operations in Southeast Asia," n.d., Att to Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger, CJCS, USecState, and DCI, "FY 72-73 Air Operations in Southeast Asia (U)," 28 Jun 71, Att to (TS-GP 3) JCS 2472/739-21, 29 Jun 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 5. For JCS consideration of the CREDIBLE CHASE Program, see Chapter 6, pp. 343-350.

southern Laos. The authorities allowed for only limited defensive US air operations over North Vietnam, while in Cambodia they permitted B-52 and tactical air interdiction, air reconnaissance with armed escort and flak suppression, and search and air rescue operations. In addition, search and rescue and recovery operations were authorized in support of the Vietnamese Air Force, the Cambodian Air Force, and the Royal Thai Air Force in emergencies and when such operations were beyond the capabilities of those Southeast Asian nations.[60]

(TS) In April 1971, the Southeast Asia air operating authorities were extended through 1 November 1971 with only two minor changes: IRON HAND aircraft overflight of North Vietnam was widened to allow positioning between US and allied planes in the Republic of Vietnam, in addition to planes in Laos, and surface-to-air missiles and antiaircraft artillery sites in North Vietnam; and the three interdiction areas in Cambodia, FREEDOM DEAL, FREEDOM DEAL ALPHA, and FREEDOM DEAL EXTENSION, were combined into one area referred to as FREEDOM DEAL.[61] In addition the following air authorities, which previously did not have expiration dates, were included in the consolidated Southeast Asian authorities that extended through 1 November 1971: current air operations in the Republic of Vietnam; search and rescue operations for US personnel throughout Southeast Asia; B-52 strikes in support of operations along Route 4 in Cambodia; use of US transport

60. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5220 to CINCPAC, 5 Nov 70.
61. See pp. 254-271, for Joint Chiefs of Staff efforts to expand air operating authorities in North Vietnam during 1971.

for airborne insertion and resupply of SALEM HOUSE reconnaissance and intelligence teams in Cambodia; US leaflet operations against the NVA/VC forces wherever US air strikes were authorized in Cambodia; B-52 strikes in Laos and the Republic of Vietnam when approved by CINCPAC and CINCSAC and coordinated with the US Embassy in Vientiane or Saigon; manned tactical reconnaissance in North Vietnam below 19° north and elsewhere in Southeast Asia except in the BARREL ROLL NORTH area where JCS approval was required; and high and low altitude drone and SR-71 missions over all of Southeast Asia and U-2R operations over all of Southeast Asia except North Vietnam. These authorities were subsequently extended to April 1972.[62]

(S) With the increasing withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam, the Deputy Secretary of Defense grew concerned about the ability of the Southeast Asian countries to assume completely their own air defense. As a consequence, the US Air Force undertook in early 1971 a study of the Southeast Asian air defense systems and the possible development of a single integrated air defense system for the area. The results of the study were submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 2 April 1971. The Air Force concluded: the current air defense systems could not be maintained without US logistical support for the foreseeable future; the current and presently programmed systems could be improved

62. (TS-GP 1) CM-830-71 to SecDef, 16 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Operations, Jul 70-Jun 71. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Air Operating Authorities," 29 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 22 Oct 71, 12 Nov 71, 29 Dec 71, same file, sec 2. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 29 Jan and 26 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 27 Nov 71, same subj, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

without a correspondingly enlarged US presence, but an increase in size and sophistication of programmed forces would require a corresponding increase in US logistic support; the current air defense systems of the Republic of Vietnam and Thailand could not defend the entire area against an all out NVN air attack and, consequently, some type of US presence or commitment was needed as a deterrent; an improved air defense system was required to support the planned RVN interdiction program and counter North Vietnam's air support of its ground force operations; and the effectiveness of programmed air defense systems for Southeast Asia could be enhanced by upgraded radar capabilities, increased interceptors, and provision of additional aircraft shelters and ground-to-air weapons to reduce vulnerability of air bases in high threat areas. Even with additional resources, autonomous air defense systems were destined to failure in the face of a common enemy, the study found. Survivability of the Republic of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand depended upon their cooperation, and the United States should encourage and sponsor a mutual security arrangement among those countries.[63]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the study and forwarded the Air Force conclusions to the Secretary of Defense on 28 June 1971. They emphasized the need for a regional air defense system, but were skeptical whether the countries could overcome their longstanding hostilities and suspicions of one another. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also cautioned against provision of complex equipment that was beyond the capabilities of the Southeast Asian countries. They

63. (S-GP 3) CSAFM 112-71 to JCS, 2 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2339/341, 6 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (2 Apr 71).

recommended to the Secretary that the United States pursue negotiations for a mutually acceptable air defense system among the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. They also recommended that, as long as US aircraft supported the RVN effort, US air defense aircraft be committed to Southeast Asia and that air defense operating teams be retained at key radar sites.[64]

(C) The Secretary of Defense agreed on 20 July 1971 that undue sophistication should be avoided in development of Southeast Asian air defense systems and that these systems must be kept in the perspective of overall requirements. He approved the JCS recommendations to the extent that existing bilateral working relationships should be improved to provide more effective coordination of the air defense effort. But he saw neither need for nor prospect of multilateral air defense agreements at that time. The US air defense capability should be retained, he stated, to provide protection for US forces. The regional protection resulting therefrom was merely incidental to the US capability.[65]

The Search for Air Operating Authorities Against North Vietnam in 1971

(U) United States pilots in 1971 faced a growing enemy air defense threat when conducting missions near the North Vietnamese borders. The North Vietnamese had undertaken an augmentation of these defenses in late 1969, and the buildup proceeded throughout 1970 and into 1971. The enemy moved surface-to-air missiles

64. (S-GP 4) JCSM-299-71 to SecDef, 28 Jun 71, Encl to JCS 2339/341-2, 15 Jun 71, JMF 907/323 (2 Apr 71).
65. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2339/341-3, 21 Jul 71, same file.

(SAMs), antiaircraft artillery (AAA), and MIG aircraft into the southern areas of North Vietnam targeted against US planes operating in nearby Laos and, in early 1971, began to direct these defenses against US planes over South Vietnam just below the DMZ.

(C) Almost simultaneously with the initiation of the enemy air defense augmentation, both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had begun a series of continuing requests for increased operating authorities to counter the threat. United States pilots were allowed to react in self-defense, and on two occasions, 1-4 May 1970 and 20-21 November 1970,[66] offensive strikes were approved against air defense targets in North Vietnam. But despite the repeated recommendations of the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense had not granted standing authority for preemptive attack of enemy air defense installations in North Vietnam. With the withdrawal of US forces from ground combat operations during 1971, US air power took on even greater importance as a means of halting enemy infiltration into South Vietnam. Consequently, the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were even more attentive to the threat to US air operations and efforts to obtain authorities to remove the weapons based in North Vietnam that endangered these US operations in South Vietnam and Laos.

(TS) As described in the preceding volume in this series[67], the Secretary of Defense on 1 January 1971

66. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 353-354, 360-361.
67. Ibid., pp. 362-364.

authorized a one-time attack of SAM sites in North Vietnam, but weather conditions prevented execution. As a result, when the authority expired on 18 January 1971, the NVN SAM threat remained undiminished. On 20 January 1971, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff apprised the Secretary of Defense of this situation and the continuing threat. Admiral Moorer proposed further armed reconnaisance in the lower portion of North Vietnam along certain key routes, followed by "one-time" strikes when SAM sites or equipment were located. The suggested name for such an operation was LOUISVILLE SLUGGER.[68]

(~~TS~~) On the following day, 21 January 1971, Admiral Moorer forwarded to Secretary Laird two plans for air strikes against North Vietnam. These plans, requested earlier by the President, provided for a 72-hour protective reaction operation against SAM facilities and supply lines below 19° north and a 72-hour air and naval attack of the supply system along the NVN coast. The Secretary acknowledged receipt of the plans two days later, stating that he had advised the President of their availability, but no action was taken to approve strikes against North Vietnam.[69]

(~~TS~~) Admiral Moorer repeated his recommendation for attack of the North Vietnamese SAM sites on 29 January 1971. The strikes, he told the Secretary, would be limited to not more than 16 F-4 strike and suppression

68. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-523-71 to SecDef, 20 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

69. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-513-71 to SecDef, 21 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 71. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "North Vietnam Contingency Plans," 23 Jan 71; JMF 912/340 (23 Jan 71).

aircraft for each SAM target discovered. This time the Secretary approved and the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to conduct armed reconnaissance and one-time strikes along carefully delimited roads leading from North Vietnam into the Laotian panhandle. The authority extended through 10 February 1971 with the number of participating aircraft limited as specified by Admiral Moorer in his request to the Secretary.[70]

(TS) Once again poor weather conditions over North Vietnam prevented implementation before the expiration of the authority. Accordingly, on 11 February 1971, the Chairman recommended an extension until such time as the strike could be executed. On the previous day, 10 February 1971, Admiral Moorer had also provided the Secretary of Defense an assessment of the North Vietnamese SAM, AAA, and MIG threats to US interdiction and other air activities. These enemy defenses, Admiral Moorer said, had forced the United States to divert "significant numbers" of fighter aircraft from interdiction missions in order to protect the B-52 force operating in Laos near the NVN border. He also noted that the B-52s were frequently diverted from the most lucrative targets to lesser ones in order to avoid the enemy defenses.[71]

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70. (TS-GP 1) CM-532-71 to SecDef, 29 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. SecDef approval is indicated in handwritten notation on draft msg attached to CM-532-71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3254 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 4 Feb 71.

71. (TS-GP 1) CM-583-71 to SecDef, 11 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (TS-GP 1) CM-582-71 to SecDef, 10 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

(~~TS~~) The Deputy Secretary of Defense extended the strike authority to 18 February and, when poor weather again prevented implementation, the authority was further extended through 28 February. United States forces conducted strikes against SAM targets in North Vietnam on 20, 21, and 28 February. The announced purpose for these LOUISVILLE SLUGGER attacks was a reaction to recent missile firings at US aircraft. A total of 67 strike sorties destroyed or damaged 4 SA-2 missiles, 15 SA-2 transporters, and 14 "vehicles."[72]

(~~TS~~) It soon became apparent that LOUISVILLE SLUGGER had not deterred the enemy, and SAM firings at US aircraft in Laos continued. In addition, for the first time since 1967, NVN SAMs were fired at allied planes over South Vietnam below the DMZ. Even before the completion of the LOUISVILLE SLUGGER operation, the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff had urged the Secretary of Defense to approve a "concentrated effort" against the NVN SAM defenses. Specifically he recommended a one-day strike of approximately 250 sorties, with a second strike the following day if reconnaissance indicated suitable targets, against SAM, AAA, and lucrative targets in North Vietnam below 18°15' north and within 30 kilometers of the Laos-NVN border.[73]

(~~TS~~) Before the Secretary replied to this request, Admiral Moorer pressed for a much more ambitious air

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72. Handwritten DepSecDef approval on draft msg attached to CM-583-71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-606-71 to SecDef, 18 Feb 71; (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Authority to Strike SAM Sites in NVN (~~TS~~)," 18 Feb 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. NY Times, 24 Feb 71, 1; 2 Mar 71, 1.

73. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-642-71 to SecDef, 25 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

strike program. On 4 March 1971, he explained to Secretary Laird that authority for one-time strikes was not adequate to meet the threat. Such restricted reaction gave the enemy a "distinct advantage," while limiting the US ability to meet the growing air defense threat. Before US forces could strike identified sites, the enemy, using the cover of darkness and adverse weather, was able to relocate his firing elements. It was essential, Admiral Moorer believed, to strike enemy SAM assets when and where they were found. To do so, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV required strike authority on a continuing basis rather than being restricted to a series of one-time strikes.[74]

(~~PS~~) Approval was given for a one-time protective reaction strike and the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed implementation on 5 March during the period through 10 March. The Secretary of Defense did not, however, approve continuing strikes against NVN air defenses. He told Admiral Moorer on 6 March 1971 that such action would be "inappropriate--or at least premature" at that time. He realized that protection was vital for the aircrews and planes flying over Laos and conducting unarmed reconnaissance over North Vietnam, but he was concerned about the consequences of granting continuing authority to strike SAM targets. Unless the United States struck repeatedly and on a sustained basis, it risked failure to achieve any substantial results. Yet repeated strikes would abrogate the November 1968 bombing halt understandings and the Secretary was not ready to take such an action. Mr. Laird had hoped that the authorities allowed in 1969 and 1970 would

74. (~~PS~~-GP 1) CM-628-71 to SecDef, 4 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN.

be adequate. Before granting additional ones, he requested an assessment of the military value of the strikes already carried out, an indication of the sufficiency of the existing authorities, a "stringent" assessment of the military value of proposed additional authorities, and a detailed review of the costs and risks, "military and otherwise," associated with repetitive attacks against North Vietnam.[75]

(~~TS~~) Poor weather again delayed execution of the one-time strike. After an extension of the authority, US Air Force and Navy planes carried out protective reaction strikes on 21 and 22 March 1971 in the lower NVN panhandle, as delimited by the Chairman in his original request of 25 February. This operation, nicknamed FRACTURE CROSS ALPHA, expended 234 strike and 30 reconnaissance sorties, destroying eight SA-2s, two SA-2 transporters, one FANSONG radar, six control vans, 64 buildings, and 45 trucks. One US F-4 was lost, but the crew was recovered.[76]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, on 19 March 1971, Admiral Moorer forwarded to the Secretary of Defense the requested assessment of the need for standing authority to attack air defense targets in North Vietnam. He regretted Mr. Laird's impression that the authorities granted

75. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5579 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Mar 71. (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Protective Reaction Strikes Against North Vietnam," 6 Mar 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

76. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6661 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV) 19 Mar 71. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Damage Assessment Fact Sheet, Att to CM-782-71 to SecDef, 5 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 71. (~~S~~-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. NY Times, 22 Mar 71, 1; 23 Mar 71, 1; 24 Mar 71, 5.

in 1969 and 1970 were adequate. To the contrary, evidence accumulating as early as October 1970 had indicated that the enemy intended to contest US air operations in the vicinity of the Laos-NVN border. The Chairman agreed fully with the Secretary that, without repeated and sustained strikes, the United States risked failure to achieve "any substantial or durable" military benefits. "Had we earlier permitted the field commander the latitude to attack these targets as they were discovered," Admiral Moorer continued, "I am convinced the threat would have been contained well below the current level." After discussing the impact of the enemy air defenses, but without considering the costs or risks involved in added authorities, Admiral Moorer repeated his request for standing approval to strike SAM targets in North Vietnam. Specifically, he wanted authority to attack SAM and AAA sites as discovered in the NVN panhandle (Route Package 1) within 19 nautical miles of the Laos border and to retaliate within 72 hours (or a week if the weather was unfavorable) against any SAM or AAA site below 20° north that fired at US aircraft.[77]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense did not reply immediately and, in the interim, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also addressed the matter of countering the increasing MIG presence in the lower part of North Vietnam. The concern of the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the growing air defense threat in North Vietnam during 1971 was not limited solely to the SAM and AAA sites. As early as 14 January, the Acting Chairman, Admiral Zumwalt, had

77. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-723-71 to SecDef, 19 Mar 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71.

requested permission either to strike MIGs on the ground or engage them in the air in North Vietnam below 20° north. No action resulted, and on 14 April 1971, the Chairman again broached the MIG issue with the Secretary. He recounted a growing number of MIG deployments to the lower area of North Vietnam, stating that this increased MIG activity had become a "major consideration" in the conduct of US air operations in Southeast Asia. Current countermeasures, the Chairman said, were clearly inadequate to dissuade the enemy from establishing strip alert facilities within threatening range of US aircraft. He repeated the recommendation of 14 January and, additionally, wanted permission for the field commanders to attack any MIG within 20 nautical miles of the BARREL ROLL EAST area of Laos.[78]

(TS) Two days following the submission of the MIG request, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also submitted a codification of existing, as well as proposed, air operating authorities for Southeast Asia. In November of the previous year, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had codified all the SEA air authorities into the single integrated interdiction program, and the Secretary of Defense had approved these rules through 1 May 1971. With regard to North Vietnam, the codification had encompassed principally self-defense measures, including: (1) immediate protective reaction strikes, without subsequent retaliation, by fighter aircraft, including IRON HAND, against any SAM or AAA site in North Vietnam below 20° north that fired on or was activated against US aircraft conducting missions

78. (TS-GP 1) CM-505-71 to SecDef, 14 Jan 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 71. (TS-GP 1) CM-814-71 to SecDef, 14 Apr 71, same file, Apr 71.

over Laos or North Vietnam; (2) overflight of North Vietnam by IRON HAND aircraft to the extent necessary to position themselves between SAM and AAA sites in North Vietnam and B-52s operating in Laos to protect the B-52s from attack; (3) engagement by friendly aircraft and surface-to-air missiles of enemy aircraft over North Vietnam that indicated hostile intent against US or allied planes operating outside the border of North Vietnam; (4) overflight of North Vietnam by laser-illuminator aircraft, not to exceed three nautical miles, in order to guide ordnance onto selected targets in Laos close to the NVN border. Now these authorities were due for renewal. The Chairman asked for a continuation until 1 November 1971; he also requested additional authorities, or "modifications" as he called them, for operations in North Vietnam, which in effect consolidated the outstanding requests for standing authorities against both SAM and MIG targets.[79]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense was still unwilling to expand air operations over North Vietnam. On 26 April 1971, he informed the Chairman that he considered the existing rules adequate to handle the MIG threat. Two days later, on 28 April, he addressed the 19 March request concerning NVN SAMs. He considered that current "countermeasures, tactics, and operating authorities" provided sufficient protection for US aircraft and crews at that time. The next day, he extended the existing SEA air operating authorities until 1 November 1971, but in accord with his previous decisions, did not include the "modifications" for North Vietnam requested by the Chairman.[80]

79. (TS-GP 1) CM-830-71 to SecDef, 16 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 70-Jun 71.

80. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "NVN MIG Activity," 26 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS,

(TS) The North Vietnamese air defense activities continued unabated, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reluctant to accept the Secretary of Defense's decision as final. On 29 April 1971, Admiral Moorer informed Mr. Laird of recent MIG activity against US aircraft in Laos near the NVN border. He repeated his belief that "a substantial expansion" of existing operating rules was required to defend against MIG activity below 20° north. Specifically, Admiral Moorer requested approval to launch anti-radiation missiles against active enemy GCI sites below 20° north when MIGs were airborne in the area. Secretary Laird, however, turned down this request a week later.[81]

(TS) On 1 May 1971, CINCPAC reported a continuing MIG threat and location of new SAM and AAA sites and equipment. He wanted to conduct appropriate strikes but the Acting Director of the Joint Staff was, initially, reluctant to press the matter further. He told Admiral Moorer that reiteration of such recommendations to the Secretary of Defense was not advisable in light of the recent denials of similar requests. The continuing NVN air defense buildup, apparently, overcame the Director's reluctance, and on 12 May 1971, the Chairman began a renewed series of requests, which continued into July 1971, for permission to attack both SAM and MIG targets in North Vietnam. The Secretary of Defense did not approve any of these requests. He did, on

"Protective Reaction Against North Vietnam," 28 Apr 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Air Operating Authorities," 29 Apr 71; JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

81. (TS-GP 1) CM-854-71 to SecDef, 29 Apr 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-860-71 to SecDef, 29 Apr 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Air Operating Authorities," 7 May 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

15 May 1971, assure the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he was "vitally interested" in the protection of the lives of US aircrews. But, observing that only one US plane had been lost in the thousands of sorties flown over Laos and North Vietnam during April and May, he believed existing authority was working satisfactorily.[82]

(TS) With the arrival of the summer rainy season in 1971, allied air operations over both Laos and northern South Vietnam slackened, accompanied by a corresponding decline in enemy air defense activities in the lower part of North Vietnam. But the approach of the fall dry season brought an increase in both again. By mid-September 1971, the US commanders realized that North Vietnam intended to contest allied planes near its borders, perhaps to an even greater degree than during the previous dry season. To meet this threat, the Secretary of Defense approved and the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the execution of a strike against air defense, logistic, and other military targets in North

82. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 010540Z May 71, JCS IN 79929. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-833-71 to CJCS, 3 May 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-893-71 to SecDef, 12 May 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-907-71 to SecDef, 16 May 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-975-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-1047-71 to SecDef, 11 Jul 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, SAM Sites in NVN. (TS-GP 1) CM-902-71 to SecDef, 19 May 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Authority to Strike SAM Installations in North Vietnam, 15 May 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 19 May 71; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "NVN SAM Firing," 17 Jun 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "NVN MIG Threat," 22 May 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef, "NVN SAM Firing," 17 Jul 71; JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2.

Vietnam within 35 miles of the northern boundary of the DMZ. Priority of attack was directed against those systems posing most serious threat to friendly operations in Laos and South Vietnam. The attack was scheduled for 20 September 1971.[83]

(S) After a one day's postponement because of poor weather conditions, Operation PRIZE BULL was carried out on 21 September. Continuing bad weather necessitated an all-instrument attack, and US planes flew 200 combat sorties against only three targets in North Vietnam within 35 miles of the DMZ. The strike destroyed an oil storage area and several AAA radars; no US aircraft were lost. In Washington, a Department of Defense spokesman announced the strike, stating by way of explanation that the number of AA guns within the DMZ had increased about 40 percent since August 1971.[84]

(TS) The PRIZE BULL strike did not remove the NVN air defense threat, and the remainder of 1971 witnessed a resumption of the search by the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for expanded authority to counter this challenge. On 20 October 1971, Admiral Moorer described for the Secretary of Defense the current MIG disposition in North Vietnam below 20° north that was endangering US B-52 operations in Laos and requested appropriate strike action. The Secretary of

83. (~~S~~ NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3334 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 17 Sep 71. Available records do not reveal the documentation of the request for or approval of this strike by the Secretary of Defense.

84. (~~S~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4828 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 20 Sep 71. (~~S~~ NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. (U) DJSM 1792-71 to CJCS, 28 Sep 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 71. NY Times, 22 Sep 71, 1, 9; 24 Sep 71, 1.

Defense, however, declined to approve the request. He readily admitted that the loss of a B-52 "would indeed be unfortunate," but asked for an assessment of limiting B-52 operations to areas less susceptible to MIG attack.[85]

(TS) On the day of this disapproval, 21 October 1971, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary a codification of air operating authorities for Southeast Asia. This codification included not only the existing rules scheduled to expire on 31 October 1971, but also various new ones. With respect to North Vietnam, new proposals included the designation as hostile any airborne MIG below 19° north and standing permission to attack during actual engagement controlling GCI sites in North Vietnam below 20° north.[86]

(TS) On 22 October 1971, the Secretary of Defense notified Admiral Moorer that the matter of Southeast Asia air authorities required "detailed examination." Therefore he extended the current rules until 15 November, pending a review of the proposed new ones requested the previous day. The Secretary of Defense never did approve the expanded authorities requested by the Chairman. On 12 November 1971, the Secretary extended the existing authorities until 1 December 1971 and, thereafter, he extended them month by month until the time of the April 1972 offensive.[87]

85. (TS) CM-1275-71 to SecDef, 20 Oct 71 (not available because it contained SI information, but its contents are summarized in (TS-GP 1) CM-1281-71 to SecDef, 29 Oct 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan-Dec 71). (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Requests for Strikes," 21 Oct 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2.

86. (TS-GP 1) CM-1272-71 to SecDef, 21 Oct 71, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

87. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 22 Oct 71, 12 Nov 71, and

(TS) Meanwhile, on 29 October 1971, Admiral Moorer had responded to the Secretary's request for an assessment of the restriction of B-52 operations to areas less vulnerable to enemy MIG attack. He supported the position of COMUCMACV and CINCPAC that B-52 operations were vital to the success of the interdiction campaign and must be continued in Laos near the NVN panhandle in order to restrict enemy movement through the Laotian LOC network. "All appropriate measures within our ability and authority," the Chairman assured the Secretary, "will be taken to defend against A MIG attack." Nevertheless, Admiral Moorer did not believe that the "inherent potential" for a successful MIG attack on a B-52 could be ignored.[88]

(TS) In early November 1971, reconnaissance revealed additional MIG deployments to airfields in lower North Vietnam near the pass areas into Laos. On 13 November, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Ryan, informed the Secretary of Defense of this situation, citing an increased number of aircraft deployed to Bai Thuong and staged to Vinh, Quan Lang, and Dong Hoi. United States protective reaction strikes in support of reconnaissance missions over these three latter fields had not deterred the enemy resolve. General Ryan explained that the transitory nature of MIG deployments to the three fields militated against a request to strike newly located MIGs. But he did recommend execution of an attack (FRACTURE DEEP)

29 Dec 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 29 Jan 72 and 26 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 27 Nov 71, same subj, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

88. (TS-GP 1) CM-1281-71 to SecDef, 29 Oct 71, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan-Dec 71.

against Bai Thuong, a hub of MIG activity in the panhandle and a field that had remained occupied throughout the summer monsoon.[89]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense did not approve the plan, and on 24 November 1971, the Chairman again requested expanded authorization to meet the growing MIG threat. This particular request was spurred by a North Vietnamese attempt to shoot down a B-52 on 21 November. Currently, US fighter aircraft escorting the B-52s, the Chairman said, could engage in immediate protective reaction against attacking MIGs, including hot pursuit and strike of the air fields where the MIGs landed. Often, however, the US fighters could not carry out reaction against enemy air fields because they were configured primarily with air-to-air munitions. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer sought permission to expand the time allowed for protective reaction against hostile MIGs and the fields from which they operated. Instead of the currently authorized immediate reaction, the Chairman recommended a 24-hour period with extension to 72 hours in case of bad weather. But the Secretary took no immediate action on this request.[90]

(TS) In a further effort to counter the NVN air defenses, the Chairman submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 30 November 1971 several plans for attack of targets in North Vietnam: (1) FRACTURE DEEP, one-day, one-time attacks on four air fields, Bai Thuong, Quan Lang, Vinh, and Don Hoi, and associated air defenses below 20° north; (2) PROUD BUNCH, a one-day "maximum

89. (TS) CM-1309-71 to SecDef, 13 Nov 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

90. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Air Strikes Against North Vietnam Air Defenses (S)," 15 Nov 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 2. (TS-GP 1) CM-1340-71 to SecDef, 24 Nov 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

effort" against military and logistic targets below 17°45' north; (3) PROUD DEEP, consolidation of the previous two. Admiral Moorer also provided the Secretary a plan, HAI CANG TUDO II, for covert off-shore fire against port and logistic facilities at Quang Khe by PTF boats with South Vietnamese crews, using captured enemy 122-mm rockets. For maximum effectiveness, Admiral Moorer recommended approval of PROUD DEEP with simultaneous and concurrent execution of HAI CANG TUDO II.[91]

(TS) Before the Secretary of Defense replied, NVN SAM firings at US aircraft increased. On 10 December, a US F-105 escorting B-52s was shot down, followed a week later by the loss of an F-4 reconnaissance escort. Now the Secretary of Defense decided expanded reaction was justified and on 19 December the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed execution of PROUD DEEP and HAI CANG TUDO II. As seemed always to be the case when the United States decided to carry out reaction strikes in 1971, the weather forced a delay, and on 26 December, after expiration of the Christmas cease-fire, the Joint Chiefs of Staff extended the authority. They directed CINCPAC to conduct the operations, weather permitting, until the beginning of the New Year's cease-fire scheduled to begin 31 December 1971.[92]

(TS) Accordingly, US forces carried out operation PROUD DEEP ALPHA during the five-day period 26-30 December 1971. Secretary Laird announced in a press

91. (TS) CM-1345-71 to SecDef, 30 Nov 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71.

92. NY Times, 20 Dec 71, 1. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6784 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 19 Dec 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3591 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 26 Dec 71. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5984 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 29 Dec 71.

conference on 27 December that the strikes were designed to protect the lives of US servicemen still in South Vietnam and warned that such strikes might be repeated. The PROUD DEEP ALPHA operation was the largest attack and deepest penetration of North Vietnam since the 1968 bombing halt; over 200 US Air Force and Navy planes from bases in Thailand and South Vietnam and from two carriers off North Vietnam flew 1,025 strike sorties against targets below 20° north. These targets consisted of SAM sites, air defense radar locations, airfields, antiaircraft sites, POL dumps, and supply depots. Three US planes were lost to SAM attacks, with one crewman recovered. Despite its size and extent, the operation did little to reduce the enemy air defense threat, which continued in 1972.[93]

Covert Operations Against North Vietnam

(~~TS~~) During 1971, the United States planned and supported to a limited extent covert operations against North Vietnam. As the result of a Washington Special Actions Group meeting on 2 December 1970, Dr. Kissinger requested the development of selected options in Cambodia, Laos, or North Vietnam with the objective of enabling the United States to wrest the initiative from the enemy instead of continually reacting to enemy moves. The Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared and submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 5 December a series of options, both overt and covert. They fell into three categories: short term spoiling-type operations designed to keep the enemy off balance and use minimum

93. (~~S~~-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-34. NY Times, 27 Dec 71, 1; 28 Dec 71, 1; 29 Dec 71, 1; 30 Dec 71, 1; 31 Dec 71, 1. Although the JCS authorized the execution of both PROUD DEEP and HAI CANG TUDO II no reports of the latter operation have been found.

resources; more ambitious undertakings requiring longer time and more resources; and deception and psychological feint operations to support the previous two categories.[94]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense forwarded the JCS proposals to Dr. Kissinger, but recommended against any implementation pending a further review. Subsequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reconsidered the options and Admiral Moorer submitted to the Secretary a revised list on 4 January 1971. The new options, he believed, had the highest probability of success, would give the enemy concern, and could be implemented within existing capabilities. The original JCS options had included North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, but the new ones provided only for the following actions against North Vietnam: small-scale air attacks; Patrol Torpedo Fast (PTF) boat[95] attacks on NVN coastal shipping; PTF coastal attacks by fire; capture and subversion of

94. (TS-GP 1) CM-412-70 to SecDef, 5 Dec 70, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

95. The PTF boats involved were assigned to the MACV Studies and Observation Group. The previous October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had wanted to return these craft to the US Navy for deactivation as a means of easing budget pressures. The Secretary of Defense had agreed, but Dr. Kissinger had delayed this deactivation, citing the President's interest in maintaining these boats for possible covert use against North Vietnam. The scheduled reduction of US forces to a level of 69,000 men during the spring of 1972 precluded retention of the PTF boat detachment in South Vietnam, and on 27 March 1972, the Secretary of Defense authorized the return of the boats to US Navy control. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-482-70 to SecDef, 14 Oct 70, Encl to JCS 2472/552-41, 22 Sep 70, JMF 911/535 (10 Nov 69) sec 10. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Nov 70, Att to JCS 2472/552-42, 13 Nov 70, same file, sec 11. (TS-GP 1) CM-1311-71 to SecDef, n.d. [ca. 13 Nov 71] and not sent, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 71. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Patrol Torpedo Fast Boats (PTF)," 27 Mar 72, same file, Feb 72.

North Vietnamese fishermen; and PTF destruction of a NVN trawler at sea. All of these actions, except for the air attacks, could be conducted by indigenous personnel.[96]

(TS) Throughout January, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense various refinements to the options and several additions, including proposals for both cross-beach and airborne raids against petroleum and logistics facilities. On 3 February 1971, however, the Secretary of Defense notified Admiral Moorer that he was not prepared to approve any of the options for implementation at that time. He felt that the small-scale air attacks of North Vietnam would have minimal effect and might be viewed by the public as "a unilateral US resumption of the air war over NVN with its attendant unfavorable impact upon the Paris Negotiations along with widespread domestic and international political repercussions." Nor did the Secretary feel the other actions justified the political and military risks involved, although he did direct continuation of planning for those and other possible covert actions.[97]

(TS) Thereafter, Admiral Moorer narrowed the contingency options against North Vietnam to two actions: interdiction of NVN coastal shipping by PTF boats,

96. (TS) CM-467-71 to SecDef, 4 Jan 71; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Options for Southeast Asia," 9 Dec 71; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

97. (TS-GP 1) CM-537-71 to SecDef, 28 Jan 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-547-71 to SecDef, 30 Jan 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-548-71 to SecDef, 30 Jan 71; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Options for Southeast Asia," 3 Feb 71; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

with the nickname NEWPORT CASINO; and coastal attacks by fire using PTFs, nicknamed SPRUCE GUM. The PTFs for both actions would be manned with Vietnamese crews and no US personnel would be aboard. Admiral Moorer submitted plans for these operations to the Secretary of Defense on 5 February 1971, recommending immediate execution. This time the Secretary approved and, on 7 February 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to carry out the plans. They directed that no US personnel, even advisers, should participate.[98]

(~~TS~~) Subsequently, PTF craft, manned by South Vietnamese crews, conducted maritime harassing operations against NVN shipping on two occasions, the first off Quang Khe on the night of 10-11 February and the second off Vinh during the night of 19-20 February. The actions resulted in five enemy ships sunk and four heavily damaged with eight prisoners and numerous documents captured. The cost to friendly forces was one crew member killed and minor damage to one PTF boat. The nicknames for these operations were changed from the English designations NEWPORT CASINO and SPRUCE GUM to HAI CANG TUDO at the direction of the Secretary of Defense. Since the operations were conducted by the South Vietnamese, he wanted them to have Vietnamese names. The field commanders and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff all recommended to the Secretary of Defense execution of a third HAI CANG TUDO mission, an attack by fire against petroleum and transshipment

98. (~~TS~~) CM-567-71 to SecDef, 5 Feb 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3418 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 7 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

targets at Quang Khe, using captured NVN 122-mm rockets, but the Secretary did not approve the mission.[99]

(TS) The United States also conducted amphibious feints off the coast of North Vietnam in February and March 1971. On 4 February, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary of Defense a plan to deploy an Amphibious Ready Group and a Marine Amphibious Unit off the southern coast of North Vietnam. Such action was designed to convey to the North Vietnamese the impression that a raid was being planned and to cause them to hold forces in-country in anticipation of an impending attack. CINCPAC had strongly recommended approval of the plan, and Admiral Moorer concurred in that recommendation.[100]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense approved the plan and, on 5 February 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized deployment of the amphibious forces to waters off North Vietnam. Subsequently, at Admiral Moorer's request, the Secretary of Defense agreed on 3 March 1971 to the movement of the amphibious group further up the NVN coast in order to maintain the enemy's concern over possible coastal attack. The operation was completed on 6 March.[101]

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99. (TS-GP 1) CM-598-71 to SecDef, 15 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4144 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 16 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-619-71 to SecDef, 20 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-654-71 to SecDef, 27 Feb 71; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71. (TS-GP 1) Unconventional Operations Summary No. 4, 1 Apr 71, Att to DJSM 641-71 to SecDef, 5 Apr 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 71. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Hai Cang Tudo Operations (U)," 9 Apr 71, JMF 907/323 (CY 1971) sec 1.

100. (TS) CM-565-71 to SecDef, 4 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71.

101. SecDef approval of the original plan is contained in a handwritten notation on a draft msg

(~~TS~~) In February 1971, CINCPAC had developed a general concept for agent operations in North Vietnam. It provided for the recruitment of both short- and long-term agents with about three months required for the training of the former and 9 to 14 months for the latter. Admiral Moorer forwarded the concept to the Secretary of Defense on 17 February stating that:

> The momentum of current operations against North Vietnam must be maintained; the initiative is clearly ours in overt operations in Cambodia and Laos and in successful covert operations by Patrol Torpedo Fast (PTF) boats against the coast of NVN. These operations have caused confusion and frustration within the NVN government.

Admiral Moorer thought that ultimately all types of agents should be introduced into North Vietnam, and he recommended initiation of the CINCPAC program. No US personnel or "attributable resources" would be required and the Vietnamese would do all the recruiting and training.[102]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense approved the concept for agent operations in North Vietnam on 20 February provided that the Joint General Staff would undertake the program. He stipulated that there should be no US participation in the actual operations, although COMUSMACV might assist in planning and training. Thereafter, General Abrams approached the Chief of

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attached to (~~TS~~) CM-565-71 to SecDef, 4 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3318 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Feb 71, same file. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-656-71 to SecDef, 2 Mar 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Amphibious Deception Plan (U)," 3 Mar 71; same file, Mar 71. (~~TS~~-GP 1) DJSM-451-71 to Dir DIA, 11 Mar 71, JMF 912/378 (CY 1971).

102. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-604-71 to SecDef, 17 Feb 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71.

the JGS, General Vien, who believed that the proposal should be discussed by President Thieu and Ambassador Bunker. Subsequently, the Secretary of Defense, at Admiral Moorer's request, asked the Secretary of State to have Ambassador Bunker approach President Thieu.[103]

(TS) Secretary Rogers, however, expressed "considerable skepticism" about the agent program. He told Secretary Laird on 21 May 1971 that similar operations in the past were of little or no intelligence value and of only minor use for harassment. In addition, Secretary Rogers feared that, even though no US personnel or resources attributable to the United States would be used in execution of the program, the United States would be blamed, particularly since it would be involved in the recruitment and training. He suggested an interdepartmental evaluation of the gains and risks of the proposed operations. Although Secretary Laird favored such a project, the evaluation was never conducted and the record reveals no further consideration of the agent program.[104]

(TS) Throughout 1971, the United States carried out covert psychological operations against North Vietnam. These consisted primarily of [redacted] the insertion of psychological operations materials into North Vietnam. On 6 December 1971, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

103. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Options for Southeast Asia," 20 Feb 71; (TS-GP 1) CM-699-71 to SecDef, 15 Mar 71; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Mar 71. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 4 May 71, same file, Apr-Jun 71.

104. (TS) Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 21 May 71, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Apr-Jun 71. (TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, 16 Jun 71, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

Staff submitted to the 40 Committee, a special committee of the National Security Council, a three-phase program for expanded covert psychological operations in North Vietnam. The first phase would revitalize the ongoing actions, while the second and third would expand them. No US personnel would participate in the execution of the operations although they would be used for training and as advisers. Admiral Moorer requested the Committee to approve the first phase of the program for immediate implementation and to approve in principle the remaining two phases, but the record does not reveal further action on this matter.[105]

(~~TS~~) In February 1972, COMUSMACV undertook to prepare a cover and deception plan for NVN operations with the ostensible purpose of disrupting NVA forces and preventing their movement into South Vietnam. When learning of this planning, the President requested that it be broadened to include a full range of ground, sea, and air options. Subsequently, Assistant Secretary of Defense G. Warren Nutter told Admiral Moorer that South Vietnamese assets should be used to the maximum extent possible and that there should be no US ground troop involvement.[106]

(~~TS~~) On 23 February, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense "conceptual planning options" for cover and deception operations against enemy forces in North Vietnam. These included: a RVNAF ground attack across the DMZ; increased carrier operations; an amphibious operation

105. (~~TS-~~GP 1) CM-1355-71 to the 40 Cmte, 6 Dec 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 71.

106. (~~TS~~) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Cover and Deception Operations for North Vietnam (~~S~~)," 15 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

north of the DMZ; covert attacks in NVN waters; and various combinations of the above options.

(TS) The Chairman doubted that the outcome of any of the options warranted the risks and expenditures of resources involved. As US redeployments continued, the Republic of Vietnam had to assume increased responsibility for "the total conduct of the war effort." As a result, the RVNAF was stretched thin and troop deployments necessary to give credibility to the projected operations would leave critical areas undefended. In addition, Admiral Moorer questioned whether credible deception operations could be conducted in light of the accelerated US withdrawals, the reduced in-country support for the RVNAF, and the political constraints precluding expansion of the US combat role in South Vietnam. For these reasons, he recommended against implementation of the options. The Secretary of Defense relayed them to Dr. Kissinger, agreeing with Admiral Moorer that the expenditure of the necessary resources could not be justified at that time, and the available record reveals no further action on this matter.[107]

The Approaching Offensive: Military Operations, January - March 1972

(S) There had been indications of enemy plans for an attack during the latter half of 1971, and these signs increased significantly during January 1972. Growing enemy troop movements and improvements of his logistics network in western Quang Tri Province, in the DMZ, and in North Vietnam just above the DMZ

107. (TS-GP 1) CM-1571-72 to SecDef, 23 Feb 72; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Cover and Deception Options," 8 Mar 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

all portended an approaching ground attack. In addition, during the first two months of 1972, the enemy became increasingly bold in his air defense activities, stepping up attacks against US interdiction operations in Laos, and carrying out troop and supply movements in support of the impending offensive. He continued to employ NVN-based MIGs for this purpose and introduced SA-2 missile batteries into heretofore lightly defended areas of Laos, the lower part of North Vietnam, and even into the DMZ. Moreover, US reconnaissance indicated construction work on the airfields in the NVN panhandle to enable MIGs to use them as well as a marked increase in conventional anti-aircraft artillery forces in the same area.[108]

(TS) To counter the enemy air defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 10 December 1971 had asked the Secretary of Defense for authority to use IRON HAND aircraft equipped with anti-radiation missiles in protective reaction against GCI and associated radars below 20° north that were activated whenever MIG aircraft were deployed or operating in that area. The Secretary of Defense did not reply until 8 January 1972 when he requested a further assessment of this matter before making a final decision. He asked about the capabilities of enemy radar in the lower part of North Vietnam, the US ability to attack specific radars, and measures that might be taken within the existing authorities to counter the increased threat to allied aircraft.[109]

108. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) pp. 9, 11.

109. (TS-GP 1) CM-1370-71 to SecDef, 10 Dec 71, CJCS 091 Southeast Asia, Jul-Dec 71. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Authority to Strike Vietnamese EW/GCI Sites," 8 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan 72 - .

(TS) The Chairman submitted the requested assessment two days later. He related that, between 4 October 1971 and 8 January 1972, there were 43 penetrations of Laotian air space by MIG aircraft, 17 of which occurred in the first seven days of January. He continued:

> It is obvious that the character of our air operations in Laos has taken on a new dimension. Whereas we previously enjoyed freedom of the skies and were concerned primarily with the SAM/AAA threat, we now face a determined, clever and more qualified enemy in the air. Against this new threat, we are forced to operate in the fringe area of our radar and radio coverage and at the limits of aircraft endurance. On the other hand, the enemy is working at or near optimum capability under close radar control [in] a friendly environment, in proximity to his airfields, over familiar geography and [with] the added comfort of base sanctuary.

Admiral Moorer carefully detailed for the Secretary of Defense the actions undertaken by the field to increase and improve warning and alert procedures as protection against the enemy air defenses. He shared the opinion of the field commanders that there was little further that could be done in that regard. What was required was authority to attack MIGs, both airborne and on the ground, anywhere in North Vietnam below 20° north as well as their supporting airfields, facilities, GCI sites, and associated radars. Ten days later, on 20 January, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary additional information in response to the 8 January request and reiterated the recommendation for authority to employ anti-radiation missiles against GCI air defense radars in North Vietnam.[110]

110. (TS) CM-1439-72 to SecDef, 10 Jan 72; (TS-GP 1) CM-1464-72 to SecDef, 20 Jan 72; CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan 72 - .

(TS) Meantime, General Abrams was seeing increasing signs of a buildup for an enemy offensive. On 11 January, he forwarded a warning of such an attack to CINCPAC and Admiral Moorer. Recent intelligence, he said, revealed enemy preparations for intensified military and political actions during the spring of 1972. Nine days later, on 20 January 1972, he described for his superiors "in the clearest possible manner" the impending enemy offensive against South Vietnam. He believed that high level decisions and planning for such effort had already been made although he could not be sure of the precise plan of attack. He reported major movement of NVA units toward northern MR 1 and MR 2 in South Vietnam. General Abrams expected recently intensified enemy MIG activity to continue, as well as increased movement of SAMs and AAA to the area just north of the DMZ in order to "complicate our operations." The enemy had already moved these weapons into the Laotian panhandle.[111]

(TS) To counter this buildup and to be prepared when the enemy offensive broke, General Abrams requested the following authorities in North Vietnam, to be invoked as appropriate when the battle began: strike of enemy MIGs on the ground at Dong Hoi, Vinh, and Quan Lang; fighter strike, including IRON HAND, of active GCI radars below 20° north; fighter strike, including IRON HAND, of occupied SAM sites and associated equipment in North Vietnam located within 19 nautical miles (SAM range) of the PMDL or the Laotian border as far north as 19 nautical miles above Mu Gia

111. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 11 Jan 72, JCS IN 59093. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 20 Jan 72, JCS IN 76221.

Pass; fighter strike of enemy logistic support facilities below 18° north. General Abrams also recommended the use of sensors throughout the DMZ to provide necessary intelligence to assure the safety of US forces and employment of fixed and rotary wing aircraft for logistic support, troop lift, and medical evacuation to assist the RVNAF in limited cross-border operations in Laos and Cambodia when requirements exceeded the VNAF capabvilities. The seriousness of the developing situation and the need for prior preparation, General Abrams said, demanded urgent consideration. "The stakes in this battle will be great," he believed. "If it is skillfully fought by the RVN, supported by all available US air, the outcome will be a major defeat for the enemy, leaving him in a weakened condition and gaining a decisive time for the consolidation of the Vietnamization effort." Both Ambassador Bunker and CINCPAC supported General Abrams' assessment, and Admiral Moorer forwarded it the same day to the Secretary of Defense recommending that it be sent to the White House.[112]

(~~TS~~) Heretofore, in the continuing search for expanded air operating authorities against North Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had relied on the Chairman to pursue these operational matters with the Secretary of Defense. But on this occasion, they themselves addressed the Secretary as a body. On 21 January, they told him that recent evidence strongly pointed to a major enemy campaign in the near future. They shared the concern of the field commanders over the developing situation. The ensuing battle, the

112. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 20 Jan 72, JCS IN 76221. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg CINCPAC to CJCS, 210149Z Jan 72, JCS IN 77806. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1468-72 to SecDef, 20 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 72.

Joint Chiefs of Staff thought, might well depend on the effective use of US air power. The North Vietnamese had already expanded their operating areas to the point where MIG incursions into Laos were commonplace. This growing threat had required the United States to allocate large numbers of tactical air sorties to an anti-MIG role at the expense of US interdiction operations. The SAM and AAA threat had also expanded.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense that the previous requests for additional air authorities remained valid. They "urgently" recommended approval of the authorities requested by General Abrams the previous day and repeated the recommendation that the field commander's assessment be forwarded to the White House. This latest request was more urgent, they believed, and required immediate attention because of the threat of substantial ground operations. In the impending battle, the field commander must have the necessary authority to insure effective use of air power. The authorities requested by General Abrams, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, would allow flexibility in application of air assets for "optimum impact on the ground situation" while continuing overall interdiction against the enemy's vital logistic pipeline.[113]

(TS) The Senior Review Group met in a "principals only" session on 24 January 1972 to consider the increasing enemy threat to South Vietnam together with General Abrams' request for authorities to cope with the anticipated enemy offensive. The available record does not reveal what transpired at the meeting, but a modified version of authorities desired by General

113. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-26-72 to SecDef, 21 Jan 72, JMF 907 (21 Jan 72).

Abrams was approved. For, on 26 January 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV that "pertinent" operating authorities had been examined. When the expected ground campaign developed, the following authorities would be effective, in addition to those currently available: intensified reconnaissance of the vicinity of the Dong Hoi, Vinh, and Quan Lang airfields with "associated protective reaction" strike if the involved reconnaissance aircraft were fired on; and consideration as hostile and engagement of MIGs from the above fields when "encountered" below 18° north. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also authorized employment, until 1 May 1972, of anti-radar missiles against primary GCI sites outside RP 6 when MIGs were airborne and indicating hostile intent, and planning for a one-time attack of all threatening radars below 20° north with execute authority to be provided on "a case-by-case" basis depending on the circumstance. Should these authorities prove inadequate, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the field commanders, consideration would be given to a one-time strike of threatening SAM facilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed the preparation of plans for attack on those NVN logistic support facilities that could be expected to support a major attack into South Vietnam. Again execute authority would be retained in Washington, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff expected rapid approval once the battle began. In accordance with General Abrams' request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed aerial implanting of sensors in the DMZ above the PMDL and the provision of fixed and rotary wing aircraft for logistic, trooplift, and medical evacuation support for RVNAF operations along the Laotian and Cambodian borders. Since substantial

enemy attacks could begin without much additional warning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested CINCPAC to alert all friendly forces of the possibility of an enemy attack and to increase the vigilance of US forces throughout South Vietnam.[114]

(TS) In their discussions at the 24 January meeting, the members of the Senior Review group had considered possible air strikes against North Vietnam, and on the following day, Admiral Moorer submitted to the Secretary of Defense a "concept plan" for such strikes. The plan provided for "short duration operations against military and war support targets" in the NVN panhandle (below 18° north) with strikes against troop concentrations and artillery sites. Such operations were designed to disrupt the enemy supply system as well as to destroy supply stockpiles in North Vietnam and the means for introducing those supplies into Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. The plan included options for a one, two, or three day operation with flexibility "to play the weather" by continuing the visual bombing attack for as long as necessary to accomplish the objective. Admiral Moorer preferred the three-day option and asked the Secretary to approve the plan and forward it to Dr. Kissinger for the President's approval.[115]

(TS) No action resulted on the Chairman's plan, but on 2 February, Secrtary Laird asked Admiral Moorer "on an urgent basis" for plans for operations against North

114. Handwritten note by COL Hansen, J-5, NSC Affairs Office, "SRG Meeting on Vietnam Assessment," 24 Jan 72, J-5 Files. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2002 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 26 Jan 72.

115. (TS-GP 1) CM-1485-72 to SecDef, 25 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 72.

Vietnam. Specifically, the Secretary wanted four plans to cover an attack of logistics and military personnel targets in North Vietnam below 19° north; a strike of GCI radars in North Vietnam below 20° north; a surge in US air activities, including stepped up tactical air sorties and increased B-52 capability; and a plan to meet an all-out enemy assault across the DMZ. Admiral Moorer responded on 7 February. Three plans dealing with logistics targets, threat radars, and an enemy assault across the DMZ were designated FREEDOM PLAN, FREEDOM DASH, and FREEDOM MANDATE, respectively. Plans for augmentation of US air assets provided for the movement of a fourth CVA (the USS KITTY HAWK) to WESTPAC, a B-52 capability of 1,500 sorties per month, and deployment of one F-4 squadron from Korea. Again, however, no action was taken on the Chairman's plans.[116]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC had requested a temporary augmentation of US tactical air assets for operations in Vietnam and Laos. They were concerned over the enemy's "continued aggressiveness in gaining additional control in new areas" in Cambodia and Laos and his "unprecedented" interference with US air interdiction operations. Vehicles and equipment continued to move through the passes into southern Laos and South Vietnam, surface-to-air missiles and associated equipment had been introduced into southern Laos, and the enemy was using MIGs to attack friendly aircraft in northern Laos. These activities, as well as the necessary defenses to counter them, had strained the US ability to meet sortie requirements during peak periods of "simultaneous and widespread" enemy

116. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1521-72 to SecDef, 7 Feb 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

action. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer requested the Secretary of Defense's concurrence on 2 February 1972 in the implementation of a CINCPACAF plan, COMMANDO FLASH, to deploy up to three cells of six F-4 aircraft (for a total of 18 aircraft) from the Philippines to Udorn and Ubon Air Bases in Thailand and to Da Nang in South Vietnam.[117]

(TS) On 4 February, the Secretary authorized the execution of COMMANDO FLASH for a period of 30 days to begin on the date the first increment of aircraft arrived in Southeast Asia. The Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed this authorization to CINCPAC the following day, directing that, for security reasons, there be no public announcement or comment of any kind at that time about "this activity." Subsequently, on 28 February 1972, the Chairman requested and the Secretary of Defense thereafter approved a 30-day extension of the COMMANDO FLASH deployment to Southeast Asia.[118]

(TS) As an additional means of countering the enemy air defenses, CINCPAC had developed a plan to employ TALOS/TERRIER missiles against the NVN MIG threat. The plan provided for the positioning of two US Navy TALOS/TERRIER-equipped ships in the Gulf of Tonkin to create a SAM environment in which to lure and destroy hostile MIGs as they proceeded below 20° north. Admiral Moorer secured Secretary of Defense

117. (TS-GP 1) CM-1510-72 to SecDef, 2 Feb 72, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72.

118. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary Augmentation of SEA TACAIR Forces," 4 Feb 72; (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3274 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 5 Feb 72; CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jan 72. (TS-GP 1) CM-1581-72 to SecDef, 28 Feb 72; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary Augmentation of SEA Forces," 3 Mar 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

approval, and CINCPAC executed the plan during the period 29 January through 5 February 1972. Four TALOS missiles were fired and one was believed to have destroyed a ground control intercept site at Cam Ngoc-Le Nghia on 4 February. Following that action, US forces observed "a virtual standdown" of the NVN GCI sites for three days, possibly as a defensive measure.[119]

(TS) Thereafter, the United States stepped up air operations in the enemy B-3 Front (the central highlands area in MR 2) and in the northern part of MR 1 in an attempt to disrupt the enemy troops massing for the expected offensive. The 18 additional F-4 aircraft supplied by the COMMANDO FLASH deployment provided "a significant increase" in US Air Force sortie generation capability, and on 12-13 February, a sustained maximum air effort was conducted in the B-3 Front. All available air assets were turned to this effort on a round the clock basis. Allied aircraft flew a total of 1,072 sorties, including 868 US tactical air, 100 VNAF tactical air, 34 gunship, and 70 B-52. No allied losses occurred, but bomb damage assessment revealed numerous damaged or destroyed enemy structures, trucks, caves and tunnels, guns, and storage areas.[120]

(TS) The intensified allied air operations did, apparently, delay the enemy offensive, but the air

119. (TS-GP 1) CM-1439-72 to SecDef, 10 Jan 72, CJCS File 091 Laos, B-52 Strikes, Jan 72 thru -. (TS-GP 1) DJSM 67-72 to CJCS, 13 Jan 72; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "TALOS/TERRIER Employment," 18 Jan 72; (TS-GP 1) CM-1540-72 to SecDef, 14 Feb 72; CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72.

120. (TS) CM-1534-72 to SecDef, 14 Feb 72; (TS) CM-1551-72 to SecDef, 18 Feb 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 72.

defense threat continued unabated. On 1 March 1972, CINCPAC submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for a 48-hour attack to eliminate NVN MIG airfields. The plan was not approved, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Admiral McCain that it was being held as "an on-the-shelf contingency option."[121]

(TS) On 2 March 1972, Admiral Moorer advised the Secretary of Defense that the SAM threat in the pass areas of Laos and the area of South Vietnam below the DMZ continued to cause serious interference with air interdiction operations. There were now 28 SAM battalions currently stationed in North Vietnam below 20° north, and eight US aircraft had been lost to SAMs since the beginning of the current dry season. It was apparent, Admiral Moorer stated, that the enemy was determined to cover his intensive logistic effort to support an impending offensive with the most extensive possible defense. To deny the enemy the benefit of sanctuary, and to reduce the effectiveness of his air defenses, the Chairman supported recent proposals by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC for tactical air strikes against both logistic support facilities in the NVN panhandle and SAM sites located within 19 nautical miles of the PMDL or the Laos/NVN border to a point 19 nautical miles north of Mu Gia Pass.[122]

(TS) A week later, on 9 March 1972, Admiral Moorer again warned the Secretary of Defense of continuing enemy preparations for a major offensive. After giving a detailed assessment of the situation, he went

121. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 011458Z Mar 72, JCS IN 57991. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3133 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 3 Mar 72.

122. (TS-GP 1) CM-1593-72 to SecDef, 2 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 72.

on to request additional authorities to limit the enemy's options in the approaching battle and to reduce the prevailing danger to friendly air operations in the NVN border areas. These expanded authorities included: tactical air strike and naval gunfire attack of SAM sites, MIGs, GCI sites, AAA, long-range artillery, tanks, and logistic facilities in North Vietnam below 18° north; and employment of area denial munitions throughout the northern portion of the DMZ[123]

(TS) On 11 March, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense that, although the enemy had not launched his offensive, such an attack appeared "imminent." Current intelligence and field assessment indicated the movement of VC/NVA units into Hue, the B-3 Front, and MR-3, and CINCPAC wanted to take additional preparatory actions. In order to reduce the reaction time should additional reinforcement of US air forces in Southeast Asia become necessary, CINCPAC had proposed the relocation of 18 US F-4D aircraft, with associated personnel and equipment, from Korea to the Philippines. There the crews would receive combat training and theater indoctrination and be available for rapid deployment to South Vietnam and Thailand. In order to avoid any political problems arising from the withdrawal of the planes, the F-4Ds would be replaced in Korea with F-4C aircraft from Okinawa. Admiral Moorer supported CINCPAC's proposal, telling the Secretary that the "threatening situation" made it prudent to take such preparatory measures.[124]

(TS) The Secretary of Defense approved the movement of the F-4Ds from Korea to the Philippines on 15 March,

123. (TS-GP 1) CM-1625-72 to SecDef, 9 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71 - Jun 72.
124. (TS-GP 1) CM-1568-72 to SecDef, 11 Mar 72, same file.

adding that "further approval" would be needed for deployment of the aircraft to Southeast Asia. He did not, however, grant the Chairman's requests of 2 and 9 March for air strikes and naval gunfire against NVN air defense targets. On 22 March, he reaffirmed all existing authorities and stated that these authorities and "the firm RVNAF posture" had, from all reports, disrupted the enemy's offensive plans. He did authorize employment of area denial munitions in the upper half of the DMZ with the authority extending through 1 May 1971. Should there be "significant adverse changes" in the overall military situation, the Secretary promised to reconsider requests for expanded authorities in North Vietnam.[125]

(C) The expected enemy offensive still had not developed by the latter part of March. Allied forces in South Vietnam remained on alert and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders had, with Secretary of Defense approval, augmented US air resources in Southeast Asia. They also wanted to carry out preemptive air strikes against the continuing enemy preparations just above the DMZ in North Vietnam, but Secretary Laird, ever mindful of the political implications, resisted such action in the absence of an actual enemy attack.

Unauthorized Bombing

(U) Despite the careful control exercised by the Secretary of Defense through the Joint Chiefs of Staff

125. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "TACAIR Augmentation, Southeast Asia," 15 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 Southeast Asia, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Request for Operating Authorities to Counter the North Vietnamese Threat," 22 Mar 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

over US air operations against North Vietnam, a number of unauthorized US strikes did occur during the winter 1971-1972. Between 8 November 1971 and 8 March 1972, US aircraft of the 7th Air Force conducted 28 such strikes against military targets in the lower part of North Vietnam and reported them as protective reaction even though they were pre-planned rather in reaction to enemy firing.[126]

(U) On 8 March 1972, a noncommissioned US airman in Thailand wrote to General John D. Ryan, Chief of Staff of the US Air Force, telling of this violation of the rules of engagement in Southeast Asia. General Ryan immediately dispatched the Air Force Inspector General to investigate the charge, and the resulting report confirmed the allegation. Some missions had been flown in violation of the rules of engagement and there were irregularities in the subsequent operational reports.[127]

(U) General Ryan then summoned General John D. Lavelle, USAF, the Commander of the US 7th Air Force, to Washington to explain the situation. General Lavelle admitted that he had authorized a small number of such attacks and had erroneously reported them as protective reaction. Following consultations with the Secretary of the Air Force, Admiral Moorer, and the Secretary of Defense, General Ryan allowed General Lavelle to retire for "personal and medical reasons" at the reduced rank of lieutenatnt general. The Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General John W. Vogt, USAF was selected on 6 April to replace General Lavelle

126. "Unauthorized Bombing of Military Targets in North Vietnam," Report by Investigating Subcom. of H. Com. on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72, 92d Cong, 2d sess, pp. 1-12 (hereinafter cited as "Unauthorized Bombing," H. Com. on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72).

127. Ibid., p. 1

as the 7th Air Force Commander, and a Department of Defense spokesman announced the command change the following day, though no explanation for the change accompanied the official statement.[128]

(U) Rumors about this incident soon began to circulate, and US Congressman Otis G. Pike of New York, himself a former Marine pilot, requested a Congressional inquiry. Subsequently, on 12 June 1972, the Investigating Subcommittee of the House Committee on Armed Services held a hearing on the unauthorized bombing of military targets in North Vietnam. The Subcommittee heard Generals Ryan and Lavelle, and the latter confirmed his authorization of the strikes, though he placed the number "in the neighborhood" of 20. He admitted "a very liberal interpretation" of the rules of engagement, but justified the strikes against airfields, missile sites and equipment, radars, and heavy guns in North Vietnam just above the DMZ in order to check the expanding enemy air defense threat and to protect US air crews. The General acknowledged that some incorrect reports had been submitted on these missions, but believed that his "superiors," including General Abrams, were aware of "what he was doing"[129]

(U) The Congressional hearing did not end the controversy over the Lavelle relief. General William Westmoreland, the Chief of Staff of the US Army, retired on 1 July 1972, and the President named General Abrams to succeed him. But General Abrams' Senate

128. "Unauthorized Bombing," H. Com. on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72.

129. Ibid., pp. 2-8, 18-24. NY Times, 11 Jun 72, 1; 12 Jun 72, 4; 13 Jun 72, 1.

confirmation became ensnared in the Lavelle matter. General Abrams left Vietnam for Washington on 29 June, but because of Congressional dissatisfaction with General Lavelle's removal, the Senate Armed Services Committee delayed confirmation hearings on General Abrams pending further investigation of the Lavelle affair. In September, the Committee conducted an inquiry into the Lavelle relief together with hearings on General Abrams' nomination. The Senate Committee voted unanimously to confirm General Abrams on 6 October 1972 and the full Senate followed suit a few days later by a vote of 84 to 2. The Committee also confirmed the Air Force's decision on General Lavelle and, in fact, voted to strip him of another star, lowering him to the rank of major general. But this action amounted to a token punishment since he would retain the retired salary of a full general.[130]

(U) Later, in December 1972, the House Committee on Armed Services issued the report of its Investigating Subcommittee on the unauthorized bombing in North Vietnam. The House members, in effect, took issue with their Senate colleagues, finding General Lavelle's action "not only proper, but essential" to meet the increased enemy radar coverage endangering US aircrews. The Subcommittee stopped short, however, of declaring the General's authorization for the strikes legal, and no further action resulted on the matter.[131]

130. Hearings, Nomination of John D. Lavelle, General Creighton W. Abrams, and Admiral John S. McCain, S. Com. on Armed Services, 92d Cong, 2d sess. NY Times, 29 Jun 72, 12; 30 Aug 72, 7; 14 Sep 72, 1; 16 Sep 72, 1; 19 Sep 72, 1; 7 Oct 72, 1; 13 Oct 72, 9.

131. "Unauthorized Bombing," H. Com on Armed Services, 15 Dec 72, pp. 7-12.

(U) To prevent such unauthorized bombing from occurring in the future the Secretary of Defense implemented a number of actions within the Department of Defense during the fall of 1972 to strengthen civilian control. He created a new group of inspector generals in the unified commands to conduct regular checks of procedures to insure scrupulous compliance with instructions from Washington. Henceforth reporting by Service inspector generals would be to their civilian Service secretaries in addition to their respective military chiefs, and the second Deputy Secretary of Defense, a position recently authorized by the Congress, would concentrate on maintaining operational control of forces in the field. Finally, the Secretary directed the newly established Defense Investigative Service to work directly under him rather than the individual Services and all echelons of the Department of Defense were to give closer scrutiny to the "accuracy and completeness" of operations reports.[132]

132. Ltr, SecDef to Senator John Stennis, 18 Oct 72, OSD Files.

CHAPTER 6

EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE RVNAF, 1971

(U) United States policy in Vietnam since 1969 had called for a negotiated settlement of the war, but in the absence of success in that approach, the United States had also pursued a program of strengthening and improving the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. The objective was to enable the South Vietnamese forces to assume that combat burden as the United States gradually disengaged from the war. President Johnson had initiated the improvement program in 1968 and President Nixon had greatly expanded and accelerated it in 1969 and 1970. At the beginning of 1971, the revised Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program (CRIMP), as approved by the Secretary of Defense on 5 June 1970, provided for a 1.1 million force structure for the RVNAF to be attained by the end of FY 1973 (see Table 3, p. 298). On 31 December 1970, the RVNAF had reached an actual strength of 1,054,125[1] and recruitment was under way to meet the authorized CRIMP ceiling of 1,078,345 for the end of FY 1971.[2]

(U) The improvement of the RVNAF appeared to be progressing satisfactorily at the beginning of 1971,

1. This is the figure given in COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VIII-5. Individual component figures given on pp. VIII-7, 15, 18, and 22 of the same source total 1,047,410. Page J-1 gives a figure of 1,074,410; this is, perhaps, a typographical error for 1,047,410.

2. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, Chapters 6 and 10, pp. 177-209, 373-411.

TABLE 3

The Revised Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program (CRIMP) Approved by the Secretary of Defense on 5 June 1970*

Forces	Proposed End FY 1971	FY 1972	FY 1973
Regular Forces			
ARVN	434,019	441,829	447,456
VNN	39,611	39,611	39,611
VNAF	38,780	44,712	46,998
VNMC	13,462	13,462	13,462
RF	294,446	294,446	294,446
PF	258,027	258,027	258,027
Total RVNAF	1,078,345	1,092,087	1,100,000
Total Paramilitary	179,410	163,285	149,160
Total RVNAF plus Paramilitary	1,257,755	1,255,372	1,249,160

*The Secretary of Defense approved the revised CRIMP for FY 1971-1972 and the FY 1973 portion for planning purposes.

but it was, nevertheless, a matter that would receive considerable JCS attention in the coming months. As the US redeployments continued, reaching the point in mid-year where US forces no longer participated in major offensive combat operations, the RVNAF had to assume the missions vacated by the US troops whether ready or not. In addition, the Secretary of Defense on several occasions during the year called upon the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the military commanders to plan additional specialized capabilities for the RVNAF. No additional funds, however, were supplied, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to juggle existing US military resources to accomplish these programs without further derogation of US force posture and readiness. They also had to tread the narrow line between further strengthening of the RVNAF and stretching too thin its already limited leadership resources.

The RVNAF Force Structure Review

(C) In December 1970, COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff reviewed the FY 1972-1973 RVNAF structure, and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird was presented with proposed changes to the approved structure by the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense during a visit to South Vietnam in January 1971. The principal proposals were for acceleration of 7,913 manpower spaces from FY 1973 into FY 1972, thereby attaining the projected 1.1 million-man ceiling by the end of FY 1972 instead of FY 1973 as currently planned, and for various changes within that ceiling (but without any change in the total figure) to correct existing short-falls. On 6 February 1971, COMUSMACV submitted the same recommendations to CINCPAC, stating that these changes would

enable the South Vietnamese to assume a much greater responsibility for the war as US forces continued to redeploy. Subsequently, on 17 February 1971, CINCPAC forwarded these recommendations with his concurrence to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[3]

(C) On 5 February 1971, COMUSMACV had forwarded to CINCPAC a progress report on leadership, morale, and training in the RVNAF, elaborating in extensive detail developments in those three areas during 1970. It was the commander's view that leadership in the RVNAF was improving at a satisfactory rate "quantitatively and qualitatively." The Chief of the Joint General Staff and the Joint General Staff as a unit, he said, were performing in an "eminently" satisfactory manner, and appointment of new commanders in MRs 2 and 4 had given all four MRs excellent leadership. Division and regimental commanders, with a few exceptions, were satisfactory, and the quality of leadership at battalion and lower levels in both the regular and regional forces was expected to improve as projected force levels were obtained. Nevertheless, despite the promising indications, leadership remained a problem for the RVNAF. Adviser reports rated the leaders of many units as weak or mediocre. Corrective measures, COMUSMACV explained, had to consider many complex factors, such as social, cultural, religious, ethnic, and political influences, some of which had existed for centuries. In addition, many of the bravest and most experienced leaders had been killed, and the

3. (C) Memo, RVN Ministry of Defense to SecDef, "Requirements for the Plan of Developing and Modernizing the RVNAF," 11 Jan 71; (S-GP 4) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 6 Feb 71, and (S-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 17 Feb 71, both Atts to JCS 2472/714, 23 Feb 71; JMF 911/535 (30 Jan 71).

limited supply of qualified leaders had been further dissipated in the expansion of the RVNAF and the diversion of many leaders to governmental and other nonmilitary positions.

(C) General Abrams described ongoing programs to build RVNAF morale in the areas of food, housing, clothing, pay, terms of service, medical care, and leave, stating that they had achieved some beneficial effect. But it was difficult, he explained, to assess progress in this area. Cross-border operations, increased mobility and time away from base camps, assumption of greater combat responsibility, and decreased US combat assistance all tended to degrade morale, while success on the battlefield tended to improve it. He believed that the most positive measurement of improvement in morale was increased effectiveness of the RVNAF units in combat and he found that "RVNAF units on the whole have become more aggressive and effective in 1970."

(C) In the 5 February report, COMUSMACV rated ARVN training programs as "very satisfactory." In a later report, he indicated that the training efforts of the VNAF, VNN, and VNMC were making progress though some continuing problems remained.[4]

(C) CINCPAC relayed the COMUSMACV report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 25 February with some additional comments. He pointed out the continuing problem in improving RVNAF leadership, which he attributed to the rapid expansion of the forces. He was encouraged,

4. (C-GP 4) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 5 Feb 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/721, 4 Mar 71; (C-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 4 Mar 71, JCS IN 61150; JMF 911/535 (5 Feb 71).

however, that the leveling off of desertion rates during 1969 and 1970, except during the Cambodian incursion, indicated that this problem was stabilizing and "more amenable to solution."[5]

(TS) Meantime, a sharp rise in infiltration of enemy personnel into South Vietnam occurred in January and early February 1971, and on 10 February the Secretary of Defense requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess the capability of the Government of Vietnam to interdict North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies into the south both then and after completion of the improvement and modernization program. He wanted to make sure, he explained, that there was no misunderstanding of the direction in which the Department of Defense was moving in long-standing efforts to strengthen the RVNAF. While the United States could not give the RVNAF all the capabilities of the US forces then in South Vietnam, he did not think that "semantic differences" should be allowed to obscure the fact that an interdiction capability could be developed by the South Vietnamese. "Acceptably effective interdiction" could take place at or near destination points, he believed. Methods of interdiction might include disruptions by ground and naval forces, location of enemy caches through judicious use of financial incentives, political pressures, and air interdiction.[6]

(U) While the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reviewing the proposals for the revised FY 1972-1973 RVNAF structure in February and March 1971 and preparing

5. (C-GP 4) Ltr, CINCPAC to JCS, 25 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/721, 4 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (5 Feb 71).
6. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 10 Feb 71, Att to JCS 2472/715, 23 Feb 71, JMF 911/309 (19 Feb 71).

their assessment of South Vietnamese interdiction capability for the Secretary of Defense, the RVNAF launched cross-border operations into both southern Laos and Cambodia.[7] These actions gave some indication of the improvement of the RVNAF. The ARVN units had some successes and some notable failures, but at a news conference on 4 March, President Nixon told reporters that "the South Vietnamese on the ground by themselves are taking on the very best units that the North Vietnamese can put in the field." The President told of General Abrams' conclusion, that the ARVN by themselves could "hack it" and could give "a better account of themselves even than the North Vietnamese units." This meant, the President explained, that the Vietnamization program was a success and could continue on schedule, perhaps ahead of schedule assuming more progress in operations in southern Laos.[8]

(S) On 26 March 1971, the President met with Dr. Kissinger, Secretary of Defense Laird, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard, and Admiral Moorer and discussed RVNAF progress and the possibility of accelerating US troop redeployments from South Vietnam. At that meeting, Secretary Laird left with the President a memorandum[9] on RVNAF improvement and modernization, summarizing statistically the progress of the CRIMP as of the beginning of 1971. After studying this memoramdum, President Nixon directed Dr. Kissinger, Secretary Laird, and Admiral Moorer on

7. See Chapter 1 for an account of the LAMSON 719 operation in southern Laos and Chapter 5 for an account of the operations in Cambodia.

8. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon, 1971 (1972), p. 387.

9. The memorandum has not been located in either JCS or OSD files. The OSD Deputy Historian stated ahat it most likely was an informational memorandum that the Secretary took to the White House meeting, rather than a formal memorandum addressed to the President.

1 April 1971 to join in conducting a detailed analysis of future plans for expanding and modernizing the South Vietnamese forces. Specifically he wished an analysis for the period 1 May 1971 to 30 June 1973 of illustrative levels of major items of equipment for the RVNAF ground forces and for air and navy units with emphasis on helicopter troop and cargo lift, helicopter gunship, and tactical air capabilities. Also to be considered was the possibility of expanding RVNAF ground forces beyond the programmed 1.1-million level.[10]

(S) The Secretary of Defense wanted to make use of all the work currently underway on RVNAF improvement and modernization in the preparation of the analysis for the President. Accordingly, on 8 April 1971, he requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to complete by 23 April 1971 their recommendations on the FY 1972 RVNAF force changes proposed by the Government of Vietnam, the evaluation of the RVNAF interdiction capability, and the annual review of RVNAF leadership and morale. The Secretary intended to base his analysis for the President on "the RVNAF capability to conduct protracted war, to counter the main force threat, to interdict the flow of men and materiel from the north, and to provide local security in the countryside," and he requested any additional recommendations the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought appropriate.[11]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff already had these tasks well in hand. Two days previously, they had provided the Secretary an optimistic assessment by

10. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 1 Apr 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/735, 8 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (8 Apr 71).

11. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Apr 71, Att to JCS 2472/735, 8 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (8 Apr 71).

CINCPAC and COMUSMACV of RVNAF improvement. The next day, 7 April, they had given the Secretary both the COMUSMACV report and the CINCPAC comments on leadership, morale, and training in the RVNAF during 1970. They made no comment on this information except to state that "excellent progress" was accomplished during 1970 in improvement of the quality and quantity of RVNAF training. Although several "minor difficulties" remained, they believed that the problems had been recognized and were being addressed.[12]

(TS) On 19 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense their review of the JGS and COMUSMACV proposals for the FY 1972-1973 RVNAF force structure. (See Table 4, p. 308.) They recommended approval of the acceleration of the 7,913-space increase from FY 1972 to FY 1973 as well as the RVNAF force structure changes within the 1.1 million force ceiling for FY 1972. They also requested planning approval for the related changes within the established ceiling for FY 1973. The acceleration, they told the Secretary, assumed that the RVNAF would undertake an increasingly greater responsibility for the war in the coming months. They pointed out that, while this proposal would speed up the RVNAF manpower ceiling by one year, it would not accelerate activation of major RVNAF units into the same time frame except for one air defense artillery weapons battalion and three station hospitals. Consequently, the RVNAF would be able to maintain its training facilities and pipeline at near capacity.

12. (TS-GP 1) JCSM-165-71 to SecDef, 6 Apr 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/736, 6 Ar 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Mar 71). (S-GP 4) JCSM-174-71 to SecDef, 7 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/721-1, 30 Mar 71, JMF 911/535 (5 Feb 71).

~~(TS)~~ With regard to specific improvements brought about by the recommended proposals, the acceleration would supply the ARVN 5,627 spaces in FY 1972 to augment existing approved units and 2,286 spaces for the VNAF in the same period, to accomplish recruiting and training for units scheduled for activation in FY 1973. No acceleration would occur in the VNN or VNMC, since those services were currently scheduled to reach their final ceilings in the 1.1 million structure by the end of FY 1972. The most significant changes in the ARVN resulting from the proposed revisions within the overall ceiling would include an additional armored cavalry squadron to be positioned in MR 2, 10 M-196 self-propelled mortar platoons, and 10 military police companies. In addition, increases totaling over 6,000 spaces in the combat service support structure would enhance the ARVN capability in the areas of air operations, logistics, maintenance, and medical treatment. The territorial forces would be expanded through the addition of 17 Regional Force battalion headquarters and 219 Popular Force platoons. Changes in the VNN would permit: activation of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (ACTOVRAD); turnover of 29 US river patrol boats to the VNN; improved coordination of riverine operations; augmentation of the Viper patrol craft building and operation program; and improved logistics, base maintenance, and support. Proposed revisions in the VNAF would allow enhanced self-sufficiency primarily in base operating support, logistic depot repair, and UH-1 helicopter maintenance. In addition, the VNMC division would be reorganized to improve command and control and to upgrade maintenance capability.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated the cost of these force structure proposals at an additional $88.585 million. The cost breakdown for the US Services was as follows:

	PERSONNEL	EQUIPMENT	O&E	TOTAL
Army	$12.2	$55.3	$19.4	$86.9
Navy	0.0	0.0	.435	.435
Air Force	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Marine Corps	0.0	1.210	.04	1.250
TOTAL	$12.2	$56.510	$19.875	$88.585

The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary of Defense for provision of additional FY 1972 funds and procurement authority to replace US equipment that was delivered to the RVNAF in accord with the above programs. They also recommended authority for the Military Departments to deliver major items of equipment in FY 1972, at an unprogrammed cost of $56 million, as required by the proposals.[13]

(TS) The same day, 19 April 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also sent the Secretary of Defense the requested appraisal of RVNAF interdiction capability. They explained that the CRIMP was not designed to provide the South Vietnamese forces with an out-of-country air interdiction capacity. The rationale for the CRIMP program was that the progress and momentum of pacification made it reasonable to assume that the Viet Cong threat would decline as the GVN capability

13. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-180-71 to SecDef, 19 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/714-1, 12 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Jan 71).

TABLE 4

The JCS RVNAF Force Structure Proposals as submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 19 April 1971 in JCS 180-71.

ACCELERATION PRESENT FY 1972 MANPOWER AUTHORIZATION TO FY 1972

RVNAF Service	FY 1972 Present	FY 1972 Accelerated	Difference
ARVN	441,829	447,456	+ 5,627
VNN	39,611	39,611	0
VNMC	13,462	13,462	0
VNAF	44,712	46.998	+ 2,286
RF	294,446	294,446	0
PF	258,027	258.027	0
TOTALS	1,092,087	1,100,000	+ 7,913

improved and that the RVNAF would be able to cope with the combined VC/NVA threat in-country by mid-1973 with MAAG assistance. Also included in this rationale was provision for continuation of certain elements of US out-of-country and offshore tactical support beyond mid-1973. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe that interdiction at the place of destination, as suggested by the Secretary, was the best method of dealing with the problem. From a tactical standpoint, they said, it was more "cost effective" to aim principal interdiction efforts at choke points in the enemy's infiltration system.

(~~TS~~) The RVNAF did have some interdiction capability, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense. The VNAF could conduct limited air operations outside the RVN borders against low-threat areas, and this capacity would be further improved upon completion of the CRIMP in 1973. Aircraft currently in the VNAF inventory and programmed in the CRIMP would be highly vulnerable in actions against strongly defended enemy sanctuaries, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff thought the VNAF could be further strengthened by substituting aircraft with greater capabilities for some of those planned in the CRIMP. Efforts in that direction were under study. In addition, the acceleration of VNAF manpower spaces, as proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the RVNAF force structure review,[14] would improve helicopter maintenance, ultimately augmenting the VNAF interdiction potential.

14. See above, pp. 305-307.

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also anticipated that the continued improvement of the 37 Ranger Border Defense Battalions should increase RVNAF effectiveness in controlling enemy infiltration along either side of the RVN borders. Further, the approved CRIMP would supply the VNN with a means of preventing significant enemy infiltration by sea. Finally, they pointed out that the RVNAF already possessed a special cross-border capability targeted exclusively against activities in Laos and Cambodia. Although these operations were directed primarily to intelligence collection, they did, in fact, represent a limited interdiction asset.

(~~TS~~) For all these reasons, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not convinced that further efforts to give the RVNAF additional interdiction capability were warranted at that time. Though they did not recommend against further efforts in this regard, they did request that major changes in the CRIMP await further review of the RVNAF force structure and assessments of projected US redeployments as well as the results of the current (1970-1971) dry season campaign.[15]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 April 1971 provided the Secretary of Defense further comments on the RVNAF improvement and modernization program based on an additional review by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC of the South Vietnamese performance in the recent cross-border operations and the predicted impact of the US redeployment directed by the President on 7 April 1971.[16] The Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated "no significant adverse effects" on the RVNAF improvement and modernization program at that time from either the cross-border operations or the accelerated US redeployments.

15. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-182-71 to SecDef, 19 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/715-1, 7 Apr 71, JMF 911/309 (19 Feb 71).
16. See Chapter 3, p. 147.

But continuation of the current US withdrawal rate beyond 30 November 1971, they believed, could "impact adversely on the program." The RVNAF force structure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Mr. Laird, was designed to provide a "balanced mix of forces with increased firepower, tactical mobility, and logistical support capabilities," and it was important to avoid disruptive changes and to retain a degree of stability. Therefore they opposed any drastic force structure changes or additions of unprogrammed new and sophisticated equipment that could impede the success currently enjoyed in RVNAF training, logistical, and maintenance programs. Moreover, they did not consider that either the South Vietnamese manpower or economic base could support an increase in the RVNAF force level above 1.1 million men under present conditions. In conclusion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended early approval of the proposals for the FY 1972-1973 RVNAF force structure that they had submitted on 19 April 1971 together with provision of additional FY 1972 funds and procurement authority.[17]

(~~TS~~) After reviewing the various JCS submissions, the Secretary of Defense on 3 June 1971 made his decision on the RVNAF structure that the United States would support in the forthcoming fiscal year. He approved both the force structure modifications for FY 1972 within the 1.1 million-man ceiling and the acceleration to achieve that ceiling by the end of FY 1972 as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 19 April 1971. Force structure modifications for FY 1973 were approved for planning. The Secretary of Defense did not, however, provide any additional funds for RVNAF

17. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-192-71 to SecDef, 23 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/735-1, 21 Apr 71, JMF 911/535 (8 Apr 71).

improvement and modernization. The additional $88.585 million for FY 1972, as estimated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would have to be accommodated within the resources available to the military departments. Secretary Laird did authorize COMUSMACV to continue to make field refinements to the RVNAF tables of organization and equipment so long as personnel and equipment changes did not exceed approved ceilings.[18]

A Presidential Decision on RVNAF Improvement

(~~TS~~) While the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense were resolving the questions of the RVNAF structure during the spring of 1971, the National Security Council was conducting an extensive Vietnam assessment that included an examination of the RVNAF.[19] Among a number of preliminary studies used in the review was an appraisal by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) of the RVNAF improvement and modernization program submitted to the Senior Review Group on 19 May 1971. This appraisal was, in fact, the Secretary of Defense response to the President's 1 April request[20] for a detailed analysis of future plans for the RVNAF, and the day before submission to the Senior Review Group, the Secretary of Defense had sent the same appraisal to the President together with proposals for adjustment of the FY 1972 and 1973 RVNAF force structure as proposed

18. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/714-4, 4 Jun 71, JMF 911/535 (30 Jan 71).
19 The NSC assessment is treated in Chapter 2, pp. 71-85.
20. See above, pp. 303-304.

by COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff and concurred in by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[21]

(TS) The Assistant Secretary concluded that the improvement and modernization program had given the RVNAF a potential ability to cope with the VC/NVA threat as then projected. Whether the South Vietnamese could realize that potential depended on their "national will, leadership, and morale." Moreover, some minor adjustments would be needed in the equipment provided under current plans. RVNAF interdiction systems and techniques did exist but needed continued improvement and added impetus. Moreover, the "manpower and economic impact resulting from the size of the RVNAF" made the ultimate reduction of the force structure essential.

(TS) One problem raised by the Assistant Secretary was the possibility of an unfavorable ratio of South Vietnamese to enemy main force units in Military Regions 1 and 2 during FY 1972 if US redeployments continued. In the "aggregate," he pointed out, South Vietnamese forces outnumbered the enemy significantly, but assuming a US force of 50,000 and the maximum estimate of VC/NVA strength and operations, there could be deficit of 44 RVNAF battalions in Military Region 1 and a surplus of only 8 in Military Region 2. Clearly some decision would be required to give additional defensive capability in the two northern Military Regions.[22]

(TS) After a lengthy review, as described in Chapter 2, the Senior Review Group concluded that the

21. (TS-GP 3) Memo, ASD(ISA) to Dr. Kissinger, USec State, DCI, and CJCS, 19 May 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/739-5, 27 May 71, JMF 911 (15 Apr 71) sec 1.

22. Ibid.

threat confronting the RVNAF in South Vietnam was serious and that additional measures were urgently required to strengthen the South Vietnamese forces. Consequently, the Group presented the President three alternatives for RVNAF improvement: (1) qualitative improvement in the RVNAF and temporary commitment of RVNAF general reserve forces from Military Region 3 to Military Regions 1 and 2; (2) improvements as in the first alternative, but with permanent allotment of increased forces in Military Regions 1 and 2 within the current 1.1 million-man RVNAF ceiling by either moving forces from the other regions or inactivating units in other areas to allow increased authorization in the northern regions; (3) expansion of the RVNAF to a 1.2 million-man ceiling and the creation of an additional two-division force.[23]

(TS) After reviewing the Vietnam assessment, the President made two decisions to strengthen the RVNAF and improve the situation in the northern regions of South Vietnam. On 23 June 1971, he decided that the United States would support the continued presence of two ROK divisions in South Vietnam throughout 1972 thereby allowing the RVNAF more flexibility in force dispositions.[24] Then on 3 July 1971, he approved US support for the RVNAF in accordance with the second alternative proposed by the Senior Review Group. He directed the Department of Defense and the US Mission in Saigon: to institute training and promotion programs to improve RVNAF leadership and morale as well as programs for combat pay for units in isolated areas; to

23. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Dr. Kissinger, USecState, DCI, and CJCS, 18 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/739-19, 21 Jun 71, same file, sec 4.

24. For resolution of Republic of Korea force levels in South Vietnam, see Chapter 3, pp. 168-174.

increase manning levels in RVNAF combat and other key units to 90 percent; and to strengthen the RVNAF by adding a division in Military Region 1 and a division headquarters with appropriate support in Military Region 2 (being careful not to lower security in the other MRs). Should the Government of Vietnam request US support for additions to the 1.1 million RVNAF ceiling in FY 1972, and should the US Mission judge that the alternative of adding RVNAF forces by removing or demobilizing units in Military Regions 3 and 4 involved excessive risks, the United States would be willing, the President said, to consider an increase in the ceiling. But US support would be contingent upon demonstration that the increase would not jeopardize the attainment of the manning level of 90 percent in combat and other key units. This decision of the President on 3 July, in effect, confirmed the Secretary of Defense's earlier action on the FY 1972 RVNAF structure. No strength increases beyond the 1.1 million-man ceiling were approved nor were any additional FY 1972 funds provided for the improvement and modernization program.[25]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised General Abrams of the President's decision on 8 July 1971, but an actual implementing directive was delayed pending the return of the Secretary of Defense from a trip to the Far East. In view of the many programs then under way for improving the RVNAF, the Director of the Joint Staff believed that only minimum guidance need be given the field commanders, but the Secretary of Defense did not agree. After his return to Washington, Secretary Laird advised the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

25. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 113, 23 Jun 71; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 118, 3 Jul 71; JMF 001 (CY 1971) NSDMs.

on 20 July 1971 that, while he agreed that the President's decisions were "consistent with the numerous programs already underway," he believed more would have to be done to achieve the full potential of the RVNAF. The success or failure of the Vietnamization program, he said, and as he had repeatedly stressed, would ultimately rest on the "will, desire, and initiative" of the South Vietnamese themselves.[26]

(TS) Secretary Laird was concerned, however, at the apparent inability of the RVNAF to achieve program objectives. He had earlier, on 23 June 1971, raised with the Joint Chiefs of Staff the continuing leadership problem in the RVNAF and asked about additional measures in this area. He remained convinced that there was "still a long way to go" in improving the performance and effectiveness of the RVNAF leadership. He found it hard to reconcile the generally favorable reports given him on RVNAF training in light of the operational failures such as air-ground and fire control inadequacies during the LAMSON 719 and Snuol operations, deficiencies of the VNN MARKET TIME forces, and the inability or unwillingness of the VNAF to fly at night. He also commented on the inefficient personnel management that allowed RVN country-wide average combat unit strength to "drift" at under 80 percent while the overall RVNAF strength stood at nearly authorized levels. It was essential to the success of Vietnamization, the Secretary said, for the full potential of the RVNAF force structure to be attained. He requested that COMUSMACV review

26, (TS) Msg, JCS 4739 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 8 Jul 71. (TS) DJSM-1298-71 to ASD(ISA), 15 Jul 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Jul 71; Atts to JCS 2472/769, 21 Jul 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

current programs and report his findings and recommendations for measures to implement the President's recent decisions.[27]

(C) At JCS direction, COMUSMACV conducted the necessary review, and on the basis of the commander's findings, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded two reports to the Secretary of Defense on 17 August 1971, one dealing with RVNAF leadership and a second on programs to implement the Presidential decisions on RVNAF improvement. In the former, the Joint Chiefs of Staff outlined the status of efforts to enhance RVNAF leadership, including: identification and elimination of weak leaders; the current battlefield promotion system designed to recognize and accelerate advancement of promising leaders; and an improved leadership evaluation system. It was the JCS judgment that, despite the continuing expansion of the South Vietnamese forces and their increased responsibility for combat operations, RVNAF leadership was improving both quantitatively and qualitatively. Nevertheless, continued improvement was required, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the ongoing programs, with emphasis on rapid promotion of proven leaders, removal of ineffective commanders, and improved morale and training, were appropriate and adequate.

(C) With regard to implementation of the President's decisions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that the Joint General Staff had actions underway to improve the distribution of manpower (allotting a higher proportion of men to combat units) as well as

27. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/769, 21 Jul 71; (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 23 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/769-1, 13 Aug 71; JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

efforts to improve RVNAF morale and to lower desertions. These efforts included a pay increase for military personnel financed through economic assistance from the US Agency for International Development. In addition, COMUSMACV and the US Embassy in Saigon were attempting to induce stronger GVN enforcement of the South Vietnamese desertion law in an effort to stem what accounted for the "largest single manpower loss to the RVNAF." To strengthen the RVNAF in the northern Military Regions, the Joint General Staff was working on a plan to deploy an additional "division-sized force" to Military Region 1. In addition, a series of other measures were under consideration to strengthen forces there and in Military Region 2, including provision of additional artillery units in both regions, a medium tank battalion for Military Region 1, additional armored cavalry squadrons in Military Region 2, and strengthened VNAF and VNN forces in both regions.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also reviewed for the Secretary of Defense current RVNAF training efforts. For the ARVN, the JGS Central Training Command in April 1971 had taken action to standardize training, with specified yearly training quotas and objectives. In addition, the ARVN refresher training program attempted to train all ground forces (ARVN, Regional, and Popular Force) units, battalion size and below, once every three years. Although refresher training goals had not been met, added emphasis and resources were being devoted to this effort. The recent RVNAF cross-border operations into Laos and Cambodia had identified deficiencies in operational capabilities, largely attributable to the inability of regimental, division, and corps operations centers to "orchestrate" large combat actions effectively. Staff command post exercises and war games were being conducted to solve

this problem. Unit training was being conducted in the VNAF to improve combat effectiveness and correct the inability or unwillingness to fly at night. Fighter and helicopter pilots were receiving additional night flying training and the VNAF training center was being expanded. The Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned, however, that there was a more basic problem, namely, that the RVNAF simply had not had, and was only beginning to develop, the necessary integrated air-ground capability to identify targets properly and then to conduct tactical air strikes at night. For the VNN, the GVN was carrying out programs to increase unit training, enhance combat effectiveness, and overcome deficiencies in the logistic system and MARKET TIME operations.

(C) All these programs, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, would be reviewed and changed continuously as the RVNAF demonstrated the ability to absorb new responsibilities. In all instances, the programs would be carefully examined with the objective of achieving the results desired by the President.[28]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense informed Admiral Moorer on 4 September 1971 that he had relayed the JCS reports on RVNAF improvement to the President. Mr. Laird believed that, in general, the plans and actions underway by COMUSMACV had achieved commendable progress. But he expressed concern over the lack of clearly assigned priorities and target dates. On the basis of his review, the Secretary listed the following areas that required further action: strengthening of forces in Military Regions 1 and 2, particularly the

28. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-379-71 to SecDef, 17 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/769-2, 13 Aug 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

provision of an additional division in Military Region 1; reform of RVNAF personnel practices to assure a 90 percent manning level; and renewed attack on leadership and morale problems. Since the imminent redeployment of more US troops would impose further limitations on COMUSMACV's capabilities, Secretary Laird urged that actions be carefully chosen to achieve the greatest impact. He wanted a report on all these matters by 15 October.[29]

(TS) Planning and actions now proceeded to strengthen the RVNAF in Military Regions 1 and 2 as directed by the President and the Secretary of Defense. In September 1971, COMUSMACV concurred in a JGS proposal to activate a new ARVN infantry division in Military Region 1 using a nucleus of units already operational in the area. Subsequently, the Joint General Staff activated the 3d Infantry Division on 21 October 1971. The new division would be fully deployed by April 1972; until that time, elements of the RVN Marine Corps division would be moved to Military Region 1 to provide additional combat strength while the 3d Infantry Division received unit training. In addition, the Joint General Staff ordered the movement of three ARVN artillery battalions and a newly activated M-48A3 tank battalion into Military Region 1 and an armored cavalry squadron into Military Region 2. By reducing the size

29. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 4 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/769-3, 7 Sep 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71). The deadline of 15 October was subsequently extended to 15 November by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) when he informed the Chairman on 28 September of a Presidential directive for a follow-up report on RVNAF improvement by 1 December 1971. (TS-GP 1) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 28 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/769-4, 29 Sep 71, same file.

of the Popular Force platoon, the Joint General Staff was able to activate 302 additional platoons in Military Regions 1 and 2. Eight Regional Force battalion headquarters were added there as well. Actions to strengthen the VNAF and VNN in the two northern regions included: the August 1971 transfer of a VNAF AC-46 gunship squadron from Military Region 3 to Military Region 2; turnover of Coastal Surveillance Radar System (ACTOVRAD) sites in Da Nang and Mui Dinh to the VNN with three remaining sites in Military Region 1 scheduled to be transferred to the Vietnamese by February 1972; turnover of the Naval Intermediate Support Base at Thuan An and the Naval Operating Base at Chu Lai, both in Military Region 1, to the VNN; planned relocation of a detachment of F-5A aircraft from Military Region 3 to Military Region 1 in January 1972; and activation of one U4-1H squadron at Nha Trang in November 1971 and another at Da Nang in February 1972 in advance of activation dates of March and June 1972, respectively, previously planned.[30]

(~~TS~~) On 9 November 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a further report on improvement in the South Vietnamese forces that responded both to the Secretary's 4 September request as well as the President's desire for further followup on this subject. They told the Secretary of the measures taken to strengthen the RVNAF in Military Regions 1 and 2, as described above, and added that COMUSMACV had approved a JGS concept of standardized Ranger battalions/groups and the addition of a Ranger component to the RVNAF general reserve. This latter action would provide an additional force capable of

30. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-493-71 to SecDef, 9 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/769-5, 2 Nov 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71).

deployment as needed. Also, recommendations had been made to the RVNAF in the areas of personnel procurement, distribution and management, and control of desertions in the continuing effort to attain a 90 percent manning level in RVNAF combat units. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff admitted that desertions still represented the largest single manpower loss to the RVNAF. Despite a law prescribing punishment for deserters, they said, there was little manifestation of "a unified concern or effort" by the Government of Vietnam to enforce this law, although the Joint General Staff had repeatedly stressed the need for stronger efforts. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the actions already taken, together with JGS proposals then under consideration dealing with conscription, terms of service, military pay, and promotions, indicated "an encouraging assessment of GVN/RVNAF determination to enhance Service morale, as well as insure higher manning levels in the Military Forces." They believed, however, that attempts to enlist the cooperation of GVN civilian officials in the prompt and thorough execution of draft laws must be pursued through Department of State channels while US military advisers continued "to emphasize proper manpower distribution within RVNAF units." In conclusion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured the Secretary of Defense that the goals outlined by the President on 3 July were being pursued as vigorously as US military capabilities allowed.

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff appended to their submission to the Secretary a COMUSMACV assessment of the RVNAF leaders. It was General Abrams' view that the Joint General Staff and the commanders of the four military regions were performing in an eminently

satisfactory manner. Of the thirteen RVNAF division commanders (including the commander of the new 3d Infantry Division), General Abrams considered only one ineffective and one marginal. General Abrams had assured CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the assignment of the best qualified RVNAF officers to responsible positions had and would continue to have his personal attention. He had engaged in a constant dialogue with Vietnamese officials in an attempt to impress upon them the urgency and necessity for the relief of ineffective officers and, in most instances, his recommendatons had been accepted.[31]

(S) During the fall of 1971, the Secretary of Defense inquired about the future of the US advisory effort for the RVNAF. "Obviously," he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "as redeployments continue, the US advisory structure must also be reduced." Should the United States try to achieve esentially the same structure and role as before the 1965 buildup, he asked, and should the rate or reduction in the advisory force be tied to redctions in other US forces? The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 26 November that the advisory effort was being "continually analyzed and refined" as redeployments progressed and they expected the ultimate organization to evolve on the basis of requirements and the degree of self-sufficiency attained by the South Vietnamese forces.[32]

31, (TS-GP 3) JCSM-493-71 to SecDef, 9 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/769-5, 2 Nov 71, JMF 911/535 (23 Jun 71). The COMUSMACV assessment of RVNAF leaders is contained in (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 090944Z Oct 71, JCS IN 98143, same file.

32. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Sep 71, Att to JCS 2472/781, 27 Sep 71; (S-GP 3) JCSM-514-71 to SecDef, 26 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/781-1, 15 Nov 71; JMF 911/145 (24 Sep 71).

(S) Despite all the US effort during 1971 to improve the South Vietnamese forces, the actions to enhance RVNAF morale and increase the manning levels of combat units did not prove successful. Overall ARVN strength declined during the last six months of the year and the ARVN was 46,000 personnel short of the planned figure at the end of 1971. In addition, conscription for the year fell 47 percent short of the 66,900-man goal. Consequently, combat infantry battalions had only 65 percent of authorized strength on 30 November 1971 while all other organic division units had between 96 and 121 percent. South Vietnamese conscripts did increase appreciably during December 1971 and ARVN strength rose by 5,856 to 407,963, but this increase would not be reflected in infantry battalions until February 1972 when the conscript training cycle was completed. Nor was there any major decrease in the high number of RVNAF desertions in 1971. A slight downward trend did occur in the last half of the year, but the overall total for 1971 showed an 18,528 increase over the previous year. The ARVN strength by month during 1971 was as follows:

January	416,609	July	412,549
February	411,958	August	405,745
March	414,069	September	404,704
April	412,035	October	401,526
May	412,705	November	402,107
June	411,693	December	407,963[33]

(S) During the last six months of 1971 (the first half of FY 1972), COMUSMACV approved adjustments in the

33. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, pp. VIII-7 - VIII-9, VIII-33.

RVNAF force structure through tradeoffs within the approved 1.1 million space ceiling. In making those decisions, he was acting within the discretionary authority granted him by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[34] By the end of 1971, COMUSMACV had sanctioned 9,413 new spaces for the ARVN: 7,983 for the activation of the new 3d Infantry Division; 894 for the new 20th Tank Squadron (M-48A3); 402 for reorganization and standardization of ranger battalions; and 134 for other miscellaneous units. Against the new spaces, COMUSMACV had approved the reduction of 4,665 elsewhere in the ARVN, including disestablishment of the following units: an electronic combat detachment, a ranger border defense battalion, 13 highland scout companies, 17 highland intelligence platoons, 10 military intelligence detachments for allied units, and 2 military police battalion headquarters. Other spaces were obtained through reduction of interpreter-translator, communications, and ARVN pipeline personnel and by reorganization of the Inspector General system and the Medical Branch. Since a remaining net increase of 4,748 new spaces still had to be accommodated within the 1.1 million RVNAF ceiling, COMUSMACV also

34. On 15 August 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had authorized COMUSMACV to make field refinements to manpower space ceilings of individual RVNAF components up to 5 percent so long as the total RVNAF strength was not exceeded and new units were not created without prior JCS approval. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7495 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 15 Aug 70. On 29 March 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized COMUSMACV to create additional RVNAF units within the approved force structure without prior JCS approval provided individual component strength ceilings did not exceed 5 percent of the field adjustments authorized by COMUSMACV, the total RVNAF strength ceiling was not exceeded, Service approval was obtained for additional equipment, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were informed of the changes. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7422 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 29 Mar 71.

approved reductions in the Regional and Popular Forces, totaling 6,970 spaces in FY 1972, not only meeting the requirement for the 4,748 spaces for the ARVN but also providing 84 new spaces for the Regional Forces and 2,138 for the VNAF.

(S) For the VNAF, COMUSMACV approved 249 spaces for the conversion of an AC-47 gunship squadron to AC-119K; 1,770 spaces for use in acquisition of Phu Cat Air Base, and 368 spaces for miscellaneous purposes for a total of 2,387. Those spaces were accounted for by the 2,138 tradeoff from the Regional and Popular Forces as well as a tradeoff of 249 spaces within the VNAF pipeline strength.

(S) COMUSMACV also approved 431 new spaces for the VNN, comprising: 308 for two Coast Guard high-endurance cutters (WHEC); 99 for one repair, berthing, messing barge (YRBM); and 24 for three landing craft mechanized (LCM-8). Against those new spaces, COMUSMACV approved a tradeoff of 92 spaces from two coastal minesweepers, 197 spaces from one river transportation escort group, 80 spaces from miscellaneous craft, and 62 spaces from 16 Viper patrol craft.[35]

(C) By the end of 1971, the RVNAF had reached an actual strength of 1,046,254 against the authorized ceiling of 1.1 million. This total comprised 407,963 ARVN, 42,267 VNN, 49,475 VNAF, 14,312 VNMC, 282,680 Regional Forces, and 248,557 Popular Forces.[36]

35. (~~TS~~ GP 4) JCSM-75-72 to SecDef, 23 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2472/796-1, 18 Feb 72, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).

36. (~~S-NOFORN~~-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. VIII-7, VIII-15, VIII-18, VIII-21, and VIII-22.

Improving the RVNAF Interdiction Capability

(S) Even though the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed in the spring of 1971 that improvement of the South Vietnamese armed forces was progressing as rapidly as possible, the Secrtary of Defense and his Deputy, Mr. David Packard, sought some new ways to improve the RVNAF interdiction capability. While it was true, as Mr. Packard told the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Director of the Defense Special Projects Group on 10 May 1971, that the "highly sophisticated US aerial bombardment capability" could not be duplicated in the VNAF, it was equally apparent that the US air effort could not continue indefinitely. More would have to be done, he believed, to improve the indigenous capabilities of the RVNAF with "reasonably unsophisticated systems and within reasonable manpower and dollar limitations." With that end in mind, he directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Director of the Defense Special Projects Group to assess five projects as possible means of increasing the RVNAF interdiction capacity: (1) addition of the CBU-55 (a cluster bomblet munition) weapons system to the VNAF inventory; (2) provision of a mini-gunship fleet to the RVNAF to replace the US AC-119/AC-130/B-57G aircraft in interdiction operations; (3) replacement of the IGLOO WHITE sensor system with a strategic readout system to permit the RVNAF to measure infiltration into South Vietnam and northern Cambodia; (4) provision of improved equipment for support of raiding parties targeted against the Laotian infiltration system (both personnel and materiel); (5) appraisal of the RVNAF need for additional border surveillance equipment, including sensors, readout equipment, and

radars, to increase the capability to monitor infiltration across the South Vietnam border.[37]

(TS) A week later, on 17 May 1971, Secretary Laird informed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that greater emphasis would have to be placed on imaginative tactics, techniques, and technology to enhance further the RVNAF interdiction capability. In addition to the studies already assigned to the Military Departments and the Defense Special Projects Group, the Secretary wanted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess three proposals: RVNAF targeting of the personnel infiltration by either ground or air operations employing currently planned force levels (using harrassment, terror, and other unconventional warfare tactics); conduct of operations in exploitation of intelligence of the personnel and materiel infiltration systems; and integration of all RVNAF border surveillance and cross-border reconnaissance capabilities into a single command.[38]

(TS) After reviewing these concepts and proposals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 June 1971 advised the Secretary of Defense that it would be feasible and desirable to increase emphasis on targeting the personnel infiltration system. While total interdiction was not possible, harassing operations would impede infiltration and cause the enemy to commit greatly disproportionate forces to this effort. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the RVNAF capability could be improved by "establishing all aspects of interdiction as high-priority missions"; by employing

37. (TS-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to Secys of MilDepts, Dir DSPG, 10 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/747, 11 May 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 1.

38. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 17 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/751, 18 May 71, JMF 911/535 (17 May 71).

the RVNAF Strategic Technical Directorate in the primary task of unconventional warfare and special operations in North Vietnam and enemy-controlled areas of Laos and Cambodia; by developing a strong centralized planning and coordination element under the Joint General Staff; and by expanding the use of psychological warfare, small unit ambushes, mines, and booby traps along personnel infiltration routes. Although complete reconnaissance coverage of the Ho Chi Minh trail complex was not possible, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, targeting of personnel routes could be improved through integration of sensor reports and reconnaissance sightings. In order to improve cross-border operations, however, they advised the Secretary that significant changes would be needed in current rules of engagement to relax restrictions on boundaries, size of forces, and US adviser participation and to remove constraints on use of riot control agents and defoliants by the RVNAF. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not consider formation of a force dedicated exclusively to infiltration interdiction to be an efficient application of planned RVNAF resources, nor did they believe that the creation of a single RVNAF command for cross-border and border surveillance forces with an integral exploitation capability was desirable.[39]

(C) A matter of further concern to the Secretary of Defense was the indication of a possible decline in effectiveness in combating sea infiltration into South Vietnam as the Vietnamese Navy took over the MARKET TIME operations. He raised this matter with Admiral Moorer on 18 May 1971 and received assurances that

39. (~~TS~~ GP 1) JCSM-274-71 to SecDef, 15 Jun 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/751-1, 9 Jun 71, JMF 911/535 (17 May 71).

COMNAVFORV was doing everything possible within available resources to remedy this situation. The Chairman cautioned the Secretary, however, not to expect the same level of effectiveness from the South Vietnamese operation as had been attained by the combined US air and surface forces.[40]

(S) Meantime, during June 1971, the studies that the Deputy Secretary of Defense had requested on improvement of the RVNAF interdiction capability were completed. The Director of the Defense Special Projects Group submitted to Mr. Packard on 9 June a review of the feasibility of developing a simplified strategic readout system to allow the RVNAF to measure infiltration into South Vietnam and northern Cambodia. The next day, 10 June, the Secretary of the Air Force submitted a study on the CBU-55 munition; a mini-gunship concept, given the name CREDIBLE CHASE, employing short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft to increase RVNAF interdiction and tactical mobility capabilities; and a feasiblity study of providing improved equipment to the RVNAF to permit expanded use of small airborne raiding parties. And the Secretary of the Army furnished an assessment of the need for more border surveillance equipment on 28 June 1971.[41]

40. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 May 71; (S-GP 4) CM-980-71 to SecDef, 14 Jun 71; Atts to JCS 2472/759, 21 Jun 71, JMF 911/329 (18 May 71). See Chapter 5, pp. 240-243, for coverage of MARKET TIME operations in 1971.

41. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dir DSPG to DepSecDef, 9 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-1, 11 Jun 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg SecAF to SecDef, 10 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-2, 14 Jun 71, same file; sec 2. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecArmy to DepSecDef, 28 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-3, 30 Jun 71, same file, sec 3.

(~~TS~~) After reviewing these studies and the JCS submission of 15 June on improvement of RVNAF interdiction, the Secretary of Defense on 2 July 1971 expressed satisfaction that "realistic RVNAF interdiction capabilities consistent with the eventual withdrawal of US forces from SEA" were being identified. He wanted further refinement of these plans and testing of selected equipment and concepts identified in the recent studies. He requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review the Military Departments and Defense Special Projects Group papers and then prepare a combined interdiction plan for FY 1972 to reflect increasing RVNAF participation and responsibility for the entire effort. Specifically, the plan was to include: strengthening of the Vietnamese border surveillance capability; providing the RVNAF with some "primitive" strategic readout system; coordination of selected allied air and ground raids against the enemy's personnel and materiel systems "in the lower threat areas of Laos"; integration of a refined COMMANDO HUNT effort concentrated in the "higher threat areas of Laos"; integration of the system for uncovering enemy material caches through a rewards and incentives program; and improvement of the MARKET TIME performance by continuing the US air surveillance and improving RVNAF reaction capability.

(~~TS~~) In preparing the plan, the Secretary of Defense directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assume that US redeployments and air activity levels would continue "as at present or accelerate" and that essential elements of current operating authorities for the use of US personnel outside of South Vietnam and employment of US air in North Vietnam would remain unchanged. Mr. Laird also wanted aggressive

pursuit of corrective measures for MARKET TIME operations; further study of "dedicated" versus "decentralized" reaction forces for interdiction; further development of a JCS concept for a "strong centralized planning and coordination element" under the Joint General Staff to manage the interdiction campaign; and continued effort to develop a better intelligence base to assist the South Vietnamese in interdiction operations.

(~~TS~~) Since the time for planning before the onset of the next dry season was short, Secretary Laird suggested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff might form a special ad hoc task force at CINCPAC headquarters to expedite the task. He also directed the Department of the Air Force, with the assistance of the Army and the Defense Special Projects Group, to design a combat test to take place during the next dry season of selected equipment and concepts that might allow the RVNAF to conduct their own counterinfiltration operations in the future. He was willing, he said, to assist in obtaining Congressional approval for procurement of utility STOL aircraft for evaluation.

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense impressed on the Joint Chiefs of Staff the importance he attached to this effort:

> I need not remind you that the fate of our national Vietnamization policy rests in part on the evolution of a credible RVNAF interdiction capability at the earliest possible time. If the suggestions proposed and studied by the Services do not represent realistic and useful operational solutions, then I believe it to be incumbent on the JCS to evolve acceptable alternatives. It should be made clear to the Joint

General Staff that the interdiction campaign will eventually become their total responsibility. Our process of withdrawal and disengagement is irreversible--including our own expensive and sophisticated air interdiction campaign over Laos.[42]

(TS) To implement the Secretary of Defense's directive, the Director of the Joint Staff on 12 July 1971 established an ad hoc group under the chairmanship of the Operations Directorate (J-3) of the Joint Staff with a membership from the other appropriate Joint Staff directorates as well as from the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Defense Special Projects Group. Subsequently, on 26 July 1971, CINCPAC convened a task force in Saigon to study specific programs and consolidate them into a single interdiction campaign plan for FY 1972. This group included representatives from CINCPAC's staff, his Service components, MACV, the 7th Air Force, and a small contingent from Washington consisting of officers from the Joint Staff, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Special Projects Group.[43]

(TS) At a meeting of the CINCPAC group on 29 July 1971, General Abrams expressed concern over the Secretary of Defense's decisions for development of an RVNAF interdiction capability. He urged a careful review of the "total" problem facing the RVNAF and a weighing of the interdiction capability in light of the resources available to the RVNAF before the United States committed itself to such an effort.

42. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, and Dir DSPG, 2 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/727-4, 9 Jul 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3.

43. (TS-GP 1) DJSM-1260-71 to DIA et al., 12 Jul 71, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/747-4, 14 Jul 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3. (TS-GP 1) DJSM 1417-71 to CJCS, 3 Aug 71, same file, sec 4.

Since South Vietnamese resources were extremely limited, addition of anything further to the CRIMP would require the subtraction of something else. But, despite these reservations, General Abrams agreed that the United States should test everything that offered any chance of success. He believed that 1972 and 1973 would be "extremely critical years" and that the United States must continue substantial tactical air and B-52 support of the RVNAF during that period. Without this US air umbrella, the enemy would be "quick to take advantage," General Abrams said, and the United States could lose all that it had invested in Southeast Asia to date.[44]

(~~TS~~) The CINCPAC task force proceeded with its work and identified a number of ways to improve allied interdiction capability both in FY 1972 and in future years. Enemy infiltration was not just a problem for the Government of Vietnam but one for Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand as well. The task force developed OPLAN ISLAND TREE for combined interdiction operations in Southeast Asia for FY 1972. The plan called for a coordinated air, naval, and ground interdiction effort against the entire enemy infiltration system by the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, with US support. This effort was tailored toward RVNAF assumption of a major portion of the responsibility for interdiction operations in the short term and assumption of the primary role with minimal US involvement in succeeding campaigns. Operations called for in the ISLAND TREE plan were to

44. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo for Record, BG John W. Pauly, USAF, DepDir for Ops (J-3) 29 Jul 71, Att to DJSM-1417-71 to CJCS, 3 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4.

be coordinated through the Combined Interdiction Coordinating Committee (CICC), recently established by COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff. ISLAND TREE would also serve as the basis for an interdiction annex to the US/RVN Combined Campaign Plan then being drafted. CINCPAC forwarded OPLAN ISLAND TREE to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 5 August 1971 together with a separate "Compendium of Additional ISLAND TREE Issues."[45]

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff used the ISLAND TREE OPLAN as the basis for the US/RVNAF Combined Interdiction Plan, which they submitted to the Secretary of Defense on 23 August 1971. This document, they told the Secretary, was based on the "fundamental strategy" of establishing GVN self-sufficiency with US assistance for interdiction action. It recognized the need for a coordinated effort by Lao, Cambodian and Thai forces to disrupt the enemy infiltration network beyond the borders of South Vietnam. All operations contributing to interdiction, including land, sea, riverine, psychological and special, would be coordinated into a single attempt to impede the flow of enemy personnel and supplies into South Vietnam. This plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured the Secretary, included all feasible possibilities for improving interdiction in Southeast Asia.

(~~TS~~) Under the Combined Interdiction Plan, ground actions would include reconnaissance, deception,

45. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 5 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-6, 10 Aug 71; (~~TS~~-GP 3) J-3 Briefing Sheet for CJCS, "JCS 2472/747-7--RVN Armed Forces Interdiction Alternatives (U)," 19 Aug 71; JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CINCPAC OPLAN ISLAND TREE, 5 Aug 71, JMF 346 (5 Aug 71) sec 1A.

diversion, and exploitation operations within available resources. Regular RVNAF units would launch larger-scale, less-frequent attacks against lucrative targets in Laos and Cambodia to disrupt the enemy infiltration system. Allied air forces would interdict enemy lines of communication in the COMMANDO HUNT area, including BARREL ROLL, STEEL TIGER, and FREEDOM DEAL operations in Laos and Cambodia. This effort would be principally a US one with some Lao, Thai, and Cambodian support, but it would not be possible to integrate this friendly assistance fully into the COMMANDO HUNT program. In addition, VNAF sorties within the limits of resources would be directed against interdiction targets in Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam with COMUSMACV serving as the coordinating agency for the total air effort against the enemy infiltration system. The MARKET TIME patrol would continue along the South Vietnamese and Cambodian coasts with emphasis on improved effectiveness, and riverine operations would be conducted against enemy infiltration along inland waterways and coastal estuaries. In addition, the Combined Interdiction Plan provided for: employment of reconnaissance teams along known or suspected infiltration routes; psychological operations to demoralize the enemy while enhancing the morale of friendly forces; conduct of special operations directed by the RVNAF Strategic Technical Directorate with complete responsibility for special interdiction operations assumed by the South Vietnamese in June 1973; and an extensive rewards and incentives system to stimulate the flow of information on all aspects of the enemy infiltration system. Finally, the plan would improve equipment for border ranger battalions and supply improved sensor surveillance of border regions by ARVN divisional forces.

(~~TS~~) The Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out to the Secretary of Defense that, because of the limited time remaining before the onset of the 1971-1972 dry season, only "a minor increase" in RVNAF participation in the FY 1972 interdiction operations was possible and that the US air campaign, COMMANDO HUNT VII, would constitute the largest single element of the Combined Interdiction plan for FY 1972. Moreover, continuing US redeployments and the limited capability of the RVNAF to assume the US air role would reduce the total interdiction effort in FY 1972 and subsequent years. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did believe, however, that centralized planning and coordination of the overall effort at the JGS level would enhance the "viability and effectiveness" of the future operations, and to that end, COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff had established the Combined Interdiction Coordination Committee. As US redeployments proceeded, the South Vietnamese would assume complete responsibility for the Committee with only US advisory assistance.[46]

(S) Subsequently, on 30 August 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC that they did not plan a formal review of his ISLAND TREE OPLAN. They had used it as the basis for the Combined Interdiction Plan for FY 1972, which they had aproved and forwarded to the Secretary of Defense. They told the field commander that he should use this latter document as a "guideline" for completing interdiction planning for FY 1972 and in developing an appropriate annex for the 1972 Combined Campaign Plan. The Joint Chiefs of

46. (~~TS~~-GP 1) JCSM-384-71 to SecDef, 23 Aug 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/747-7, 18 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4.

Staff authorized and encouraged CINCPAC to implement any innovations in this area that were possible within his resources and authority.[47]

(TS) On 23 August 1971, the same day that the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense the Combined Interdiction plan, they also gave him their comments on the five Service and Defense Special Projects Group studies on improvements to RVNAF interdiction capabilities. Generally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found the Revised Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program commensurate with the South Vietnamese capability to assume increasing responsibility for the total war effort, and they again warned against placing "unmanageable burdens" on the RVNAF in the form of new weapons or programs. Few additinal improvements for the RVNAF were possible within the current program, they said, and experience had shown that South Vietnamese human, technological, and economic resources were already stretched "extremely thin." With regard to the specific studies, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that use of the CBU-55 munition was feasible and should be added to the VNAF inventory. The possibility of improved equipment for relay of sensor signals, as already planned for inclusion in the CRIMP, was a promising development to enhance border surveillance. They favored combat evaluation of both the mini-gunship concept (CREDIBLE CHASE) and improved equipment for airborne raiding parties. Finally, they found the strategic readout system "unrealistic in terms of required resources and cost," but urged a "limited evaluation" of it along with CREDIBLE CHASE. The studies presented other ideas, the Joint Chiefs of

47. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4586 to CINCPAC, 30 Aug 71.

Staff concluded, that warranted testing, but regardless of the merits, those concepts would have to be incorporated into interdiction plans on the basis of feasibility and practicability, considering "available money, skills, allocation of resources, and desired results."[48]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense reviewed both the Combined Interdiction Plan and the JCS comments on the Service studies of possible RVNAF interdiction alternatives and informed Admiral Moorer on 8 October 1971 of his encouragement with the increased in RVNAF interdiction capability during the past year. He did not want improvements in RVNAF interdiction capacity tied up in lengthy test cycles. It was imperative, he said, to accelerate the time when the RVNAF could "go it alone." If additional equipment were required to reduce South Vietnamese reliance on US forces, it should be supplied at once. He established the objective of achieving an "optimal RVNAF interdiction capability by the fall of 1972" that could be "self-sustaining with no more than limited US advisory assistance." To accomplish that goal, he directed that the RVNAF assume responsibility for interdiction planning and operations for the 1972-1973 Laotian dry season and that materiel assistance be accelerated to give "all additional feasible capabilities" to the RVNAF during the 1971-1972 season.

(~~TS~~) With respect to the approaching 1971-1972 campaign, the Secretary stated that current operating authorities would continue with reevaluation by 1 November 1971 and with changes considered on a case-by-case basis. For ground interdiction, he set, as

48. (~~TS~~-GP 3) JCSM-369-71 to SecDef, 23 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-5, 4 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3.

a "reasonable starting point," an objective of ten company-size cross-border interdiction operations per month and battalion raids as required. To increase South Vietnamese involvement in air interdiction in FY 1972, he wanted: an objective established for VNAF contribution to COMMANDO HUNT VII in the low-threat area of southern Laos and northeast Cambodia; immediate improvement in VNAF basing for interdiction purposes; and a program for prompt provision of the CBU-55 to the VNAF. Mr. Laird found the plans for MARKET TIME operations for 1972 sound. Further he requested that responsibility for special operations be completely transferred to the RVNAF by 1 July 1972 with "US advisory effort reduced in accordance with overall US redeployment planning." He did not find the Combined Interdiction Campaign Committee a completely adequate mechanism for involoving South Vietnamese, Thais, Cambodians, and Laotians in the overall interdiction effort and directed that better methods for integration and coordination of operations of common concern be developed and instituted during the 1971-1972 dry season.

(TS) Looking toward the future, the Secretary directed that the RVNAF interdiction capability receive "priority attention" in the current review of the RVNAF modernization program. Specifically, he directed that the following changes be considered: additional radar-equipped C-119s, C-47s, and other suitable aircraft to give the VNAF a "limited maritime air patrol capability"; incorporation of the mini-gunship (CREDIBLE CHASE), subject to successful testing of the program, in the FY 1972/1973 CRIMP "either as part of the interdiction operations or as a substitute for those air assets diverted to that mission"; expanded sensor and radar capability for all ground forces; a

senor delivery and readout capability for the VNAF; and provision of AC-119K aircraft, modification of A-37s, and recommendations for any other significant changes to strengthen the RVNAF interdiction capability. He wanted preliminary views on these changes by 15 November and final recommendations by 15 February 1972 so that reprogramming could be initiated. In final guidance, the Secretary stated:

> Every effort must be made to involve the RVNAF to the extreme limits of their capability in all facets of planning, coordination, execution and evaluation of the campaign. Therefore, whenever possible RVNAF resources should be employed and the Vietnamese should plan and control operations.[49]

(C) On 12 November 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported to the Secretary of Defense that the field commanders had been informed of his objectives and guidelines to achieve an optimum RVNAF interdiction capacity. Both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC had the South Vietnamese interdiction efforts under continuing review and had already begun action for improvements. The commanders were concerned, however, that these programs might not be practical without US support

49. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-8, 12 Oct 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 5. To manage implementation of the actions directed by the Secretary, Admiral Moorer requested the Director of the Joint Staff on 14 October 1971 to establish "a high level Joint Staff Steering Group with appropriate Service representatives." Subsequently, the Director decided to use the already existing Joint Vietnamization Coordinating Group, which included both Joint Staff and Service members, to meet this requirement. (S-GP 4) CM-1265-71 to DJS, 14 Oct 71; (S-GP 4) DJSM-1914-71 to CJCS, 16 Oct 71; same file.

and might require "prohibitive trade-offs" in other areas. General Abrams had noted, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary, that the Government of Vietnam must necessarily place primary emphasis on internal security in populated, food-producing, and industrial areas that were vital to its survival. The type and scale of South Vietnamese interdiction operations would depend on the forces available for the various competing requirements and the situation in each military region.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff then outlined for Secretary Laird the actions underway to carry out his directions for enhanced interdiction during the 1971-1972 dry season. They provided specific details on planned land, sea, and air operations as well as efforts and programs to expand the South Vietnamese interdiction capabilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also presented the Secretary their initial views on his suggested changes to the CRIMP to improve further RVNAF capability for the 1972-1973 interdiction campaign. They believed that the development of a VNAF maritime air patrol capability would only degrade other important missions and that action on CREDIBLE CHASE and on a sensor delivery and readout capacity should await the results of scheduled tests. Nor did they favor further sensors or radars for the RVNAF; they found the current sensor program adequate and stated that addition of any more radars would exceed the South Vietnamese support capability. Provision of AC-119K aircraft to the VNAF was planned for late FY 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, and further modification of the A-37 for interdiction operations was being considered. They told the Secretary that, while any one of these proposals might

be implemented without degrading other essential RVNAF functions, adoption of the entire set would require reductions of other vital efforts. The only means the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw for offsetting such reductions would be through the use of additional contractor assistance, but such support would add to "the already significant costs" of the Secretary's proposals.[50]

(C) When the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded this report on interdiction improvement to the Secretary of Defense, Admiral Moorer was away from Washington on a trip to the Western Pacific. Upon his return, he endorsed the JCS report and assured the Secretary of Defense that the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff accorded the highest priority to the Vietnamization of interdiction operations.[51]

(U) The JCS report of 12 November contained only their preliminary views on additional changes to the RVNAF improvement and modernization program and they promised the Secretary of Defense their final recommendations by 15 February 1972 in accordance with his earlier instructions. Consequently, the Secretary of Defense took no further action on RVNAF improvement during the remaining weeks of 1971 except for CREDIBLE CHASE.

CREDIBLE CHASE

(TS) The idea of a mini-gunship capability to augment RVNAF interdiction efforts arose in May 1971 when the Deputy Secretary of Defense asked the Secretary of the Air Force, as described above, to investigate such a possibility. As a consequence, the Air Force developed the CREDIBLE CHASE concept providing

50. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-500-71 to SecDef, 12 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-9, 8 Nov 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 5.

51. (TS-GP 4) CM-1318-71 to SecDef, 18 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-10, 18 Nov 71, same file.

for a large number of "simple, off-the-shelf, light" short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft to be armed and operated in an austere environment. The concept would reorient interdiction efforts from southern Laos to the contiguous border areas of South Vietnam and Cambodia where the STOL aircraft could provide continuous coverage of enemy supply corridors. The Air Force proposed to evaluate a squadron of 30 STOL aircraft in a combat situation in southern Laos during the next dry season, beginning in February 1972.[52]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the CREDIBLE CHASE concept and told the Secretary of Defense on 23 August that the STOL aircraft could have useful application for the RVNAF in several different roles and missions. They did not, however, make any recommendation on CREDIBLE CHASE, preferring to await the results of the planned combat tests. They did point out to the Secretary that the concept would impact heavily on the RVNAF improvement and modernization program, costing a total of approximately $1.7 billion for the first three years.[53]

(S) At the direction of the Secretary of Defense a multi-service task force was established in South Vietnam on 27 October 1971 to conduct the test of the CREDIBLE CHASE concept under combat conditions. A 60-day evaluation would begin about 15 April 1972 and would include armed STOL aircraft, orbiting relay

52. (S-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to SecAF et al., 10 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/747, 11 May 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 1. (TS-GP 1) Memo, Actg SecAF to SecDef, 10 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-2, 14 Jun 71, same file, sec 2.

53. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-369-71 to SecDef, 23 Aug 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-5, 4 Aug 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 3.

aircraft, ground forces, and sensor equipment. A force of 30 STOL aircraft would be divided between two competitive designs--the AU-23A PACEMAKER and the AU-24A STALLION. Following suitable training of both US Air Force and VNAF pilots, a squadron-sized task force would be deployed into a base area along the tri-border area of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to conduct counterinfiltration operations with staging from Pleiku; COMUSMACV would exercise operational control of the test through his Deputy for Air Operations and integrate it into the 1972 interdiction program.[54]

(C) In their 12 November progress report on measures to improve RVNAF interdiction capabilities, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again noted that STOL aircraft might warrant consideration for a variety of missions in South Vietnam. They foresaw the possibility, depending on the results of the combat evaluation, of four to five STOL squadrons for the RVNAF by the end of FY 1973. But to meet that date, they added, action must be taken immediately to begin procurement and funding.[55]

(TS) On 29 November 1971, the Secretary of Defense decided that enough was known about the STOL aircraft and their capabilities to proceed immediately with procurement for the RVNAF. Although the Secretary agreed that final assessment of the use of CREDIBLE CHASE aircraft in the interdiction role must await the results of the impending field test, he did believe these planes could be used in Vietnam for coastal patrol, psychological operations, utility cargo and

54. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. VI-15. As constituted at the end of 1971, the task force consisted of 108 VNAF and 278 US personnel.

55. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-500-71 to SecDef, 12 Nov 71, Encl to JCS 2472/747-9, 8 Nov 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 5.

troop movement, armed reconnaissance, and support of ground force operations. The low cost and the relative ease of maintenance were additional favorable features. Therefore the Secretary established a planning goal of five operational STOL squadrons (32 UE each, with a total of 200 to allow for command support and initial attrition) for the FY 1973 interdiction campaign. He requested JCS confirmation that a military requirement existed and could be met by the STOL as proposed in the CREDIBLE CHASE concept. Since provision of STOL aircraft to the South Vietnamese would contribute to the overall Vietnamization program, Mr. Laird wanted the US Military Departments to share the burden of absorbing the additional costs involved. He also directed coordination with the Joint General Staff to secure the manpower to support the STOL force.[56]

(TS) Admiral Moorer replied to Secretary Laird on 3 December 1971, stating that it was difficult to arrive at a "finite" decision on the military requirements for the STOL in South Vietnam before the conclusion of the CREDIBLE CHASE evaluation. Since the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Ryan, was currently away from Washington, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed to delay their comments on the STOL until they could discuss the matter with their absent colleague. The Secretary agreed to this delay, but emphasized to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that "RVNAF interdiction capabilities must be maximized as soon as possible."[57]

(S) A few days later, on 11 December 1971, the Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied the Secretary their comments

56. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Nov 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-11, 30 Nov 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

57. (TS-GP 1) CM-1359-71 to SecDef, 3 Dec 71, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/747-11, 7 Dec 71; (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Dec 71, Att to JCS 2472/747-13, 7 Dec 71; same file. (Emphasis is the Secretary's).

on the use of STOL aircraft for interdiction purposes in Vietnam. They still refused to endorse such a requirement in the absence of completed combat tests. The STOL was not capable of operations in the threat environment in which the US forces currently operated, they said, although it could satisfy other military requirements in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed the field commanders to begin preliminary planning with the Joint General Staff to support introduction of STOL aircraft should such a decision be made, but they pointed out that a five-squadron force would require about 2,100 additional VNAF spaces. Such an addition, as well as the training and logistics required, they believed, must be carefully weighed against other RVNAF needs. Nor did the Joint Chiefs of Staff favor Service cost sharing for a STOL program. The Services had already been required to take substantial reprogramming actions to meet unexpected costs of the Southeast Asian operations, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended other means of funding for any procurement of STOL aircraft.[58]

(S) President Nixon announced on 13 January 1972 the withdrawal of another 70,000 US troops during the next three months, reducing US strength in South Vietnam to 69,000 by 1 May 1972, and this decision put increased demands on the US forces remaining in Vietnam. Four days later, on 17 January, the Chief of Naval Operations complained to Admiral Moorer that the currently approved plans for accelerated improvement of the RVNAF interdiction capability were taxing South

58. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-547-71 to SecDef, 10 Dec 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/747-12, 1 Dec 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6. Although the JCSM is dated 10 December 1971, it was not finally approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff until 11 December. See (C) Dec On, "JCS 2472/747-12, 'CREDIBLE CHASE Program (U),'" 11 Dec 71, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

Vietnamese resources and causing an "adverse impact" on the overall improvement effort. He relayed and endorsed CINCPACFLT's warning against premature assignment of RVNAF personnel and equipment to the CREDIBLE CHASE program prior to final evaluation. Otherwise serious dilution of VNAF ability to support VNN coastal surveillance, interdiction, and riverine operations might result.[59]

(S) Admiral Moorer acknowledged the CNO concern on 26 January, assuring Admiral Zumwalt that his views would be taken into account. In fact, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a few days previously informed the Secretary of Defense of the impacts of meeting the President's recently announced redeployment schedule, pointing out, among other things, that the CREDIBLE CHASE program could no longer be supported from Pleiku.[60]

(S) Subsequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary of Defense on 5 February 1972 that, in order to meet the new US force level in South Vietnam, it would no longer be possible to conduct the CREDIBLE CHASE evaluation in Southeast Asia. The only feasible alternative, which they recommended, was to do the test at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Mr. Laird accepted this change, reasserting once again the importance he attached to improving the RVNAF interdiction capacity:

59. (TS-GP 4) Memo, CNO to CJCS, 17 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2472/747-14, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

60. (TS-GP 4) CM-1478-72 to CNO, 26 Jan 72, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/747-14, 3 Feb 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-24-72 to SecDef, 19 Jan 72, Encl to JCS 2472/786-6, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).

> I continue to rely on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to determine the most suitable and timely methods to optimize RVNAF interdiction capabilities. Those RVNAF capabilities must be consistent, in turn with the objective of allowing the people of the Republic of Vietnam to determine their future without outside interference.[61]

(~~TS~~) Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff canceled the evaluation of CREDIBLE CHASE in Vietnam, and plans proceeded for the testing of STOL aircraft in the United States with participation of both VNAF air and ground crews. In the meantime, the North Vietnamese launched their major offensive into South Vietnam on 30 March, and the President asked the Secretary of Defense to recommend additional equipment that might be furnished the South Vietnamese to increase their combat capabilities. Included among the Defense proposals, submitted by Deputy Secretary Kenneth Rush to the President on 19 May 1972, was provision to the VNAF of the 30 STOL aircraft that would become excess in June upon completion of the CREDIBLE CHASE evaluation, and the President approved this recommendation the same day.[62]

(~~TS~~) In the end, however, the STOL aircraft were not given to the RVNAF. Following the President's

61. (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-43-72 to SecDef, 5 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2472/747-15, 5 Feb 72; (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 16 Feb 72, Att to JCS 2472/747-17, 17 Feb 72; JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

62. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6026 to CINCPAC, 172109Z Feb 72. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, CSAF to CJCS, "CREDIBLE CHASE Evaluation," 3 Mar 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Pres, 19 May 72, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/818, 22 May 72, JMF 911/495 (19 May 72). (~~TS~~-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 168, 19 May 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) NSDMs.

decision, COMUSMACV questioned the survivability of the STOLs in a high threat environment and estimated that 4,100 additional VNAF personnel would be needed to operate and support these aircraft. Consequently, he recommended against introduction into the VNAF force structure, and the Secretary of Defense on 7 June 1972 halted all actions relating to provision of the STOL to the Republic of Vietnam pending the outcome of the final tests. The US Air Force conducted operational tests and evaluations of both the AU-23A and the AU-24A STOL aircraft in June and July 1972 and found performance of the planes only marginally effective for the missions tested. Therefore the Air Force did not recommend the STOL for an interdiction mission in South Vietnam. Thereafter the VNAF pilots who had participated in the test returned to South Vietnam and the United States gave 14 of the STOLs used in the evaluation to Thailand and 13 to Cambodia, but none to the Republic of Vietnam.[63]

63. (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS et al., 7 Jun 72, Att to JCS 2472/821, 8 Jun 72; (TS) J5SM-1129-72 to Secy, JCS, 27 Dec 72; JMF 911/460 (7 Jun 72). (C) TAC COM, TAC Project 71A-211T, TAWC Project 1142, Final Rpt, "CREDIBLE CHASE/AU-23A (U)," Aug 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 4B.

CHAPTER 7

THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE

The Attack Begins

(C) After several months of increasingly visible preparations, the North Vietnamese launched their offensive into the south on 30 March 1972 in the form of three coordinated attacks.[1] In MR 1, two NVA divisions supported by armor and artillery pushed across the DMZ into Quang Tri Province, and a third enemy division moved eastward from Laos toward Hue in Thua Thien Province. The enemy hoped to eliminate the defending fire support bases (FSB) and occupy the provincial capital Quang Tri City. Two hundred and fifty kilometers to the south of the DMZ in the Central Highlands of MR 2, the North Vietnamese attacked in Kontum Province the following day, 31 March, and on 4 April, a major enemy drive began in Binh Long Province in MR 3 in a threat against Saigon 100 kilometers to the south. In all, six fully equipped divisions entered South Vietnam in these three major thrusts.[2]

(C) In MR 1, the North Vietnamese pressed the attack employing tanks and artillery to overrun South Vietnamese positions, and heavy cloud cover restricted tactical air support available to the defending South Vietnamese troops. By 2 April, six fire support bases just below the DMZ had fallen and two more were lost

1. For indications of enemy preparations for the offensive, see Chapter 5, pp. 279-292.

2. All information on the operational aspects of the North Vietnamese offensive and South Vietnamese counteractions is from (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, Chapters 2 and 3 and Annexes B, J, K, and L, unless otherwise stated.

that day, leaving only three major bases in the northern part of Quang Tri Province in South Vietnamese hands. The North Vietnamese pushed on, threatening Quang Tri City as the South Veitnamese troops continued to fall back. On 4 April, after forcing the abandonment of one of the last remaining South Vietnamese defense points on the north bank of the Cua Viet River, the North Vietnamese paused briefly in their attack to regroup and make further preparations.

(C) The intensity of the enemy attack in MR 2 in the initial days of the offensive did not match the fighting to the north. South Vietnamese forces along Rocket Ridge in eastern Kontum Province as well as two regiments northeast of Dak To were in heavy contact with enemy forces, but the full impact of the offensive would not be felt in MR 2 until the middle of April.

(C) After a preliminary feint in northern Tay Ninh Province, the main enemy drive in MR 3 began on 4 April when elements of two VC divisions with armor support moved from Cambodia into Binh Long Province. The main attack was against the district capital of Loc Ninh on Route 13. Despite a fierce South Vietnamese defense, Loc Ninh fell on 7 April and the enemy pushed on down Route 13 toward Saigon to lay siege to the provincial capital of An Loc--a siege that would last for over two months.

United States Reaction

(U) United States officials, both in South Vietnam and Washington, watched the massive enemy onslaught and the faltering South Vietnamese resistance with growing concern and began immediate action to assist the South Vietnamese. President Nixon and his advisers never

contemplated using US ground combat forces to stem the invasion. Neither political nor military realities permitted consideration of that course and US assistance took the form of materiel assistance, naval gunfire and tactical air support, and air strikes against North Vietnam. Spasmodic and ad hoc at first, these measures soon evolved from mere reaction into organized and coordinated programs culminating in the LINEBACKER air attacks and the POCKET MONEY mining of North Vietnamese waters.

(TS) On 1 April, Admiral Moorer provided the Secretary of Defense three options for air attack of North Vietnam to destroy the enemy's air defenses and disrupt his supply system. These plans would have permitted strikes in North Vietnam up to 18°, 19°, or 20° north, respectively. (In fact, one of these plans, allowing for attack up to 19° north, had been previously provided to the Secretary in February.) No formal action resulted on these options, but the United States did launch air strikes into North Vietnam immediately thereafter. On 2 April, Admiral Moorer authorized tactical air, artillery, and naval gunfire attack on military and logistics targets in North Vietnam to a limit 25 miles above the DMZ as well as B-52 strikes throughout the DMZ until the current emergency was terminated or not later than 1 May 1972. The following day, the target area in North Vietnam was extended to 17°35' north and the area was further enlarged on 4 April to 18° north with provision for protective reaction above that limit as required. These oerations were nicknamed FREEDOM TRAIN. Though closely restricted for the moment, the air attacks

against North Veitnam would be progressively expanded, becoming a full scale bombing campaign in early May.[3]

(~~TS~~) The Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG) reviewed the Vietnam situation on 3 April. In the course of the discussion, Dr. Kissinger asked how long the offenisve would last, and Admiral Moorer replied "a good 20 to 30 days" or perhaps even longer. In further discussions the following day, Admiral Moorer pointed out to the WSAG that the enemy had changed his strategy from protracted to conventional warfare. The fact that North Vietnam had committed "everything--all the mainforce units"--led Admiral Moorer to believe the enemy would try to stay in MR 1.[4]

(~~TS~~) President Nixon left no doubt about his concern with the developments in Vietnam. In a meeting with Admiral Moorer, Deputy Secretary of Defense Rush, and Dr. Kissinger on 3 April, he said that General Abrams should "exercise maximum aggressiveness in the use of air power." The President wanted the fullest possible impact achieved by air attacks, requesting COMUSMACV to give this matter "around-the-clock attention." He asked Admiral Moorer to investigate the feasibility of augmenting both B-52 and tactical air assets and voiced his expectation for "imaginative, aggressive

3. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1693-72 to SecDef, 1 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5821 to CINCPAC, 021702Z Apr 72; JCS 6494 to CINCPAC, 031716Z Apr 72; JCS 7921 to CINCPAC, 042325Z Apr 72; JCS 9013 to CINCPAC, 052250Z Apr 72. (Late on 2 April 1972, Admiral Moorer authorized a 48-hour strike of targets in North Vietnam below 19° north, but the authorization was canceled before any operations were undertaken. See (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 3030 to CINCPAC, 030518Z Apr 72 and JCS 7921 to CINCPAC, 042325Z Apr 72.) SecDef approval of these air attacks may be assumed although it cannot be documented.

4. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 3 and 4 Apr 72, NSC Files.

and continuous attention" to the current crisis "throughout the unified command system." The President also instituted special arrangements to follow the situation. During the offensive all reports from COMUSMACV were to be transmitted to the White House immediately "for my personal review" and an officer from the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be designated to brief him or his Assistant for National Security Affairs.[5]

(~~TS~~) In guidance for the field commanders on 4 April, Admiral Moorer emphasized the importance attached in Washington to stopping the offensive:

> We do not expect to lose this one and, consequently, must bring as much air and naval force to bear as possible in order to give the enemy a severe jolt. . . . We have received increased authorities and must make full use of them at every opportunity. Our objectives are: to ensure that the North Vietnamese do not endanger remaining U.S. forces, to provide maximum assistance to the South Vietnamese in their efforts to destroy the invader and to prevent the North Vietnamese from interferring with Vietnamization plans . . . .[6]

(U) The United States also publicly declared its intention to use air power to assist the South Vietnamese. In a press conference on 7 April, Secretary of Defense Melvin R Laird warned the leaders in Hanoi that the US bombing of their territory would continue until

5. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6826 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 040006Z Apr 72. (~~S~~) Memo, President to SecDef, 3 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72.

6. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7951 to CINCPAC et al., 042355Z Apr 72.

until North Vietnam withdrew its invading forces from the south and showed interest in "serious" peace talks. The White House Press Secretary followed up the next day stating that the United States would do "what is necessary" in terms of air power, fire support, and logistical assistance to help the South Vietnamese stop the enemy offensive.[7]

(~~TS~~) Poor weather in Vietnam prevented full use of authorized air resources against the North Vietnamese invasion and President Nixon grew dissatisfied with the level of US air operations. In a meeting on the morning of 8 April, he was "extremely out of patience," Admiral Moorer reported to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV afterwards. The President reminded his hearers that the military commanders had received authorities and resources beyond those requested and, "so far, nothing other than routine operations have occurred." The President wanted to give both North Vietnam and the Soviet Union "a clear message" of US intent to use whatever force was necessary. "I cannot impress on you too strongly," Admiral Moorer told the field commanders,

> how intensely the President is in this operation, how determined he is that the enemy does not succeed in their objectives, and how forthcoming he is when presented with requests for authorities and additional resources . . . .[8]

(~~PS~~) At the 8 April meeting, President Nixon approved expansion of tactical air and naval gunfire attacks against North Vietnam from 18° to 19° north and a B-52 strike on North Vietnam below 19° north and

7. NY Times, 8 Apr 72, 1; 9 Apr 72, 28.
8. (~~PS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3492 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 082308Z Apr 72.

granted authority to engage all enemy fighter aircraft either in the air or on the ground below 20° north. This last authority had been requested by CINCPAC on 4 April and had the support of Admiral Moorer and Secretary Laird. Admiral Moorer issued the necessary directives the same day to implement the President's decisions. The B-52 strike was to employ "at least" six aircraft with execution before sunset 10 April 1972, Saigon time, against a logistics target. Accordingly, the strike was carried out on 9 April, beginning a series of B-52 attacks against North Vietnam.[9]

US Augmentations

(U) The air resources of the United States in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1972 were extremely thin as the result of the continuing US redeployments, and reinforcements were required to meet the expanding operations. The President and the Secretary of Defense were quick to approve these actions and the month of April witnessed a significant buildup of US air assets in South Vietnam and Thailand, and Guam. In South Vietnam, introduction of the augmentation forces complicated the continuing redeployment of US forces, necessitating the withdrawal of additional security and support personnel in order to meet approved redeployment ceilings, which remained unchanged despite the enemy offensive.[10]

9. (~~TS~~ GP 1) Msg, JCS 3492 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 081208Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~ GP 1) Msgs, JCS 3489 and 3500, 082259Z and 082321Z Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (~~TS-NOFORN~~) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, (S) pp. 152-153. (~~TS~~ GP 1) Msg, JCS 3502 to CINCPAC, 082322Z Apr 72.

10. For a discussion of US redeployments during the enemy offensive, see Chapter 8.

(~~TS~~) The incresing signs of an enemy attack in early 1972 had alerted the US military commanders to the need for added air resources and several initial augmentations were accomplished before the offensive broke. In February, the United States returned 18 F-4 aircraft to Thailand and South Vietnam (COMMANDO FLASH) and shifted another 18 F-4D aircraft from Korea to the Philippines for possible movement to Southeast Asia.[11] Once the invasion began, immediate actions were ordered to retain these assets. On 30 March, at the request of the field commanders, Admiral Moorer recommended a 30-day extension of the COMMANDO FLASH deployment, and the Secretary of Defense aproved on 4 April. Meantime, on 1 April, Admiral Moorer had requested and the Secretary approved moving the 18 F-4D aircraft in the Philipines to Southeast Asia. The movement (COMMANDO FLY) was ordered the same day.[12]

(~~TS~~) Other actions to bolster US air assets in Southeast Asia followed in rapid succession. Admiral Moorer, with the Secretary's concurrence, directed CINCPAC on 1 April to hold the USS CONSTELLATION in WESTPAC to maintain a four carrier posture.[13] At CINCPAC's request, Admiral Moorer approved on 4 April an increase of nine B-52 (ARC LIGHT) sorties per day, ordering the deployment of "approximately" 20 B-52s

11. See Chapter 5, pp. 287-288, 291-292.

12. (~~TS~~) CM-1684-72 to SecDef, 30 Mar 72; (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "COMMANDO FLASH," 4 Apr 72; (~~TS~~) CM-1697-72 to SecDef, 1 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 7641 to CINCPAC, 041854Z Apr 72; JCS 5401 to CINCPAC, 011850Z Apr 72.

13. (~~TS~~) CM-1698-72 to SecDef, 1 Apr 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5371 to CINCPAC, 011744Z Apr 72.

to Guam and "approximately" eight supporting KC-135s to Okinawa.[14] That same day, the Secretary of Defense requested an increase of naval gunfire ships in support of activity in Vietnam, and Admiral Moorer ordered CINCPAC to carry out this task as soon as possible.[15]

(S) Further actions occurred the next day, 5 April. With Secretary of Defense and WSAG aproval, the Chairman directed the following deployments: (1) two US Marine Corps tactical air squadrons from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing to South Vietnam; (2) one CONUS-based F-105 squadron (12 aircraft) to Thailand; (3) two CONUS-based F-104 tactical fighter squadrons to Thailand. All deployments were for a period of not more than 90 days and included required logistics and personnel support, and authority was granted to exceed temporarily the US manpower ceilings in Thailand.[16]

(TS) On 6 April, the President decided to provide additional tactical air support for Southeast Asia operations, and the Chairman issued the necessary implementing order. He directed the deployment of an additional carrier, the USS MIDWAY, from the west coast of the United States to Southeast Asia as soon as possible, to raise the Seventh Fleet strength to five

14. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7393 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 041443Z Apr 72.
15. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7438 to CINCPAC, 041530Z Apr 72.
16. (S-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 9004 to CINCPAC, 052241Z Apr 72; JCS 9069 to CSAF and CINCPAC, 052353Z Apr 72; JCS 9073 to CSAF and CINCPAC, 052357Z Apr 72. (TS) WSAG Mtg, Minutes, 5 Apr 72, NSC Files.

attack carriers, and the transfer of four CONUS-based EB-66 aircraft to Thailand.[17]

(TS) With the President's decision on 8 April for expanded tactical air operations and a B-52 strike against North Vietnam,[18] still more augmentations were needed. Accordingly, Admrial Mooere ordered movement of another carrier, the USS SARATOGA, from the Atlantic to WESTPAC as soon as possible. In addition, he authorized CINCPAC and CINCSAC to surge to the "maximum supportable" B-52 sortie level above the authorized 1,800 per month rate "until stabilization of the current emergency." To achieve these rates, the Chairman authorized the immediate deployment of all available B-52D and 28 B-52G aircraft to Guam together with required supporting KC-135 aircraft.[19] Further actions to strengthen tactical air and naval gunfire operations included direction on 9 April to deploy one US Marine Corps F-4J fighter squadron from Hawaii to South Vietnam and orders on 10 April to sail a cruiser (USS NEWPORT NEWS) from the Atlantic and two destroyers (USS C.P. CECIL and USS M.C. FOX) from the Mediterranean, all to WESTPAC.[20]

17. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Apr 72; (~~TS~~-GP 1) DJSM-656-72 to CJCS, 6 Apr 72; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1210 to CINCPAC, 062208Z Apr 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1718-72 to SecDef, 6 Apr 72; (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 2002 to CSAF and CINCPAC, 071351Z Apr 72; CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

18. See above, pp. 356-357.

19. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 2864 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 080443Z Apr 72; JCS 3476 to CINCLANT and CINCPAC, 082235Z Apr 72; JCS 3485 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 082253Z Apr 72.

20. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 4008 to CINCPAC, 100056Z Apr 72; JCS 4390 to CINCLANT, 101330Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4922 to USCINCEUR, 102334Z Apr 72.

The Offensive Continues

(C) The US air attacks on North Vietnam in the early days of April did little to slow enemy momentum. In MR 1, the lull in Quang Tri Proince, which had begun on 4 April, ended abruptly five days later when the enemy attacked Fire Support Base PEDRO with indirect fire and ground assaults. Heavy fighting raged for two days and, although the North Vietnamese suffered heavy losses, they took several more South Vietnamese fire support bases. General Abrams visited MR 1 on 11 April, and the South Vietnamese Commander, Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, assured him that the situation was in hand. Thereafter, in mid-April, the RVNAF did launch a counter-offensive in Quang Tri to retake lost bases and clear the area, but little progress resulted in ten days of action.

(TS) On 11 April, Admiral Moorer gave the Secretary of Defense an assessment of enemy capabilities and his thoughts on the length of the offensive. In MR 1, the enemy had not only committed some of his best units, but had assured them the initial advantage of a large cache of prepositioned supplies. In the months October 1971 through March 1972, the enemy had moved some 4,200 to 4,700 tons of ammunition and equipment into Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces and this buildup, Admiral Moorer believed, would allow the enemy to continue fighting at the present level for as long as two months. Despite these advantages, the enemy had not captured Dong Ha or Quang Tri City, and Admiral Moorer attributed this failure to the "determined ARVN resistance." He believed that the South Vietnamese forces in MR 1, supported by "massive naval and air strikes," would give a good account of themselves. Moreover,

as the weather improved, enemy positions and supply lines would "become increasingly vulnerable to air, naval, and ground interdiction."

(TS) In MR 2, Admiral Moorer thought that the enemy forces would probably break contact soon after the start of the rainy season unless they had taken a key target such as Pleiku or Kontum City. But the Chairman believed that the South Vietnamese forces in that area, with reinforcement and strong air support, should be able to contain the enemy without loss of a major population center. As for the situation in MR 3, Admiral Moorer said that the enemy's supply posture there would constrain his offensive operations. He expected the enemy to contine action in the northwestern provinces of MR 3 to tie down ARVN troops, but added that VC forces in that Region had "historically" been incapable of contesting ARVN units of equal size. In any event, the Chairman predicted that the southwest monsoon would force the enemy to withdraw to base areas in Cambodia by mid-summer.[21]

(C) Admrial Moorer's prediction of the ARVN's ability to halt the enemy in MR 1 proved optimistic. On 27 April 1972, the enemy opened the second phase of his drive in the northernmost military region, attacking Dong Ha and Quang Tri City just to the south. Dong Ha received both 130mm artillery and 122mm rocket bombardment as well as an infantry attack from the southwest, and the provincial capital came under attack by enemy armor and infantry from the northwest, west, and southwest. Dong Ha fell the following day, further increasing the threat to Quang Tri City where the South Vietnamese now regrouped their defenses.

21. (TS-GP 1) CM-1735-72 to SecDef, 11 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72.

(C) The enemy pressed on supported by tanks and heavy artillery, and the South Vietnamese position deteriorated rapidly. On 30 April, the North Vietnamese interdicted Route 1, the major line of communication between Quang Tri City and Hue to the south, hampering resupply activities and during the night the besieged city received 4,500 rounds of artillery, rocket, and mortar fire. Enemy pressure mounted during the morning of 1 May and all US advisers were evacuated except for 18 who elected to stay with their Vietnamese units. Later that day, the Quang Tri defense collapsed and friendly forces withdrew southward.

(~~TS~~) In Washington, at a WSAG meeting on 1 May, Dr. Kissinger asked how the enemy could still move south despite the heavy US air strikes. Admiral Moorer replied the "we're attacking them 24 hours a day," but that air strikes alone would not halt the enemy advance. "The ARVN ground force," he said, "must stand and fight."[22]

(C) Still the South Vietnamese continued to fall back and the enemy showed no letup in his drive. On 2 May, Fire Support Base NANCY, the last friendly position in Quang Tri Province, came under attack and fell to the enemy. Meantime, after a period of moderate action during early April, heavy fighting had broken out by mid-month in Thua Thien, the province just below Quang Tri, and continued during the struggle for Quang Tri City and the days immediately thereafter. Now, not only was all of the northernmost province of South Vietnam in enemy hands, but the old imperial city of Hue, the capital of Thua Thien Province, was threatened.

22. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 1 May 72, NSC Files.

(C) To the south in MR 2, the full force of the enemy offensive was not felt until mid-April. Then on 14 April, the North Vietnamese overran Fire Support Base CHARLIE in Kontum Province and pressed the defending forces back to Dak To and Tan Canh. The enemy also successfully blocked Kontum Pass, cutting Route 14 between the cities of Kontum and Pleiku. A major enemy armor attack during the night of 23-24 April forced the evacuation of Dak To and Tan Canh, and the RVNAF regrouped and prepared for the defense of Kontum. Thereafter, during the remaining days of April and into early May, scattered enemy ground contacts and attacks-by-fire occurred, but the anticipated thrust against Kontum did not come.

(C) In mid-April, enemy pressure also increased in neighboring Binh Dinh Province, and two district capitals, Hoai An and Hoai Nhon, fell to the enemy in rapid succession. On 26 April, the enemy closed Bong Son Pass, thereby blocking Route 1 and isolating the northeastern corner of the province.

(C) In MR 3, following the fall of Loc Ninh on 7 April, the South Vietnamese forces braced for an assault on An Loc. It began on 13 April when the 9th VC Division launched artillery and ground attacks that became daily occurrences, but in this battle the enemy did not succeed. The RVNAF air assaulted three airborne battalions southeast of An Loc on 15 April and they fought their way into the city linking up with the defenders three days later. The enemy maintained his daily attacks, but could not dislodge the tenacious defenders. On 26 April, the ARVN 3d Airborne Brigade air-landed near Chon Than to the south of An Loc and began to move northward. The South Vietnamese airborne troops came within eight kilometers of the beleaguered town, but could not break the enemy siege.

The United States Expands Air Efforts Against North Vietnam

(~~TS~~) In response to the deteriorating combat situation, the United States continued to step up air and naval gunfire operations against North Vietnam during the remainder of April. At CINCPAC's request, Admiral Moorer obtained Secretary of Defense approval on 10 April for an expansion of the authority to attack enemy fighter aircraft below 20° north to include "any military aircraft" in the designated area. Now US pilots could attack helicopters and military transports in order to disrupt enemy resupply activities. In the following days, 11-12 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered CINCPAC to plan and then execute a B-52 strike against Ba Thuong Airfield below 20° north. Accordingly, on 13 April, 18 B-52s hit the target, interdicting the runway in 12 places.[23]

(~~TS~~) On 14 April, the United States widened the area for naval gunfire attack in North Vietnam from 19° to 20° north. To complement the expanded gunfire, the Secretary of Defense directed the movement of at least two ships above 20° north on 15 April. Although no actual bombardment was to occur, he wanted to signal North Vietnam that the United States was considering even larger gunfire attacks. The increased area for naval gunfire stimulated a requirement for more spotting assets, and Admrial Moorer

23. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1724-72 to SecDef, 10 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 090127Z Apr 72, JCS IN 39303. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 4689 to CINCPAC, 101915Z Apr 72; JCS 4940 to CINCPAC, 110006Z Apr 72; JCS 6111 to CINCPAC, 120008Z Apr 72; JCS 6322 to CINCPAC, 120530Z Apr 72. (~~TS-NOFORN~~) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 153.

subsequently approved a CINCPAC request to use US Marine Corps helicopters of the Amphibious Ready Group for this purpose.[24]

(TS) Simultaneously, even larger air attacks against North Vietnam were under consideration. As early as 5 April, CINCPAC had urged "a one-time maximum effort air strike" against carefully selected targets in Haiphong to demonstrate US resolve to counter the enemy offensive. The following day, 6 April, the Secretary of Defense asked Admiral Moorer about an existing contingency plan, FREEMONT GAMBLER, for a limited 24-hour air strike against targets in the Haiphong area. He was particularly concerned with damage to foreign shipping in the harbor and wondered whether the potential military value would justify the risks involved. Admiral Moorer hastened to assure him that the risk would be no greater than during the bombing in 1967 and 1968, adding that all precautions would be taken to prevent inadvertent damage to foregin vessels. The Secretary was apparently satisfied, and on 10 April 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC, in coordination with CINCSAC, to plan an intensified one-day strike with combined tactical air and B-52 resources of key logistics targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong area.[25]

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24. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "US Naval Activity in the Gulf of Tonkin," 14 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9317 to CINCPAC, 141739Z Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 9724 to CINCPAC, 142256Z Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1420 to CINCPAC, 151619Z Apr 72.

25. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 050521Z Apr 72, JCS IN 31176. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Contingency Plans for Operations Against North Vietnam," 6 Apr 72; CM-1722-72 to SecDef, 7 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4413 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 101406Z Apr 72.

(~~TS~~) CINCPAC prepared the plan and the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed the field commanders to proceed with necessary preparations for execution on 16 April. Subsequently, however, COMUSMACV recommended a postponement until later in the month in order to give priority to the "critical" combat situation in South Vietnam. But, despite the plea from General Abrams, the strike was not delayed. "Very high level considerations," Admiarl Moorer told CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, dictated "a heavy air strike" against Hanoi and Haiphong during the period 15-I6 April; and he directed execution of the original plan using 18 B-52's and the "maximum number" of tactical aircraft available above those needed for immediate requirements of the land battle.[26]

(~~TS~~) The attack, nicknamed FREEDOM PORCH BRAVO, was carried out on 16 April. Navy A-6s struck SAM sites in the Haiphong area, B-52s bombed nearby petroleum storage facilities, and two more waves of tactical aircraft hit other targets in both Hanoi and Haiphong. Photo bomb damage assessment revealed heavy destruction. The United States lost one F-105 and one A-7 while five enemy MIGs, three in the air and two on the ground, were destroyed. During the attack, CINCPAC at JCS direction moved a cruiser to 20°40' north and bombarded shore gun emplacements on the Do Son Peninsula.[27]

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26. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 140642Z Apr 72, JCS IN 49209. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 8374 to CINCPAC, 132334Z Apr 72; JCS 9098 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 141422Z Apr 72; JCS 9723 to CINCPAC, 142256Z Apr 72.

27. (~~TS~~-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 153. (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 1580 to CINCPAC, 152327Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 161138Z Apr 72, JCS IN 53513.

(U) Almost immediately, the Soviet Union charged that four of its ships in Haiphong harbor had been damaged in the US air attack and demanded that the United States immediately adopt strict measures to prevent similar provocations in the future. The United States refused any blame for the "alleged" damage, but did pledge every effort to avoid damage to international shipping.[28]

(U) In Washington, on 17 April, Secretry of State William P. Rogers told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States would take "whatever action is necessary" to repel the invasion of South Vietnam. The bombing was justified, he said, to protect the 85,000 US troops still in Vietnam, to guarantee the continuing troop withdrawal program, and to give the South Vietnamese a chance to defend themselves. Appearing before the same committee the following day, Secretary Laird declared that the raids on Hanoi and Haiphong had been both effective and precise. All of North Vietnam, he told the Senators, would be subject to bombing as long as the offensive in the south lasted. He also indicated that the Administration was considering plans to seal off Haiphong harbor in order to stop military shipments.[29]

(~~TS~~) Two further US B-52 strikes against North Vietnamese targets followed in April. On 22 April and again on 24 April, combined B-52 and tactical air attacks, named FREIGHTER CAPTAIN and FREIGHTER CAPTAIN II, respectively, hit rail and road bridges,

28. Edward W. Knappman (ed.), South Vietnam, vol 7, U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia, 1972-1973, (Facts on File, Inc., New York, 1973) p. 57.
29. Ibid., pp. 58-59.

airfields, and transshipment points, locomotive shops, and petroleum targets in the Thanh Hoa area between 19° and 20° north. In anticipation of these strikes, additional operating authorities were granted. With Secretary of Defense approval, Admiral Moorer advised CINCPAC on 19 April that, during any US air missions in North Vietnam above 19° north, the following would be permitted: (1) use of aircraft and SAMs to attack any airborne enemy fighter aircraft anywhere in North Vietnam exclusive of the Chinese buffer zone; (2) employment of anti-radar missiles against GCI sites throughout North Vietnam.[30]

(~~TS~~) On 25 April, the United States pushed the limit for tactical air strikes in North Vietnam still further northward from 19° to 20° north to correspond with the authorized naval gunfire target area. The field commanders and Admiral Moorer had sought this change since 17 April, the latter explaining to the Secretary of Defense that the mountainous terrain of North Vietnam between 19° and 20° north made a natural bottleneck for roads and railroads and an especially lucrative bombing target. The Secretary approved on 25 April and appropriate instructions were dispatched to CINCPAC allowing tactical air strikes below 20° north. In a separate message dispatched at the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized

30. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 5651 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 192327Z Apr 72; JCS 5676 to CINCPAC, 200002Z Apr 72; JCS 8890 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 221545Z Apr 72; JCS 8905 to CINCPAC, 221624Z Apr 72; JCS 8969 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 221833Z Apr 72. (~~TS-NOFORN~~) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 154. (~~TS~~) CM-1752-72 to SecDef, 17 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (The CINCPAC History gave the strike on 24 April the name FREQUENT WINNER.)

employment of tactical air "in support of and in conjunction with NGFS in those areas where naval gunfire is authorized."[31]

(TS) That same day, 25 April, the Acting Chairman, Admiral Zumwalt, requested a further expansion of naval gunfire operations. The segment of coastline between 20° and 20°25' north was one of the most heavily defended areas in North Vietnam with 12 coastal defense gun sites, and the Acting Chairman wanted to attack those sites. Moreover, since tactical air strikes were now authorized in areas approved for naval gunfire, the requested expansion would automatically enlarge the area of operations for tactical air interdiction.[32]

(TS) Before approving this request, however, Mr. Laird asked several questions. What were the specific targets in this area and what would be the potential value of destroying those targets as opposed to ones further south? In addition, he wanted an estimate of the amount of tactical air support that would be diverted from other operations to support any in this enlarged area. On 26 April, Admiral Moorer listed for Mr. Laird 25 storage areas, 2 inland waterway transshipment points, 41 highway bridges, 6 rail bridges, 7 ferry sites, and 6 rail sidings, all within naval gunfire range of the North Vietnam coast between 20° and 20°25', as well as a segment of railroad and 6 secondary highways in the same area. He believed that the currently authorized tactical air and naval gunfire operations were causing significant buildup

31. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 171855Z Apr 72, JCS IN 55315. (TS-GP 1) CM-1764-72 to SecDef, 20 Apr 72; CM-1760-72 to SecDef, 24 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 2309 and 2313 to CINCPAC, 251459Z and 251504Z Apr 72

32. (TS-GP 1) CM-1763-72 to SecDef, 25 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72.

of logistic and support equipment in the area just above 20° north, thus warranting the requested authority. The proposed attacks, he continued, would be intermittent and would not require substantial diversion of tactical air resources. Apparently satisfied, the Secretary approved and Admiral Moorer passed the authority to the field. This directive referenced the previous approval for tactical air support in areas authorized for naval gunfire and sanctioned the conduct of naval gunfire to 20°25' north. Authority to use both naval gunfire and tactical air to 20°25' north was subsequently confirmed in an extension of air authorities at the end of the month.[33]

(U) On 26 April, President Nixon told the American people that US military actions would continue against North Vietnam until the invasion ended. In a televised address, he condemned the current offensive as unprovoked and a violation of both the 1954 Indochina Accords and the 1968 understanding with President Johnson. Recalling previous pledges to meet any enemy efforts to expand the war, he announced the continuation of air and naval attacks on North Vietnamese military targets. This decision, he said, was designed to protect remaining US troops in Vietnam, to permit the US withdrawal to proceed, and to prevent imposition of a communist regime on the South Vietnamese against their will.[34]

33. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "FREEDOM TRAIN Operating Authorities," 25 Apr 72; CM-1787-72 to SecDef, 26 Apr 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3765 to CINCPAC, 262224Z Apr 72. Msg, JCS 6393 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 290041Z Apr 72.

34. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1972 (1974), pp. 550-554.

(~~TS~~) With critical battles developing in both MR 1 and MR 3 at the end of April, the United States directed its primary air effort away from North Vietnam for the moment to support ground operations in South Vietnam. A planned B-52 attack against Hanoi and Haiphong was not carried out, and on 29 April, Admiral Moorer directed CINCPAC "to lay on" the maximum number of air sorties available in a surge effort against targets directly supporting the land battle. He wanted a level to exceed 1,000 sorties per day with allocation of resources as specified by COMUSMACV.[35]

(~~TS~~) Another operating authority in North Vietnam was granted in April--the use of riot control agents. Admiral Moorer made an appropriate request to the Secretary on this matter on 14 April seeking use of agent CS for aircrew recovery in North Vietnam and Cambodia. The Secretary approved and Admiral Moorer passed on this approval to the field commanders on 15 April. Subsequently, on 27 April, Mr. Larid gave detailed guidance for the use of riot control agents throughout Southeast. Asia. He authorized their use in search and rescue operations and to aid in the recovery of friendly evadees and escapees in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as well as for crash site inspections and prisoner recovery in all these same areas except North Vietnam. He also approved riot control agents for ground operations in South Vietnam and for RVNAF employment in ground intelligence and reconnaissance operations in Cambodia and Laos, in emergency situations only,

35. (~~TS~~-Gp 1) Msgs, JCS 8952 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 221753Z Apr 72; JCS 6412 to CINCPAC, 290047Z Apr 72.

at the discretion of COMUSMACV. He reserved for himself, however, on an individual case basis, decisions for use in prisoner recovery in North Vietnam and for ground operations in Cambodia and Laos.[36]

(~~TS~~) The various operating authorities granted during April to meet the enemy offensive extended only through the end of the month, and all standing Southeast Asia authorities expired on 1 May 1972 as well. On 13 April, Admiral Moorer had asked the Secretary of Defense to extend all authorities, both standing and temporary, through October 1972 and had also proposed certain additional authorities for expanded air action against North Vietnam. Most of those in the latter category were subsequently approved on a case-by-case basis during the remainder of April as already described above. On 28 April Secretary Laird extended all the standing Southeast Asia authorities for a period through 1 November 1972; the temporary ones related to the current offensive, he continued only until 1 June. He also approved the following additional authorities through May: (1) use of antiradiation missiles against primary ground control intercept (GCI) sites in North Vietnam outside of Route Package 6 (the Hanoi-Haiphong area) whenever MIGs were airborne and indicating "hostile intent"; (2) employment of US fixed and rotary wing aircraft to provide logistic, trooplift, and medical evacuation support for RVNAF operations in areas along the South Vietnam border

36. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1750-72 to SecDef, 14 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1477 to CINCPAC, 151842Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Use of Riot Control Agents in SEAsia," 26 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72.

with Laos and Cambodia; (3) use of B-52 aircraft, in the Demilitarized Zone above the Provisional Military Demarcation Line as well as implanting of sensors throughout the Zone.[37]

~~(TS)~~ One further authority in North Vietnam was granted before the end of April. Existing drone intelligence operations over North Vietnam had not produced the necessary coverage for the field commanders, and on 16 April, COMUSMACV had requested authority for manned tactical reconnaissance above 19° north to cover objectives in strike areas. Both CINCPAC and Admiral Moorer supported this request, but Secretary Laird requested further justification. Admiral Moorer prvided it, and the Secretary raised the northern limit for manned tactical reconnaissance in North Vietnam to 20°25' north on 29 April 1972. At this time, the Secretary requested still further information on these reconnaissance flights and Admiral Moorer furnished it a week later.[38]

~~(TS)~~ The growing US air actions against North Vietnam in the latter part of April necessitated further augmentation of US Air Forces in Southeast Asia.

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37. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1742-72 to SecDef, 13 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 28 Apr 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6393 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 290041Z Apr 72.

38. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 160915Z Apr 72, JCS IN 53749; CINCPAC to JCS, 161716Z Apr 72, JCS IN 53754. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1783-72 to SecDef, 25 Apr 72; CM-1818-72 to SecDef, 6 May 72; CJCS CM Chron File. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Manned Tactical Reconnaissance," 24 Apr 72 and 29 Apr 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (There are two SecDef memos, "Manned Tactical Reconnaissance," both dated 29 Apr 72 and both in JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). In one, SecDef raised the limit for the reconnaissance and in the other he requested further information.)

Following the attack on Hanoi and Haiphong on 16 April, the President decided additional tactical air support was in order. Accordingly, on 25 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directred the immediate deployment of two USAF F-4 squadrons (36 aircraft and 836 squadron and ground support personnel) from CONUS to Thailand for a period of 90 days. This deployment increased Southeast Asia resources by 1,080 sorties per month. The continuing air operations, together with resulting battle damage to US aircraft, strained CINCPAC's C-130 airlift capability and he requested additional aircraft. In response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the Commander, US Readiness Command (USCINCRED), on 28 April to loan CINCPAC 10 C-130E aircraft to ease his problems. The following day, 29 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff with WSAG approval extended all the augmentations, air and naval, through 1 June 1972.[39]

Public Reaction in the United States

(U) Public dissent in the United States, which had been relatively quiet during the preceding winter and early spring, was rekindled by the renewed US air attacks against North Vietnam in April. In the Congress, leading Democrats immediately charged President Nixon with "a dangerous and reckless reescalation" of the war. The offensive, they claimed, was proof of the failure of Vietnamization and they called for an immediate renewal of negotiations to end the war. On

39. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1755-72 to SecDef, 18 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 2657 to CSAF, CINCPAC, and USCINCRED, 252058Z Apr 72; JCS 5110 to USCINCRED and CINCPAC, 280019Z Apr 72; JCS 7058 to CINCPAC, CINCLANT, USCINCRED, and CINCSAC, 291655Z Apr 72. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 24 Apr 72, NSC Files.

17 April, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted a cutoff of funds for all US combat operations in Vietnam subject only to agreement for the release of US prisoners of war. The House Democratic Caucus followed suit three days later with a resolution calling for a definite date for the end of US military involvement in Indochina. Republicans in the Congress, generally, rallied to the suport of the President. Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona defended the bombing and called for strike of "every conceivable supply target." in North Vietnam. The Arizona Senator also introduced a resolution condemning the North Vietnamese as aggressors and endorsing the current US policies in Vietnam, but the Senate did not accept it.[40]

(U) The air strikes on North Vietnam also stirred public demonstrations. In mid-April, protests broke out on college and university campuses across the country and continued throughout the remainder of the month. Some were peaceful; others turned violent, requiring police dispersal and the use of tear gas. In New York, anti-war demonstrators marched in the rain on 22 April to protest the renewed bombing. Estimates of the number of participants ranged form 30,000 to 100,000, but no violence marred the day. A Gallup poll on the question of the bombing, released on 25 April, revealed somewhat ambivalent findings. Forty-seven percent supported the bombing, forty-four opposed, and nine percent remained undecided. But the poll also showed seventy-one percent in favor of a cutoff of funds for US operations in Vietnam after 31 December 1972.[41]

40. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 59-60. NY Times, 20 Apr 72, 1.

41. NY Times, 18 Apr 72, 20; 19 Apr 72, 1; 22 Apr 72, 1; 23 Apr 72, 1; 26 Apr 72, 1, and 9; 29 Apr 72, 14.

The United States Considers Further Action

(U) At the beginning of May 1972, the war in Vietnam was going badly for both the United States and the South Vietnamese. The enemy now occupied the entire northernmost province of South Vietnam and was threatening Hue as well as provincial capitals in both MR 2 and MR 3. The deteriorating combat situation threatened the Vietnamization, pacification, and US troop withdrawal programs and the negotiations remained at a complete impasse. Clearly, the United States needed some bold stroke to turn the situation around, not only to blunt the North Vietnamese offensive, but to renew the confidence of the South Vietnamese as well.

(~~TS~~) President Nixon and his advisers had a number of possibilities under consideration in the early days of May. The use of US ground forces was not one of these, but a further expansion of US air attacks against North Vietnam was. Others included the landing of ARVN and VNMC forces in the North Vietnam panhandle and an amphibious feint off MR 1. Yet another possibility was action to stem the flow of war materiel that arrived in North Vietnam by sea. To accomplish this purpose, plans were readied for a blockade of the entire North Vietnamese coast and for various actions to block the water approaches to Haiphong, including mining operations.[42]

(~~TS~~) All of these options were reviewed in almost daily meetings of the Washington Special Actions Group. The choice was soon narrowed to expanded air

42. (~~TS~~) DJSM-898-72 to CJCS, 3 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (~~TS-GP~~ 1) Msgs, JCS 8659 to CINCPAC, 261257Z Apr 72; JCS 3298 to CINCPAC, 050024Z May 72. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 25 Apr 72, NSC Files.

operations and mining of North Vietnamese waters. On 2 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC and CINCSAC to plan an air strike (FRAME GLORY) against key logistic targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas on 6 and 7 May, using between 18 and 30 B-52s each day combined with tactical air strikes. Subsequently, however, this attack was cancelled on 4 May.[43]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, photo reconnaissance had located a large concentration of armor approximately 15 nautical miles northwest of Hanoi, and on 5 May, Admiral Moorer secured Secretary of Defense approval for a tactical air strike (FRESH BATH) of this target. In view of the critical situation in MR 1 and the large role enemy armor had played in the offensive, Admiral Moorer was particularly anxious to eliminate this tank collection. The Secretary approved and Admiral Moorer implemented the decision, ordering execution of the strike on 8 May. But the following day, 6 May, Admiral Moorer modified this instruction, directing a one-time extension of the FREEDOM TRAIN tactical air strikes above 20°25' north. Before these strikes could be carried out, however, the President decided upon an air interdiction program throughout North Vietnam and all air attacks were consolidated in this expanded operation.[44]

(~~TS~~) At this same time, consideration of mining of North Vietnam had moved forward. The field commanders had recommended such an option from the very beginning of the offensive. As early as 5 April,

43. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 9692 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 022232Z May 72; JCS 2860 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 041738Z May 72.

44. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 4681 to CINCPAC, 060014Z May 72; JCS 5524 to CINCPAC, 061823Z May 72.

CINCPAC advocated aerial mining as "the most direct, effective, and economical means available to neutralize enemy reliance upon seaborne imports." A plan for such action was already "on the shelf," he had told Admiral Moorer, and could be executed within 72 hours of approval. Again on 23 April, CINCPAC had recommended aerial mining of Haiphong harbor, the entry point for 80 percent of all North Vietnamese supplies.[45]

(~~TS~~) Admiral Moorer presented a mining proposal to the WSAG on 4 May and serious consideration ensued. Details of execution, timing, and announcement were discussed, and on 6 May the President tentatively approved the mining. Admiral Moorer immediately alerted CINCPAC, telling him to designate forces and assemble the materials for an aerial mining campaign as provided in his previously recommended plan. The mine laying would begin at 0900 on 9 May, Vietnam time, with Haiphong harbor to be seeded to become active in 72 hours and with sterilization within 180 days. Seeding would then proceed at Hon Gai and Cam Pha and other coastal areas including Dong Hoi, Quang Khe, Vinh, and Thanh Hoa. The Chairman authorized air and naval gunfire in the Haiphong area to suppress or divert threats to the mining aircraft.[46]

(~~TS~~) The President and his advisers considered the mining option one last time at a National Security

45. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 050522Z Apr 73, JCS IN 31161; CINCPAC to CJCS, 230750Z Apr 72, JCS IN 67763.

46. (~~S~~-EX) USN Mine Warfare Project Office, The Mining of North Vietnam, 8 May 1972 to 14 January 1973, 30 Jan 75, pp. 2-3, 2-21. (Hereinafter cited as The Mining of NVN.) (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5451 to CINCPAC, 061608Z May 72. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 4 May 72, NSC Files.

Council meeting on 8 May. Admiral Moorer again presented the case and the President decided to proceed with the operation. Accordingly, Admiral Moorer issued the necessary orders to the field. He directed CINCPAC to lay the first mine in the Haiphong channel at 0900, Saigon time, as previously planned. Elaborate precautions would be taken to prevent any ship from unknowingly entering the mined areas, and US ships on the "notification line" would use all appropriate means to warn approaching vessels of the US action.[47]

(~~TS~~) On 8 May 1972, the President also decided to launch an air campaign against supply and transportation targets throughout North Vietnam in a further effort to restrict the enemy's ability to wage war in the south. Thus, several hours after despatch of the initial directive for the mining, Admiral Moorer ordered the air interdiction program, authorizing offensive air operations throughout North Vietnam except for a buffer zone along the Chinese border. The mining and air campaigns were named POCKET MONEY and LINEBACKER, respectively, and in anticipation of these actions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff increased the readiness of US forces worldwide to DEFCON 4. (CINCPAC was already at DEFCON 3 and CINCSAC at DEFCON 4.)[48]

(U) President Nixon announced these expanded actions on the evening of 8 May as US aircraft were actually

47. (C-EX) The Mining of NVN, p. 2-22. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 6992 and JCS 7453 to CINCPAC, 081839Z and 090325Z May 72.

48. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7421 to CINCPAC, 090247Z May 72; (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7309 to AIG 939, 090043Z May 72; (~~TS~~-GP 4) Msg, JCS 7315 to all Unified/Specified Commanders, 090053Z May 72. (US forces worldwide returned to previous DEFCONs on 1 Jul 72; see (~~TS~~) Memo, SecDef to Pres., 1 Jul 72, CJCS SecDef Memo File.)

laying the mines in North Vietnamese waters where it was already the next morning. The United States really had no choice, he explained to the American people in a televised address. To stop the fighting and the killing, North Vietnam must be denied the weapons and supplies needed to continue the aggression. Therefore, he said:

> I have ordered the following measures which are being implemented as I am speaking to you.
>
> All entrances to North Vietnamese ports will be mined to prevent access to these ports and North Vietnamese naval operations from these ports. United States forces have been directed to take appropriate measures within the internal and claimed territorial waters of North Vietnam to interdict delivery of any supplies. Rails and all other communications will be cut off to the maximum extent possible. Air and naval strikes against military targets in North Vietnam will continue.
>
> These actions are not directed against any other nation. Countries with ships presently in North Vietnamese ports have already been notified that their ships will have three daylight periods to leave in safety. After that time, the mines will become active and any ships attempting to leave or enter these ports will do so at their own risk.

These actions would cease, the President said, when all US prisoners were returned and there was an internationally supervised cease-fire throughout Indochina.[49]

49. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 585.

(~~TS~~) To exploit the possible psychological impact of his announcement, President Nixon also decided on a leaflet campaign directed toward North Vietnamese armed forces in both North and South Vietnam. In consideration of a leaflet effort several weeks earlier, CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had favored the idea while the US Embassy in Saigon was opposed, and no action resulted. Now, on 8 May, the President approved a saturation campaign. He wanted to bring to the attention of the North Vietnamese forces his decision on the mining and the "strangling effect" it would have on their resupply. He also hoped to alert the North Vietnamese troops to the continuing US offer for a cease-fire. Accordingly, the Department of State issued appropriate instructions to the Embassy in Saigon on 8 May. The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed the necessary order to CINCPAC based on the same guidance, and operations began on 10 May with 200,000 leaflets dropped at An Loc.[50]

POCKET MONEY

(~~TS~~) During a two minute period on the morning of 9 May, North Vietnam time, US aircraft plannted 36 MK-52 mines in the Haiphong ship channel. CINCPAC moved two carriers, two guided missile cruisers, and ten "destroyer types" to protect the mining aircraft, and 150 sorties, in addition to the actual mining

50. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1774-72 to SecDef, 24 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 72. (~~S~~-GP 3) Paper prepared for CJCS WSAG Mtg Bk, "Special Leaflet Campaign Against NVA Forces in RVN and NVN (~~S~~)," 10 May 72, WSAG Briefing Bk for 11 May 72 Mtg; (~~S~~) TP Prepared by J-3 for CJCS WSAG Briefing Bk, 12 May 72; J-5 Files. (~~S~~-GP 3) Msg, JCS 7459 to CINCPAC, 090328Z May 72.

sorties, were flown to provide fighter cover, diversionary strikes, and ECM protection and to attack SAM sites. The North Vietnamese responded with MIG and SAM attacks and antiaircraft fire, but no US planes were lost; US pilots, however, downed one MIG. Subsequently, on 11 May 1972, US aircraft laid mines in the ports of Thanh Hoa, Dong Hoi, Vinh, Hon Gai, Quang Khe, and Cam Pha, effectively cutting off all seaborne supply to North Vietnam. In all, about 1,100 mines were dropped.[51]

(C) The mines in the Haiphong channel did not become active for 72 hours after emplacement in order to allow ships in the harbor a chance to depart. Nine vessels did so and another 27 from the Soviet Union, China, Hong Kong, Poland, Somalia, and Cuba remained in port and were prevented from leaving thereafter. Approximately 25 ships bound for North Vietnam at the time of the initial mining made no attempt to reach port.[52]

(TS) There were reports of US ordnance hitting third country shipping in North Vietnamese waters and the Soviet Union officially protested that two of its ships, the tanker PEVEK and the merchant ship GRISHA AKOPYAN, had been damaged on 9 May. The Secretary of Defense was especially sensitive on this matter and asked Admiral Moorer to take "extraordinary measures" to reduce the probability of hitting foreign vessels in North Vietnamese waters. The Chairman doubted that the United States had hit the PEVEK although he did acknowledge to the Secretary a possibility that US ordnance might have struck the GRISHA AKOPYAN. He thought it

51. (C-EX) The Mining of NVN, pp. 3-3 - 3-19. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, pp. 188-189. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 12 May 72, NSC Files.
52. (C-EX) The Mining of NVN, p. 3-19. Kappman, South Vietnam, p. 82.

likely, however, that the damage had been caused by North Vietnamese antiaircraft fire. In any event, he passed on an appropriate caution to the field on 10 May. Since President Nixon was planning a trip to the Soviet Union on 20 May, Admiral Moorer again cautioned CINCPAC about possible POCKET MONEY damage to third country shipping. "I would like to emphasize once again," he told the commander on 11 May, "the necessity to ensure that no third country ships are damaged in operations conducted in the immediate future." He did not want efforts to counter North Vietnamese mine clearing activities in the Haiphong channel if there was a chance of hitting any merchant ships. Still the Chairman did not intend to relax the closing of the North Vietnamese ports. "Under no, repeat no, circumstances," he continued, "must we permit further use of [the Haiphong] channel for delivery of supplies to North Vietnam." In the event of any indcation that the channel was open, Admiral Moorer instructed CINCPAC to notify the Joint Chiefs of Staff and prepare for reseeding operations. CINCPAC was to prepare an appropriate reseeding plan and maintain one carrier "on the line" with mining capability.[53]

(~~TS~~) Shortly after the initiation of POCKET MONEY, Admiral Moorer obtained Secretary of Defense approval of two CINCPAC requests for added authorities for the mining activities. On 13 May, the Chairman

53. (~~S~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Foreign Shipping in North Vietnamese Waters," 10 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (~~S~~-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 May 72, JMF 546 (CY 1972). (~~S~~) CM-1834-72 to SecDef, 11 May 72; CM-1870-72 to SecDef, 20 May 72; CJCS CM Chron File. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 9511 to CINCPAC, 101703Z May 72; JCS 2233 to CINCPAC, 120009Z May 72; JCS 2237 to CINCPAC, 120010Z May 72. (~~TS~~) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 9 May 72, NSC Files.

authorized CINCPAC to attack North Vietnamese ships or aircraft either engaged in or configured for mine clearance. In view of the Secretary's sensitivity about damage to third country shipping, Admiral Moorer told CINCPAC that this authority did not permit action against vessels of any nation other than North Vietnam. Later, on 17 May 1972, Admiral Moorer directed CINCPAC to proceed with his plan to mine segment 2100 in the approaches to Haiphong harbor as an additional backup to the already mined segments.[54]

(TS) The mining was a total success and no shipping entered or departed Haiphong after 11 May. There was, of course, always the possibility that a political settlement would require the removal of the mines. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had prepared for such an eventuality, directing CINCPAC on 9 May 1972 to develop an outline plan for sweeping the mines and to be ready to assemble appropriate assets for clearing operations.[55]

LINEBACKER

(TS) In the announcement of the mining of North Vietnamese ports on 8 May, President Nixon also stated that the United States would continue air and naval strikes to cut rail and all other communications to interdict the delivery of supplies. In accordance with

54. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 100312Z May 72, JCS IN 11271. (TS-GP 1) CM-1832-72 to SecDef, 11 May 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 13 May 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 4545 to CINCPAC, 132151Z May 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 140537Z May 72, JCS IN 20205. (TS-GP 1) CM-1847-72 to SecDef, 17 May 72 (has DepSecDef initialed "O.K."), CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8742 to CINCPAC, 172240Z May 72.

55. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 189. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8588 to CINCPAC, 092315Z May 72.

this decision, Admiral Moorer directed CINCPAC the same evening to begin an air campaign against the enemy transportation and supply distribution system with initial strikes on 10 May, Vietnam time. The Chairman's authorization provided for offensive air operations in all of North Vietnam except in a buffer zone, varying from 25 to 30 nautical miles, along the Chinese border.[56]

(~~TS~~) Thirty-two US strike and eighty-eight supporting aircraft conducted the first attack of the new campaign at 100300Z May, hitting railroad and highway bridges and railroad yards. Photo reconnaissance revealed heavy damage and two US F-4s were lost. This first strike was conducted under the name ROLLING THUNDER ALPHA, but immediately thereafter the designation for the new air campaign was changed to LINEBACKER.[57]

(~~TS~~) Even before execution of the first strike, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directd CINCPAC to continue tactical air and naval gunfire interdiction efforts, augmented by B-52 sorties as necessary. The objective was to destroy and disrupt enemy petroleum and transportation resources and lines of communication in North Vietnam, and priority targets included POL storage and pumping stations; railways, roads, and associated bridges and tunnels; means of transportation (trucks, rolling stock, and watercraft); repair facilities for maintaining them; war supplies and support materials; ports; and transshipment points. A long list of specific targets was supplied and the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized addition of fixed transportation and interdiction targets at CINCPAC's discretion, except

56. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 7421 to CINCPAC, 090247Z May 72.

57. (~~TS~~-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, p. B-8.

for those within a 10-nautical mile radius of Hanoi and Haiphong or in the Chinese buffer zone. Armed reconnaissance was also authorized against choke points and other time-sensitive transportation and interdiction targets that developed outside the restricted areas. Initial efforts were to concentrate on targets in the area between the Chinese buffer zone and Hanoi, in areas around Hanoi and Haiphong, and on lines of communication leading from the Hanoi-Haiphong area south. To enhance the interdiction even further Admiral Moorer secured Secretary of Defense approval to use aerial denial munitions, including MK-36 destructors. These munitions were already authorized for POCKET MONEY operations, and now they could be employed against appropriate land targets throughout North Vietnam below the Chinese buffer zone as well as in inland and coastal waters. As Admiral Moorer explained to the Secretary of Defense, LINEBACKER would complement the POCKET MONEY operations. In the near term, he expected it to disrupt the North Vietnamese supply and distribution system while over the longer term it should limit the enemy's ability to maintain an adequate logistic network, ultimately reducing his war-making capacity and lowering the level of combat.[58]

(S) After the initial strike, LINEBACKER missions were planned and carried out daily as weather permitted. Usually the strike missions consisted of 8 to 12 bombers accompanied by appropriate fighter and support aircraft. The North Vietnamese responded to

58. (TS-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 8619 to CINCPAC, 092356Z May 72; JCS 8627 to CINCPAC, 100111Z May 72. (TS-GP 1) CM-1778-72 to SecDef, 9 May 72; CM-1848-72 to SecDef, 15 May 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72.

the US air attacks with all the resources at their command, launching MIGs and firing SAMs. During May, North Vietnam fired 429 SAMs, downing 6 US aircraft.[59]

(~~TS~~) Although the original LINEBACKER target list was extensive, many targets remained exempt from attack. Included were numerous targets within 10-mile radius control circles surrounding Hanoi and Haiphong and in the buffer zone along the Chinese border as well as dams, dikes, and locks. Almost from the beginning of the campaign COMUSMACV and CINCPAC pressed for permission to hit various of these restricted sites. Responding to requests from the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 16 May authorized attack of several railroad bridges and tunnels in the Chinese buffer zone, directing maximum caution to avoid overflight of Chinese territory, and additional targets in the buffer zone were approved on 23 May. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also removed a large number of fixed targets within the Hanoi and Haiphong radiuses from the restricted category on 16 May. In a related action, they prohibited all air strikes within a 10-nautical mile radius of Hanoi during the period 21 May through 1 June and within a 5-nautical mile radius for the succeeding period 2 through 5 June in order to avoid any political repercussions during the President's visit to Europe and the Soviet Union. Meantime, on 12 May, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations had suggested to Admiral Moorer that the interdiction effort could be "significantly" enhanced by attacking all North Vietnamese irrigation, flood control, and waterway system targets to flood LOCs, thereby contributing to the interdiction campaign. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not act on

59. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) pp. B-8 - B-9.

this proposal, however, and dams, dikes, and locks remained in the restricted category.[60]

Reaction to POCKET MONEY and LINEBACKER

(U) President Nixon's decision for the mining and bombing of North Vietnamese territory and waters brought a loud public outcry. Reaction was immediate both in the United States and around the world. The Soviet Union on 11 May described the US actions as "fraught with serious consequences for international peace and security." The Soviets did not, however, cancel President Nixon's impending trip to Moscow planned for later in May. The official news agency of the People's Republic of China called the US action a "dangerous move" and "flagrant provocation against the people of Vietnam and the world over." The communist countries of Eastern Europe echoed the sentiments of the Soviet Union and China, and both France and Japan deplored the latest actions by the United States.[61]

(U) At home, in the United States, an intense wave of protests followed the President's announcement on 8 May. Mass marches, silent vigils, and traffic blocking sit-ins erupted on campuses and in major cities on 9 May and continued without interruption for the next several days. While most began as peaceful demonstrations, some turned into violent confrontations with police. Serious incidents occurred in Minneapolis,

60. (TS) Msgs, JCS 6177 to CINCPAC, 152340Z May 72; JCS 7006 to CINCPAC, 161617Z May 72; JCS 7011 to CINCPAC, 161625Z May 72; JCS 6029 to CINCPAC, 232017Z May 72. (TS-GP 4) Memo, Vice CNO to CJCS, "NVN Interdiction Planning (U)," 12 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72.

61. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 84-86.

Minnesota; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Boulder, Colorado; Madison, Wisconsin; Gainesville, Florida; and Berkeley and San Jose, California. Protests of varying sizes, accompanied by violence and arrests, also took place in New York, Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco.[62]

(U) In Washington, protesters rallied at the Capitol on 11 May, causing the building to be closed to the public. A few days later, during the early morning of 19 May, an explosion damaged the Pentagon, though no one was injured. Mass demonstrations followed for several days and police clashed with demonstrators at the Capitol and the Pentagon. In all, more than 400 persons were arrested.[63]

(U) As might have been expected, reaction was also immediate in the Congress. For the most part, the Republicans praised the President's leadership and determination while Democrats repeated the terms "reckless," "dangerous," and "desperate" in commenting on the 8 May announcement. Senators Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, and Edmund Muskie, all aspiring to the Democratic presidential nomination, were quick to criticize the President's decision. The Senate Democratic Caucus condemned the "escalation of the war in Vietnam" on 9 May by a vote of 29 to 14. The caucus also endorsed the cutoff of funds for Vietnam operations approved the month before by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.[64] The following day, 10 May,

62. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 89-91. NY Times, 10 May 72, 22; 11 May 72, 1 and 7; 12 May 72, 21.
63. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 98-99. NY Times, 20 May 72, 1; 25 May 72, 20.
64. See above p. 376.

the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted a measure setting 1 October as the final date for the withdrawal of all US ground and air forces from Indochina subject only to prior release of US prisoners. A few days later, however, the Senate accepted an Administration proposal to add a clause to the proposed "end of the war" legislation providing that the withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam should be conditional upon "an internationally supervised cease-fire."[65]

(U) This victory over the anti-war forces in the Senate did not end the skirmishing between the Congress and the Nixon Administration over the bombing of North Vietnam. On 23 May the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a military aid program that included an end-the-war amendment sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. But later, on 3 July, the House Foreign Affairs Committee defeated a bill calling for US withdrawal from Indochina by 1 October 1972 and substituted a resolution backing the withdrawal terms offered by President Nixon. Subsequently, the full House also rejected another end-the-war amendment offered to a military procurement bill.[66]

Renewed Authorities and Further Augmentations

~~(PS)~~ By the end of May, POCKET MONEY had effectively closed Haiphong harbor and LINEBACKER had simultaneously interdicted the rail lines leading from China to Hanoi and railroads to the south had been cut as well. Now the enemy had to take to the highways to receive and move his supplies, making roads, bridges, petroleum

65. NY Times, 9 May 72, 1; 10 May 72, 19; and 17 May 72, 16.
66. Kappman, South Vietnam, pp. 103, 108, 111. NY Times, 14 June 72, 1; 28 June 72, 1.

pipelines, and fuel storage areas prime targets. Accordingly, on 26 May 1972, Admiral Moorer advised CINCPAC that it was "increasingly important to interdict these highway nets, as well as [to] strike the rolling stock, transshipment points and storage areas associated therewith." He wanted a coordinated program developed to insure that all suitable road net targets were struck and that the highway system north of Hanoi and Haiphong was "covered thoroughly with armed reconnaissance against fleeting targets."[67]

(~~TS~~) All the temporary air and naval operating authorities granted to meet the enemy offensive would expire on 1 June, and on 26 May Admiral Moorer requested the Secretary of Defense to extend these authorities for the duration of the "on-going" campaign against North Vietnam. The Chairman also sought certain revisions required by the expansion of operations during May. He wanted sanction of various support operations for LINEBACKER, including weather reconnaissance, flak and SAM suppression, flare, escort, reconnaissance before and after strikes, ECM and ELINT support, search and rescue, air refueling, and airborne early warning. He also requested approval to implant sensors in North Vietnam below the Chinese buffer zone in order to detect enemy activity and develop targets.[68]

(~~TS~~) Before granting the Chairman's request for a blanket extension the Secretary wanted a codification of all other temporary authorities, including those for LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY which had no specific

67. (~~TS-NOFORN-EX~~) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) p. B-9. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 8685 to CINCPAC, 260019Z May 72.

68. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1879-72 to SecDef, 26 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72.

~~TOP SECRET~~

expiration dates, in order to facilitate his review. In the interim, however, he did extend all the temporary authorities until 1 July 1972. He added a proviso that there be no attack of helicopters and transports in North Vietnam because of possible consequences of mistakenly firing on third country or ICC aircraft. The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed on this extension to the field commanders on the same day, 1 June.[69]

(U) The LINEBACKER operations required additional air resources and the United States carried out more augmentations in May 1972. In all of these actions, a procedure was followed whereby the Chairman requested approval, the Secretary approved, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff then issued the necessary directive to the commanders involved.

(TS) Even before the initiation of LINEBACKR, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 3 May ordered the deployment of the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing, consisting of four F-4 Squadrons (72 aircraft and approximately 4,300 personnel) together with 16 KC-135 aircraft and approximately 583 additional personnel, from Europe to Thailand. This transfer necessitated the reopening of Takhli Air Base in Thailand on an austere basis with a capability to support tactical operations for a period of 90 days.[70]

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69. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 1 Jun 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6450 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 011705Z Jun 72.

70. (TS-GP 1) CM-1811-72 to SecDef, 3 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Additional USAF F-4 Deployments," 3 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1956 to USCINCEUR, USCINCRED, CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and CSAF, 032346Z May 72.

(S) Once LINEBACKER began, additional requirements arose. Accordingly, on 11 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered USCINCRED to deploy two C-130E squadrons (32 aircraft) to the Pacific Command to alleviate an airlift deficiency there.[71] Then on 15 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to deploy two US Marine Corps A-4 squadrons with necessary logistics and support personnel from Japan to Bien Hoa in South Vietnam.[72] Next on 20 May, they ordered the deployment of 7 B-52G aircraft from CONUS to Guam with additional KC-135 aircraft as required,[73] and three days later they directed deployment of another increment of 66 B-52G aircraft, including eight currently enroute, from CONUS to Guam. Thirty-two were to be moved immediately with the remaining ones to follow as soon as parking stubs could be made ready at Anderson Air Force Base in Guam.[74]

(TS) The movement of these 66 B-52s to Guam completed the US force augmentations to meet the enemy offensive. As indicated in the table below, these step-by-step increases more than doubled the US capacity to strike the enemy:

71. (S-GP 4) CM-1824-72 to SecDef, 10 May 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2142 to USCINCRED, CINCPAC and CSAF, 112216Z May 72.
72. (TS-GP 4) Msg, JCS 6206 to CINCPAC, 160022Z May 72.
73. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 3423 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 210004Z May 72.
74. (S-GP 1) CM-1872-72 to SecDef, 22 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 5677 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 231422Z May 72.

	1 Jan 72	24 May 72	% Increase
TACAIR			
Land-based	212	480	126
Sea-based	121	334	176
B-52s	42	148*	252
KC-135s	64	129	102
Other Aircraft	110	149	35
Naval Gunfire Ships	16	54	238[75]

*This figure of 148 included only 8 of the 66 B-52G aircraft ordered deployed on 23 May; the remaining 58 had yet to arrive in Southeast Asia and their subsequent arrival raised the total B-52 strength to 206.

(TS) In the meantime, the question of replacement of carriers in the Western Pacific had arisen. In early April, the United States had increased the carriers on line in the Western Pacific from three to six to provide additional air support in Vietnam. By late May, when it was apparent that tactical air would be needed at current levels for some time to come, CINCPAC pointed out that two of the carriers were "critically" overdue for rotation and wanted to relieve them with one carrier from the US west coast and another from the Atlantic. Admiral Moorer requested Secretary of Defense approval on 27 May, noting, however, that movement of the carrier from the Atlantic would prevent the United States from maintaining its commitment of six carriers available for NATO within 48 hours. Nevertheless, the Secretary approved, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the necessary instructions. The USS ORISKANY moved from the west coast to

75. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/813-6, 24 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 2.

relieve the USS CONSTELLATION and the USS AMERICA from the east coast replaced the USS CORAL SEA, maintaining six carriers on line to support the Vietnam operations.[76] On 27 May, with Secretary of Defense approval, the JCS continued all the temporary Southeast Asia air and naval augmentations until 30 June 1972.[77]

(S) The augmentations carried out during April and May to meet the enemy offensive were, of course, expensive both in terms of funding and manpower, and the Secretary of Defense was anxious to weigh the operational advantages against the costs. As early as 26 April, Mr. Laird had requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess any further force augmentations from the standpoint of budgetary, logistical, manpower, and operational impacts. While not questioning the "operational and political benefits," he said, "the reality of resource limitations and costs . . . remains."[78]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense discussed this matter on 1 May, but Mr. Laird was not entirely satisfied. He came away from the meeting, he told Admiral Moorer on 3 May, with the impression that "we still had considerable homework to do in delineating and assessing the full impact of the recent force augmentations." He again asked for an assessment of this matter. He also wanted a plan for retaining the augmented air and naval forces as well

76. (TS-GP 1) CM-1883-72 to SecDef, 27 May 72 (Sec Def approval indicated on draft msg attached to CM), CJCS File 323.3 CINCPAC. (S-GP 1) Msgs, JCS 1873 to CINCPAC, 271630Z May 72; JCS 1878 to CINCLANT, 271634Z May 72. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History 1972, p. 195.

77. (TS-GP 1) CM-1874-72 to SecDef, 24 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1837 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, CINCLANT, and USCINCRED, 271556Z May 72.

78. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef, to CJCS, 26 Apr 72, Att to JCS 2472/813, 26 Apr 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 1.

as measures, and associated impacts, to assure sortie and gunfire levels that could be supported without constraints.[79]

(TS) On 10 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary a US Force Augmentation Plan for Southeast Asia. The current air and naval augmentation forces together with the associated air sortie and gunfire levels could be maintained, they said, with only minor problems for a six-month period from April through September (actually 179 days--the "full TDY period."). Maintenance of these forces and levels would, however, cause a significant impact on vital programs and capabilities outside Southeast Asia and should the tempo of operations increase or be prolonged beyond the six-month period the seriousness of this operational degradation would grow progressively worse. Moreover, drawdown of various munitions and equipment was restricting the US ability to respond to situations in the NATO area and elsewhere.[80]

(C) Five days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented Mr. Laird an overall assessment of the US augmentation to date. They estimated the cumulative costs for the period through 30 September at $3.12 billion, a figure that would require extensive reprogramming in Service FY 1972 budgets if supplemental funding or other relief was not supplied. They spelled out in detail the logistic impacts involving primarily high attrition of aircraft and certain items of equipment as well as extremely high expenditures of both air

79. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 3 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/813-3, 4 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 1.

80. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-221-72 to SecDef, 10 May 72, Encl to JCS 2472/813-5, 9 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 2.

and surface munitions. They again said that manpower for the augmentations would not be a problem in the period through September though the buildup of these forces in Southeast Asia was causing "a severe degradation" in the US military capability to respond to crises in other areas and this impact would grow more severe as the duration of the augmenation increased. In conclusion, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary to forward their views to the President.[81]

~~(PS)~~ With the additional deployments following the initiation of POCKET MONEY and LINEBACKER, the Secretary of Defense requested an updated assessment of the augmentations on 24 May. Specifically to be included was the JCS judgment on recent deployment of B-52Gs and the "incremental military value" in relation to cost. Admiral Moorer asked to be relieved of this requirement. Recent changes, he believed, were not of such a magnitude as to require a major change in the earlier JCS positions. The Secretary thought otherwise and the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided him a new assessment on 31 May. They now placed the cost of the augmentations through 30 September 1972 at $3.75 billion. They reaffirmed the conclusions of their previous report and concluded that "prolonged deployment of the augmentation forces and replacement of projected material losses have aggravated and compounded the problems previously identified." With regard to the operational impact of the additional movements to Southeast Asia, the Joint Chiefs of

81. (~~PS~~-GP 4) JCSM-225-72 to SecDef, 15 May 72, Encl to JCS 2472/813-4, 9 May 72, JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 1.

Staff listed further degradation in responsiveness to NATO, in readiness of antisubmarine warfare forces, and in the PACOM Single Integrated Operational Plan. Responding to the question about operational benefits of the the extra B-52 forces, they cited the increased number of daily sorties. The incremental military value of the planes, they said, could only be determined in light of a specific situation and the manner in which COMUSMACV targeted the planes.[82]

(~~TS~~) The Secretary of Defense expressed surprise at the JCS evaluation of the value of the additional B-52s. "If I understand your position correctly," he told Admiral Moorer on 7 June, "you and the Joint Chiefs feel we should leave all 206 B-52's in SEA in hope that some proper situation will prevail at some time in the future and that MACV will target these B-52's in some effective manner." In reply, the Joint Chiefs of Staff observed that their 31 May submission had assessed the importance of the B-52 augmentation. But, since this assessment had not satisfied the Secretary, they now set out in greater detail the benefits of the added B-52Gs. These planes allowed increased sorties and an improved night/all weather capability and were of major assistance in achieving a balance between LINEBACKER efforts, close air support, and interdiction in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. There was a military requirement, they said, for all 206 B-52s currently operating in Southeast Asia and

82. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/813-6, 24 May 72; (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1882-72 to SecDef, 26 May 72, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/813-6, 26 May 72; (~~TS~~-GP 4) JCSM-256-72 to SecDef, 31 May 72, Encl to JCS 2472/813-7, 30 May 72; JMF 907/374 (26 Apr 72) sec 2.

they recommended retention of them until the situation improved.[83]

(TS) All the air and naval augmentation forces, with some minor adjustments, were, in fact, retained in Southeast Asia throughout the remainder of 1972. Extensions were made month-by-month, and each necessitated a separate request to and approval by the Secretary of Defense.[84]

The Enemy Offensive Plays Out, Operations May-June 1972

(U) The North Vietnamese capture of the last RVNAF base in Quang Tri Province on 2 May marked the high point of the enemy offensive. Fierce fighting would continue for several more months, but the enemy would win no more dramatic battles or make any further advances into South Vietnam. Now, slowly, the RVNAF began to regroup and push out to recapture lost territory.

(TS) On 4 May, Admiral Moorer compared for the Secretary of Defense the effectiveness of the RVNAF and North Vietnamese Army units. While the kill ratio in the fighting from 30 March through 30 April had favored the RVNAF by 6.7 to 1, "analysis of the quantitative factors and enemy activity" indicated that the enemy could

83. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Augmented B-52 Force in SEA," 7 Jun 72; (TS) JCSM-279-72 to SecDef, 19 Jun 72, Encl to JCS 2472/822, 12 Jun 72; JMF 907/327 (7 Jun 72).

84. (TS-EX) CM-1967-72 to SecDef, 23 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5109 to CINCPAC, CINCLANT, USCINCRED, 261614Z Jun 72. (TS-EX) CM-2042-72, 21 Jul 72; CM-2137-72, 28 Aug 72; CM-2205-72, 27 Sep 72; CM-2267-72, 25 Oct 72; CM-2293-72, 11 Nov 72; CM-2389-72, 21 Dec 72; all to SecDef, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary Augmentation Authorities," 25 Jul 72, 31 Aug 72, 29 Sep 72, 18 Nov 72, and 23 Dec 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

replace personnel losses on a one-for-one basis. Although enemy equipment losses would affect his combat support capability over the longer term, Admiral Moorer doubted that these losses were "yet considered sufficient to render this combat support ineffective." In the fighting to date, the Admiral continued, the RVNAF had vitually exhausted their reserves while the enemy still had a relatively uncommitted division north of the Demilitarized Zone. He believed, however, that the great majority of the RVNAF remained an effective fighting force and that with continued US support the South Vietnamese should be able to contain the offensive in the long term. "The central point to be understood . . . ," he told the Secretary, "is that all our efforts of the past several years are at stake, and the effectiveness of RVNAF and GVN leadership at this time is the crucial ingredient."[85]

(S) Following the loss of Quang Tri Province, President Thieu decided to bring fresh military leadership into MR 1. General Abrams had urged such a course in order to bolster the ARVN's will to fight. On 4 May, President Thieu replaced Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, the commander of the region, with Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, the commander of MR 4, and also relieved Brigadier General Vu Van Giai, the Commander of the Third Division. The latter had been responsible for the defense of Quang Tri City and President Thieu did not believe he had performed with sufficient determination. President Thieu also considered naming an Assistant for Operations to the Chief of the JGS in MR 1 to insure that orders from Saigon were carried out and that reinforcements were used properly. This proposal raised delicate questions

85. (TS-GP 1) CM-1813-72 to SecDef, 4 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72.

of command relations, and before President Thieu had reached a final decision, the Saigon press reported the prospective appointment. Consequently, it was never made.[86]

(C) Lieutenant General Truong took immediate actions to regroup the South Vietnamese forces in MR 1. He set up straggler control points at Hue and Da Nang to reorganize units and troops falling back from the Quang Tri battles and, with Major General Frederick J. Kroesen, Jr., the Senior US Commander in MR 1, he established a joint forward command post at Hue. Simultaneously, Brigadier General Nguyen Duy Hinh, the new commander of the Third Division, began to rebuild his forces near Phu Bai southeast of Hue.

(TS) Under new leadership and with battered units reformed, the South Vietnamese forces began to reassert themselves in MR 1. On 5 May, the 1st ARVN Division launched operations southwest of Hue to relieve enemy pressure on two fire support bases. Assisted by US tactical air and B-52 support, the South Vietnamese forces made steady progress. They not only removed the threat to the two bases, but in a second thrust on 14-15 May they retook Fire Support Base BASTOGNE which had fallen to the enemy on 28 April. These actions eased the pressure on Hue and also captured eight tons of enemy ammunition. To assist the South Vietnamese forces in meeting the serious tank threat in MR 1, General Abrams proposed to supply them a limited number of tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided (TOW) antitank launchers and missiles. The weapons would

86. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. 44. (S) Memos, DCI to SecDef, 3 May, 4 May, and 8 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 3 May 72, NSC Files.

go to selected teams of the 1st ARVN and Marine Division units that had already demonstrated a will to stand and fight against enemy armor. Admiral Moorer sought the necessary approval from the Secretary of Defense on 6 May and authorization was duly granted.[87]

(C) Meantime, the RVNAF Marine Division had resumed operations in its area of responsibility along the coast between Hue and the Quang Tri border. On 8 May US and South Vietnamese forces launched an intensive campaign of tactical air, B-52, naval, and artillery fire against enemy concentrations in southeastern Quang Tri Province. The following day the 2d Brigade of the Vietnamese Airborne Division moved from MR 3 to MR 1 and came under the operational control of the Marine Division. Now reinforced, the RVN Marines launched their first offensive action on 13 May. Two battalions, air assaulted by US helicopters, landed behind enemy lines in Quang Tri while a third battalion crossed the Tach Ma River into the enemy-held province. These forces linked up, killing more than 300 North Vietnamese troops before returning to friendly positions the next day.

(C) On 21 May, a strong North Vietnamese force with armor support attacked the Marine Division. Several days of heavy fighting followed, but the South Vietnamese held their positions. The Marine Division counterattacked on 24-25 May with another airmobile and amphibious assault into Quang Tri, killing 505 North Vietnamese troops, destroying large caches of enemy

87. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS and CINCPAC, 051010Z May 72, JCS IN 91741. (~~TS~~-GP 1) CM-1816-72 to SecDef, 6 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72. (~~TS~~-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6267 to CINCPAC, 080108Z May 72.

ammunition and food, and freeing 5,000 civilians from enemy control. Contact with the enemy continued for the remainder of the month, but the Marine defenses held.

(C) Heavy fighting in MR 1 proceeded throughout the month of June but without significant result. The South Vietnamese Marines carried out additional assaults into Quang Tri on 8 June and again ten days later, on 18 June, killing significant numbers of enemy troops and destroying supplies and equipment. The enemy, in turn, attacked into the coastal area above Hue on 20 June with tanks and infantry, engaging both the Marine and Airborne Divisions. The fighting lasted through 26 June, but the enemy made no gains. Meantime, the 1st ARVN Division continued limited operations west and southwest of Hue to increase the depth of the defenses around the city. Activity was light until 10 June when heavy contact began and continued for over a week. With US air support, the ARVN troops stood fast. Another enemy attack against the 1st ARVN Division began on 26 June, but again the South Vietnamese troops were not dislodged.

(C) In MR 2 North Vietnamese troops encircled the provincial capital of Kontum City at the beginning of May and were increasing the pressure on the outlying defenses of the city. Many civilians had already been airlifted as the South Vietnamese defenders braced for the push on the city itself. Again President Thieu did not feel that the responsible field commander was resisting the enemy attack with sufficient determination, and on 10 May he removed Lieutenant General Ngo Dzu from command of MR 2, replacing him with Major General Nguyen Van Toan, the deputy for operations to the commander of MR 1.

(C) The battle for Kontum began on 14 May. Preceded by heavy attacks by fire, the enemy launched an armor-supported drive on the city. Assisted by tactical air strikes and supporting fire, the defending South Vietnamese repulsed the enemy, but he attacked again on 25 and 26 May. Sappers penetrated Kontum's defenses and by the following day, the enemy occupied strong points in the north, northeast, and southeast portions of the city. Fighting raged for three days and then the enemy attack subsided. Gradually, ARVN troops cleared the enemy from the city and opened the Kontum airfield on 8 June. The level of activity was light throughout the remainder of June as the South Vietnamese proceeded with clearing operations northwest and north of the city.

(C) There was other serious fighting in MR 2 during May in the area around Kontum Pass and the Route 14 area. On 4 May, ARVN forces attacked the Pass, which the enemy had closed in April, from north and south. They did open the Pass but did not succeed in clearing Route 14. Efforts to open the highway continued throughout the rest of May and most of June. Finally, by 26 June, enemy resistance began to falter, and on 30 June, a convoy of 36 vehicles traveled from Pleiku to Kontum City for the first time since mid-April.

(C) In MR 3, the siege of the provincial capital of An Loc continued during all of May. The enemy shelled the city daily, but failed in repeated efforts to breach An Loc's defenses. South Vietnamese forces attempting to move up Route 13 from the south to relieve the city were similarly unsuccessful and the siege continued into June. By the end of the first week of June, however, the enemy grip on An Loc began to slip. On 8 June, patrols from the city and the ARVN

6th Airborne Battalion moving up from the south linked up 1.5 miles below An Loc. Additional elements joined up the next day and began to consolidate and occupy the high ground dominating the southern approach to the city. The following day, 10 June, the first substantial airlift since the siege began was conducted into the city. Some 119 reinforcements arrived and over 100 wounded troops were evacuated. By 11 June the siege was definitely broken and more than 1,000 refugees moved out of An Loc along Route 13 to resettlement centers. The remainder of June brought sporadic enemy attacks by fire and small ground contacts around An Loc as the South Vietnamese proceeded to expand and clear their perimeter.

US Actions in June

(~~TS~~) By June, the military situation was finally beginning to improve for the South Vietnamese, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not want to let up the pressure on the enemy. On 6 June, they told the Secretary of Defense that it was essential to exploit the damage already inflicted on North Vietnam by increasing the "intensity and scope" of the current air campaign. Noting the military force now assembled in WESTPAC, as well as the prospect of three months of favorable weather, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw a situation that presented "undoubtedly a final and unique opportunity to bring sufficient pressure to bear on the North Vietnamese to engage in meaningful negotiations." They proposed a "continuing and aggressive" air campaign against the entire "war-making capacity" of North Vietnam, including transportation and logistics targets, the electrical power net, and communications and command and control facilities.

(~~TS~~) Specifically, they requested authority to strike 44 additional targets not then on approved lists. These comprised sites in the restricted areas around Hanoi and Haiphong, including the Hanoi/Gia Lam airfield, the Hanoi and Haiphong railroad yards, the Hanoi thermal power plant, and four industrial sites, one of which was the only steel plant in North Vietnam. They also wanted authority for armed reconnaissane along railroads and highways within the Chinese buffer zone to within seven nautical miles of the Chinese border. This intensified effort against targets in North Vietnam would be complemented by expanded air operations in South Vietnam and adjacent areas, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed additional mining to seal off coastal areas in the event the People's Republic of China attempted to resupply North Vietnam "via close-in coastal waters." These efforts, they concluded,

> will deal a severe blow to the enemy's war-making capability and his resolve to continue. In our judgment, we are at a crucial juncture which requires a firm decision to take the entire target array under attack as the best course of action to assure attainment of our objectives in Southeast Asia.[88]

(~~TS~~) On 12 June the Secretary athorized strike of 28 of the recommended targets in the period through 1 July 1972, but he withheld approval for the remaining ones including the Hanoi/Gia Lam airfield. He also disapproved any expanded armed reconnaissance near the

88. (~~TS~~-EX) JCSM-265-72 to SecDef, 6 June 72, filed in CJCS CM Chron File in place of CM-1901-72.

Chinese border, though he was willing to consider requests for specific strikes within the buffer zone, as he had done in the past. The Secretary found it increasingly difficult to monitor the scope and pattern of the US interdiction campaign, and earlier, on 2 June, he had asked Admiral Moorer for a listing of all authorized targets in North Vietnam. Now, on 12 June, he requested a survey of all targets in North Vietnam to identify those of primary military value, those indirectly supporting the enemy offensive, and those of psychological value. Within those categories, he wanted the targets arranged in priority of importance. This information, he told Admiral Moorer, would aid him in evaluating future target requests and permit a more thorough assessment of the air campaign.[89]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff passed authorization to attack the additional targets to the field on 15 June and, on 21 June, Admiral Moorer gave the Secretary of Defense the requested survey of all targets in North Vietnam. Thereafter, on 26 June, Admiral Moorer requested approval to strike two radio receivers in the Hanoi area, targets that the Secretary had disapproved on 12 June. But the Secretary was still unwilling to approve these targets, telling the Chairman on 30 June that the currently approved target list was adequate. In addition, the Secretary wanted to approve any new targets "selected primarily for high psychological impact like electronic power installations,

89 (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "LINEBACKER Target Validation," 12 Jun 72; (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Targeting in North Vietnam," 2 Jun 72; JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

communications/command and control sites, and industrial facilities."[90]

(S) In the meantime, Admiral Moorer had responded to speciic questions from the Secretary of Defense on the concept for and operation of the air interdiction campaign against North Vietnam. There were two major objectives, he told Mr. Laird on 15 June: (1) to reduce the enemy's ability to wage main force war in South Vietnam and limit future enemy options to guerrilla and economy of force tactics; (2) to destroy the will of the North Vietnamese government and populace to continue the war and induce a willingness to participate in productive negotiations. To achieve these overall purposes, Admiral Moorer listed a number of specific military objectives, including disruption or destruction of transportation systems, repair facilities, stocks of materiel and supplies (specifically POL), key power plants, airfields, and communications. He could not develop a definite schedule for attainment of these objectives because of various intangibles such as the US ability to detect and counter enemy reactions. He added that the bombing should not be limited solely to transportation and logistics targets and stated:

> The US now has a perishable opportunity to attain its objectives in Southeast Asia. A military force has been assembled in WESTPAC which is adequate to the task. . . . At this critical period for US policy in Indochina, the United States must not

90. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3293 to CINCPAC, 152100Z Jun 72. (TS-EX) CM-1932-72 to SecDef, 21 Jun 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (TS-EX) CM-1964-72 to SecDef, 26 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 30 Jun 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

unnecessarily restrict the application of its main strength, lest the enemy be given the chance to survive the next few months and later to accommodate his logistic system to a reduced air campaign.[91]

(TS) During June 1972, several questions arose concerning the mining of North Vietnamese waters. Since only limited areas of the coast of North Vietnam were mined, CINCPAC feared that infiltration of supplies was occuring by small craft in inlets not accessible to large vessels. To detect any such infiltration, Admiral Moorer requested authority on 10 June for manned tactical reconnaissance along the entire North Vietnamese coast to within five miles of the Chinese border, but the Secretary of Defense disapproved this request on 30 June 1972.[92]

(TS) Another question concerned the reseeding of the mines in the Haiphong channel. On 18 June, CINCPAC reported to Washington the presence of approximately 50 small North Vietnamese craft in the channel and the assumption that these craft were carrying out minesweeping. The following day, while assessment of the North Vietnamese activity continued, Admiral Moorer passed this information to the Secretary of Defense and requested authority to reseed minefield segments 2111A and 2111B in the Haiphong Channel. But Mr. Laird did not approve; he advised the Chairman on

91. (TS) CM-1951-72 to SecDef, 15 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72.

92. (TS-EX) CM-1920-72 to SecDef, 10 Jun 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "LINEBACKER Tactical Reconnaissance," 30 June 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

on 26 June that he would reconsider his decision "when dictated by enemy mine countermeasures activity or the approaching automatic sterilization of the two mine fields."[93]

(~~TS~~) During June, Admiral Moorer also complained to the Secretary of Defense of Chinese efforts to frustrate the US campaign to cut off seaborne supply to North Vietnam. Since mid-April, he told Mr. Laird on 10 June, the People's Republic of China had rotated merchant vessels to the offshore islands along the southern North Vietnam panhandle as a tactic to keep anchorages at Hon Nieu and Hon La Islands continuously occupied. As a result, the United States had to expend significant air and surface resources to maintain constant surveillance in order to be ready to strike North Vietnamese lighters when they cleared the Chinese ships. Moreover, on 9 June, a Chinese ship at Hon Nieu had fired on a US surveillance aircraft. Accordingly Admiral Moorer recommended a formal US protest to the People's Republic of China as well as authority to destroy any ship in North Vietnamese waters that fired on US ships or planes. He also wanted permission to mine the waters around Hon Nieu, Hon La, and Hon Me with notice to the Chinese to leave those waters within 48 hours. By 29 June, the Secretary had not replied, and Admiral Moorer repeated his request. Again, the Secretary did not approve the mine seeding.[94]

93. (~~TS~~) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 182218Z and 182220Z Jun 72, JCS IN 89557 and 89569. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1954-72 to SecDef, 19 Jun 72; (~~TS~~-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "POCKET MONEY," 26 Jun 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72.

94. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1927-72 to SecDef, 10 Jun 72; CM-1979-72 to SecDef, 29 Jun 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72.

(TS) All the temporary operating authorities granted to counter the enemy offensive would expire on 30 June. At the end of May the Chairman had sought extension of these authorities for the duration of the air and naval campaign against North Vietnam but the Secretary had renewed them only for the month of June pending a codification of all other temporary authorities including those for LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY.[95] Admiral Moorer submitted the requested codification on 9 June, although the Secretary still did not grant any blanket extension of the authorities. Consequently, on 23 June 1972, Admiral Moorer requested the Secretary of Defense to continue all the temporary authorities, including those for LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY, for another month through 31 July 1972. Mr. Laird did so on 26 June 1972. Thereafter these authorities, with the exception of LINEBACKER as will be discussed below, were extended on a month-by-month basis until the end of hostilities in January 1973.[96]

95. See above pp. 392-393.

96. (TS-EX) CM-1966-72 to SecDef, 23 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 71-Jun 72. For SecDef approval, see handwritten notation on draft msg attached to CM-1966-72. For subsequent extensions, see (TS-EX) CM-2057-72, 27 Jul 72 (SecDef approval on attached draft msg); CM-2133-72, 28 Aug 72 (SecDef approval on attached draft msg); CM-2270-72, 24 Oct 72; CM-2315-72, 22 Nov 72; CM-2414-72, 30 Dec 72 (SecDef approval on attached draft msg); all in CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72, except CM-2270-72, 24 Oct 72 which is in CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul-Dec 72. (TS-EX) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Operating Authorities," 29 Sep 72; "Southeast Asia Operating Authorities," 30 Oct 72; JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary SEAsia Operating Authorities," 29 Nov 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

(~~TS~~) Throughout May and June 1972, all dams and dikes in North Vietnam remained exempt from US air attack. The closest the United States came to such an attack was a strike against the Lan Chi hydroelectric power plant. Consideration of such a strike in a WSAG meeting in early June produced some hesitancy because of the possibility of damage to the adjacent dam and spillways. Both Dr. Kissinger and Secretary Laird were absent from Washington at that time and, thereafter, Admiral Moorer assured Mr. Laird that there was little chance of conventional bombs weakening the dam or spillways or of any extensive flooding resulting from inadvertent damage to the dam. Therefore he urged the Secretary of Defense to discuss the strike with Dr. Kissinger and approve attack of the Lang Chi power plant. Approval was secured and the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the attack on 8 June. They cautioned CINCPAC to restrict the effort to the transformers and the substation and to take special precautions to reduce damage to the dam and spillways.[97]

(U) Even with the prohibition against strike of dams and dikes as well as the precautions observed in bombing targets near such sites, reports did circulate of damage to dams caused by the US air attacks. President Nixon was questioned on this matter on 29 June, and he termed the reports "inaccurate." The United States tried, he said, "to hit only military targets and we have been hitting military targets. We have had orders out not to hit dikes because the result

97. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1905-72 to SecDef, 6 Jun 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 72. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 4446 to CINCPAC, 081243Z Jun 72.

in terms of civilian casualties would be extraordinary." These orders, he said, remained in effect. A few days later, a Department of State spokesman hedged somewhat on the President's statement. He put the US air strikes in North Vietnam in the context of the US air effort, explaining that there might be inadvertent damage to dams and dikes when located near military targets.[98]

(TS) In another question of unauthorized bombing, the People's Republic of China made allegations in early June of US intrusion into Chinese air space, of a bombing of Chinese territory, and of fragment damage to a Chinese merchant vessel. From the beginnng of the air actions against North Vietnam in response to the spring offensive, the United States had taken careful precautions to avoid violation of Chinese territory or air space. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had prohibited any overflight of the People's Republic of China and had reinstated a buffer zone in North Vietnam along the Chinese border as had been the case in the ROLLING THUNDER bombing. No air attacks were allowed in this buffer zone without special permission in order to guard against inadvertent penetration into China's air space. At the Secretary of Defense's direction, Admiral Moorer investigated the Chinese charges and reported on 15 June no evidence to support the alleged violations. He assured the Secretary that every effort would continue to avoid any violation in the future.[99]

(TS) The United States carried on the LINEBACKER campaign without letup throughout June, inflicting considerable damage upon North Vietnam. A Defense

98. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 708. Knappman, South Vietnam, p. 147.

99. (TS-EX) CM-1943-72 to SecDef, 15 Jun 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

Intelligence Agency assessment in early July evaluated the air effort as follows:

> The current campaign against North Vietnam has inflicted a progressively greater burden on the regime and the population. Hanoi's manpower and material resources have been heavily taxed, and the population's morale has been strained by the disruptions inflicted on the internal supply and distribution system and other targets. These strains have been compounded by the extra efforts required to counter restrictions on the flow of supplies into North Vietnam and southward to the battlefield area.
>
> Air and naval operations are adding substantially to the heavy price paid by the North Vietnamese in the battle area in the South.

(~~TS~~) In more specific terms, the United States had carried out 14,621 air strikes and 836 naval gunfire attacks against North Vietnam in the period between 9 May and 15 June 1972. The US air strikes had effectively closed both the northeast and northwest rail lines from China, forcing movement of supplies by means of truck and watercraft. In the North Vietnam panhandle the air campaign had disrupted and delayed highway traffic, the primary transportation mode in that area, but the enemy had resorted to alternate roads, bypasses, and ferries. Strikes against watercraft and transshipment points along inland waterways had destroyed about 1,100 barges, waterborne logistics craft, and assorted rivercraft and forced the enemy to limit his activity to hours of darkness. The net

effect of the effort in the panhandle was a substantial reduction in the enemy capability to move supplies into and through southern North Vietnam.

(~~TS~~) The air campaign had also done significant damage to the North Vietnamese POL and electric power systems. Petroleum stocks had been reduced from 103,000 metric tons to some 40,000 metric tons, a seven-week supply, and the major power plants of Lang Chi and Uong Bi, accounting for over 40 percent of the total national capacity, would require extended periods of repair. Moreover from 9 May onwards, most of North Vietnam's industrial plants had either ceased to operate altogether or were operating at reduced levels. Major facilities for barge construction and ship repair, coal processing, and production of construction materials, as well as sugar, paper, and textile mills had been struck. The cumulative impact of the strikes on industrial plants was reinforced by the degradation of the electric power supply, shortages of raw material imports, and departures of foreign technical experts.

(~~TS~~) Despite this extensive damage, North Vietnam was still able to carry on operations in South Vietnam. The Defense Intelligence Agency reported continued movement of supplies into South Vietnam even though the air and naval attacks were creating logistics problems. Shortages of ammunition had not yet manifested themselves in overall reductions of enemy exenditure, but the Agency claimed certain combat units had experienced serious ammunition supply problems and stated that enemy concern about the ability to meet future distribution requirements had become evident. North Vietnam was making efforts to cope with the

situation by strengthening and expanding its rear service apparatus in the North Vietnamese panhandle and MR 1. The North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam were in good logistics posture at the beginning of the offensive, and the DIA analysts believed substantial stocks remained despite drawdowns caused by operational requirements and losses from the US air campaign.

(TS) The Defense Intelligence Agency also reported the continued success of POCKET MONEY throughout June in denying North Vietnam supplies by sea. Since the mining on 9 May, no ships had attempted to enter or leave major ports, and the only known shipments by sea to North Vitnam were small amounts lightered ashore from Chinese ships at the anchorage off Hon Nieu and Hon La in the panhandle. In addition, mining operations, naval gunfire, and air strikes had seriously curtailed use of small river ports and transshipment points, and coastal traffic, the primary means of distributing supplies to the southern panhandle, had been halted. Consequently North Vietnam had been forced to shift to overland routes for the import of essential supplies from the People's Republic of China.[100]

(TS) Hampered by both supply problems and growing resistance from the RVNAF, the enemy offensive in South Vietnam had come to a halt by the end of June. In MR 1, the RVNAF was on the offensive, and the South Vietnamese forces had repulsed the attack on Kontum in MR 2 and broken the siege of An Loc in MR 3. On

100. (TS-EX) DIA Document, "Assessment of Campaign Against North Vietnam," n.d., Att to CM-2014-72 to SecDef, 11 Jul 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72.

20 June, Admiral Moorer asked the field commanders for an assessment of future operations. What could the enemy do in South Vietnam in the next 30 days, he wondered, and what could the RVNAF do to meet the enemy action?[101]

(TS) General Abrams prepared the response, presenting a picture of growing RVNAF strength, and CINCPAC endorsed this position. Although the enemy was continuing preparations for an attack against Hue, the RVNAF position in MR 1 had steadily improved since early May. The South Vietnamese had made good progress in rebuilding depleted forces, in improving command and control and fire support coordination, and in conducting aggressive ground actions, and these activities had steadily eroded enemy units and logistics. Moreover, the South Vietnamese had initiated a coordinated operation in early June in preparation for a major counteroffensive to retake Quang Tri City, and the actual offensive was scheduled to begin on 28 June. Even if the enemy attacked Hue before this South Vietnamese operation began, COMUSMACV predicted that the RVNAF would prevail.

(TS) In MR 2, General Abrams reported that the enemy had logistics and personnel problems and that the RVNAF could gradually reassert influence over lost territory. The enemy failure to take An Loc and the resulting manpower and equipment losses, COMUSMACV believed, had significantly degraded the enemy capability to launch and sustain a main force offensive in MR 3. In addition, the RVNAF reinforcements previously

101. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 8243 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 202221Z Jun 72.

engaged in the An Loc battle were now available for use in other areas and the Airborne Brigade was being moved to assist in the counter-offensive in Quang Tri. COMUSMACV believed that the enemy still planned major activity in MR 4 but did not have the ability to mount such a campaign. General Abrams stated that the failure of the North Vietnamese invasion had discouraged "the already ineffective VCI in RVN" and that no more than sapper activity and terrorism were to be expected from the Viet Cong during the next 30 days. In this same period, he said, the "RVNAF, with our continued full support, can hold its own and make progress in regaining lost territory."[102]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, in Washington, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had prepared their own assessment. "The steady improvement in the friendly situation in recent weeks has been marked," they told CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on 22 June, and:

> The main enemy offensives appear to have been blunted. The GVN has retained its stability, and the people have not rallied to support the enemy. The enemy continues to suffer heavy losses in both manpower and material, and the impact of air and naval campaigns in NVN should further aggravate his resupply problems. The delays imposed on the enemy have provided time for the RVNAF to strengthen their defenses and prepare for counteroffensive action.

102. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 211145Z Jun 72, JCS IN 94951. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 220430Z Jun 72, JCS IN 96570.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of staff cautioned the field commanders, however, that maintenance of the present level of US forces "in-theater," as well as the associated budgetary support, for any extended period would be "extremely difficult." Thus they said, "prospects of a long stalemate along presently held lines would give rise to the difficulties previously experienced here and can only hasten the reduction in US support levels." The current situation, they continued, presented what, in all probability, was "a final oportunity" to regain the momentum lost after 30 March 1972. The "overall goal" for the next three months, they told the field commanders, must be to reestablish South Vietnamese control over the key areas lost in the recent offensive in order to present "the strongest possible negotiating position" in Paris and "to demonstrate to the world community the military strength of the GVN." The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the highest priority for the RVNAF should be to retake Quang Tri City and the coastal lowlands south of the Cua Viet River with the ultimate objective of seizing all the territory in Quang Tri Province along the coast to the Demilitarized Zone. Other objectives were to restore South Vietnamese control in MR 3 and MR 4 to the west and northwest of Saigon, to remove the threat to Kontum City, and to restore control in Binh Dinh Province in MR 2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted the field commanders to underscore the urgency of regaining the territorial initiative with the GVN and the RVNAF Joint General Staff.[103]

103. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1255 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 221223Z Jun 72 (derived from JCS 2472/826), JMF 911/300 (10 Jun 72).

The RVNAF Counteroffensive, July-October 1972

(C) The South Vietnamese forces in MR 1 attacked northward on 28 June to retake the lost Quang Tri Province. The Marine and Airborne Divisions, supported by Ranger units and elements of the 1st and 2d ARVN Divisions, pushed into the enemy occupied province from Thua Thien in a series of ground and helicopter assaults. The RVNAF moved steadily ahead and by 7 July had reached Quang Tri City. There the South Vietnamese offensive halted, blocked by determined enemy resistance. After several weeks of heavy fighting, the South Vietnamese breached the northeast wall of the citadel of the provincial capital on 25 July, but were not able to dislodge the enemy.

(TS) At a WSAG meeting on 4 August, Dr. Kissinger asked why the South Vietnamese were still trying to capture the Citadel. He wondered whether they were squandering manpower in this effort. Admiral Moorer replied that the South Vietnamese did not want to leave the Citadel behind in their advance and that only a small force was being devoted to the actual assault. A representative of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), Major General David E. Ott, USA, pointed out the psychological importance to the RVNAF of retaking the Quang Tri fortress. Dr. Kissinger was not completely convinced. Still referring to the struggle for the Citadel, he said: "We are not interested so much in achieving great victories. We just have to avoid a major setback."[104]

(S) Still the battle for the Quang Tri Citadel continued. On 7 September, the South Vietnamese forces

104. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 4 Aug 72, NCS Files.

regrouped and began a new coordinated assault on 9 September. That day, the Airborne Division secured three enemy strong points just to the south of the fortress, and on 12 September, the RVN Marines broke through the northeast corner. Fierce fighting raged for two more days, and by the afternoon of 14 September, the entire Citadel was in friendly hands and the South Vietnamese officially declared Quang Tri City recaptured the following day.

(C) Throughout the remainder of September, action was light in MR 1 as the South Vietnamese units rested, refitted, and eliminated small pockets of enemy resistance in Quang Tri City. Then, on 30 September 1972, the Airborne and Marine Divisions attacked to the west and southwest of the city to seize fire support bases lost the previous April. Again the South Vietnamese met determined enemy resistance and heavy fighting continued. By the middle of October, monsoon rains began to restrict tactical air support for the ground forces and progress slowed. Finally, on 31 October, the Airborne Division reoccupied Fire Support Base BARBARA, one of the main objectives of this action, although another, nearby Fire Support Base ANNE, remained under enemy control.

(C) Meantime, the South Vietnamese had also resumed the offensive in MR 2. There, on 19 July, they began a three-phased operation, BAC BINH VUONG 22/8, to retake territory lost to the enemy in northern Binh Dinh Province. Following B-52, tactical air, and naval gunfire bombardment, elements of the 40th Regiment air assaulted into enemy held areas while the rest of the regiment and the 19th Cavalry attacked through Bong Son Pass. The operation went according to plan and the

South Vietnamese had accomplished their objective by 24 July. They had returned Hoai Nhon and Hoai An to their control and Route 1 was now open. The RVNAF conducted clearing actions in the recaptured areas during the last days of July and carried out additional, though smaller, operations to regain lost territory in August. These operations proved successful and thereafter military activity in MR 2 was at a low level.

(C) With the failure of the enemy siege of An Loc, the major battles were over in MR 3. The enemy continued frequent attacks-by-fire and occasional ground probes as the South Vietnamese expanded their control to the east of the city, but the last six months of 1972 was a stable period in MR 3.

LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY Continue

(U) The United States gave the RVNAF counteroffensive full backing. Adhering to the decision not to recommit ground forces to combat in South Vietnam, the US assistance took the form of increased air support. The United States furnished helicopter, fixed wing gunship, B-52, and tactical close air support and both US Army and US Marine Corps helicopters airlifted the attacking RVNAF units into combat. Consequently, US air activity levels continued to increase in South Vietnam during the summer months, with B-52 sorties reaching a peak of 3,407 for August. The largest concentration of these sorties was flown in MR 1 to assist the RVNAF assault on Quang Tri.[105]

105. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. 70.

(~~S~~) The United States also proceeded with efforts to block the movement of war supplies to and through North Vietnam. The POCKET MONEY mining was maintained and the LINEBACKER campaign grew more intense each successive month in the period June through August. These air attacks struck petroleum, transporation, and logistics targets throughout North Vietnam except in restricted control areas around Hanoi and Haiphong and in the buffer zone along the Chinese border. Strikes in those areas required specific approval by the Secretary of Defense, and the summer of 1972 brought continuing attempts by the field commanders, supported by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to gain permission to hit various exempted targets.[106]

(~~TS~~) In the latter part of July, Admiral Moorer asked the Secretary to approve a total of 20 additional targets in the Haiphong control area as well as to grant standing authority to strike petroleum storage and transportation facilities in a limited portion of that same area. Mr. Laird approved some of the specific targets, withheld others, and did not give the standing authority desired by the Chairman.[107]

(~~TS~~) During August, Admiral Moorer continued to press for attack of restricted targets. On 9 August, he sought permission for a B-52 strike of a railroad yard and repair area in Hanoi; on 16 August for attack of the Gia Lam airfield in Hanoi; on 30 August for 16

106. (~~TS-NOFORN~~-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) pp. B-8 - B-10.

107. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-2030-72 to SecDef, 18 Jul 72; CM-2038-72 to SecDef, 20 Jul 72; CM-2053-72 to SecDef, 26 Jul 72; Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "LINEBACKER Target Validations," 20 and 25 Jul 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72.

targets in the Hanoi control area and another 13 in Haiphong; and on 5 September rail and road facilities in Hanoi. But the Secretary of Defense did not approve any of these. Later, on 27 September, Admiral Moorer asked and this time did receive authority to strike a Hanoi radio receiver target that the enemy used for commnications and intelligence purposes.[108]

(TS) The field commanders had found the restrictions on air operations in the area of North Vietnam near the Chinese border a particular hindrance to the effectiveness of the interdiction campaign and had repeatedly sought expanded authorities in this Chinese buffer zone from the beginning of LINEBACKER. These efforts continued in the period July through early October 1972. On 10 July, Admiral Moorer explained to Secretary Laird that the current restrictions on air strikes within the buffer zone limited US ability to interdict the complete North Vietnamese transportation system and requested approval for selected strikes in the zone along lines of communication up to the Chinese border. He also wanted sanction for manned tactical reconnaissance and low altitude drone flights inside the buffer zone to within 10 miles of the Chinese border.[109]

(TS) The Chairman's request came at a most inopportune time--just when the People's Republic of China accused the United States of further violations of

108. (TS-EX) CM-2086-72 to SecDef, 9 Aug 72; CM-2118-72 to SecDef, 16 Aug 72; CM-2135-72 to SecDef, 30 Aug 72; CJCS File 091, Aug 72. (TS-EX) CM-2160-72 to SecDef, 5 Sep 72; CM-2200-72 to SecDef, 27 Sep 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Linebacker Target Authorization," 30 Sep 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 72.

109. (TS-EX) CM-2008-72 to SecDef, 10 Jul 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72. (TS-EX) CM-2009-72 to SecDef, 10 Jul 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

its territory. The Chinese charged that US planes struck two Chinese fishing boats on 20 June and bombed their territory on 5 July. These allegations caused the President and Dr. Kissinger considerable concern and Admiral Moorer's Assistant, Vice Admiral Weinel, cabled the Chairman, who had just left for Europe, of the reaction in Washington. "HAK [Henry A. Kissinger] is about to have a baby. . . . Things are serious and the word from the 'top' is that once more heads will roll." Secretary Laird called the Director of the Joint Staff "to read the riot act concerning border violations" and directed despatch of a strong message to the field. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC on 11 July:

> The Chinese buffer zone is established to preclude an inadvertent overflight of the People's Republic of China. The recent increase in buffer zone and PRC intrusions or allegations thereof has aroused grave concern at highest level. Result is an imperative requirement for whatever measures are needed to:
>
> a. provide absolute assurance that PRC border violations will not occur, and
>
> b. establish a source of data on all US aircraft tracks in vicinity of buffer zone so that we can with full confidence respond to allegations of violations.

They directed CINCPAC and CINCSAC to take specific actions to preclude Chinese border incursions and to report all ordnance expenditures and fuel tank releases

that might have impacted in the buffer zone or the People's Republic of China.[110]

(~~TS~~) At CINCPAC'S direction, CINCPACFLT and the Commander, 7th Air Force, investigated all LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY activities in the appropriate time periods and found no positive evidence to substantiate the Chinese charges. In commenting on this matter, CINCPAC told Admiral Moorer:

> I believe you should be aware of likely consequences emanating from our application of more stringent contols to effect the required degree of assurance that border violations are precluded . . . . The best interdiction points on the NE rail line lie within the buffer zone.

Effective interdiction, he said, was a difficult matter, and he recommended authority at an early date for strikes, under positive control, within the Chinese buffer zone.[111]

(~~TS~~) Needless to say, against this background, the Secretary of Defense did not approve Admiral Moorer's request for either strikes or manned reconnaissance in the buffer zone. The Chairman, however, did not let the matter rest. On 19 July he pointed out to the Secretary the extent to which the North Vietnamese were using the buffer zone as a sanctuary for receipt and transfer of supplies destined for battles in the south and five days later, on 24 July, requested

110. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 1264 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 112047Z Jul 72. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 1386 to CINCUSNAVEUR, 112257Z Jul 72.

111. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 2537 to CINCUSNAVEUR, 122304Z Jul 72. (~~TS~~) Msgs, CINCPAC to CJCS, 140356Z and 180315Z Jul 72, JCS IN 47180 and 53605.

authority to strike three railroad bridges in the buffer zone.[112]

(TS) On this occasion, the Secretary was willing to allow attack of the targets in the buffer zone. Accordingly, on 1 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to plan an operation against the three bridges and they subsequently authorized the attack on 17 August as a one time exception to the restrictions in the buffer zone. The authority lasted only through the end of August. Poor weather conditions prevented successful strikes during August and the authority was extended throughout September and, subsequently, into October 1972.[113]

(TS) Meantime, in extending the temporary Southeast Asia operating authorities at the end of July, the Secretary had relaxed the restriction against action in the buffer zone to allow aircraft hitting nearby targets to penetrate the zone to within 20 nautical miles of the Chinese border. He granted this modification to permit US pilots greater tactical flexibility and more options to avoid enemy air defenses. Two weeks later, the Secretary extended this authority to include support aircraft.[114]

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112. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Chinese Buffer Zone Reconnaissance," 14 Jul 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972). (TS-EX) CM-2033-72 to SecDef, 19 Jul 72; CM-2052-72 to SecDef, 24 Jul 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 72.

113. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 9482 to CINCPAC, 012110Z Aug 72; JCS 6691 to CINCPAC, 172240Z Aug 72. (TS-EX) CM-2158-72 to SecDef, 27 Aug 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 72. (TS-EX) CM-2198-72 to SecDef, 21 Sep 72, same file, Sep 72. (Draft msgs attached to both CMs have notations of SecDef approval.)

114. (TS-EX) CM-2057-72 to SecDef, 27 Jul 72 (for SecDef approval, see handwritten notation on draft msg attached to CM-2057-72); CM-2085-72 to SecDef, 7 Aug 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 15 Aug 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

(TS) In early September, Admiral Moorer requested authority to interdict a key rail and road bridge in the buffer zone located approximately eight miles from the Chinese border but the Secretary did not approve. Then on 21 September and again on 10 October, the Chairman repeated his earlier request to conduct manned tactical reconnaissance in the buffer zone, but Mr. Laird did not grant the requests.[115]

(U) Public opposition to the bombing of North Vietnam continued in the United States during the summer. The focus of the criticism shifted from the streets to the Democratic and Republican National Conventions and the selection of presidential nominees. The Democrats, meeting in Miami Beach, chose Senator George S. McGovern, an avowed opponent of the war, on 12 July and he pledged, if elected, to withdraw all forces from Vietnam within 90 days of his inauguration. Not surprisingly, the Democratic platform included a plank calling for "immediate and complete" withdrawal of US forces from Indochina and termination of all military assistance to the Thieu government. A little over a month later, the Republicans gathered at Miami Beach. While thousands of antiwar protesters demonstrated outside the convention hall, the Republicans renominated Richard Nixon by a vote of 1,347 to 1 and endorsed his peace efforts. Various speakers denounced Senator McGovern's Vietnam position, charging that he was sabotaging the President's negotiation efforts.[116]

115. (TS-EX) CM-2157-72 to SecDef, 2 Sep 72; CM-2168-72 to SecDef, 21 Sep 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "LINE BACKER Reconnaissance," 26 Sep 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 72. (TS-EX) CM-2228-72 to SecDef, 10 Oct 72, same file, Oct 72.

116. NY Times, 13 Jul 72, 1; 14 Jul 72, 11; 21 Aug 72, 1; 23 Aug 72, 1; 24 Aug 72, 47.

(U) Attempts also continued in the United States during the summer of 1972 to legislate an end to the war. On 24 July, the Senate adopted an amendment to a foreign military aid bill requiring the withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam within four months in exchange for the release of prisoners of war. The Senate quickly reversed itself, however, rejecting the entire bill, which it had just amended. Efforts to attach a similar amendment to the House version of the bill also failed on 10 August. Meantime, on 3 August, the Senate had approved an end-the-war amendment calling for US withdrawal from Vietnam within four months. In this instance, the provision was added to a military procurement bill, but it did not survive the conference action to reconcile the Senate and House bills. Congressional opponents of the war still did not rest. Further attempts were made in both the House and the Senate during September to attach end-the-war amendments to other bills, but these efforts did not succeed. Senator William Proxmire, Democrat of Wisconsin, made a final challenge in early October, offering an amendment to the Defense appropriations bill to prohibit use of any funds for bombing in Indochina. The amendment was defeated, however, by a vote of 55 to 26.[117]

(U) Despite the public and Congressional opposition, the United States maintained the air campaign against North Vietnam. As already mentioned, US force augmentations to support the campaign were extended from month to month throughout 1972. Because these forces were retained in Southeast Asia longer than originally anticipated, certain adjustments became necessary during the summer. On 15 July, the Secretary of

117. NY Times, 25 July 72, 1; 3 Aug 72, 1; 11 Aug 72, 1; 15 Sep 72, 7; 27 Sep 72, 1; and 3 Oct 72, 1.

Defense approved the redeployment of 13 KC-135 aircraft from Thailand to the United States by 10 October 1972. Since these tankers supported US F-4 aircraft stationed at Takhli, the Secretary also endorsed a JCS concept to substitute F-111s, which did not require aerial refueling, for the F-4s. To carry out this action the Secretary approved on 20 September 1972 Admiral Moorer's request to deploy 48 F-111s to Takhli and 72 A-7s to Korat and to redeploy 72 F-4s and an appropriate number of KC-135s from Thailand back to the United States.[118]

(S) In further augmentation adjustments, the Secretary of Defense approved on 14 August Admiral Moorer's request for the immediate return of six F-105 aircraft and nine aircrews to the United States. Movement of these planes to Southast Asia in early April had left only six in the United States and consequently the US Air Force training program was beginning to encounter serious problems. Subsequently, with the easing of airlift requirements in Southeast Asia, Mr. Laird granted on 26 August a request by Admiral Moorer for the return of two C-130E squadrons from WESTPAC to CONUS.[119]

(TS) Throughout the summer of 1972, the POCKET MONEY mining campaign prevented almost all resupply of North Vietnam by sea. During June the field commanders

118. (S) CM-1995-72 to SecDef, 7 Jul 72; CM-2166-72 to SecDef, 8 Sep 72; CJCS CM Chron File. (TS) CM-2088-72 to SecDef, 12 Aug 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (S) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, 15 Jul and 20 Sep 72, CJCS SecDef Memo file.

119. (TS) CM-2082-72 to SecDef, 5 Aug 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "F-105G Augmentation," 14 Aug 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (S) CM-2109-72 to SecDef, 15 Aug 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 29 Aug 72, CJCS SecDef Memo File.

and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had grown concerned about resupply activities by Chinese merchant vessels off-loading to North Vietnamese lighters in anchorages around Hon La and Hon Nieu Islands off the North Vietnamese panhandle. They wanted to mine waters around these islands in June, but the Secretary of Defense did not approve.[120] On 4 July Admiral Moorer informed Mr. Laird that a Chinese freighter had fired on a US plane near Hon Nieu. He recommended a strong protest to the People's Republic of China as well as authority to mine the waters around the two islands, but, again, the Secretary did not concur.[121]

(~~TS~~) Meantime, on 30 June, CINCPAC requested authority to seed new minefield segments with MK-36/40 destructors. The Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the use of these munitions in and around the entrances to ports, river mouths, islands, and other areas in the internal and claimed territorial waters of North Vietnam on 30 July, provided no third country shipping was present. They specifically prohibited the implanting of mines or destructors in the vicinity of the Chinese anchorages at Hon La and Hon Nieu, even if the Chinese ships temporarily vacated those areas. At this time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also restricted POCKET MONEY somewhat, directing that each seeding and reseeding operation be approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[122]

120. See above, p. 411.
121. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-1989-72 to SecDef, 4 Jul 72, CJCS CM Chron File.
122. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 010245Z Jul 72, JCS IN 25042. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 7623 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 301946Z Jul 72.

(TS) On 1 August, Admiral Moorer notified the Secretary of Defense that two minefield segments (2111A and 2111B) in Haiphong harbor would be 50 percent sterile by 20 August and asked for authority to reseed them. Although a similar request had been denied earlier, the Secretary approved this time and the actual reseeding took place on 11 August.[123]

(TS) On 20 August, CINCPACFLT reported a "Woosung" class minesweeper in Haiphong harbor. The field commander had no explanation for how this vessel arrived behind the minefield, but there was speculation that a route through shallow coastal waters had been found to circumvent the deeper mined channel. Consequently Admiral Moorer suggested to CINCPAC consideration of further mining to close possible routes. Thereafter, three tender-type craft capable of minesweeping were identified in Haiphong harbor. The nationality of these three tenders as well as the minesweeper could not be determined, but none of them were attempting to sweep the minefields. Therefore, CINCPAC proposed on 28 August to continue surveillance of these ships to identify their nationality. Meantime, should any of the four attempt mine countermeasures operations he wanted immediate authority to reseed the Haiphong channel.[124]

123. (TS-EX) CM-2040-72 to SecDef, 1 Aug 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5666 to CINCPAC, 071653Z Aug 72. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 191.

124. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1909 to CINCPAC, 221648Z Aug 72; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT (info CJCS), 232222Z Aug 72, JCS IN 32994. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 290318Z Aug 72, JCS IN 42154.

(TS) Admiral Moorer told the Secretary of Defense on 7 September of the presence of the minesweeper and the tenders in Haiphong harbor. Since the identity of the four ships still had not been determined, the Chairman did not want to raise the sensitive question of action to meet mine countermeasures by a third country unless the situation arose. Nevertheless, he did want to insure the effectiveness of the Haiphong channel minefield against this newly discovered minesweeping threat. Therefore he proposed the following actions: (1) should the minesweeper prove to be North Vietnamese, every effort would be made to attack and destroy it within existing authorities; (2) if the craft flew a third country flag, or if it could not be identified, destructors would be reseeded within existing authorities and immediate permission would be requested to reseed the channel with mines. At the same time, Admiral Moorer requested CINCPAC to report any enemy attempts or suspected attempts at minesweeping in the Haiphong channel. The vessels, however, made no effort to sweep the Haiphong waters and there was no occasion to take action against them.[125]

(U) During the summer and fall of 1972, there were further allegations of US attack on civilian targets in North Vietnam. In July, North Vietnam charged the United States with bombing dikes on 20 different occasions and forwarded reputed evidence of the attacks to the UN Secretary General. The United States disclaimed any intentional bombing of dams or dikes though a Department of State spokesman did concede that there might have been accidental or

125. (TS-EX) CM-2162-72 to SecDef, 7 Sep 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5196 to CINCPAC, 071722Z Sep 72.

inadvertent damage as the result of strikes on nearby military targets. On 27 July, President Nixon strongly defended the US bombing in North Vietnam. It was not US policy, he said, to bomb the dikes. If it had been, he continued, "we could take them out, the significant part of them out, in a week." He went on to contrast the US efforts to avoid civilian targets in the north with the deliberate North Vietnamese shelling of cities in South Vietnam resulting in 45,000 civilian casualties since the beginning of the offensive in April.[126]

(~~TS~~) Another bombing incident that caused international repercussions was an attack on the Gia Lam railroad repair shops in Hanoi on 11 October when the French diplomatic mission was hit and heavily damaged. The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately prohibited any further air strikes within a 10 nautical mile radius of Hanoi until further notice and ordered an investigation of the incident. In a detailed report to the Secretary of Defense some days later, Admiral Moorer accounted for all 19 aircraft that had participated in the operation. None, he said, had reported malfunctions that might have caused the damage. He noted that the strike aircraft were subjected to intense AAA fire and that at least eight SAMs were observed. In such a hostile environment it was not uncommon for aircrews to have difficulty keeping track of their exact positions. Since bomb fragments found at the French mission site were reported to be of US manufacture, Admiral Moorer could only conclude that US forces were responsible due to accidential release of weapons, inadvertent jettison, or late release of momentarily hung ordnance.[127]

126. Knappman, South Vietnam, p. 150. Nixon, Public Papers, 1972, pp. 744-746, 752.

127. NY Times, 12 Oct 72, 1. (~~TS~~-EX) Msgs, JCS 1472 and 1946 to CINCPAC, 111453Z and 112225Z Oct 72. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-2258-72 to SecDef, 19 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.

(C) In October a serious problem in operational security for B-52 flights developed and all sorties in Route Packages 2 and 3, the upper portion of the North Vietnam panhandle, were cancelled on 9 October. Intelligence had confirmed that the enemy had accurate knowledge of the B-52 targets as well as planned times over targets. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to undertake "an immediate and determined effort" to tighten the operational security of the B-52 strikes. They saw no reason to disclose B-52 targets and timing outside of US secure channels. "The fact that such information has reached enemy hands prior to the strikes," they said, "should be a matter of grave concern to all of us."[128]

(TS) When Secretary Laird learned of the possible enemy knowledge of the B-52 strikes, he asked for an investigation of "our entire chain of planning and execution of our B-52 strikes." Admiral Moorer replied on 17 October that the problem was a complicated one with a number of agencies and activities involved in the planning and execution. Each element in the process had been identified, he said, and a thorough investigation was underway. Preliminary results had disclosed no apparent source of operational leaks.[129]

(TS) By early October there were growing indications that secret US-North Vietnamese negotiations[130] might

128. (TS) DJSM-1923-72 to CJCS, 10 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72. (TS) Msg, JCS 1369 to CINCPAC, 111227Z Oct 72.

129. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Enemy Knowledge of B-52 Strikes in NVN," 10 Oct 72; CM-2255-72 to SecDef, 17 Oct 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.

130. See Chapter 11 for a description of these developments.

soon produce a peace settlement in Vietnam, and in an effort to enhance the chances for success, the United States cut back air attacks against North Vietnam. On 14 October, the Secretary of Defense directed the gradual reduction of attack sorties in North Vietnam to about 150 per day by 19 October. The bulk of the remaining sorties, he instructed, should be used in the area just above the Demilitarized Zone in order to give maximum support to the fighting in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately issued the necessary orders to CINCPAC, and the following day, the reduction of the US air campaign against North Vietnam was accelerated. At that time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to achieve the 150 daily rate by 17 October in lieu of 19 October as previously instructed.[131]

(~~TS~~) Then on 22 October, the United States restricted air operations against North Vietnam even further. At the instruction of higher authority, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to cease all air operations, leaflet and psychological warfare operations, and naval gunfire in North Vietnam above 20° north effective 0700 Vietnam time, 23 October. Even

131 (~~TS~~-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Attack Sorties in North Vietnam," 14 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 1401 and 1823 to CINCPAC, 150044Z and 152155Z Oct 72.

According to Richard Nixon's account, he ordered an intermediate reduction to 200 attack sorties on 13 October and then subsequently further restricted the bombing of North Vietnam to 150 attack sorties. See The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (1978), pp. 693-694. No record has been found, however, of an order for or implementation of the intermediate reduction to 200 sorties.

though the prospective peace settlement aborted on 26 October, the United States did not resume air operations in North Vietnam at the pre-October levels, and on the following day, 27 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff restricted the use of MK-36 destructors in the POCKET MONEY mining. They directed CINCPAC to cease using MK-36 MODs 1 and 1A altogether and to set other MK-36 destructors for either 30 or 45 day self-destruct times.[132]

(~~TS~~) On 27 October, the Acting Chairman, General John D. Ryan, USAF, asked the Secretary of Defense to clarify the restriction on US air operations in North Vietnam imposed five days earlier. Specifically, General Ryan wanted authority for immediate pursuit of hostile forces throughout North Vietnam to within 20 nautical miles of the Chinese border, for conduct of defensive reaction and use of antiradiation missiles (air and surface launched) as necessary above 20° north, and for laser illuminator/optical delivery aircraft overflight of North Vietnam up to a distance of three nautical miles. Further, unless directed otherwise, General Ryan interpreted the 22 October restrictions to allow psychological operations below 20° north, but to prohibit both POCKET MONEY seedings or reseedings above 20° north and action to counter North Vietnamese mine countermeasures activity. The Secretary approved these requests and clarifications with some modification. No air-to-surface or surface-to-surface ordance was to impact above 20° north and

132. (~~TS~~) Msg, JCS 7521 to CINCPAC, 221956Z Oct 72. (~~TS~~-EX) Msg, JCS 4296 to CINCPAC, 271341Z Oct 72.

"hot pursuit" was authorized only up to 20°30' north.[133]

(TS) Shortly before the curtailment of the air operations against North Vietnam, Admiral Moorer gave the Secretary of Defense an assessment of both the LINEBACKER and POCKET MONEY campaigns. The mining, the Chairman told the Secretary on 12 October, had forced a fundamental revision in the basic method by which North Vietnam received supplies. Except for minor offshore activities near Hon La and Hon Nieu Islands, the North Vietnamese coast had been closed to foreign shipping. This development had forced North Vietnam to shift movement of supplies to rail and road networks--a method less effecient and more susceptible to air interdiction. Moreover, the adjustment had lengthened enemy supply lines, causing delays as well as manpower and economic drains.

(TS) Despite the restrictions on attacks in the Chinese buffer zone and in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas, air interdiction had destroyed bridges on both the northeast and northwest railroads between Hanoi-Haiphong and the Chinese border. This destruction necessitated extensive shuttling from railcar to trucks and water craft. With bridges out, the enemy used ferries and barges to cross rivers, and this tactic had been countered by implanting destructors in inland waterways. Within the existing prohibitions, attacks had been conducted against the Hanoi-Haiphong

133. (TS-EX) CM-2273-72 to SecDef, 27 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "SEAsia Operating Authorities," 2 Nov 72, JMF 907/323 (CY 1972).

area to destroy the major distribution points and industrial complexes there. While progress had been made, strike restrictions accounted for significant targets remaining. Below Hanoi and Haiphong, Admiral Moorer continued, the air interdiction had placed maximum pressure on lines of communication before supplies moved into South Vietnam. Extensive daily tactical reconnaissance had exposed supply points that were attacked as identified. In addition, major and minor bridges were destroyed and rail traffic had been greatly restricted below Hanoi.[134]

(U) By October, the LINEBACKER campaign had inflicted heavy damage on North Vietnam, and together with POCKET MONEY, had caused serious logistical problems for the enemy. But the extent to which the damage and problems had influenced the enemy will and determination to continue the war in South Vietnam was a matter of some question. To date, the North Vietnamese had shown no serious inclination to end the fighting, and separate but concurring Central and Defense Intelligence Agency reports to the National Security Council in September had concluded that North Vietnam could sustain the current level of fighting for the next two years, even with the heavy US bombing.[135]

(~~TS~~) Nonetheless, by the time of the restriction of US air operations in October 1972, the South Vietnamese, with US assistance, had not only stopped the offensive but had pushed the enemy back nearly to positions existing before the campaign began. While

134. (~~TS~~-EX) CM-2241-72 to SecDef, 12 Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.
135. NY Times, 13 Sep 72, 1.

the enemy still controlled areas of South Vietnamese territory, only 400,000 people of the total population of 19 million remained under enemy control. Moreover, North Vietnamese casualties during the offensive were estimated at 100,000 killed or seriously wounded, and the Central Intelligence Agency predicted that it would take 18 months for North Vietnam to resupply and refit its main forces.[136]

136. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 28 Sep 72, NSC Files.

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THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM 1971 - 1973

PART II

By
WILLARD J. WEBB

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

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AUTHORITY

This volume is the final one in a series comprising the official history of the actions and activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff relating to the war in Vietnam. It has been prepared by historians in the Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat in accordance with professional standards of historiography. Since the content of the volume has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is to be construed as descriptive only and not as constituting the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

Harold D. Neeley

HAROLD D. NEELEY
Colonel, USAF
Secretary, JCS

CHAPTER 8

FORCE WITHDRAWALS, 1972

The January Announcement

(U) Despite, first, evidence of enemy preparations for a major attack as 1972 began and, then, the actual offensive in April, the United States pressed ahead with redeployment of troops from Vietnam. The approaching Presidential campaign, which could be counted upon to heighten the already strong political pressure for disengagement in Vietnam, made it highly unlikely that President Nixon would attempt to slow the momentum of the US withdrawal. He had approved the removal of 45,000 additional US troops, Increment 10 (KEYSTONE MALLARD), during the period December 1971 through January 1972 and this withdrawal was completed on schedule. On 1 February 1972, actual US strength stood at 136,505, well below the authorized level of 139,000 specified by the President.[1]

(C) For the field commanders, the accelerating US redeployments during 1971 had posed severe problems, so much so that at the end of the year the Joint Chiefs of Staff raised this matter with the Secretary of Defense. Both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, they told Mr. Laird, had expressed concern over the difficulties in personnel turbulence, logistics, base closures, and force structure encountered in the ten withdrawal increments approved to date and had requested adequate warning before the next announcement if similar problems were to be avoided. The impact of the problems

1. For approval and execution of this redeployment increment, see Chapter 3, pp. 159-161.

became even more serious, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, as US force levels declined, affecting the security, operational readiness, morale, and welfare of remaining forces in South Vietnam. For the next announcement, COMUSMACV and CINCPAC favored one increment covering the period 1 February to 1 July 1972 and lowering authorized strength from 139,000 to 60,000. Should the decision be for an increment of shorter duration, the commanders suggested removal of 55,000 US troops in the months February through April 1972, to a level of 84,000. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported these recommendations and requested the Secretary to bring the impact of "short redeployment announcement and execution cycles" to the President's attention.[2]

(TS) Mr. Laird agreed that proper management of US forces was essential as the redeployment continued, but he gave no indication of any pause in the US withdrawals. Rather, he asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 January 1972 for illustrative force structures assuming a 60,000-man US force in Vietnam on 15 May 1972, 30,000 by 1 July 1972, and 15,000 by 1 November 1972. He wanted assessments of the capabilities of each of the structures as well.[3]

(TS) Meantime, a Washington inter-agency task force chaired by a representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was preparing an updated Vietnam assessment[4] for the NSC Vietnam Special Studies Group that included an analysis of enemy and friendly strengths in South Vietnam. In the completed appraisal, which the Chairman

2. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-577-71 to SecDef, 30 Dec 71, Encl to JCS 2472/786-3, 28 Dec 71, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).
3. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 6 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2472/786-4, 6 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).
4. For detailed coverage of this assessment, see Chapter 2, pp. 122-125.

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave to the Secretary of Defense on 10 January 1972 for transmittal to the Special Studies Group, the task group estimated enemy forces at 217 combat battalions at the beginning of December 1971 as compared with 233 friendly battalions (US, RVNAF, and ROK). On the basis of the projected enemy threat, and assuming a US force level of 60,000 by 30 June 1972 (a planning figure established earlier by the Secretary of Defense), the task group concluded that friendly troops remaining in South Vietnam by mid-1972 could meet the anticipated threat without major redistribution of forces by using the RVNAF reserve. After 1 July 1972, and with the US strength of 60,000 men, the threat could be met but only with increased risk. The task group cautioned, however, that this evaluation did not carry over into 1973 when US strength would be lower and when the enemy would have benefited from another dry season to infiltrate more men and supplies.[5]

(U) The Senior Review Group did subsequently consider the updated assessment, but the President did not await this action to make his decision on further redeployments. On 13 January 1972, he announced that 70,000 additional US troops would leave South Vietnam during the next three months, reaching a troop ceiling of 69,000 by 1 May 1972. This withdrawal, he said, had the approval of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Government of Vietnam. (In fact, however, it amounted to 15,000 more men than the redeployment proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders for the same period.)

5. (TS-GP 3) "Updated RVN Assessment," 10 Jan 72, pp. 18-20, Encl to JCS 2472/790-1, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911 (16 Dec 71).

The President also promised another announcement on further withdrawals before 1 May 1972.[6]

(S) Following the President's announcement, Secretary Laird held a press conference at the White House. For a troop ceiling of 69,000, he explained, there would be about 48,000 Army, 4,500 Navy, and 16,000 Air Force troops remaining in South Vietnam on 1 May 1972; monthly withdrawal rates would average about 23,000 men in the succeeding three months. That same day, 13 January, Mr. Laird authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to redeploy US troops from South Vietnam in accordance with the President's announcement. A few days later, on 19 January, he informed Admiral Moorer of his personal concern for the safety of the remaining US forces. "If ever there is a time," he said, "during which we must insure that each soldier and his commander are fully alert for unexpected weaknesses in our defense, both day and night, it is during these remaining months of the Vietnamization program."[7]

Planning a Transitional Force

(TS) On 19 January, the Joint Chiefs of Staff furnished the Secretary of Defense COMUSMACV's outline plan to attain the 69,000 US troop level by 1 May 1972 together with the field commander's assessments of the lower transitional forces of 60,000, 30,000, and 15,000 to be reached by 15 May, 1 July, and 1 November 1972. The plan for the 69,000 force

6. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1972 (1974), p. 30.

7. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 17 Jan 72, p. 50. (TS-GP 1) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2472/786-5, 14 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71). (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 19 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2472/795, 20 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (19 Jan 72).

contained 10,000 rollup spaces and retained "a modest force" for security of US personnel, an area the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered of "paramount importance." To carry out the plan by 1 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, would present a number of problems. They believed that there would be a degradation in intelligence collection and in helicopter support for the RVNAF. Moreover, there would be no room for significant tradeoffs of manpower spaces without jeopardy to security of US forces. Other impacts of reducing to the 69,000 level included: port and processing backlogs might be caused by the equipment accompanying the redeploying troops; the Military Equipment Delivery Team in Cambodia could not be supported by COMUSMACV after 1 March 1972 and the capability to train Cambodian forces might be reduced; Cam Ranh Bay Air Base might have to be closed earlier than currently scheduled; the Joint Personnel Recovery Task Force would have to be relocated in Thailand; and reduction of US helicopter and logistic support to the ROK troops in South Vietnam would require renegotiation of the US-ROK military working arrangement.

(TS) With respect to the 60,000, 30,000 and 15,000 transitional force levels, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found all three lacking in adequate security for remaining US personnel. Once the problems associated with the 69,000 force had been resolved, then the commanders would reexamine the lower transition levels. In the meantime, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed the following actions should be approved immediately: (1) give security of US forces primary consideration while recognizing that increasing reliance must be placed on the RVNAF as US drawdowns continued; (2) confirm authority to increase US manpower ceilings in

Thailand to accommodate necessary relocations from South Vietnam; (3) reduce the requirement for helicopter support for the RVNAF commensurate with capability of remaining US forces; (4) grant authority to renegotiate the military working agreement under which the United States provided helicopter and logistic support to the ROK forces in Vietnam.[8]

(C) Secretary Laird appreciated the magnitude of the problems raised by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he told them on 24 February 1972. He fully realized that COMUSMACV must in the coming months not only insure the success of Vietnamization, but also redeploy one half of his force, provide timely intelligence, retrograde large quantities of materiel, and accelerate the transfer of bases and facilities. Mr. Laird had full confidence that the US commanders would continue their "admirable performance" in these tasks despite the "difficult problems" involved.

(C) The Secretary wanted the security of US forces in South Vietnam preserved and he believed this could be accomplished by increased alertness, consolidation of activities at more secure installations, and close coordination with the RVNAF. He relaxed the requirement for helicopter support for the RVNAF as requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and directed COMUSMACV to plan for a "transitional remaining force" of 30,000 by 1 July 1972 and "a more stable force" of 15,000 by 1 November 1972. These figures, he stressed, were for planning purposes only and other contingencies should be considered. He also requested further JCS views on

8. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-24-72 to SecDef, 19 Jan 72, Encl to JCS 2472/786-6, 19 Jan 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71).

the issues of support for ROK forces, requirements for a US rollup force, the minimum US intelligence capability required in Vietnam after 1 July 1972, and US manpower space requirements in Thailand. He wanted, as well, information on measures being taken to support the Cambodian armed forces.[9]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff gave Secretary Laird on 6 March their views on some of the issues identified by him. Support of the ROK forces would begin to decrease when the US force level fell below 30,000, they said, and none could be provided when US strength reached 15,000 men. They recommended early decisions on the question of retention of the ROK forces in South Vietnam, the size of these forces, and the level and duration of US support.[10] In addition, they requested authority for COMUSMACV to negotiate a new logistic support arrangement with the ROK forces in Vietnam and the GVN.

(TS) With respect to the rollup force, further study of COMUSMACV's troop reduction plan showed that a force of 9,117, rather than the 10,000 originally planned would suffice.. This new level, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, would allow COMUSMACV to process the retrograde generated by the continuing redeployments. Adjustments were required, they continued, in the US manpower ceiling in Thailand to compensate for the force reductions in South Vietnam and to carry on programmed military activity, including the 4,800 monthly tactical air sortie level. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the

9. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 24 Feb 72, Att to JCS 2472/773-5, 25 Feb 72, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2.

10. For further consideration of the ROK force issue, see pp. 470-474.

ceiling in Thailand be raised to 33,250 spaces, an increase of 1,050.[11] Finally they considered that the Cambodian logistics and training support were progressing at a satisfactory rate and should not be impaired by the current redeployments.[12]

(C) Nearly two weeks later, on 18 March 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff furnished the Secretary of Defense views on the US intelligence capability required in South Vietnam after 1 July 1972. The redeployment of US forces to the projected strength of 30,000 by 1 July 1972, they pointed out, would bring no equivalent reduction in intelligence requirements. They set out the minimum intelligence requirements for the period after 1 July 1972 and listed the intelligence capabilities that would be lost as US forces shrank. They concluded that a minimum of 5,035 intelligence spaces would be needed in the 30,000 structure and 4,193 in the 15,000 one.[13]

(C) Thus far in the consideration of transitional US force structures in Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had planned on the retention of a small residual US force, but now the possibility of total US withdrawal was raised. On 25 January 1972, President

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11. The Secretary of Defense disapproved an increase in the US force level in Thailand, though this decision did not preclude movement of USAF units from Vietnam to Thailand within the authorized ceiling, and he told Admiral Moorer on 31 March 1972 that he wanted the Air Force to continue planning for 4,800 tactical air sorties per month during FY 1973. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 31 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/773-11, 3 Apr 72, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2.

12. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-98-72 to SecDef, 6 Mar 72, Encl to JCS 2472/773-6, 2 Mar 72, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2.

13. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-112-72 to SecDef, 18 Mar 72, Encl to JCS 2472/773-8, 11 Mar 72, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2.

Nixon had presented a new peace plan including an offer for complete US military withdrawal within six months of an agreement.[14] Thereafter, on 8 March, the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to examine ways for the United States to insure the self-sufficiency of the RVNAF in the event of a total removal of US troops from Vietnam. He wanted four options studied: (1) conversion of the US advisory effort to civilian contract supported by US resources; (2) direct US budgetary assistance to the GVN for contractual support in place of US advisers; (3) contracting for in-country assistance and agreements with other Asian countries for either in-country or offshore "backup rebuild facility" with the United States providing financial support for both of these "contractual ventures"; (4) the same as 3 except that the United States would supply support only for the in-country contract effort.[15]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied to the Secretary on 3 April. While the attainment of total US withdrawal was a valid goal, they believed this objective should continue to be tied to the progress of Vietnamization. It was "premature," they said, to assume that Vitnamization would be a complete success. The RVNAF would need "quality US advisory assistance and support" for some time to come in the areas of logistics, intelligence, communications, and training. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not think any of the options suggested by the Secretary was likely to succeed "if implemented in the near term." Recognizing, however, the need for contingency planning

14. See Chapter 11, pp. 604-605
15. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/773-7, 9 Mar 72, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2.

for total US military withdrawal from South Vietnam on short notice, they preferred the Secretary's first option for conversion of the US advisory effort to civilian contract. This approach, they thought, could be implemented more rapidly than the other three but would require adequate leadtime for implementation. In addition, the first option provided the "highest degree of US control" over the contracts for the United States would provide the funding. The Joint Chiefs of Staff promised the Secretary a conceptual plan based on this option and asked that no further consideration be given the remaining options.[16]

Redeployment Increment 11, February-April 1972

(C) While the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense were considering transitional force levels for the latter part of the year, the redeployment of the 70,000 US forces during the period February through April 1972 proceeded in accord with the President's January announcement. The field commanders had prepared the necessary troop list for Increment 11 (KEYSTONE OWL) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved and submitted it to the Secretary of Defense on 17 February 1972. Included were 55,235 Army spaces, comprising one airborne division headquarters, a brigade headquarters, five infantry battalions, two armored cavalry squadrons, four air cavalry squadrons and three separate air cavalry troops, three field artillery battalions, and associated support elements. Navy spaces totaled 3,994, including two light helicopter attack squadrons, naval support personnel at

16. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-142-72 to SecDef, 3 Apr 72, Encl A to JCS 2472/773-10, 29 Mar 72, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2

Binh Thuy and Cam Ranh Bay, and reductions in the naval support activity at Saigon and in the Naval Advisory Group. The Air Force would withdraw three special operations squadrons, two C-7 tactical airlift squadrons, a C-130 tactical airlift detachment, an air rescue and recovery squadron, and personnel from two tactical air support squadrons for a total of 10,590 spaces, while the Marine Corps would remove 181 advisory headquarters and support spaces. Thereafter KEYSTONE OWL moved ahead in accordance with the approved list.[17]

(C) The enemy offensive, breaking at the end of March, caused considerable disruption in the Increment 11 redeployment. The United States continued the withdrawals and did reach the 69,000-man level by the end of April, but some spaces scheduled for redeployment in April 1972 were retained and approximately 1,600 additional or "augmentation" forces were deployed to South Vietnam. These retention and augmentation forces consisted primarily of combat and combat support elements and the preponderance were air forces. The US Air Force retained troops associated with the 620th TSC, 8th Special Operations Squadron, 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron, 374 Tactical Airlift Wing, and 7th Air Force Headquarters and redeployed a tactical fighter squadron from South Korea and a KC-119K Gunship FOL[18] from Thailand. In addition, the C-130 Rotational Squadron at Tan Son Nhut was reinforced

17. (TS-GP 4) MJCS-57-72 to SecDef, 17 Feb 72, Att to JCS 2472/786-8, 22 Feb 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Nov 71). (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. F-56.

18. FOL - Forward Observation Laser.

and an F-4 servicing site was established in MR 3. The Army retained two air cavalry troops, an aerial weapons company, a helicopter assault company, an aviation detachment, and various aviation maintenance spaces and redeployed an aerial delivery detachment from Okinawa to assist the RVNAF. The US Marine Corps redeployed three fighter squadrons, two from Japan and one from Hawaii, and augmented certain other units. In all, 4,110 spaces were involved, including 2,525 retention and 1,585 augmentation spaces broken down as follows:

	Augmentation	Retention	Total
Army	77	1,114	1,191
Navy	6	0	6
Air Force	428	1,411	1,839
Marine Corps	1,074	0	1,074
	1,585	2,525	4,110

(C) The Services and COMUSMACV had to make appropriate reductions elsewhere in the Vietnam force to compensate for the forces retained and deployed in order to insure a US force level of 69,000 by the end of April. Necessary reductions were made principally in logistics and rollup spaces and adjusted ceilings for Increment 11 redeployment were:

Service	Old Ceiling	New Ceiling	Difference
Army	49,278	46,417	-2,861
Navy	3,067	3,029	- 38
Air Force	16,308	18,133	+1,825
Marine Corps	347	1,421	+1,074
Total	69,000	69,000	

Despite the enemy offensive and the associated retentions and augmentations, the United States did reduce its strength by 70,000 men in the months February through April 1972, reaching a level of 68,100 men on 30 April. Included in this increment as ultimately

accomplished were 11 Army maneuver battlions, 3 field artillery battalions, and 4 Air Force tactical airlift squadrons. The US Navy withdrew the last of its combat troops in this period and the remaining 5,000 land-based US Navy personnel were either advisers or headquarters staff.[19]

The April Announcement

(U) In the January withdrawal announcement, President Nixon had promised a decision on further redeployments before the beginning of May and he was not dissuaded from this course by the intervening enemy offensive. Accordingly, planning proceeded for the succeeding redeployment increment.

(C) In anticipation of a forthcoming Presidential announcement, General Abrams set his staff to planning the continuing redeployment of US forces from South Vietnam to "the eventual attainment" of a US assistance group. He forwarded an advance summary of the resulting OPLAN J203 to CINCPAC and Admiral Moorer on 15 March 1972. Using the 69,000 US force level for 1 May 1972 as a point of departure, COMUSMACV had prepared notional packages for a 30,000 force on 1 July 1972 and a 15,000 one for 1 November 1972. Since he found these figures arbitrary, precluding retention of various desirable capabiities, he had developed alternative packages of 37,000 and 23,000 spaces to be achieved by the same dates. General Abrams considered a 15,000 US troop level the minimum appropriate for the US assistance group; further, he thought that such a group should not be established before 1 July 1973 to allow a smooth transition from the 1 May 1972 force level.

19. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) pp. F-56 - F-57; (U) p. N-3.

(C) General Abrams considered it essential to keep command and control of air forces in South Vietnam so long as the United States participated in the air war. After careful study, he believed a US force of 23,000 the lowest possible level to assure command and control of the air war as well as minimum support for the ROK forces and essential assistance to South Vietnam. To attain a 23,000 level by 1 November would require withdrawal of 46,000 troops in the period May through October 1972, and General Abrams asked for authority to determine the pace of the redeployments and the composition of the remaining force within that overall figure. Should "overriding considerations at the national level" dictate a redeployment package to be completed by 1 July, the field commander preferred a 37,000-man structure.[20]

(C) CINPAC found his subordinate's planning "excellent" and recommended its adoption to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the "best course to follow subsequent to 1 May 1972." The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed and passed on the field commanders' recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on 24 March.[21]

(C) On 1 April 1972, the Secretary of Defense directed review of the entire Vietnamization effort, including a report on the US force posture in Southeast Asia. This review is discussed in Chapter 9, but on

20. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC (info CJCS), 150255Z Mar 72, JCS IN 81704, JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2.

21. (TS-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 162121Z Mar 72, JCS IN 85516; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-130-72 to SecDef, 24 Mar 72, Encl to JCS 2472/773-9, 22 Mar 72; JMF 911 (6 Aug 71) sec 2.

5 April 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff responded on the specific matter of the US force structure. At that time, they reaffirmed their recommendations of a week and a half earlier for a US troop level of 23,000 spaces on 1 November 1972 or one of 37,000 spaces on 1 July 1972 if a definite ceiling was required by the earlier date.[22]

(TS) Meantime, North Vietnam had launched its offensive into the south, and the Secretary of Defense on 15 April asked for General Abrams' latest views on future US redeployments. Admiral Moorer relayed these views as well as those of CINCPAC to the Secretary on 19 April. General Abrams expected the current level of enemy activity to continue for several months and both he and CINCPAC recommended deferral of any decision on redeployments beyond the 1 May level of 69,000 until 1 July or later. In addition, the two commanders believed their earlier recommendation for a 37,000-man force for 1 July, if a ceiling was required for that date, was now "unrealistic" and urged retention of the maximum number of US troops in South Vietnam until 1 July 1972.

(TS) At this time, Admiral Moorer pointed out to the Secretary that recent US force augmentations and retentions to meet the enemy invasion had necessitated substituting over 4,000 combat and combat support spaces in the existing US structure in place of essential logistics and rollup spaces. Consequently, the resulting force structure of 69,000 on 1 May would be

22. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 1 Apr 72, Att to JCS 2472/810, 1 Apr 72; (TS-GP 4) JCSM-149-72 to SecDef, 5 Apr 72, Encl to JCS 2472/810-2, 4 Apr 72; JMF 907/301 (1 Apr 72).

unbalanced and Admiral Moorer was uncertain how long the augmentation forces could be sustained within the 69,000 level.[23]

(U) Once again President Nixon chose to disregard the advice of his military advisers on the issue of redeployments. In a televised address on the evening of 26 April, he reported to the nation that the South Vietnamese were "fighting courageously" and "inflicting very heavy casualties on the invading force." Moreover, General Abrams had predicted that the South Vietnamese, with continued US air and sea support, would stop the North Vietnamese offensive. On the basis of this assessment, and in consultation with President Thieu, Ambassador Bunker, and "my senior advisers in Washington," President Nixon had decided Vietnamization was progressing well enough to continue the withdrawal of US forces. In the next two months, he announced, 20,000 more US troops would depart South Vietnam, lowering the US military ceiling there to 49,000 on 1 July 1972. The President went on to announce a new negotiating effort to end the war and renewed US air and naval attack on North Vietnam, matters treated in Chapters 11 and 7, respectively.[24]

Redeployment Increment 12, May-June 1972

(TS) Thereafter, the Secretary of Defense directed the withdrawal of 20,000 US troops from South Vietnam during the period May through June 1972, and this, redeployment, Increment 12 (KEYSTONE PHEASANT),

23. (TS) CM-1768-72 to SecDef, 19 Apr 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam Force Planning.
24. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 551-552.

proceeded. The field commanders readied the necessary plans and the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted an approved troop list to the Secretary of Defense on 19 May 1972. The 20,000 spaces comprised: 12,084 US Army forces, including one infantry brigade less one battalion, one aerial weapons company, and two air cavalry troops; 537 US Navy advisers and support personnel; 6,297 Air Force troops consisting of four tactical fighter squadrons, a reconnaissance technical squadron, reductions in a tactical airlift squadron, a tactical electronics warfare squadron, and a tactical air support squadron; and 1,082 US Marine Corps augmentation forces. In order to meet the 49,000 ceiling, COMUSMACV had to move out tactical air forces still required in ongoing operations. Consequently, all but one of the redeploying tactical squadrons moved to Nam Phong and Takhli Air Bases in Thailand.[25]

(C) In June COMUSMACV reviewed and modified the 49,000 US force structure to retain certain assets that contributed most directly to destroying the enemy, assisting the RVNAF, and accommodating the stepped up US materiel assistance to South Vietnam (Project ENHANCE).[26] As a result, General Abrams retained 3,004 spaces previously identified for withdrawal, trading off a like number of other spaces, principally security forces. The final US force levels of Increment 12 were as follows:

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25. Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 4 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/814, 5 May 72; (S-GP 4) MJCS-169-72 to SecDef, 19 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/814-1, 24 May 72; JMF 911/374 (4 May 72). (TS-GP 1) CM-1796-72 to SecDef, 1 May 72, CJCS Chron CM File. (S-NOFORN) COMUSMACTHAI Command History, 1972, (C) pp. 12-13, 18.

26. See Chapter 9, pp. 489-494.

Army	9,616
Navy	548
Air Force	7,710
Marine Corps	2,126
Total	20,000

The redeployment moved forward and US strength in South Vietnam on 30 June 1970 stood at 48,000.[27]

Command Reorganization and Consolidation

(C) By the spring of 1972, the continuing drawdown of US forces called for some adjustment in US command organization in South Vietnam. COMUSMACV OPLAN J203,[28] prepared in February and March 1972, for the transition to a US military group in Vietnam included various organizational changes and consolidations in the MACV structure as well. Salient among these were retention of command and control of the air war in South Vietnam; the merger of the MACV and 7th Air Force Headquarters with the Commander, 7th Air Force becoming Deputy COMUSMACV; and the establishment of an Army advisory group using the assets of the present MACV Training Directorate.[29]

(TS) Admiral McCain supported the COMUSMACV plan, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented it to the Secretary of Defense on 4 April. The plan would, they told the Secretary, reduce manpower requirements for headquarters elements, continue COMUSMACV's capability to accomplish assigned missions, and provide for the

27. (TS) CM-1936-72 to SecDef, 14 Jun 72, CJCS Chron CM File. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) pp. F-57 - F-58.

28. See above, pp. 454-455.

29. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 120725Z Feb 72, JCS IN 26695, JMF 045 (12 Feb 72).

orderly transition from a combat command to an assistance advisory group at a later date. The changes would not, however, alter COMUSMACV's status as a subordinate unified commander under the operational command of CINCPAC.[30]

(TS) Secretary Laird asked several questions about the proposed organizational revisions. What changes were envisioned in the MACV mission? What would be the general and flag officer structure in the revised organization? And what about the possible need for single management of all aspects (civilian and military) of pacification and rural development? The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded on 22 April that no revision in the current COMUSMACV mission would be required until US strength in Vietnam fell below 23,000 men. The general and flag officer requirements, they said, must await later determination in light of the specific mission given the final advisory group and of the changing military situation. Further, they assured Mr. Laird that current planning called for a single management MACV/CORDS-type organization as long as needed. Before acting on the COMUSMACV reorganization plan, Secretary Laird put forth a possible alternative, namely, that COMUSMACV be replaced by (or transformed into) what he called a "Supreme Command" for all of Southeast Asia, independent of CINCPAC. The Joint Chiefs of Staff objected that such a change would require a large expansion of staff machinery in Southeast Asia and would mean that command of forces required for the war would be split between CINCPAC and the new command. They recommended proceeding with the

30. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 180356Z Mar 72, JCS IN 88557; (TS-GP 3) JCSM-137-72 to SecDef, 4 Apr 72, Encl B to JCS 2472/808, 27 Mar 72; JMF 045 (12 Feb 72).

scheduled reorganization and phase-down of MACV. The Secretary did not press his proposal, and nothing more came of it.[31]

(C) Mr. Laird discussed the MACV reorganization with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 May 1972. He did not oppose the merger of the MACV and 7th Air Force Headquarters, but suggested assigning the ARVN advisory mission to the US Army, Vietnam (USARV) with the transfer of advisers from MACV to USARV in lieu of creating an Army advisory group. General Abrams objected to this proposal, believing that the advisory function was best kept separate from the mission of USARV, which was to provide support for the ARVN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported the field commander and the Secretary of Defense acceded to their wishes. He did not formally approve the organizational changes for Vietnam at that time, however, and not until 31 August 1972, did Mr. Laird confirm approval for designation of the Commander, 7th Air Force as Deputy COMUSMACV, establishment of an Army Advisory Group using the resources of the Training Directorate of MACV, and maintenance of CORDS activities at the current level.[32]

(C) Meantime, COMUSMACV had proceeded with the implementation of the changes in accord with the

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31. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Apr 72, Att to JCS 2472/808-1, 12 Apr 72; (TS-GP 4) JCSM-182-72 to Sec Def, 22 Apr 72, Encl to JCS 2472/808-2, 19 Apr 72; JMF 045 (12 Feb 72). (TS-GP 3) JCSM-214-72 to SecDef, 8 May 72, Encl to JCS 2472/815, 7 May 72, JMF 907/045 (7 May 72). (S) CM-1820-72 to SecDef, 8 May 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Jun 72.

32. (TS-GP 4) JCS 2472/808-4, 17 May 72; (TS-GP 4) JCSM-237-72 to SecDef, 22 May 72 (derived from JCS 2472/808-4); (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 31 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/808-5, 1 Sep 72; JMF 045 (12 Feb 72).

Secretary's tacit approval. In May 1972, the MACV Training Directorate was reorganized into the Army Advisory Group (AAG) with a strength of 792 military personnel and one civilian. Over a month later, on 29 June 1972, General Abrams left South Vietnam to return to Washington to be Chief of Staff of the Army. At that time, General Fred C. Weyand, USA, Deputy COMUSMACV, became the acting commander in Vietnam although he was not formally designated COMUSMACV until 12 October. Simultaneous with General Weyand's assumption of command on 29 June, General John W. Vogt, USAF, Commander of the 7th Air Force and Deputy COMUSMACV for Air, also became Deputy COMUSMACV with the three positions now consolidated into one. At that time, the Headquarters of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and the 7th Air Force were merged.[33]

Further Redeployments, July-August 1972

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff in April had recommended one redeployment announcement for the period 1 May through 1 November 1972 with the field commanders free to set the pace of the withdrawals within the overall ceiling figure. The President, however, did not accept this position and announced instead a 20,000 US withdrawal during May and June. The question remained: what would be the size and timing of future US redeployments?

(C) On 16 June 1972, the Secretary of Defense asked for General Abrams' views on future redeployments, and

33. (C-GP 4) JCSM-244-72 to SecDef, 26 May 72, JMF 045 (26 May 72). (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) pp. v, 37, M-1, M-3, N-3 - N-4.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave the comments of both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC to Mr. Laird on 21 June 1972. The two commanders thought any reduction below the currently authorized 49,000 ceiling would result in "marginal capabilities" in one or more functional areas. Moreover, additional withdrawals would degrade the security of US forces and impair their ability to support the South Vietnamese. If it was imperative to continue redeployments, COMUSMACV believed it possible to redeploy another 10,000 US forces by 1 September. CINCPAC, on the other hand, favored a moratorium on withdrawals during July to allow an assessment of further redeployments in succeeding months.

(C) After presenting these positions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary that any substantial degradation of the US structure in South Vietnam at that "critical time" risked failure of US efforts in Southeast Asia. But, should "overriding considerations at the national level" require continuing US withdrawals, then the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the 10,000 figure proposed by COMUSMACV, reaching a ceiling of 39,000 by 1 September 1972.[34]

(U) In this instance, the President heeded the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On 28 June 1972, White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler announced the President's decision to continue US withdrawals from South Vietnam. After consulting with the Government of Vietnam and reviewing the military situation, the President had ordered a reduction of the US troop level to 39,000 by 1 September. This decision, Mr. Ziegler explained, was based on the assessment that

34. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 Jun 72, Encl B to JCS 2472/824, 20 Jun 72; (TS) JCSM-288-72 to SecDef, 21 Jun 72, Encl A to JCS 2472/824, 20 Jun 72; JMF 911/374 (16 Jun 72).

such redeployments could take place without jeopardizing Vietnamization or the safety of US forces remaining in South Vietnam. Mr. Ziegler went on to say that, effective immediately, draftees would no longer be assigned to duty in Vietnam unless they volunteered for service there.[35]

(C) As in the previous redeployment increments, the Secretary of Defense directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to carry out this redeployment and they approved the necessary troop list for Increment 13 (KEYSTONE WREN) reducing US strength to 39,000 by 1 September 1972. United States Navy spaces amounted to 55, US Air Force to 1,354, and US Marine Corps to 7, all of whom were advisers or support personnel. The US Army would withdraw 8,584 spaces including one infantry battalion, one airmobile battalion, two aerial weapons companies, one aerial rocket artillery battalion, one support and three assault helicopter companies, and logistic support personnel. These withdrawals proceeded forthwith and the US Army portion was completed on 23 August, marking the departure of the last major US ground combat units from South Vietnam. Increment 13 was completed on schedule on 31 August 1972, leaving US strength at 36,800.[36]

(C) In planning Increment 13, COMUSMACV had notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he could no longer afford to set aside medical facilities to treat civilian war

35. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 3 Jul 1972, p. 1110.

36. (U) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 1 Jul 72, Att to JCS 2472/828, 3 Jul 72; (TS) MJCS-258-72 to SecDef, 3 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/828-1, 7 Aug 72; JMF 911/374 (1 Jul 72). (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. F-58.

casalties. He proposed henceforth to provide treatment for civilians only on a case-by-case basis where South Vietnamese medical facilities were insufficient. The Joint Chiefs of Staff endorsed this proposal. Mr. Laird replied on 26 August. For reasons of domestic and international impact, he did not want to make a formal announcement of the end of US support of the "Civilian War Casualty Program." But, because of the reduced capabilities of the US forces, he authorized COMUSMACV to proceed in practice as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[37]

The Final Redeployment Increment

(C) Throughout the spring and summer of 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders repeatedly cautioned the Secretary of Defense against continuing US troop withdrawals, but President Nixon, facing reelection in November, was determined to press ahead with further reductions pending a cease-fire agreement. Following the pattern of previous increments, Secretary Laird on 15 August 1972 requested views on redeployments beyond 1 September from Admiral Moorer and General Weyand.[38]

(C) In response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recalled the COMUSMACV plan of the previous March providing for a 15,000-man force structure in South Vietnam by 1 November 1972. This plan and figure were no longer feasible, they said, because of the North Vietnamese

37. (TS) MJCS-258-72 to SecDef, 3 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/828-1, 7 Aug 72; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 26 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/828-2, 28 Aug 72; JMF 911/374 (1 Jul 72).

38. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 15 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/834, 16 Aug 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Aug 72).

invasion. General Weyand believed US air and naval power "decisive and vital" to the current counteroffensive, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued, and he would be "extremely hard pressed" to maintain this support with any further reduction in his forces. The new commander viewed the removal of the remaining US ground combat units in the increment then in process a "risk," believing that the impact of the reduction to a level of 39,000 by 1 September, had not yet been properly assessed. Only with reluctance the field commander had said a further 10,000-man withdrawal could be made by 1 November if required "at the highest level."

(C) Both CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred with General Weyand, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommending a US strength of "about 30,000" by 31 December 1972. Further, they urged that the field commander be free to determine the exact composition and timing of the approximate 9,000 spaces in this recommended redeployment.[39]

(C) As the Increment 13 redeployment proceeded in July and August 1972, concern was voiced in the Washington Special Actions Group over military plans to relocate units from South Vietnam to Thailand. Consequently, the Secretary of Defense instructed Admiral Moorer that:

> Actual redeployment of personnel from Vietnam to Thailand as a result of the drawdown in Vietnam will be kept to a minimum, and spaces for the personnel should be identified within the basic 32,200 Thailand ceiling.

39. (TS) JCSM-383-72 to SecDef, 19 Aug 72, App to JCS 2472/834-1, 18 Aug 72, JMF 911/374 (15 Aug 72).

Thereafter, on 15 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assured Mr. Laird that they were limiting troop movement to Thailand to those essential to Southeast Asian operations and would continue to do so. They would, they said, reduce the entry of new units by transferring missions wherever possible to forces already stationed in Thailand and obtain clearance from the Royal Thai Government as far in advance as possible for troops moved from South Vietnam to Thailand.[40]

(U) On 29 August 1972, White House Press Secretary Ziegler read a statement in San Clemente, California, announcing the redeployment of an additional 12,000 US troops from South Vietnam by 30 November. This withdrawal, he said, would reduce the US ceiling in Vietnam to 27,000 men. At a press conference later in the day, President Nixon explained that the 27,000 figure did not represent a force "that is going to remain in South Vietnam indefinitely." Rather, once the US Presidential election was over and before the first of December, he planned a further assessment, though he did not pledge a further withdrawal announcement at that time.[41]

(C) Following the established procedures, the Secretary of Defense authorized the withdrawal in accordance with the President's announcement and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the necessary troop list. Included in the 12,000 spaces of Increment 14 (KEYSTONE PELICAN) were: 7,282 US Army security, adviser, and support

40. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 7 Jul 72, Att to JCS 2353/198, 8 Jul 72; (TS) JCSM-370-72 to SecDef, 15 Aug 72 (derived from JCS 2353/198-1); JMF 922/374 (7 Jul 72).

41. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 4 Sep 1972, p. 1306. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 830.

personnel and 603 US Navy advisers and support forces. The US Air Force planned the removal of 3,208 troops, including three special operations squadrons, a tactical electronic warfare squadron, and various support personnel, and the 907 US Marine Corps spaces consisted of two attack squadrons (A-4) and associated support. Later, in November 1972, COMUSMACV decided to retain the two Marine Corps squadrons and appropriate trade-offs were made in the contingents of the other Services to accommodate the required 865 spaces.[42]

(C) With the Increment 14 withdrawal underway, the Secretary of Defense on 14 September 1972 asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for an analysis of necessary US force structure in Thailand assuming various US residual strengths in Vietnam and air activity levels in Southeast Asia and for a "follow-on study" of options for "US force resurgence" in Southeast Asia to meet a contingency similar to the recent North Vietnamese offensive. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied the Thailand force structure review on 18 October and a study of force resurgence options on 31 October. With regard to the latter, they concluded that US air forces could surge to meet a contingency as described by the Secretary with augmentation from the Strategic, Readiness, Pacific, and Atlantic Commands. They were quick to point out, however, that such an eventuality would limit the US capability to react quickly to contingencies in other areas of the world.[43]

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42. (U) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 5 Sep 72, Att to JCS 2472/834-2, 5 Sep 72; (TS) MJCS-341-72 to SecDef, 17 Oct 72, Att to JCS 2472/834-3, 18 Oct 72; JMF 911/374 (15 Aug 72). (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. F-59.

43. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 14 Sep 72, Att to JCS 2353/198-2, 15 Sep 72; (TS) JCSM-451-72 to SecDef, 18 Oct 72, Encl to JCS 2353/198-3, 16 Oct 72; (TS) JCSM-460-72 to SecDef, 31 Oct 72, Encl to JCS 2353/198-4, 27 Oct 72; JMF 922/374 (7 Jul 72).

(U) The Increment 14 redeployment went forward without interruption, and on 30 November 1972, the US military strength in South Vietnam stood at 25,500 men, well below the authorized ceiling of 27,000. The two US Marine Corps A-4 squadrons were the only major combat units of any service remaining in South Vietnam at that time.[44]

(C) During October 1972, a diplomatic settlement of the war appeared imminent, but then miscarried.[45] Subsequently, after the US Presidential election in November, the negotiations resumed, without success, and once again the question of additional redeployments confronted the President and his advisers. On 28 November Admiral Moorer told the Secretary of Defense that further withdrawals at the time would not be "prudent." He based his position on the still uncertain state of the peace talks as well as the need for "full use of the 27,000 personnel authorized as of 1 December" for security and orderly retrograde of US equipment if an agreement was attained. Therefore he recommended that the US force level in Vietnam be held at 27,000.[46]

(C) Apparently because of the lack of progress in the negotiations, the President announced no further US redeployments at the beginning of December, and the authorized US ceiling in South Vietnam stood at 27,000 throughout the final weeks of 1972 and in early 1973.

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44. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) pp. F-59 - F-61, (U) p. N-6.

45. For developments in the negotiations, see Chapter 11.

46. (TS) CM-2325-72 to SecDef, 28 Nov 72, CJCS CM Chron File.

Nevertheless, US forces continued to leave Vietnam. At the end of December 1972, US strength had dropped to 24,069 and another 553 troops had departed by 27 January leaving 23,516 US troops there when the cease-fire went into effect. In all, 135,603 US troops redeployed from South Vietnam in the period 1 January 1972 through 27 January 1973.[47]

Consideration of ROK Force Withdrawals

(C) With the continuing US redeployments in the early months of 1972, the issue of further ROK force withdrawals from South Vietnam again arose. The previous summer, President Nixon had recognized the Republic of Korea's desire to reduce its contingent in South Vietnam, deciding on 23 June 1971 to support two Korean divisions in South Vietnam through 1972. This decision, in effect, sanctioned the return of approximately 10,000 ROK troops from Vietnam to South Korea. Redeployment of the ROK 2d Marine Brigade together with support and headquarters elements began in late 1971 and was complete by April 1972.[48]

(TS) Meantime, in January 1972, the United States had sought confirmation from President Chung Hee Park that the two ROK divisions would in fact remain in South Vietnam through 1972. The South Korean President had publicly reserved his position but told the US Ambassador in Seoul privately that he was proceeding with plans to withdraw the two divisions beginning in June 1972. Subsequently, the South Koreans approached the

47. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) pp. F-60 - F-61. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. J-39.
48. See Chapter 3, pp. 168-174.

United States for pledges of both political and military support in return for retaining the two divisions in South Vietnam. Specifically, the Koreans asked that at least two US combat brigades remain in Vietnam as long as any Korean forces were there. They also sought air and logistic support for the ROK forces in Vietnam.[49]

(TS) President Nixon requested the NSC Under Secretaries Committee to examine alternate courses available to the United States to assure the maximum ROK presense in South Vietnam. The NSC Committee replied to the President on 21 March 1972. The Republic of Korea had requested US assurances to keep its forces in Vietnam, the Committee said, and the United States could provide acceptable military support, although not in the exact terms requested, as long as the US force level remained above 30,000 troops. Once the US strength fell below that level, US capability to support the Korean forces would decrease and none would be possible at a US level of 15,000 unless additional US personnel were retained in Vietnam specifically for that purpose. In any event, the Committee members believed that the Koreans were open to compromise on the quid pro quo involved and set two alternative goals for negotiation with the Koreans. In the first, the United States would either give a pledge to keep its forces in South Korea for a stated period or increase military assistance to the Republic of Korea in return for retention of the two divisions in South Vietnam. The second provided for negotiation for a smaller ROK force in Vietnam if ROK demands for the full two divisions proved too high. A third alternative,

49. (TS-GP 1) Memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to President, 21 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-2, 28 Mar 72, JMF 911/497 (16 Feb 72).

although not offered for the President's consideration, was not to oppose ROK troop withdrawals from Vietnam.[50]

(TS) Shortly after sending this study to the President, the Under Secretaries Committee learned that the Republic of Korea had modified its position. Now the Koreans no longer insisted on the retention of two US combat brigades in South Vietnam if the Korean troops were to stay. Rather, the ROK Minister of Defense had stated that the presence of "some" US ground combat forces would suffice.[51]

(TS) President Nixon reviewed the question of keeping the two ROK divisions in Vietnam and, on 5 April 1972, decided on US actions to facilitate retention of those forces. The United States would provide air support for the ROK forces within overall priorities as had been the case in the past; it would be prepared to implement an alternative logistic support system for the ROK divisions; and it would be ready to plan a joint US/ROK evacuation airlift of the Korean forces. In discussions with the Koreans, the President did not want to link the presence of US troops in Korea with the issue of the ROK divisions in Vietnam. Instead, the United States would assure the Republic of Korea that US forces would not be "totally" withdrawn from South Vietnam as long as ROK troops remained there. If these assurances proved acceptable to the Koreans, then the President desired to review the need

50. (TS-GP 1) Memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to President, 21 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-2, 28 Mar 72, JMF 911/497 (16 Feb 72).

51. (TS-GP 1) Memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to President, 27 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-3, 31 Mar 72, JMF 911/497 (16 Feb 72).

for the ROK forces in South Vietnam again later in the year and he wanted the Republic of Korea so informed.[52]

(TS) At the end of March 1972, just as the Republic of Korea was completing the previously planned redeployment of 10,000 forces from South Vietnam, North Vietnam launched its massive invasion across the Demilitarized Zone into South Vietnam. The Government of Vietnam immediately requested the assistance of the ROK forces in Vietnam in securing important coastal areas in MR 2 and large segments of National Highways 1 and 19, and the Republic of Korea suspended plans for further redeployments. Subsequently, on 25 May 1972, President Park agreed to retain the remaining two ROK divisions in South Vietnam throughout 1972. The United States conveyed assurances of continued support for those forces, but at the same time, indicated its intention to review early in November 1972 the question of the presence of the ROK divisions in Vietnam beyond 1972.[53]

(TS) By late summer, the Republic of Korea resumed planning to remove its divisions from South Vietnam, calling for the withdrawal of its forces in the first half of 1973. The US military commanders, however, were anxious to keep the Korean troops in Vietnam for a longer period. General Weyand thought retention of at least one ROK division in MR 2 through 1973 was a necessity, and CINCPAC agreed with him. Consequently, the Government of Vietnam asked the Republic of Korea

52. (TS-EX) Extracts of NSDM 161, 5 Apr 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) NSDMs, sec 1.

53. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. C-85, (TS-EX) Memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to DepSecDef et al., 22 Sep 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-5, 25 Sep 72, JMF 911/497 (16 Feb 72).

to delay the withdrawals, and President Nixon directed another NSC review of the matter.[54]

(C) Thereafter the NSC under Secretaries Committee prepared four alternatives to delay the redeployment of the two ROK divisions into late 1973 and 1974. In the end, however, the Under Secretaries' review and alternatives proved academic. The full two ROK divisions remained in South Vietnam throughout the remainder of 1972 and for the first three weeks of 1973. Then, with the Vietnam agreement, all US and ROK forces began immediate withdrawal and, by the end of March 1973, all had departed Vietnam.[55]

54. (S) DJSM-1823-72 to CJCS, 22 Sep 72; (TS-EX) Memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to DepSecDef et al., 30 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-4, 6 Sep 72; (TS-EX) memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to DepSecDef et al., 22 Sep 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-5, 25 Sep 72; JMF 911/497 (16 Feb 72).

55. (TS-EX) Memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to DepSecDef et al., 22 Sep 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-5, 25 Sep 72; (TS-EX) Memo, NSC Under Secys Cmte to DepSecDef et al., 5 Oct 72, Att to JCS 2472/800-7, 11 Oct 72; JMF 911/497 (16 Feb 72). (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. C-85. For withdrawal of the ROK forces from South Vietnam, see Chapter 14.

TABLE 5

US REDEPLOYMENTS IN 1972

INCREMENT	PERIOD	AUTHORIZED CEILING	SPACES REDUCED	COMBAT FORCES MVR BN	ARTY BN	ATK/FTR* SQDNS
X (KEYSTONE MALLARD)	1 Dec 71-31 Jan 72	139,000	45,000**	6	5	2
XI (KEYSTONE OWL)	1 Feb-30 Apr 72	69,000	70,000	11	3	0
XII (KEYSTONE PHEASANT)	1 May-30 Jun 72	49,000	20,000	4	2	7
XIII (KEYSTONE WREN)	1 Jul-31 Aug 72	39,000	10,000	3	0	0
XIV (KEYSTONE PELICAN)	1 Sep-30 Nov 72	27,000	12,000	0	0	0

* Includes both USAF and USMC squadrons
** 25,000 spaces in December 1971 and 20,000 spaces in January 1972

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, pp. F-56 - F-60.

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TABLE 6

ACTUAL STRENGTH OF US MILITARY FORCES IN VIETNAM
JANUARY 1972-JANUARY 1973

31 January 1972	136,505
29 February 1972	119,606
31 March 1972	95,500
30 April 1972	68,100
31 May 1972	63,000
30 June 1972	48,000
31 July 1972	46,000
31 August 1972	36,800
30 September 1972	35,500
31 October 1972	32,200
30 November 1972	25,500
31 December 1972	24,000
31 January 1973	21,821

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, pp. N-1 - N-7.

CHAPTER 9

RVNAF IMPROVEMENT, 1972

(U) Throughout 1971, the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had all exercised especial vigilance on the matter of the improvement of the RVNAF. They wanted the South Vietnamese forces trained and equipped to the fullest extent possible as the South Vietnamese assumed expanding responsibility for the conduct of the war. The US attention in this regard increased still further during the final 15 months of US military involvement in South Vietnam. In early 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders continued to refine the RVNAF structure to assure the best force to meet the enemy challenge. Then, with the enemy offensive in the spring and the subsequent prospects of an imminent political settlement during the latter months of 1972, President Nixon was particularly anxious that the South Vietnamese have everything possible to insure the survival of the Republic of Vietnam. Since the South Vietnamese force structure had already been expanded to prudent limits, the President directed several accelerated programs to supply added military equipment to the Republic of Vietnam as the United States prepared for its military departure.

FY 1973 Force Structure Review

(TS) During the fall of 1971, COMUSMACV's staff and the Joint General Staff (JGS) reviewed the Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program (CRIMP) force structure for FY 1973 to ensure that the South Vietnamese would have the necessary troops to

replace withdrawing US and Free World Forces. Keeping within the approved 1.1 million manpower ceiling, the two staffs addressed the RVNAF interdiction capability, reinforcement of Military Regions 1 and 2, and development of an air cavalry capability, medium helicopter assets, and the capabilities of self-propelled artillery. They also considered faster activation of units; improvements in command control, leadership and morale, logistics, and individual and unit training; and the availability of manpower resources to maintain the 1.1 million-man force level.

(TS) General Abrams submitted the results of this review to CINCPAC on 12 January 1972. His submission consolidated force structure changes approved since the FY 1972 review the previous spring,[1] which included: activation of the ARVN 3d Infantry Division and 20th Tank Squadron, VNAF acquisition of Phu Cat Air Base, VNN acquisition of two former US Coast Guard high endurance cutters (WHECs), and reduction of RF company strengths in MRs 3 and 4 from 123 to 119 personnel. General Abrams also recommended further changes for FY 1973 that would reorganize, expand, or streamline existing units in accordance with "current experience factors and increased RVNAF assumption of combat and combat support responsibilities." The most important proposed change was a sizeable increase in forces for air and naval interdiction: addition of maritime patrol aircraft, conversion of an air transport squadron to gunships (AC-119Ks), introduction of short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft, and provision of US Coast Guard WHECs capable of operating in deep

1. See Chapter 6, pp. 299-312.

water. Another area was the territorial forces, where accelerated US redeployment required 131 additional RF companies.

(TS) General Abrams estimated the cost of the force structure changes at $87.172 million for FY 1972 and $169.174 million in FY 1973 with nearly 80 percent of these sums attributable to the interdiction improvement efforts. To facilitate the changes, he requested temporary authority to exceed the 1.1 million strength ceiling by 17,000 spaces pending resolution of specific manpower tradeoffs in negotiation with the Joint General Staff. The South Vietnamese wished to support increases in the VNAF and elsewhere by eliminating Popular Force spaces. General Abrams, on the other hand, hoped to accomplish the same increases by withdrawing at least some compensating spaces from the ARVN. In the COMUSMACV version, the RVNAF spaces would be allocated as follows:

	FY 1972 ADJUSTED STRENGTHS	FY 1973 CHANGES	FY 1973 ADJUSTED STRENGTHS
ARVN	448,925	-15,463	433,462
VNAF	49,196	+12,257	61,453
VNN	40,681	+250	40,931
VNMC	14,072	+173	14,245
RF	292,405	+14,702	307,107
PF	254,721	-11,919	242,802
	1,100,000	0	1,100,000

Admiral McCain studied the FY 1973 CRIMP force structure review and forwarded it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 January, recommending approval of all the changes as well as the temporary increase in the RVNAF manpower ceiling.[2]

2. (TS-GP 4) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 12 Jan 72; Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 21 Jan 72; Atts to JCS 2472/796, 25 Jan 72, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72). (TS-NOFORN EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (TS) p. C-12.

(TS) At the time the Joint Chiefs of Staff received the FY 1973 CRIMP review, they were preparing a report for the Secretary of Defense on measures to achieve an optimal RVNAF interdiction capability as Mr. Laird had directed the previous October.[3] They forwarded this report on 14 February 1972. Programs to provide the VNAF with a maritime air patrol capability and STOL aircraft (CREDIBLE CHASE) and modification of A-37 aircraft to assist the RVNAF in interdiction efforts were all undergoing evaluation. The RVNAF force structure review for FY 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary, would include manpower spaces to allow provision of AC-119K aircraft to the South Vietnamese at a later date, and efforts were being made to update VNAF requirements for the CBU-55 (cluster bomblet munition). In addition, more deepwater ships were required by the VNN to impede sea infiltration. These programs would, of course, require revisions in the RVNAF force structure, causing impacts on current programs and requiring "difficult trade-offs." The COMUSMACV-JGS review had already addressed this matter, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary that the required changes would be included in the FY 1973 RVNAF force structure review to be provided shortly.[4]

(TS) A little over a week later, on 23 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted the promised RVNAF force structure review to Secretary Laird, endorsing the recommendations of General Abrams. Major changes proposed for FY 1973 would provide for: (1) ARVN engineer augmentation, (2) adding 131 Regional Force

3. See Chaper 6, pp. 339-341.

4. (TS-GP 3) JCSM-54-72 to SecDef, 14 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2472/747-16, 10 Feb 72, JMF 911/309 (10 May 71) sec 6.

companies, (3) upgrading Phan Rang Air Base to operational status, (4) acquisition of an additional airbase, (5) provision of five STOL squadrons (200 aircraft), (6) acquisition of an AC-119K gunship squadron, (7) provision of three WHECs for the VNN,[5] (8) provision of a VNAF maritime air patrol capability, (9) reduction in Regional Force company strengths in MRs 1, 2, and 3. Some of these measures, such as the provision of the STOL planes and additional WHECs, were still under evaluation. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded COMUSMACV's cost estimates, but warned that these were only preliminary and subject to change in light of further study.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended approval of the proposed changes, which would enhance RVNAF capabilities, especially interdiction. Still to be resolved was the dispute between COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff regarding space trade-offs within the RVNAF in order to remain within the established personnel ceiling. The Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated, however, that this matter could be settled by 1 July 1972 and that the temporary space authorization would not be required beyond FY 1973. Accordingly, they sought approval for 17,000 spaces above the 1.1 million RVNAF force structure through FY 1973, but with the proviso that the United States not support RVNAF assigned strength in excess of 1.1 million men. They viewed this temporary increase as a management device to allow initiation of long term programs without

5. Apparently, the three WHECs represented only one in addition to the two already approved and one less than the two additional recommended by COMUSMACV.

debilitating South Vietnamese combat power in the "crucial" months ahead. Moreover, they noted that the RVNAF had always been at least 39,000 men short of the authorized 1.1 million level. The changes proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff would provide the following RVNAF structure:

	Strengths End FY 1972	Proposed Changes	Proposed Adjusted FY 1973 Strengths
ARVN	448,925	+ 1,442	450,367
VNAF	49,196	+12,257	61,453
VNN	40,681	+ 250	40,931
VNMC	14,072	+ 173	14,245
RF	292,405	+14,702	307,107
PF	254,721	-11,919	242,802
Total	1,100,000	+16,905	1,116,905[6]

(TS) On 16 March 1972, Secretary Laird approved the temporary increase in the RVNAF structue requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He did not want new units created, however, if they would divert manpower from front-line battalions and he stressed the goal of 90 percent manning for combat and other key units remained unfulfilled.[7]

(TS) Thereafter, on 29 March 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the Secretary of Defense cost figures for the force structure changes recommendd on 23 February. The FY 1972 programs required $18.36 million and the FY 1973 additions another $75.58 million. Tentative FY 1973 programs for major interdiction improvement (provision of additional aircraft and WHECs), which were subject to further evaluation, were priced a $160.05 million. Secretary Laird

6. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-75-72 to SecDef, 23 Feb 72, Encl to JCS 2472/796-1, 18 Feb 72, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).
7. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 16 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/796-2, 17 Mar 72, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).

determined that the requested changes in the RVNAF could be accommodated in the FY 1973 budget without additional funding, and he approved them on 4 May 1972. At that time, he asked to be informed of actions to return RVNAF authorized strength to the 1.1 million level.[8]

(TS) In planning to return the RVNAF to a 1.1 million-man strength, the Joint General Staff could be depended upon to seek elimination of territorial spaces because the South Vietnamese military leaders consistently showed a preference for regular over territorial forces within the overall ceiling. In fact, during an April conference in Saigon with Major General Alexander Haig, President Thieu raised the possibility of forming additional main force units by using Regional and Popular Force units which would, in turn, be replaced by further recruitment. Commenting on this proposal, Admiral Moorer expressed his view that then, during the current offensive, was "not the time to reorganize the ARVN force structure, particularly in light of the tempo of operations and the availability of manpower."[9]

(C) In the end, the Joint General Staff view prevailed. On 19 June, COMUSMACV provided his recommendations to CINCPAC to return the RVNAF to the 1.1 million authorization, identifying 16,905 Popular Force spaces for elimination. He also proposed organizational changes in the VNN to support the three new high endurance cutters and other uses for 4,100 VNAF spaces previously designated for the STOL program now

8. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-131-72 to SecDef, 29 Mar 72, Encl to JCS 2472/796-3, 22 Mar 72; Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 4 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/796-4, 5 May 72; JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).

9. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 1489 to CINCPAC, 242139Z Apr 72.

now that the United States had decided to hold provision of the STOL to South Vietnam in abeyance pending test results.[10]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted COMUSMACV's recommendations and told Secretary Laird on 3 July 1972 that the divergencies between the Joint General Staff and COMUSMACV on personnel space trade-offs to meet the FY 1973 force structure changes had been resolved. The 1.1 million ceiling would be met by the end of FY 1973 through elimination of 16,905 Popular Force spaces, requiring inactivation of 554 Popular Force platoons. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff notified CINCPAC that the VNN changes as proposed by COMUSMACV were approved and that the Popular Force and VNAF changes were approved for planning.[11] Thus the final RVNAF authorized strength for the end of FY 1973 was as follows:

	FY 1973 Adjusted Strengths
ARVN	450,760
VNAF	64,507
VNN	39,742
VNMC	14,402
Regional Force	324,561
Popular Force	206,028
	1,100,000[12]

Project ENHANCE

(TS) The North Vietnamese offensive, breaking at the end of March 1972, dealt a staggering, if momentary

10. (TS-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 190007Z Jun 72, JCS IN 90240. For the US decision on the STOL program, see Chapter 6, p. 343-350.
11. (TS) JCSM-302-72 to SecDef, 3 Jul 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 2998 to CINCPAC, 031725Z Jul 72; (both derived from JCS 2472/796-5), JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).
12. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S), p. C-16.

blow to the RVNAF improvement program and stimulated Project ENHANCE, the funneling of massive amounts of additional military equipment to the South Vietnamese forces. Even before the offensive, both the Secretary of Defense and the President had been anxious for improvement of the RVNAF to proceed at the maximum possible pace. After review of the JCS report on 14 February on measures to strengthen the RVNAF interdiction capability,[13] Secretary Laird had expressed disappointment to Admiral Moorer on 10 March with the progress and requested a review to identify actions to accelerate the effort. A few days later, President Nixon directed a review of VNAF capabilities and related US assistance. He wanted the review to cover the period FY 1973-1975 and to address the possibility of providing the VNAF a broad range of capabilities for missions currently performed mainly by US forces. In addition to land and sea interdiction, areas mentioned by the President included: air defense, reconnaissance, intelligence collection, and out-of-country air support and interdiction. In essence, the President wanted to insure that the VNAF was prepared not only for a reduction but also withdrawal of US air support.[14]

(C) In compliance with the President's directive, the Secretary of Defense asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a review of RVNAF improvement, VNAF capabilities, and air activities in Southeast Asia as well

13. See above, p. 480.

14. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2339/354, 13 Mar 72, JMF 907/535 (10 Mar 72). (TS-GP 3) NSSM 151 to SecDef, 15 Mar 72, Att to JCS 2472/804, 18 Mar 72, JMF 911/496 (15 Mar 72).

as US forces in Vietnam.[15] His earlier tasking for further enhancement of RVNAF interdiction was to be incorporated in this larger review, the scope of which would encompass "future US force posture in SEA, RVNAF structure, and the military outlook for the RVN during the period FY 73-FY 76."[16]

(C) On 24 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave Mr. Laird an assessment of air activity in Southeast Asia during the period 1973-1976. They concluded that current programs for development of Southeast Asian air forces were progressing as rapidly as possible and that any significant changes should be avoided until the later part of the FY 1973-1976 period. In South Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that "the VNAF has been developing for the past several years at the maximum feasible rate." Major shortfalls in relation to the total threat were in air defense and interdiction in a high threat environment, neither of which could be corrected by "easily made changes in the VNAF structure."

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that US air activity would be required in Southeast Asia, at least in the near term, to offset shortfalls in the capability of Southeast Asian air forces. They presented four options for attack sortie levels and recommended approval of the first option for FY 1973, supplying 8,000 tactical air, 1,000 B-52, and 750 gunship sorties

15. For this latter aspect of the review, see Chapter 8, pp. 455-456.

16. (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 1 Apr 72, Att to JCS 2472/810, 1 Apr 72, JMF 907/301 (1 Apr 72). Admiral Moorer wanted to hold this review in abeyance pending the outcome of the ongoing enemy offensive, but Secretary Laird did not agree, asking for the studies by late that month. See (TS-GP 4) CM-1740-72 to SecDef, 13 Apr 72, Att to JCS 2472/810-3, 14 Apr 72; (TS-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 22 Apr 72, Att to JCS 2472/810-6, 24 Apr 72; JMF 907/301 (1 Apr 72).

per month, the level recommended by the field commanders. Planning for sortie rates for FY 1974 and later years, they said, should await further evaluation.[17]

(C) Three days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded a review of RVNAF improvement and VNAF capabilities. The most valid measure of military balance in South Vietnam, they noted, would be the outcome of the current offensive. In the final analysis the ultimate success of the RVNAF would depend on the South Vietnamese tenacity and will to win. So far, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found the overall performance of the RVNAF "encouraging." After initial onslaughts by locally superior North Vietnamese Army forces, the South Vietnamese had regrouped, reinforced, and slowed the enemy offensive. Of particular significance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, was the fact that operations thus far appeared to justify fully the force structure of the 1.1 million-man RVNAF. They noted that the offensive was providing "a rigorous test" of US attempts to improve RVNAF leadership. Many South Vietnamese combat leaders were on the battlefield for the first time without US advisers and, "by and large, the results have been encouraging." There appeared to be a continuous upward trend in the overall quality of RVNAF leadership, and US programs in this area would continue to stress improvement.

(C) With respect to VNAF capabilities, the Joint Chiefs of Staff again stressed that the South Vietnamese Air Force was developing at "the maximum feasible rate." They described the shortfalls as outlined in their submission three days earlier and repeated that these could not be easily corrected. Although the current combat situation precluded a thorough assessment of the South Vietnamese interdiction effort, the

17. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-184-72 to SecDef, 24 Apr 72, Encl A to JCS 2472/810-5, 20 Apr 72, JMF 907/301 (1 Apr 72).

Joint Chiefs of Staff believed it was improving. They emphasized, however, that it could not achieve the US level.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that: "The present program for the RVNAF force structure provides a capability to meet the assessed enemy threat and yet retains flexibility for changes or modificatons as they may become necessary." They defended the RVNAF as "balanced, insofar as possible, taking full cognizance of the GVN capacity to provide leadership, skills, and manpower." They warned against introduction of additional complex equipment that the RVNAF could not absorb. The US effort for the near term, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, "should be directed toward supplying resources already programmed, providing support capabilities not possessed by the RVNAF, providing advisory assistance, and monitoring essential programs until such time as it appears success is assured."[18]

(TS) Meantime, President Nixon wanted to assure the South Vietnamese all the materiel support needed to meet the enemy invasion. He asked Dr. Kissinger about this matter several times during the early days of the offensive and at a WSAG meeting on 17 April, Dr. Kissinger requested Deputy Secretary of Defense Kenneth Rush to prepare a paper on equipment replacements for the RVNAF. Dr. Kissinger suggested a joint effort with Admiral Moorer.[19]

(TS) Admiral Moorer supplied Deputy Secretary Rush an inventory of what the South Vietnamese were authorized, what they had lost, and what they actually had. In

18. (TS-GP 4) JCSM-192-72 to SecDef, 27 Apr 72, Encl to JCS 2472/810-7, 24 Apr 72, JMF 907/301 (1 Apr 72).
19. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 17 Apr 72, NSC Files.

addition, he advised Mr. Rush of the equipment losses the United States planned to replace and the sources for these replacements. Using this informnation Mr. Rush presented his paper to the WSAG on 18 April. Dr. Kissinger and General Haig, the latter just returned from Vietnam, discussed the South Vietnamese logistical situation with President Nixon the following day, 19 April. The President wanted to keep RVNAF equipment up to authorized levels. Should there be a settlement with a moratorium on the introduction of new equipment, he was anxious for the South Vietnamese to be in the strongest position possible.[20]

(TS) Resupply of RVNAF equipment losses within currently approved levels proceeded apace. On 17 May, the WSAG members again took up this matter. Dr. Kissinger reported that the President wanted to get the maximum amount of equipment to South Vietnam as soon as possible. The President was still concerned that the RVNAF be as well supplied as possible in the event of a political settlement. In the ensuing discussion, Admiral Moorer observed that in no instance had the South Vietnamese lost a battle because of the lack of logistical support. He also voiced concern over the "tremendous cost" of additional equipment for the RVNAF. Nevertheless, the members did agree to have ready for the President by Friday, 19 May, a list of equipment that could be sent to Vietnam on a priority basis.[21]

(TS) Mr. Rush prepared the list, casting it in the form of a proposed memorandum for the President. He

20. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 18 and 20 Apr 72, NSC Files.

21. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) p. E-1. (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 17 May 72, NSC Files.

observed that supplies for the South Vietnamese were adequate. At the outbreak of the offensive in early April, US deliveries under the CRIMP for FY 1973 were virtually complete. Since then a major effort had been made to replace all the materiel destroyed in the fighting, and the RVNAF supply posture at the beginning of the invasion had prevented equipment shortages from degrading the South Vietnamese combat ability. Mr. Rush cautioned that equipment and supplies, although desirable, were not enough to bolster RVNAF capability, stating:

> Sufficiency in the combat capability of the RVNAF depends, more than on equipment, on RVN will and desire. We must be careful not to delude the GVN and RVNAF that hardware can in some way substitute for backbone.

(TS) Against this background, Mr. Rush then presented three options for the RVNAF developed on a "building-block" concept. The first included only that equipment believed necessary to sustain the RVNAF "in the current combat situation" and consisted of two "suboptions" (A and B)--items considered militarily essential and those to enhance further RVNAF capability. The second option provided additional equipment for the RVNAF if the United States withdrew from Southeast Asia "for other than military reasons" in the next two to four months. Again the option was broken into two parts, that essential and that to give "even greater capability." The final option provided additional materiel to demonstrate US resolve and determination to support the Republic of Vietnam. The actual equipment included in each option was as follows:

Option 1

A
- 32 UH-1 assault helicopters
- 30 STOL aircraft
- 850 60mm mortars
- 30 TOW antitank weapons systems

B
- 5 F-5A aircraft
- 48 A-37 aircraft
- 70 TOW antitank weapons systems
- 4 PCF ships

Option 2

A
- Accelerated delivery of 14 RC-47 reconnaisance aircraft
- Accelerated delivery of 23 AC-119K fixed wing gunships
- Accelerated delivery of 23 EC-47 intelligence collection aircraft
- Accelerated delivery of 2 WHEC ships
- 12 C-119G maritime patrol aircraft
- 32 self-propelled twin-40mm air defense guns
- 1 M-48 tank battalion
- 2 composite field artillery battalions (8 inch howitzers and 175mm guns)

B
- Accelerate delivery of 28 C-7 transport aircraft
- Accelerated delivery of 1 additional WHEC ship
- 1 M-48 tank battalion
- 1 composite field artillery battalion (8 inch howitzers and 175mm guns)
- 64 Vulcan 20mm automatic antiaircraft weapons

Option 3
- 1 air cavalry troop for each MR of South Vietnam (144 Cobras, 160 LOHs, and 182 UH-1Hs)
- 4 HAWK air defense battalions
- 56 A-4B aircraft
- 3 squadrons of F-4 aircraft

(TS) These options included some new weapon systems and Mr. Rush pointed out several constraining factors. South Vietnamese technical proficiency to operate and maintain the weapons already possessed had been

stretched thin by rapid expansion and the lack of technical experience, and the RVNAF was at least three years away from maintenance self-sufficiency for currently programmed equipment. Moreover, because of the binding 1.1 million-man RVNAF ceiling, introduction of a new weapon required elimination of an existing one and a period of retraining that might cause a temporary loss of combat effectiveness. Some sophisticated systems could not be supported by the RVNAF without extensive direct US military contractor support for a prolonged period. In addition, Mr. Rush observed that US forces everywhere would suffer further degradation in combat readiness as their weapons were given to the RVNAF.

(TS) Mr. Rush estimated the cost of the entire package at $730 million--$110 million for Option 1 in its entirety, $220 million for the full Option 2, and $400 million for Option 3. No funds were programmed for any of the equipment in these options and there was also an unfunded near term requirement of $2.5 million for the current higher level of activity for US and RVN forces through 30 September 1972.

(TS) Mr. Rush did not recommend for or against adoption of the first two options. The third, however, he recommended not be implemented because the equipment would not become useful to the RVNAF "for years, if at all," and because provision of the equipment would degrade US stocks and capabilities. He also pointed out that "our ability to deliver equipment will exceed the ability of the South Vietnamese to receive, secure and forward it."[22]

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22. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Pres, 19 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/818, 22 May 72, JMF 911/495 (19 May 72). Subsequently, the President accepted Mr. Rush's submission as fulfilling the requirements of NSSM 151

(TS) Mr. Rush presented his memorandum to the WSAG on 19 May and it was passed on to the President. President Nixon acted that same day, approving the full first two options. Undaunted by a cerain degradation of US force readiness and an estimated cost of $330 million, he ordered immediate implementation of his decision with the specific understanding that the options were in addition to supply actions already in progress. Noting the large volume of materiel currently enroute to South Vietnam or scheduled for imminent shipment, he directed a review to see if further shipments could be expedited. In particular, he wanted "critical weapons and other high priority items" to arrive before 1 August. This program of equipment assistance for the RVNAF subsequently received the name Project ENHANCE.[23]

(C) The following day, 20 May, President Nixon departed for a trip to Europe and the Soviet Union. While away, he sent a message to President Thieu informing him of the "immediate delivery to your forces of a very considerable quantity of additional weapons and equipment," including aircraft, artillery, tanks, antitank weapons, and other items. In delivering this message, Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams were to stress:

> While these weapons will constitute a desirable addition to the strength of your forces, the effectiveness of these weapons must, in the final

(see above p. 485). (TS-GP 3) Memo, NSC Staff Secy to SecState, SecDef, and DCI, 24 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/804-1, 26 May 72, JMF 911/496 (15 Mar 72).

23. (TS-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to Pres, 19 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/818, 22 May 72, JMF 911/495 (19 May 72). (TS) WSAG Mtg. Minutes, 19 May 72, NSC files. (TS-EX) Extracts of NSDM 168, 19 May 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) NSDMs.

> analysis, depend on the will and desire of your able and brave people. In the critical days ahead I urge you and your commanders to prosecute relentlessly and aggressively whatever counter actions can be conducted against enemy forces which have invaded your country.[24]

(TS) In approving Project ENHANCE, President Nixon directed a further study of possible changes in the organization and equipment of the RVNAF in the period FY 1973-1975. The objective, he said, was to assist the South Vietnamese to cope with the new enemy weapons and tactics displayed in the current offensive and to enable them to carry out essential missions in the absence of US combat support forces. Deputy Secretary Rush asked Admiral Moorer on 23 May to designate the chairman for a working group to provide the information for the President. The Assistant Secretaries of Defense for International Security Affairs, Systems Analysis, Comptroller, and Installations and Logistics, as well as Department of State personnel, were to participate. Subsequently, Admiral Moorer named Brigadier General William C. Burrows, USAF, Chief, Far East/South Asia Division, J-5, as the chairman of the group.[25]

(C) Admiral Moorer forwarded the completed report of the working group to Mr. Rush on 2 June 1972. The

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24. (S) Msg, JCS 6862 to CINCPAC, 241524Z May 72, retransmitting Msg, State 5304 to Saigon, 232211Z May 72.

25. (TS-EX) Extracts of NSDM 168, 19 May 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) NSDMs. (TS-GP 3) Memo, DepSecDef to Secys of MilDepts et al., 23 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/819, 24 May 72, JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 1. (S-GP 4) CM-1887-72 to SecDef, 27 May 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, May 72.

group solidly supported existing programs for the RVNAF. In its view:

> the progress of the current fighting confirms the fundamental soundness of the Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program . . . and the process of modifying that program periodically to meet a changing enemy threat. Where failures on the battlefield have occurred, they have been principally failures of leadership rather than deficiencies in organization, equipment, or training.

The group was not optimistic, however, that additional equipment beyond that already approved would benefit the RVNAF. More important were "leadership and a sense of national purpose, which only the South Vietnamese can provide." Further measures to improve the RVNAF, the working group believed, must be approached cautiously to avoid reductions in combat effectiveness. The vast quantities of war materiel then flowing into South Vietnam and the technologically complex weapons to be furnished under Project ENHANCE would increase the need for already scarce leaders, managers, and trained technicians.

(C) Nonetheless, the working group did identify "some actions" to enhance further the RVNAF combat ability and to "commence movement toward a force which the United States and the RVN can support during the coming years." It considered, but rejected, a proposal to activate an additional ARVN division within the established RVNAF ceiling. The working group did recommend equipment for two CH-47 helicopter squadrons, two 175mm self-propelled artillery battalions, and two squadrons of F-5E aircraft, but with no organizational changes beyond those associated with this equipment.

Personnel to support such equipment could be accommodated within the RVNAF ceiling of 1.1 million men, the group said, though additional funds would be needed either through supplemental funding or budget amendment. When Admiral Moorer forwarded the working group report, he pointed out to Mr. Rush that personnel requirements for both the above equipment as well as for the Project ENHANCE equipment were still incomplete and would be furnished by the Joint Chiefs of Staff at a later date.[26]

(C) The Secretary of Defense reviewed the working group study and used it as the basis for a report to the President. After his review, the Secretary also authorized various changes and additions to Project ENHANCE. He added the two squadrons of CH-47 helicopters and 11 M-88 tank recovery vehicles, substituted three 175mm gun battalions for three composite artillery battalions, and replaced ground mounted TOW antitank missile launchers with vehicular ones. He also wanted two F-5E squadrons previously authorized included in the CRIMP. President Nixon approved the Secretary of Defense's steps to accelerate and augment Project ENHANCE, and on 12 July 1972, Dr. Kissinger informed Mr. Laird of the President's appreciation of the "high priority and excellent effort" of the Department of Defense in this project.[27]

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26. (TS) CM-1900-72 to DepSecDef, 2 Jun 72, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/819, 2 Jun 72, JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 1.

27. (TS) OSD Report, "Military Assistance to the RVN," n.d., Att to JCS 2472/819-1, 19 Jun 72; Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 16 Jun 72, Att to JCS 2472/819-2, 27 Jun 72; JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 2. (S) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 12 Jul 72, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/819-7, 19 Jul 72, same file, sec 3.

(C) Thereafter the movement of the designated equipment to South Vietnam proceeded. By mid-October some 95 percent of the Project ENHANCE equipment had either already arrived or been released for movement. Shipments thus far totalled 69,000 metric tons by sea and 20,000 short tons by air, and much of the remaining materiel was in the pipeline. The overall RVN supply posture was good, supply problems were not disrupting combat operations, and the rebuilding of stocks to pre-invasion levels was progressing satisfactorily.[28]

(C) In the meantime, Secretary Laird had raised the question of additional aircraft for the VNAF. He asked the Secretary of the Air Force to prepare a study defining options for providing the VNAF a follow-on attack fighter aircraft force. In the resulting study, the Secretary of the Air Force saw a gap in VNAF capabilities, especially in interdiction and close air support, as the United States withdrew, and he presented several alternatives. These ranged from merely maintaining the current strength by replacing attrition losses to providing as many as five squadrons of high-performance aircraft by FY 1974-1975.[29]

(C) Upon receipt of the study on 31 August, Mr. Laird asked Admiral Moorer to review it. The Chairman responded on 6 October, describing the Air Force submission as an excellent basis for evaluating the problem, but pointing out other areas for consideration before a final decision. The availability of aircraft,

28. (TS) Point Paper for CJCS and JCS for Use in Discussions with SecDef on 16 Oct 72, "Materiel Status of the RVNAF (U)," n.d., CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.
29. (TS) SecAF Study, "Aircraft for the VNAF," n.d., JMF 911/460 (12 Sep 72) sec 1A.

the impact of the proposed changes on the RVNAF force structure, and the precise military requirements for fighter-attack aircraft all needed to be determined. Admiral Moorer recommended a review of the Air Force study by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders.[30]

(C) The Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) had, in fact, already requested the recommendations of the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on this issue, and they were provided on 11 October. The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that there was no quick way to increase the capability of the VNAF because of the time required to train pilots and maintenance personnel. In addition, they believed a precipitous insertion of a new weapon system into the VNAF at that time would only exacerbate an already critical situation and degrade existing VNAF operational capability. If further air assets were to be supplied to South Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored additional A-37 and F-5E squadrons, one alternative proposed by the Secretary of the Air Force, since they would cause the least logistical impact on the VNAF and would increase the capability of the end force structure for close air support and interdiction. But, before the Secretary of Defense had acted on the JCS submission, the President ordered another massive equipment infusion for the RVNAF.[31]

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30. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS et al., "Aircraft for VNAF," 12 Sep 72; CM-2224-72 to SecDef, 6 Oct 72, Att to JCS 2472/839-1, 6 Oct 72; JMF 911/460 (12 Sep 72).

31. (TS) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 4 Oct 72, Att to JCS 2472/839, 4 Oct 72; (TS) JCSM-449-72 to SecDef, 11 Oct 72, App to JCS 2472/839-2, 10 Oct 72; JMF 911/460 (12 Sep 72).

Project ENHANCE PLUS

(TS) With the increasing likelihood of a negotiated settlement during October 1972, President Nixon became even more anxious to provide the South Vietnamese added materiel support before a cease-fire halted entry of further equipment into South Vietnam. Accordingly, he ordered expedited shipment of additional military equipment to South Vietnam to arrive "not later than 1 November 1972." As in the case of Project ENHANCE, the President took this action on his own initiative and in the absence of formal recommendations from his military advisers.

(TS) The Secretary of Defense announced the President's decision to the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Admiral Moorer on 20 October. He gave the new program the highest priority "immediately behind the support of US and RVNAF forces engaged in combat in SEA." The list of equipment was extensive. It included:

ARMY

Tanks

M48A3	72	
M41	30	

Guns

Twin 40mm	32	
Howitzer 105mm	44	
Launcher grenade 40mm	4,769	
60mm mortar	700	(400 unserviceable)
175mm gun	8	(orig)
155mm howitzer M114	12	
M16 rifle	6,476	
Multi-mount machine gun 50 cal	96	(all unserviceable)

Vehicles

Carrier personnel M113	117
Truck cargo 5 ton	76
Truck fuel 1,200 gal	35
Truck utility 1/4 ton M151	178
Truck tractor 5 ton	21
Truck cargo 2 1/2 ton	1,302
Truck dump 5 ton	424 (284 unserviceable)
Car armored M706	8
Carrier cargo M548	5

Radios

AN/URC 46	48
AN/GRG 125	9
AN/URC 34	68
AN/PRC 25	7,922
AN/URC 12	1,063
AN/URC 49	15

Generators

1.5 KW AC	40
1.5 KW DC	80

Miscellaneous

Teletype	85
Antenna	998

AIR FORCE

Aircraft

A-1	19
AC-119K	22
A-37B	90
C-130	32
F-5A	126
UH-1	177

Vehicles	855

Secretary Laird also requested the Secretary of State to begin negotiations with various foreign governments to secure the release of the US F-5A aircraft designated for the military assistance programs for those

countries, the title transfer of ROK equipment in South Vietnam, and the expedited movement of equipment from Japan.[32]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff quickly notified Admiral Noel Gayler, USN, who had succeeded Admiral McCain as CINCPAC on 1 September, of the new program, designating it ENHANCE PLUS. They embargoed retrograde of any of the listed items and directed title transfer of all equipment before 1 November 1972, even if it was still used by US troops.[33]

(C) The President obviously wanted the added materiel in the hands of the South Vietnamese before a peace settlement entered into force, and further instructions by Secretary Laird left no doubt as to the importance attached to ENHANCE PLUS. There were few sources of equipment that could not be drawn upon to satisfy the requirements of the project, and the Secretary authorized his Assistant (Installations and Logistics) on 23 October to take equipment from US forces, active and reserve, from production, or from depots. Further, Secretary Laird ordered diversions from "international logistics customers." "Title transfer," he said, "of items required to be furnished the RVNAF will be accompliched as quickly as possible. This will result in title to equipment, both within and outside Vietnam and destined for Vietnam, including that in transit, resting in the RVNAF." He also directed the turnover of all remaining US bases in Vietnam to the South Vietnamese. The Acting Chairman, General Ryan, passed

32. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 20 Oct 72; Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, 20 Oct 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.

33. (TS) Msg, JCS 2801 to CINCPAC et al., 210251Z Oct 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.

these instructions on to CINCPAC and the Service Chiefs the same day, noting that all equipment shipped was to be in serviceable condition.[34]

(C) The failure to achieve a negotiated settlement of the war in October 1972 removed the necessity to complete ENHANCE PLUS by 1 November as originally planned. Even so the project was well on its way by that date. All of the Army and Air Force items in CONUS had been identified and offered for shipment. Secretary Laird had approved a ten-plane reduction in the number of F-5As, and the remaining 116 were to be obtained as follows: 32 from Iran, 48 from Taiwan, and 36 from Korea. In addition, 66 A-37s had been dismantled, crated, and shipped from Kelly Air Force Base and the M48A3 tanks were enroute to CONUS ports for shipment to Vietnam. By the end of October, 28,570 metric tons out of 82,797 required for ENHANCE PLUS were already in South Vietnam and the remainder was either in transit or in process for movement.[35]

(C) Only two additions were made in the equipment provided the RVNAF after the initiation of ENHANCE PLUS. The first was amphibious craft for the Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC). In August 1972, COMUSMACV had recommended these craft to provide an amphibious capability after the withdrawal of US forces. Action was deferred at that time because the preferred LVT-7 model was not yet available but, as the deadline for ENHANCE PLUS approached, it became clear that available LVT-5s were preferable to none at all. On 3 November

34. (TS) Memo, SecDef to ASD(I&L), 25 Oct 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 2513 to CINCPAC et al., 260208Z Oct 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72.

35. (TS) Msg, JCS 4487 to USCINCEUR, USCINCRED, and USCINCSO, 271716Z Oct 72. (TS) Fact Sheet, "Project ENHANCE PLUS," 1 Nov 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 72.

the Commandant of the Marine Corps requested that LVT-5s be provided to the VNMC as an interim measure, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with ASD(I&L) approval, added 30 LVT-5s and one LVTR-1 to the Project ENHANCE PLUS list on 4 November.[36]

(C) The second addition substituted O-2 aircraft in place of 35 O-1 aircraft for the VNAF because of their superior performance for forward air control and visual reconnaissance. Following the recommendations of the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff supported this change, and after securing Secretary of Defense approval, Admiral Moorer authorized the replacement on 10 November 1972.[37]

(C) Since the ENHANCE PLUS equipment no longer had to reach Vietnam by 1 November 1972, some of it was transported by sea. The arrival of the SS HOOD at Newport on 12 December completed Project ENHANCE PLUS. In all, over 105,000 major items were delivered; 195 airlift sorties moved 4,998 short tons of equipment and 34 vessels transported 99,351 measurement tons by sea.[38]

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36. (S) JCS 2472/841, 26 Oct 72, JMF 911/496 (27 Oct 72). (TS) Msg, JCS 4541 to CMC, 042124Z Nov 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 72. Later, on 17 November 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested Secretary of Defense approval to replace the approved LVT-5s with LVT-7s in FY 1974 since no spare pars, tools, or follow-on maintenance was available for the LVT-5s. (S) JCSM-487-72 to SecDef, 17 Nov 72, Encl to JCS 2472/841, 26 Oct 72, JMF 911/496 (26 Oct 72).

37. (TS) DJSM-2123-72 to CJCS, 9 Nov 72; (S) Memo, SecDef to SecAF and CJCS, "Project ENHANCE PLUS," 10 Nov 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 2398 to CSAF, 102306Z Nov 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 72.

38. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p,.E-46.

Further Studies

(C) While the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were implementing the President's decisions for ENHANCE and ENHANCE PLUS, they were also attentive to the progress of the South Vietnamese armed forces. On 16 June 1972, Secretary Laird expressed concern with "the poor status of the ARVN maneuver battalion strength" and asked Admiral Moorer for an appraisal of the strength and training of all RVNAF ground combat elements. He also wanted a "separate, systematic assessment . . . of the performance of RVNAF leaders down to as low as a level as possible, to include coverage of both poor and good leadership," together with plans to correct deficiencies.[39]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded on 29 June with the encouraging information that the RVNAF then enjoyed the "highest overall assigned strength ever achieved." Maneuver battalion manning had increased from 66 percent of the authorized strength at the beginning of the offensive to 87 percent on 22 June. Under the current programs, which included reduction of the length of basic training, an amnesty for draft dodgers and deserters, declaration of martial law to tighten draft deferment, and induction of older men and 17-year olds, the Joint Chiefs of Staff anticipated that over 550,000 men would be availale for induction--a sufficient number to meet requirements for the rest of 1972. "The RVNAF personnel picture," they concluded, "appears to be more encouraging than it has ever been, and ongoing training programs, as well as those envisioned for the future, appear both sound and realistic." The RVNAF leadership,

39. (TS) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 16 Jun 72, Att to JCS 2472/819-2, 27 Jun 72, JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 2.

too, had shown improvement, though the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed additional effort was needed in this area.[40]

(C) The Secretary of Defense and his assistants continued to monitor the status of the RVNAF. In a memorandum for Admiral Moorer on 6 July, Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs G. Warren Nutter noted the encouraging JCS report on the RVNAF and drew attention to the importance of the local forces and National Police. He asked for an assessment of the capabilities of these forces to regain control where pacification had been disrupted. He also requested an assessment of enemy capabilities in the coming months, including the possibility of another enemy "high point" in the fall. A week later, on 13 July, Secretary Laird observed the progress of the RVNAF, as evidenced by the current battlefield success and stressed the importance of continuing this progress. To that end, he asked Admiral Moorer for a review of several areas relating to the morale, training, and overall combat effectiveness of the RVNAF.[41]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded immediately to the question of enemy capabilities. Yes, they told the Secretary on 14 July, the enemy could initiate a major offensive in Military Region 1 as well as "a terror/sapper campaign" by October.[42]

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40. (S-EX) JCSM-303-72 to SecDef, 29 Jun 72, Encl to JCS 2472/819-3, 29 Jun 72, JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 2.

41. (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 6 Jul 72, Att to JCS 2472/819-4, 7 Jul 72; (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Jul 72, Att to JCS 2472/819-6, 14 Jul 72; JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 3.

42. (TS) JCSM-327-72 to SecDef, 14 Jul 72, App to JCS 2472/819-5, 21 Jul 72, JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 3.

(C) With regard to the assessment of the RVNAF, the Joint Chiefs of Staff combined their replies to both the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary into one submission on 12 August. They reported that "the status of personnel, morale, training, and unit readiness within RVNAF and local force units appears to be good." Moreover, efforts then underway to improve problem areas promised further improvement. They found manpower resources adequate to meet personnel replacements and to support the authorized force structure and noted that training problems were being solved in a number of ways. Officer and NCO output had increased; mobile training teams had been used to re-equip and retain several ARVN units; and new equipment training teams had rapidly introduced new weapons and capabilities into the RVNAF, though some problems remained in technical areas. Individual unit performance in the ARVN and VNMC varied widely, but most units performed well. Overall, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered the RVNAF "a generally effective, combat-ready force" and thought the outlook good for continued improvement. They also reported that local forces and National Police could perform their missions although some limitations persisted. They expressed reservations about the effectiveness of interdiction in the Delta, but noted that US advisers were making extensive efforts to emphasize coordinated riverine operations.[43]

(C) Meantime, on 12 July 1972, Dr. Kissinger, at the President's request, had asked for a reexamination of the need for more "nationally recruited mobile reserve

43. (S-EX) JCSM-363-72 to SecDef, 12 Aug 72, Encl to JCS 2472/819-10, 9 Aug 72, JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 3.

units" in South Vietnam. Such units, Dr. Kissinger suggested, would be similar to the RVN Marine and airborne divisions and could be created by phasing out some existing units at a later date. "The eventual objective would be to increase the proportion of the mobile reserves in the RVNAF structure." Such a possibility had first been raised by the working group that had reviewed US military assistance for the RVNAF in response to the President's request at the time he approved Project ENHANCE.[44] The working group had reported that "the field commander" favored "continuing and expanding the concept of employing regular divisions outside their normal Corps areas" as a further means of enhancing South Vietnamese capabilities. Subsequently, Assistant Secretary Nutter requested Admiral Moorer's views on this matter raised by the President, suggesting the following possible "options": (1) activation of a new, nationally recruited mobile reserve division offset by deactivation of a territorially based one, (2) steps to upgrade one to three existing divisions to give them greater mobility, and (3) addition of one regiment to the Marine and airborne divisions.[45]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied on 26 July that there already was a "salutary trend toward more flexible and mobile mode of operations by the RVNAF

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44. See p. 494-495.

45. (S) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 12 Jul 72; (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 19 Jul 72; both Atts to JCS 2472/819-7, 19 Jul 72, JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 3. For the working group's consideration of this matter, see p. F-2 of Att to (TS) CM-1900-72 to SecDef, 2 Jun 72, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2472/819, 2 Jun 72, same file, sec 1.

within the existing structure as a direct result of the operational pressures generated by the recent enemy offensive." As for the possible options suggested by Mr. Nutter, they dismissed the first because of disruption to ongoing programs and cost. The third, although preferable to the first, also had significant disadvantages, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored the second option as the most productive long-term approach. They told Secretary Laird, however, that "the evolutionary process of upgrading RVNAF divisions is more desirable than any of the options considered." Rather than initiate "major organizational and structural changes," they preferred to proceed with current programs to improve all the RVNAF divisions.[46]

(C) Eventually, the President reviewed the question of additional national mobile reserves for the RVNAF and decided on 24 October 1972 that this matter should be discussed with the South Vietnamese. He set forth a number of specific points to be raised in the discussions, but no final agreement on the issue had been reached by the time of the cease-fire agreement in January 1973.[47]

(U) In following the progress of the RVNAF, Secretary Laird was also interested in the role of the US advisers in South Vietnam and the extent to which the South Vietnamese forces depended on them. "Our efforts in South Vietnam," he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 26 August 1972, "cannot be considered successful until US advisers may leave without endangering the goals of Vietnamization." He wanted US advisers assigned only

46. (S) JCSM-343-72 to SecDef, 26 Jul 72 (derived from JCS 2472/819-8), JMF 911/495 (5 May 72) sec 3.
47. (S) Extracts of NSDM 193, 24 Oct 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) NSDMs, sec 2.

where necessary and to duties that could not be performed by the South Vietnamese. He asked for a review of the advisory situation with special attention to changes required by the North Vietnamese offensive and subsequent events.[48]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff gave the Secretary their review on 6 October. In general, they found that the role of the US advisers with the RVNAF had not changed fundamentally since 30 March 1972 although emphasis had shifted temporarily to support of combat operations. They also observed that the delivery of Project ENHANCE equipment necessitated continuous adjustments to insure effective operation and maintenance of this materiel as US force levels declined. Further, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued, the RVNAF had performed well with "minimum advisory assistance" in insurgency type operations; in conventional warfare, however, the South Vietnamese, though improving, were still not equal to the North Vietnamese. Therefore the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that US advisers might be necessary as long as the North Vietnamese invasion and insurgency continued at current levels. "The US advisory presence," they concluded, "represents relatively inexpensive insurance against the loss of substantial investment. This presence must be continued at an appropriate level for the foreseeable future."[49]

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48. Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 26 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/837, 29 Aug 72, JMF 911/145 (26 Aug 72).

49. (S) JCSM-445-72 to SecDef, 6 Oct 72, Encl to JCS 2472/837-1, 13 Sep 72, JMF 911/145 (26 Aug 72).

Further Force Structure Changes

(C) The massive infusion of equipment to the South Vietnamese forces under ENHANCE and ENHANCE PLUS necessitated additional adjustments in the RVNAF structure. In early August 1972, COMUSMACV and the JGS began a review of the RVNAF structure for FY 1973-1974. Pending completion of the review, they identified additional spaces needed to support Project ENHANCE, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed these requirements to the Secretary of Defense on 24 August 1972. Included were the following 5,489 new spaces:

	Spaces
ARVN	
Add three 175mm artillery battalions	1,872
Add two M-48 tank battalions	1,374
Add two air defense artillery battalions	898
Provide 141 TOW weapon teams	630
(note: Only 100 under PROJECT ENHANCE)	
VNAF	
Add five F-5A aircraft	65
Add one CH-47 helicopter squadron	307
VNN	
Add three WHECs	462
Add four PCFs	0
Activate Third Flotilla Headquarters	16
Increase radar site spaces	225
(note: Not PROJECT ENHANCE)	
TOTAL	5,849

To keep within the still binding 1.1 million-man ceiling, they proposed appropriate trade-offs, including: inactivation of 177 Popular Force Platoons and associated personnel (5,146 spaces); inactivation of one River Assault Group and two River Interdiction Divisions (430 spaces); and reduction of Viper craft personnel (273 spaces).[50]

50. (TS) MJCS-283-72 to SecDef, 24 Aug 72, Att to JCS 2472/796-6, 25 Aug 72, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).

(C) Secretary Laird approved these new spaces and the accompanying trade-offs as "one optional course of action" on 3 September. He observed, however, that the need for territorial forces would be great because of the setbacks in pacification caused by the enemy offensive. Consequently, he authorized, as a second option, a temporary surge in RVNAF strength beyond 1.1 million rather than immediate reduction in the Popular Forces. He did not want RVNAF performance in the current heavy fighting or restoration of pacification losses to be impeded by "short-term" manpower shortages resulting from the long-term 1.1 million-man ceiling. Secretary Laird also believed that the ongoing FY 1973-1974 RVNAF structure review might be the basis for important structural changes, and he urged consideration of the manpower questions associated with improving the reserve deployment capability of ARVN divisions. The discontent at village level caused by upgrading Regional and Popular Forces, the political effects of GVN manpower policies, and the possibility of releasing some veteran RVNAF soldiers for the contributions they could make in the civilian sector should also be considered. The Secretary looked forward, he said, "to reviewing recommendations concerning RVNAF force structure with the expectation that implementation of these recommendations may be the final steps of the Vietnamization process." In relaying this decision to CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff repeated the Secretary's instruction that the performance of the RVNAF not be impeded by short-term adherence to the 1.1 million ceiling--a level designed "for the longer term."[51]

51. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 8 Sep 72, Att to JCS 2472/796-7, 11 Sep 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 6840 to CINCPAC, 201139Z Sep 72; JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).

(C) Despite the emphasis on ENHANCE and ENHANCE PLUS equipment for the regular South Vietnamese forces, as well as accompanying force structure adjustments, the Secretary of Defense did not want to "lose sight of the proper position" of the local forces in South Vietnam. The Regional and Popular Forces had made "significant contributions in repulsing last year's invasion," he told Admiral Moorer on 11 January 1973, and their value to the pacification effort was well recognized. The Secretary asked Admiral Moorer to insure that the FY 1973-1974 RVNAF structure review maintained the local forces "at an appropriate level with an adequate level of support."[52]

(C) On 24 January 1973, the day following the announcement of an agreement to end the war,[53] the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that the equipment provided by Projects ENHANCE and ENHANCE PLUS could be incorporated into the RVNAF structure without exceeding the 1.1 million-man ceiling. Naturally, however, some adjustment was necessary. The most important changes stemmed from the 600 additional aircraft furnished to the VNAF under ENHANCE PLUS, increasing the VNAF from 56 to 66 squadrons. This increase included the addition of five fighter-attack squadrons, five helicopter squadrons, one maritime air patrol squadron, and one training squadron, coupled with a reduction of two airlift squadrons, resulting in the net increase of ten. Proposed force adjustments to support the added aircraft as well as other new equipment supplied by Projects ENHANCE and ENHANCE PLUS, while at the same time meeting the 1.1 million-man ceiling by the end of FY 1973, were as follows:

52. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 11 Jan 73, Att to JCS 2472/796-8, 13 Jan 73, JMF 911/535 (12 Jan 72).
53. See Chapter 13, pp. 691-692.

	Approved FY 1973 Strengths	Proposed Changes	Proposed Adjusted FY 1973 End Strengths
ARVN	450,367	-419	449,948
VNAF	61,453	+3,047	64,500
VNN	40,931	-816	40,115
VNMC	14,245	+110	14,355
RF	327,261	-1,922	325,339
PF	222,648	-16,905	205,743
	1,116,905	-16,905	1,100,000

(C) With respect to the Secretary's 11 January admonition regarding the proper position of the local forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised Mr. Laird that the Joint General Staff and COMUSMACV had reviewed the proper mix of regular and territorial forces. They had examined the 5,146 reduction in the Popular Forces approved by the Secretary as one course of action in September and determined that 5,146 miscellaneous low-priority spaces from non-combat RVNAF units could be substituted instead. Therefore planned reduction in the local forces during FY 1973 would be limited to the 16,905 Popular Force spaces identified the previous July as a result of the FY 1973 RVNAF structure review,[54] and 1,922 miscellaneous low-priority Regional Force spaces. These actions would result in an adjusted FY 1973 territorial force strength of 531,082, and a net reduction of 16,044 over the previous fiscal year.[55]

(C) Meantime, COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff had completed the FY 1974 RVNAF structure review. General Weyand submitted the results to CINCPAC on 27 January 1973, the day the Vietnam agreement was signed in Paris,[56] and the Pacific commander, in turn,

54. See above, pp. 483-484.
55. (S) JCSM-39-72 to SecDef, 24 Jan 73, Encl to JCS 2472/852, 23 Jan 73, JMF 911/372 (3 Jan 73) sec 1.
56. See Chapter 13, pp. 694-695.

relayed them to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 February 1973. In this review, COMUSMACV and the Joint General Staff recapitulated the RVNAF structure changes made or proposed for FY 1973, including those needed to incorporate the Project ENHANCE and ENHANCE PLUS equipment into the RVNAF, and set forth changes for FY 1974. The latter were limited to readjustments to streamline existing support organizations and improve management capabilities.[57]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff found the proposed force structures for both fiscal years acceptable and requested the Secretary of Defense to approve them on 27 February 1973. The specific figures were as follows:

	FY 1973* Approved	FY 1973 Changes	FY 1973 Adjusted Strength	FY 1974 Changes	FY 1974 Adjusted Strength
ARVN	450,367	- 1,414	448,953	+ 670	449,623
VNAF	61,453	+ 3,054	64,507	+ 402	64,909
VNN	40,931	- 1,189	39,742	+ 439	40,181
VNMC	14,245	+ 157	14,402	+ 36	14,438
RF	326,508	- 1,947	324,561	0	324,561
PF	223,401	-17,373	206,028	0	206,028
AWAITING DISTRIBUTION		+ 1,807**	1,807**	-1,547	260
	1,116 905	-16,905	1,100,000	0	1,100,000

*Included temporary over-ceiling authorization of 16,905 spaces
**1,807 additional trade-off spaces were identified for distribution in FY 1974 and the future pending requirements

These changes, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary, "essentially constitute the final stages of Vietnamization and provide the Government of the RVN with a strong, well-balanced military force."[58]

57. (TS) Ltr, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 27 Jan 73; (TS) Ltr, CINCPAC to CJCS, 6 Feb 73; Atts to JCS 2472/852-1, 9 Feb 73, JMF 911/372 (3 Jan 73) sec 1.

58. (TS) JCSM-76-73 to SecDef, 27 Feb 73, Encl to JCS 2472/852-2, 23 Feb 73, JMF 911/372 (3 Jan 73) sec 2.

(U) With these recommendations by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (which the Secretary of Defense formally approved on 15 May 1973), the US program to improve the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam was, for all practical purposes, complete. Moreover, it was with these forces recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in February 1973 that the Republic of Vietnam faced the uncertainties of the post-armistice period. The Vietnam agreement[58] required withdrawal of all US military forces from Vietnam by 28 March 1973 except for a 50-man Defense Attache Office and forbade the introduction of any additional military equipment into South Vietnam. The Republic of Vietnam could replace all existing military equipment on a one-for-one basis, and the United States would continue military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam within the terms of the agreement. In addition, the United States would maintain a large civilian contractor advisory force in South Vietnam, but the great care and attention to RVNAF improvement would no longer be possible with the removal of the US military presence. The primary goal of the improvement program, ever since its initiation in 1968, had been the creation of a RVNAF capable of standing on its own, and now the ultimate test of its success was at hand.

58. For the terms of the Vietnam Agreement and the resulting US military structure in South Vietnam, see Chapter 13.

TABLE 7

RVNAF Assigned Strengths, January 1972-January 1973

	ARVN	VNN	VNAF	VNMC	RVNAF
Jan 72	415,536	43,122	49,342	14,381	1,052,642
Feb 72	417,373	43,144	49,152	14,327	1,051,431
Mar 72	421,263	42,915	49,332	15,411	1,056,380
Apr 72	427,049	42,790	50,379	15,277	1,061,378
May 72	437,215	42,780	50,326	15,775	1,070,042
Jun 72	456,620	43,505	50,160	17,681	1,097,218
Jul 72	460,419	44,076	48,817	17,391	1,099,299
Aug 72	464,838	42,842	49,454	16,886	1,097,122
Sep 72	466,709	42,837	50,539	16,674	1,097,157
Oct 72	467,362	42,726	51,629	17,179	1,098,735
Nov 72	461,045	42,429	50,853	17,100	1,091,858
Dec 72	458,473	42,136	51,629	16,128	1,089,882
Jan 73	452,430	42,086	54,349	14,879	1,085,703

	Regional Force	Popular Force
1 Jan 72	283,974	246,314
1 Jul 72	300,646	227,950
1 Jan 73	300,865	218,908

Source: (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, pp. C-18 - C-22.

CHAPTER 10

PACIFICATION AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, 1971-1972

(U) The United States had recognized early in its combat involvement in Vietnam that military support and assistance alone would not insure the survival of a free government in South Vietnam. It had been readily apparent that the United States would also have to help the South Vietnamese in the development of political strength and economic stability. To that end, the United States began to assist the Republic of Vietnam in a variety of programs loosely grouped under the general title of "pacification."

(U) In the years 1965-1966, US efforts in Vietnam were primarily focused on the military situation, and support of pacification was somewhat haphazard with responsibility for US programs divided between COMUS-MACV and the US Ambassador in Saigon. It was not until May 1967 that President Johnson assigned COMUSMACV operational direction for all US support of South Vietnamese pacification efforts under the overall responsibility of the US Ambassador in Saigon. To carry out this mission, the President directed the establishment of the position of Deputy to COMUSMACV for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) to be filled by a civilian with the rank of ambassador.

(U) The improved combat situation in 1968 allowed both the Republic of Vietnam and the United States to devote increased attention to pacification. With US encouragement, the South Vietnamese launched a series of plans integrating all pacification activities into a single campaign. These plans, prepared on an annual

basis beginning in 1969, had eight major objectives: territorial security; protection of the people from terrorism; increased self-defense capabilities for the local population; improved local administration; greater national unity; a "brighter life" for war victims; an increased information effort; and improvement of the rural economy. Programs to accomplish these objectives covered a wide spectrum. Those to improve local security included strengthening the Regional and Popular Forces to protect hamlets and the surrounding areas, creation of the People's Self Defense Force to give the local population added protection, and a buildup of the South Vietnamese National Police. In addition, there were the Chieu Hoi Program to rally Viet Cong to the allegiance of the Republic of Vietnam and the Phoenix or Phung Hoang Program to identify and eliminate the Viet Cong infrastructure. To increase national unity, aid war victims, and build the rural economy, the Republic of Vietnam with US support pursued a variety of activities including refugee assistance and resettlement, compensation to veterans and the dependent family members of soldiers killed in combat, land reform, and social, educational, agricultural, and health improvement programs.

(U) To monitor the progress of pacification, the United States and the Republic of Vietnam relied on the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), a method of assessing the security of all hamlets in South Vietnam. Under the HES, first introduced in 1967, US advisers rated the hamlets in their areas on some 18 different indicators and then assigned each a security rating on a descending scale from Category A, completely secure, to Category E, Viet Cong-controlled. At the beginning of 1968, 67.2 percent of all South Vietnamese hamlets were

rated "relatively secure" (Categories A, B, and C), but by December 1970 this figure had risen to 95.1 percent while 84.6 percent of the hamlet population lived in fully secure areas (Categories A and B), indicating a significant success in the pacification effort.[1]

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff had little actual involvement in pacification. COMUSMACV directed overall US support for the program and he, of course, reported through CINCPAC to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on matters of military policy and operations. But with respect to his pacification responsibilities, COMUSMACV was under the supervision of the US Ambassador in Saigon. The great majority of pacification activities involved economic, social, and political matters, areas beyond the purview of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In Washington, US participation in pacification efforts was handled by the Department of State, the US Agency for International Development, the US Information Agency, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency, and the normal channel to COMUSMACV was through the US Ambassador in Saigon rather than the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Staff was usually kept informed on pacification actions, and COMUSMACV furnished the Joint Chiefs of Staff with information copies of South Vietnamese pacification plans. But despite their limited direct involvement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff at all times recognized the importance of the pacification effort and gave it their full support.

1. For a more detailed account of the pacification in South Vietnam for the period 1965-1970, see The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Chapters 27, 38, 46, and 52 and The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 415-451.

Planning for 1971

(C) The beginning of the year 1971 found the Republic of Vietnam in the middle of a "Supplementary Pacification and Development Campaign" covering the four-month period November 1970 through February 1971. This special plan was a transitional device to shift pacification planning from a calendar to a lunar year (the basis of Vietnamese fiscal planning). Besides this administrative function, the supplementary plan provided impetus to complete 1970 goals and prepare for implementation of the 1971 plan, focusing attention on a nationwide effort against the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI)--elimination of all Viet Cong-controlled hamlets in MR 4, a special information and retraining program, and stockpiling and allocation of resources to meet pacification needs throughout 1971.[2]

(C) On 7 January 1971, COMUSMACV submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff the 1971 RVN pacification plan, covering the lunar year 1 March 1971 through 28 February 1972. Whereas previous plans had been a joint MACV/CORDS/South Vietnamese effort, the South Vietnamese had taken the lead in preparation of this new plan. Moreover, they had dropped the word "pacification" from the title, believing that it connoted wresting the people from enemy control, a process they considered virtually complete. Instead, they entitled the new document the "1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan" (referred to hereafter as the 1971 Plan). It reflected a shift in emphasis from security operations to political and economic development. In the 1971 Plan, the South Vietnamese consolidated the eight

2. (TS-GP 1) (C) Plans and Analysis Div, J-3, PAD-VSUM 1-71, "A Periodic Summary of Progress Toward Vietnamizing the War," 24 Mar 71, JCS Hist Div files. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. VII-6.

objectives of the earlier plans under the broad areas of local self-defense, local self-government, and local self-development. All on-going pacification programs continued, but were grouped together under these three objectives to emphasize the primary purpose of the entire effort. Local self-defense encompassed territorial security; improvement of the Regional and Popular Forces, the People's Self Defense Force, and the National Police; and the Chieu Hoi and Phung Hoang activities. Local self-government included existing information and youth programs as well as the new People's Administration Program to train and improve local government officials, and local self-development comprised programs dealing with refugees, veterans, land reform, agriculture and fishing improvement, education, health, and public works. Finally, the 1971 Plan had two special programs: one to treat the problems of the growing population in the cities; and another to insure that special attention was devoted to the particular needs of ethnic minorities.[3]

(C) The organization to accomplish pacification tasks in 1971 had evolved over the previous years. On the South Vietnamese side, the Central Pacification and Development Council had ultimate responsibility. President Thieu headed the Council and membership included the ministers and heads of all involved South Vietnamese ministries and agencies. Below the Central Council were similar bodies in each Military Region, province, district, and village or hamlet. On the US side, COMUSMACV's responsibility for all US pacification efforts was carried out by his Deputy for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS). In

3. (C) Ltr, COMUSMACV to JCS et al., 7 Jan 71; (C) RVN Community Defense and Local Development Plan, 1971, n.d.; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb-Mar 71 (Bulky).

Saigon, the CORDS organization comprised 11 directorates, composed of both military and civilian personnel. These directorates advised the South Vietnamese ministries and performed staff and administrative functions, and CORDS had similar advisory organizations at the Military Region and provincial levels, again composed of both military and civilian personnel, to assist local South Vietnamese officials.[4]

Reduction of US Personnel

(C) Both the continuing withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam as well as the increasing strictures on funds for the war began to affect US support for pacification in 1971. The number of US military advisers assigned to pacification duties peaked in mid-1970 at 6,465. But accelerated troop deployments in 1971 forced a step-up in Vietnamization of the CORDS advisory effort. Accordingly, the number of US military CORDS advisers dropped to 4,924 by 30 June 1971 and to 2,671 by the end of the year, and tasks of the remaining military advisers shifted during the year to training of their Vietnamese counterparts. In addition, Vietnamization of the Hamlet Evaluation System began on 1 July 1971 when the South Vietnamese took over reporting from US advisers in 39 districts, and by the end of 1971, the South Vietnamese reported in 103 districts.[5]

(C) The US civilian advisory role in pacification was also reduced. On 3 June 1971, Dr. Kissinger informed the Secretaries of State and Defense that the President wanted "a significant reduction" in the

4. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. VII-1-VII-3. Hearings, "US Assistance Programs in Vietnam," Subcom of H. Com on Gov't Operations, 92d Cong, 1st sess, pp. 129,179.

5. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. VII-3 - VII-5.

number of civilian employees of both the Department of Defense and the US Agency for International Development (AID) in South Vietnam. Specifically, he had asked for a study of ways to achieve a reduction of one-third by the end of FY 1972.[6]

(C) Although the President had not asked that the study address personnel within the CORDS organization, this question quickly arose. For, the following day 4 June 1971, the US mission in Saigon proposed to reduce the civilian CORDS strength from the current level of 823 to 662 for a 19 percent reduction by the end of FY 1972. Subsequently, the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam prepared a study on civilian reductions in South Vietnam that called for the reduction of 819 AID employees as well as 308 US civilian CORDS personnel by 30 June 1972. This proposal, lowering the CORDS civilian personnel level from 823 to 515 amounted to a 37 percent reduction, almost doubling the figure suggested by the US mission in Saigon.[7]

(C) Within the NSC system, representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense opposed the CORDS civilian reductions as proposed by the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam. Later, in discussions with Dr. Kissinger, Ambassador Bunker proposed a compromise, lowering CORDS civilian strength from 823 to 590, a reduction of 28.2 percent during FY 1972. General Abrams found this reduction acceptable, and the President approved it on 10 September 1971. The reduction of CORDS civilian advisers

6. (C-GP 4) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secys State and Def, 3 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/755, 4 Jun 71, JMF 911/101 (3 Jun 71).

7. (TS-GP 1) Briefing Book, CJCS WESTPAC Trip, 2-14 Nov 72, (C) "Future Organization for Pacification," J-5 Files.

then proceeded and CORDS civilian strength stood at 728 by the end of 1971.[8]

(C) Meantime, the United States had undertaken a review of the future organization for the CORDS program. This effort began when Dr. Kissinger discussed this matter as well as the possible reduction of US civilian personnel involved with US officials when visiting Saigon in the early summer of 1971. Subsequently, the Chairman of the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, Ambassador William H. Sullivan, and the Deputy US Ambassador to South Vietnam, Samuel D. Berger, agreed to have a mission task force in Saigon review the organization and future staffing of CORDS. The two officials further agreed that an interagency Washington group would visit Saigon in November to review the findings of the mission task force and submit final recommendations on CORDS to the President.[9]

(C) The interagency group from Washington, including a member from the Counterinsurgency Operations Division, J-3, Joint Staff, did go to Saigon during the period 14-19 November 1971 to review the study of the mission task force. The basic recommendation of the study was the retention of the CORDS organization under COMUSMACV as the single-manager control agency for all US support of pacification until the end of FY 1973 with modified internal structure and reduced manning. The mission task force also proposed a further assessment of the CORDS organization in May 1973 in light of the situation at that time. While there was some disagreement over the proposals for modification

8. Ibid. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. VII-5.
9. (C-GP 4) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Study of Future CORDS Advisory Program," 13 Jul 71; (C) DJSM-1728-71 to CJCS, 15 Sep 71; JMF 911/319 (1 Jul 71).

of the CORDS structure, the Washington interagency group accepted the basic recommendation to retain CORDS in the present form. Available records do not reveal any recommendation by this interagency group to the President, apparently reflecting the consensus that no change was needed at that time.[10]

(C) The only significant change in the CORDS organization during 1971 was the changeover of the Deputy COMUSMACV for CORDS position from a civilian to a military officer. Ambassador William E. Colby, who had served as the MACV Deputy for CORDS since November 1968, left Vietnam in the summer of 1971, and General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker recommended that his replacement be General Fred Weyand, USA, the current Deputy COMUSMACV. As General Abrams explained to Admiral Moorer, General Weyand was "unusually effective" with the Vietnamese and could assume the CORDS function as an additional duty. CINCPAC endorsed this proposal, observing that as the US combat role in South Vietnam continued to decline, General Weyand's present responsibilities would decrease allowing him time for the CORDS mission.[11]

(C) Admiral Moorer approached the Secretary of Defense informally on this matter, and Mr. Laird agreed. On 1 October 1971, he informed Admiral Moorer: "I accept your judgment that General Weyand should be able to assume the additional duty of Deputy COMUSMACV

10. (C) Report by Spec Interagency Task Force to the Mission Council, "The Future of CORDS in Vietnam," 1 Nov 71, CJCS File 323.3 MACV, Nov 70-Dec 72 (separate section). (C-GP 4) DJSM-2187-71 to CJCS, 3 Dec 71, JMF 911/319 (1 Jul 71).

11. (S-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV 08819 to CINCPAC and CJCS, 131201Z Sep 71; (S-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 142004Z Sep 71; CJCS File 323.3 MACV, Nov 70-Dec 72.

for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS). I therefore approve his appointment." Later that same month, General Weyand did become the Deputy for CORDS in addition to his duties as Deputy COMUSMACV.[12]

(C) In early January 1972, the question of a further reduction of US AID personnel in the CORDS effort arose, dictated by budget constraints. Following discussions with Washington, Ambassador Bunker reluctantly accepted a reduction in the number of AID civilians for the FY 1972 ceiling to 540, in place of the 590 approved earlier by the President. General Abrams had objected to this reduction, and Ambassador Bunker promised him that any further cuts for FY 1972, 1973, or 1974 would be strongly resisted.[13]

(C) General Abrams informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of this reduction in the AID civilian strength, stating that this action would restrict staffing in the areas of war victims, public safety, and technical support. On 26 January 1972, Admiral Moorer brought this matter to the attention of the Secretary of Defense. The pacification effort was essential to the Vietnamization program and the key to a stable government in Vietnam, he said, and unilateral reductions by the Agency for International Development endangered the organizational viability of CORDS. The Chairman emphasized his concern that General Abrams receive the interagency support necessary to build a stable government in South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff

12. (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 1 Oct 71, CJCS File 323.3 MACV, Nov 70-Dec 72. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. A-1.

13. (C-GP 4) CM-1477-72 to SecDef, 26 Jan 72, CJCS File 323.3 MACV, Nov 70-Dec 72.

were advising CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Admiral Moorer told the Secretary, to continue to refer proposals to lower AID strength in CORDS to the US Ambassador for resolution, and Admiral Moorer recommended that the Secretary continue efforts with the Department of State and US Agency for International Development to insure CORDS the funding resources necessary to support properly "this critical program."[14]

Pacification in 1971

(C) Meantime, pacification efforts had proceeded. The 1971 Civil Defense and Local Development Plan set a territorial security goal of providing A or B security (under the HES rating system) for 95 percent of the total population of South Vietnam and eliminating all enemy-controlled hamlets. Although all organized forces of the Republic of Vietnam were charged with the task of keeping enemy forces away from the South Vietnamese people, the territorial forces--the Regional and Popular Forces, the People's Self-Defense Force and the National Police--had the principal responsibility for local security. During 1971, the regular RVN forces and remaining US forces moved away from local security operations, and regular force support of pacification consisted mainly of training the territorial forces, clearing operations in remaining Viet Cong strongholds and base areas, and interdiction of enemy supply routes. The performance of the territorial forces in 1971 showed mixed results. During the period March through December, Regional Force (RF) operations increased, but the percentage of operations

14. Ibid. (C-GP 4) Msg, JCS 2693 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 26 Jan 72.

with enemy contact declined, and Popular Forces (PF) likewise had a low level of percentage of operations with enemy contact. By the end of calendar year 1971, the territorial security goal had not been met. In fact, by December 1971, only 84.3 percent of the population was rated in the AB category as compared with the goal of 95 percent.[15] In reporting these statistics, COMUSMACV offered no explanation for this failure to achieve the security objective in 1971, but he did point out the reduction in enemy attacks-by-fire during the year and noted that only 10 Viet Cong-controlled hamlets remained. In addition, he expected that all Viet Cong hamlets would be eliminated by the expiration of the plan at the end of February 1972.[16]

(C) The People's Self Defense Force (PSDF), organized in 1968, was a volunteer militia made up of men and boys, either above or below draft age, and women. All served on a part-time unpaid basis and assisted in patrolling and guarding their own hamlets. The 1971 plan called for a PSDF of 4,000,000 members consisting of 1,500,000 combat members and 2,500,000 support members. These forces were to be trained, armed, and

15. In his 1971 history, COMUSMACV reported the AB population at 84.3 percent by the end of 1971 compared with 73.9 percent in January 1971. In his 1970 history, however, COMUSMACV had reported the percentage of AB population in December 1970 at 84.6. If one uses this latter figure, there was actually a slight decrease in the territorial security during 1971. See (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. VII-11, and (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (U) p. VII-22.

16. All information on pacification goals in 1971 is from (C) RVN Community Defense and Local Development Plan, 1971, n.d., CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb-Mar 71 (Bulky). All information on the conduct of pacification in 1971, except as otherwise stated, is from (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) pp. VII-10 - VII-48 and H-1 - H-16.

organized into teams in order to take a more active role in protection of their local villages and hamlets. The South Vietnamese National Assembly gave full financial support to the planned expansion, and strong recruitment and training programs were pursued. Consequently, the year saw significant progress toward meeting the PSDF goals, and by December 1971, the status of the PSDF was as follows:

	Goal	Organized	Trained
Combat PSDF	1,500,000	1,393,156	1,322,500
Support PSDF	2,500,000	3,035,980	2,508,101
Total	4,000,000	4,429,136	3,830,601
Teams	15,000	14,869	14,366

(C) The South Vietnamese National Police (NP) was the third force, together with the local forces (RF and PF) and the PSDF, charged with the provision of territorial security. Specifically, the NP had responsibility throughout South Vietnam for law enforcement; for maintenance of public order; for crime prevention, detection, investigation, and apprehension; and for disaster relief. The National Police, which had been established in 1962, had never proved an effective force. At the close of 1970, NP strength stood at approximately 88,000 and the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan set a force goal of 122,000 with all personnel "well trained to include political education."

(C) President Nixon was especially interested in the National Police and in early 1971 asked Sir Robert Thompson, the British expert on counterinsurgency, to go to South Vietnam and study the National Police.[17] Sir Robert visited during the period January-March

17. For a previous mission of Sir Robert Thompson to Vietnam at the request of President Nixon, see The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 173-174.

and presented his report to the US Embassy in Saigon on 29 March 1971. He saw South Vietnam in a transition period between a destructive war and a working peace with a need to change emphasis toward restoration of discipline and moral fiber of the nation. Consequently, an effective police force was of considerable importance for rebuilding discipline and correction of the moral erosion caused by the long war. Sir Robert recommended, among other things: the independence of the National Police from political influence; the police station as the basic unit of the police force; improvement in the quality of the NP personnel; and assignment of responsibility for internal security intelligence in South Vietnam to the National Police.

(C) Undoubtedly as a result of President Nixon's interest and Sir Robert's report, South Vietnam gave increased attention to the National Police during 1971. In March, the National Police was reorganized into a National Police Command, and in June, the Republic of Vietnam established a requirement for police operations centers at the national, regional, provincial, and district levels. Development of these operational centers was underway by September 1971.

(C) Throughout its short existence the National Police had been plagued by a lack of personnel primarily because available manpower was drafted into the RVN military forces. This situation was remedied briefly in early 1971 when the Republic of Vietnam allowed the National Police the oportunity, on a one time basis, to recruit 34,000 draft-age men. This recruitment was subsequently cancelled in April 1971, but not before 28,000 personnel had been secured for the National Police.

(C) Despite the emphasis placed on the NP, not all problems were removed. The quality of the recruits was generally low, leadership was weak at middle and lower levels of the organization, and training remained inadequate. The combination of these factors was reflected in the poor performance of the NP in remote areas of the country. Nonetheless, the National Police did build up its strength and organization during the year and assumed increased responsibility for local security. By the end of December 1971, the NP strength stood at 113,686.

(C) In early 1971, the question of additional US support for the National Police had come to the attention of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In December 1970, COMUSMACV's Deputy for CORDS had reviewed South Vietnamese internal security problems and recommended to the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Staff of the Army, and others that the National Police be included in some of the special assistance programs currently provided to RVNAF personnel, such as food supplements and food allowances during training. No action resulted on this proposal, and on 13 February 1971, COMUSMACV urged CINCPAC that these recommendations be approved for funding for the National Police under the US AID/DOD Realignment Programs for FYs 1971, 1972, and 1973. CINCPAC concurred in the recommendation and passed it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a week later.[18]

(C) On 23 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense that the COMUSMACV proposal

18. (S-GP 4) JCS 2472/737, 13 Apr 71, JMF 911/147 (3 Feb 71). (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 20 Feb 71, JCS IN 31778.

would have a positive effect on the performance of the National Police and would help advance local defense. But, whereas the field commanders favored full US support for the food support programs for FYs 1971 through 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not consider the proposal feasible in FY 1971, believing it too late to introduce it for that year. Rather, they recommended US support for FY 1972 through 1974 on a sliding scale of 100 percent for FY 1972, 70 percent in FY 1973, and 30 percent in FY 1974. Further, they recommended that the funding issue be resolved between the Departments of State and Defense.[19]

(C) Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard raised the matter with the Secretary of State on 10 June 1971, but the Department of State showed little enthusiasm for the proposal, and available records reveal no further action on this question.[20]

(C) Since 1963, the Chieu Hoi (open arms) program had sought to wean Viet Cong members away from the insurgency and rally them to the allegiance of the Republic of Vietnam. This effort made extensive use of psychological operations to induce the enemy to rally and then the ralliers, known as the Hoi Chanh, received six to eight weeks of rehabilitation training at 51 centers located throughout South Vietnam. The Chieu Hoi program had been one of the most successful of the entire pacification effort, and by the beginning of 1971, the Republic of Vietnam claimed over 195,000 Hoi

19. (S-GP 4) JCSM-189-71 to SecDef, 23 Apr 71, Encl A to JCS 2472/737, 13 Apr 71, JMF 911/147 (3 Feb 71).

20. (S-GP 4) Ltr, DepSecDef to SecState, 10 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/737-1, 16 Jul 71; (C-GP 4) Ltr, USec-State to DepSecDef, 22 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/737-2, 26 Jul 71; JMF 911/147 (3 Feb 71).

Chanh. The 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan included an objective of 25,000 ralliers for the Chieu Hoi program, but it was soon obvious that this goal was too ambitious. At mid-year, the Republic of Vietnam lowered the objective to 20,000 ralliers, and the total number by the end of the year amounted to 20,357, a figure well below the 32,700 ralliers in 1970. The reason for the decline, COMUSMACV explained, was that, with the increased security of the population areas and the decline in the level of military contact, there was less opportunity for the enemy to rally. Moreover, the remaining VC were considered "hard core" and much less susceptible to inducement to change their loyalty.

(C) The most controversial of all the pacification efforts in South Vietnam was the Phung Hoang Program, or the Phoenix Program as it was originally named when introduced in 1968. This program attempted to identify and eliminate the communist leadership apparatus, the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI), in order to protect the people of South Vietnam from communist terrorism. The Phung Hoang Program called for the identification and verification of key VC members and their elimination or "neutralization," through one of several means, including efforts to rally them to the Republic of Vietnam through the Chieu Hoi approach, to apprehend and detain them for proper legal prosecution, and, only as a final resort, to kill them. Unfortunately, the general public, both in South Vietnam and the United States, conceived elimination only as killing and abuses within the program added to frequent public criticism of the activity as one of political assassination. Although US personnel advised and assisted the South Vietnamese in this effort, they did not participate in the actual Phung Hoang operations--the capturing or killing of

the VCI. Moreover, COMUSMACV had consistently attempted, through the influence of the US advisers, to discourage unlawful or inhumane conduct in the program.

(C) The 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan established a monthly objective of 1,200 VCI neutralizations throughout South Vietnam for a total of 12,000 by the end of 1971 and 14,400 by the completion of the plan on 29 February 1972. Included in this objective was provision that 50 percent of all neutralizations be "sentenced" VC, i.e. captured and brought to trial. The Phung Hoang operations proceeded apace and at the end of December 1971, the Republic of Vietnam reported 13,188 neutralizations. Thus the 1971 goal was met even though the total figure was well below that of the previous year.

(C) The CORDS staff evaluated the Phung Hoang effort during 1971 to determine areas for improvement. This study revealed that, from the national to the district level, there was no effective mechanism for coordination of information on the VCI nor were there secure repositories for intelligence. Consequently, the local population was reluctant to give information to the Phung Hoang centers. The CORDS study also concluded that the assigned South Vietnamese personnel were, generally, poorly qualified and motivated and that responsibility for carrying out the program had not been clearly established. Both General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker approved the CORDS conclusions and in October 1971, the United States presented the following recommendations to the Republic of Vietnam: a phased transfer of responsibility for the anti-VCI mission from the Phung Hoang centers to the National Police Command during 1972 accompanied by the withdrawal of US

military advisory support; improvement of the intelligence coordination system of the National Police Command; and increased emphasis on the anti-VCI responsibilities of the province and district chiefs.

(C) On 2 December, the RVN Prime Minister issued a directive partially implementing the US recommendations. The Phung Hoang centers were retained, but the National Police would assume overall responsibility for the program during 1972. The Prime Minister also placed special emphasis on the Phung Hoang Program at all echelons in South Vietnam and directed wide and active publicity for the effort so that its importance would be recognized.

(U) The criticisms and accusations that had surrounded the Phung Hoang Program throughout its existence surfaced in hearings on US assistance programs in Vietnam held during July and August 1971 by a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations. Ambassador William E. Colby, Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS, testified on pacification and received a number of questions about the Phung Hoang aspects. How did he explain the reports of abuse and torture? Did the program combat terror with terror? Was the program used by the Republic of Vietnam against its political opponents? Why had not the number of VCI decreased despite all the reported neutralizations?

(U) Ambassador Colby explained the Phung Hoang objective and operations to the Subcommittee. The program, he said, did not combat communist terrorism with terror. Rather, it identified members of the VCI for apprehension and detention according to Vietnamese law. In essence, he said, the program was as good as the people who carried it out and he recognized that

there had been abuses. These were the fault of individuals he continued, and not the program itself. Moreover, such abuses had been investigated and stopped by Vietnamese authorities when discovered. Mr. Colby admitted that it might be possible for the Republic of Vietnam to use the program against its political enemies, but he doubted that such an eventuality would occur. It was not contended, he further explained, that the total number of VCI decreased with the progress of neutralizations since replacement was constantly occurring within the communist apparatus.[21]

(C) In the spring of 1971, the Secretary of Defense had inquired whether currently approved reward and informant programs, which might be profitably used in pacification efforts, required stimulation. The Director of the Joint Staff informed the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) on 7 May 1971 of the opinion of COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the Joint Staff that the effectiveness of these various programs had been satisfactory. The Secretary of Defense, however, was still not completely convinced. He told Admiral Moorer on 20 May:

> We must adjust our efforts to interdict the flow of men and materiel by all practical means. Interdiction can and should include more than flying air sorties, performing ground cross-border raids, and conducting surveillance of water routes. I consider the location and capture of caches and elimination of Viet Cong freedom of movement an integral and essential part of the overall interdiction effort. It is a facet of interdiction which

21. Hearings, "US Assistance Programs in Vietnam" Subcmte of H. Cmte on Gov't Operations, 92d Cong, 1 sess, pp. 176-226.

has the additional merit of being consistent with the longer-term capabilities of the Republic of Vietnam.[22]

(C) After considering the views of both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, Admiral Moorer furnished the Secretary a detailed assessment of the various US-supported informant reward programs in South Vietnam. The Chairman believed implementation of those programs had been satisfactory and that "adequate and propitious" stimulation of them was being "progressively achieved." Admiral Moorer pointed out to the Secretary that, at US suggestion, the Republic of Vietnam was considering initiation of high value rewards in both the Phung Hoang and Chieu Hoi efforts.[23]

(C) The Republic of Vietnam did subsequently decide to implement such a program to improve Phung Hoang efficiency. Cash would be paid for the location of selected key VCI and greatly increased sums would go to units that captured targeted VCI. COMUSMACV planned to fund a pilot effort in four selected provinces beginning in November 1971. But several unfavorable press stories, labeling the project a "bounty system," caused the United States to reconsider and withdraw its financial support. Thereafter, high value rewards were never implemented for either the Phung Hoang or Chieu Hoi programs.[24]

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22. (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, "Informant Programs in the Republic of Vietnam," 10 Apr 71; (S-GP 4) DJSM-865-71 to ASD(ISA), 7 May 71; (S-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, same subj, 20 May 71; JMF 911/211 (10 Apr 71).

23. (S-GP 4) CM-986-71 to SecDef, 17 Jun 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jun 71.

24. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (C) p. VII-23.

(C) During 1971, the Republic of Vietnam moved ahead with efforts under the local self-government portion of the Community Defense and Local Development Plan. As will be described below, country-wide elections were held without incident for the Lower House of the National Assembly and for the presidency, and first-time elections took place in 12 villages and 203 hamlets that had previously been under Viet Cong control. A principal objective of the local self-government aspect of the 1971 plan was to train local leaders, and 13,632 village and hamlet officials received instruction at the National Cadre Training Center during the year. The institution of Province Mobile Assistance Teams was another hopeful development in 1971. The previous year, the province chief and the CORDS province team in An Gan Province in the Delta had initiated the practice of sending teams of province officials to visit and assist village and hamlet chiefs. This approach had proved so successful that the practice was extended to each Delta province and, in April 1971, the Republic of Vietnam directed the establishment of similar teams throughout the entire country.

(C) Other aspects of local self-government included a youth program and the People's Information Program. The latter publicized the entire Community Defense and Local Development plan with emphasis on the PSDF, Phung Hoang and Chieu Hoi operations, land reform, and veteran and refugee programs. But the information effort was judged a failure in 1971 because of poor performance by hamlet cadre and "election diversions." The youth program sought to organize the young people at the local, district, and province levels and develop them into useful citizens. Although goals were not completely accomplished, there were youth councils in 2,166 villages, 257 districts, and 47 provinces by the close of 1971.

(C) The local self-development portion of the Community Defense and Local Development Plan comprised economic, social, and educational programs--areas almost entirely beyond the domain of the military. The US forces in South Vietnam did, nevertheless, support and assist in these efforts.

(C) The Republic of Vietnam relied heavily on the Rural Development Cadre (RDC) to assist in carrying out the local self-development programs. The RDC, formed in 1965 and organized into paramilitary groups, was charged with motivating and organizing the local population to assume their own self-defense and to raise the living standards of the villages. With the improved security in the rural areas attained by 1971, the Republic of Vietnam reorganized the RDC into smaller groups of 10 persons and decreed that 50 percent of all the villages of South Vietnam would have such groups. Under the guidance of the village chief, these smaller groups assisted in local administration and development projects.

(U) In a country where uninterrupted war had continued for ten years, homeless persons had been a constant problem, and refugee disposition was a major part of the pacification effort. At one time or another between 1964 and early 1971, some 25 to 30 percent of the 17,500,000 people of South Vietnam had been homeless. In more specific terms, approximately 5,300,000 South Vietnamese had been disrupted by the war to date. This figure included, in round numbers, three and a half million refugees who had been displaced from their homes; one and a half million "war victims" who had been temporarily displaced, but were able to return to their homes; and over 200,000 South Vietnamese who had fled from Cambodia when the war

spread there in 1970. By the beginning of 1971, the Republic of Vietnam, with US assistance, had paid refugee benefits to roughly 5,900,000, some having received benefits more than once.[25]

(C) Refugees could never be completely eliminated as long as the war continued for the fighting always produced additional displaced persons. Although the decline in the intensity of the combat in 1969 and 1970 had brought some leveling off of the flow of refugees, the refugee program remained an important element of the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan. Under the title "Brighter Life for War Victims," the 1971 document ambitiously called for the permanent resettlement or return to their villages of the refugees remaining at the end of 1970 as well as those who became homeless during 1971--a total number of persons estimated at 430,000. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam hoped to complete permanent resettlement of the remaining refugees from Cambodia.

(C) During 1971, the Republic of Vietnam gave the refugee effort greatly increased emphasis, budgeting triple the amount of the previous year for this purpose. From 1 March to 31 December 1971, about 260,000 refugees received full "return-to-village" allowances while some 127,116 others, who were unable to return to their original homes, received RVN assistance in settling elsewhere. Despite this progress, displaced persons remained to be settled at the end of 1971 as new refugees were generated in the continuing fighting. Over 60,000 resulted from the U Minh Forest

25. Hearings, War-Related Civilian Problems in Indochina, Pt I, Vietnam, Refugee Subcom of S. Com on the Judiciary, 92d Cong, 1st sess, pp. 5-59. Hearings, "US Assistance Programs in Vietnam," Subcom of H. Com on Gov't Operations, 92d Cong, 1st sess, pp. 2-6, 176-237.

Operation in MR 4 during late 1970 and early 1971, and 65,000 persons, including 50,000 Montagnards, were relocated to safer areas in MR 2.

(C) The "Brighter Life for War Victims" also included benefits for South Vietnamese veterans and their dependents. In 1970, the Republic of Vietnam had enacted a law providing extensive benefits for disabled veterans, retired veterans, and the widows, orphans, and parents of deceased military personnel, and the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan stressed effective implementation of this law. Efforts by the Republic of Vietnam during 1971 to improve the plight of veterans included: improvement of the system for paying pensions and special compensatory allowances, processing of approximately 175,000 more benefit cases than in 1970, development of rehabilitation programs, and construction of 1,587 housing units for disabled soldiers.

(C) South Vietnam was an agricultural country, and if it was to become truly independent and economically viable, effective land reform was essential. South Vietnam had procliamed a series of ambitious programs in this regard, but the actual transfer of land had been minimal. In 1969, President Thieu had announced the "Land-to-the-Tiller" plan, a revolutionary proposal to distribute one million hectares[26] of privately owned land free of charge to the tenants who currently worked it. Tenants in the southern half of the country were to receive three hectares each and those in the northern half one, and the government

26. One hectare equals 2.47 acres.

would compensate the former landlords. This plan was enacted into law in March 1970 and the first transfer of land occurred the following August. But this reform had achieved little momentum by the end of 1970.

(C) The 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan called for the transfer of 400,000 hectares of land to the farmers. From March through December, titles for 312,345 hectares were distributed to farmers, and the Republic of Vietnam expected to come close to meeting the stated goal by the expiration of the plan in March 1972. During 1971, the Republic of Vietnam also undertook a program of land survey for the Montagnards to give them legal claim to the land they occupied and to prevent misappropriation of those lands. A third RVN land reform effort called for the redistribution of land to the people in resettlement camps, and the Republic of Vietnam distributed 11,027 plots totaling 8,567 hectares in the period March through December 1971.

(C) Closely related to land reform was the matter of improvement of food production. The local self-development part of the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan included an agricultural and fishery program designed to meet consumer requirements, export rice, and raise the rural standard of living. The plan called for self-sufficiency in rice production in 1971 through planting 750,000 hectares of miracle rice as well as development of corn and sorghum cultivation, expansion of pig and poultry raising, increased fishery production, and implementation of small irrigation projects. Rice production did increase throughout South Vietnam in 1971 with the Delta experiencing the

most prosperous year in its history. Even so, only 588,873 hectares of rice were planted and South Vietnam did not become a rice exporter. Nor did the fishery projects develop as anticipated, though the other agricultural programs were largely successful.

(C) The Republic of Vietnam made considerable progress in the areas of health, education, and public works during 1971. "Community cooperation" was the guiding principle of the public health program of the 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan, which included many projects for preventive medicine, environmental sanitation, health education, mother-child care, and disease eradication. Perhaps the most important health project was the Sanitary Hamlet Program, an attempt to attain certain basic sanitation conditions in rural hamlets such as potable water, suitable sanitary facilities, and 100 percent immunization against communicable diseases. By the end of the year, the Republic of Vietnam claimed 133 such hamlets, only slightly short of the 150 goal. The Republic of Vietnam also conducted large-scale inoculations in 1971, with 2,643,657 people vaccinated against smallpox.

(C) The Community Defense and Local Development Plan sought to increase secondary teachers from 16,270 to 19,300 by the end of the plan year and to admit a total of 62.5 percent of total primary students to secondary school through competitive examination. The percentage of students so admitted stood at 59.9 percent by the end of the year and the number of secondary teachers at 19,772. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam constructed 644 secondary classrooms during the year.

(C) Despite the continuing war, the Republic of Vietnam made steady progress in public works projects in 1971, increasing electrical capacity, adding miles of water distribution pipes, increasing postal and telecommunications capabilities, continuing road construction and repair, and increasing dredging. During 1971, the total installed electrical capacity throughout South Vietnam rose from 289 to 340 megawatts. In addition, 2,913 kilometers of road repair were completed in 1971, and the Republic of Vietnam built 50 kilometers of new rural roads, repaired 1,180 kilometers of rural roads, and constructed 3,980 meters of new bridges in this same period.

(C) The two special programs of the 1971 Plan, Urban and Ethnic Minorities Development, sought to give special emphasis to the broad objectives of local self-defense, administration, and development for both the urban population and for the ethnic minorities in South Vietnam. The Urban Program recognized that the problems of the cities could be solved only on a long term basis but did set out various priority tasks to improve administrative organization and living conditions of the cities. Some progress was made in 1971. Preventive medicine projects were launched; new schools built; and water supplies, refuse collection, and fire protection improved. With regard to the ethnic minorities, the Republic of Vietnam focused attention on training for the Montagnards, revising and expanding education and agriculture programs, and implemented other programs especially for the minorities including highland land reform, refugee support, and education. In June 1971, President Thieu appointed a new Minister for the Development of Ethnic Minorities, and he instituted a reorganization to insure greater cooperation among the RVN ministries on the problems of the minorities.

Political Developments in South Vietnam

(U) The major political events in South Vietnam during 1971 were the country-wide elections for the Lower House of the National Assembly on 30 August followed by the presidential election on 3 October. Voting for the South Vietnamese Senate, the upper chamber of the National Assembly, had occurred in August 1970.[27]

(U) Who would be the contenders in the presidential election? That was the unresolved political issue confronting South Vietnam in the summer of 1971. By the beginning of June, there were three announced candidates: Nguyen Van Thieu, the incumbent President seeking a second term; Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, the flamboyant Air Marshal and major rival of President Thieu; and General Duong Van Minh, known in South Vietnam as "Big Minh" and one of the leaders in the coup that overthrew President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, running as a peace candidate. President Thieu had won his first term as President four years earlier over 10 other contestants, but had received only 35 percent of the total vote. This time, he wanted to win by a majority vote and he was particularly anxious to limit the number of entrants in the presidential race.[28]

(U) Largely at President Thieu's urging the South Vietnamese National Assembly passed a bill on 3 June sharply restricting the eligibility of candidates for the Presidency. The new bill, which President Thieu quickly approved, required each aspirant to have nomination papers signed by 40 Deputies and Senators of

27. NY Times, 31 Aug 70, 1; 30 Aug 71, 1; 31 Aug 71, 1; 4 Oct 71,1.

28. NY Times, 31 May 71, 3; 3 Jun 71, 1; 6 Aug 71, 1; 20 Aug 71, 1.

the National Assembly or by 100 members of the elected provincial councils. Since a majority of the Assembly members as well as many of the provincial councilmen supported President Thieu, the new law gave him a decided advantage to the exclusion of all others.[29]

(U) All three announced candidates pressed ahead with efforts to secure the necessary number of signatures. President Thieu easily surpassed the necessary quota, obtaining endorsement from 89 of the 159 Deputies of the Lower House of the National Assembly and 15 Senators as well as from 452 provincial councilmen. General Minh qualified with the backing of 44 members of the National Assembly. By 4 August, the deadline for submitting the required signatures, Vice President Ky had the endorsement of 102 provincial councilmen, but 40 of those had already signed for President Thieu. Consequently, on the following day, 5 August, the South Vietnamese Supreme Court rejected Ky's application for candidacy on the grounds of noncompliance with the recent election law.[30]

(U) Throughout June and July, General Minh had threatened to withdraw from the race should the Vice President be disqualified, and he lived up to his word. On 20 August, General Minh withdrew from the contest, stating: "I cannot lend a hand to a dirty farce which would only make the people more desperate and disillusioned with the democratic system." Minh's withdrawal left only one candidate for the October presidential election, and this situation was a source of considerable embarrassment for the United States. How could

29. NY Times, 3 Jun 71, 1.
30. NY Times, 6 Aug 71, 1; 20 Aug 71, 1.

US officials claim democracy and constitutional government were working in South Vietnam when there was only one candidate in the Presidential race? Ambassador Bunker had met with General Minh just prior to his announcement in an attempt to persuade the General not to withdraw. Following the announcement, a US Embassy spokesman in Saigon voiced regret over the development, and in the United States, the White House Press Secretary also voiced disappointment that "a major candidate" had removed himself from the election. A spokesman of the Department of State followed with a similar statement, adding that the United States favored "a fair, honest and contested election--one that would lead to a choice for the South Vietnamese people."[31]

(U) The turn of events also embarrassed President Thieu. Apparently at his request, the South Vietnamese Supreme Court reconsidered the decision on Vice President Ky's candidacy, and on 21 August reversed its previous ruling. The device used by the Court was to invalidate all the 452 signatures of provincial councilmen received by President Thieu. Since the President retained the endorsement of 104 members of the National Assembly, he still more than met the requirement of the election law, but now all the provincial council member signatures obtained by Ky could be counted, making him eligible for the contest. Nguyen Cao Ky, however, was no longer willing to participate in the election, and on 23 August, he held a press conference to announce his withdrawal. Once again President Thieu was left the sole contester for the Presidency.[32]

31. NY Times, 20 Aug 71, 1; 21 Aug 71, 4.
32. NY Times, 21 Aug 71, 1; 23 Aug 71, 1.

(C) Subsequently, the election for the Lower House of the South Vietnam National Assembly occurred without incident on 29 August 1971. Slightly more than 78 percent of the eligible voters turned out to select 159 deputies from among some 1,242 candidates in an election that, "with certain glaring exceptions," was judged fair and correct. Candidates opposing President Thieu and his policies scored impressive gains, but the President still commanded a majority in the new body.[33]

(U) President Thieu now proceeded with preparations for the presidential election on 3 October apparently reconciled to the fact that his would be the only name on the ballot. The election would, in fact, merely be a referendum indicating by the size of the vote the support for the President. Meantime, anti-Thieu and anti-US demonstrations occurred sporadically in South Vietnam. There were also reports of statements by Nguyen Cao Ky promising to stage a military coup if President Thieu went ahead with the election, but the Vice President never publicly voiced such a threat. On 16 September, the anti-Government An Quang Buddhist group called on all "freedom and democracy loving people" in South Vietnam to boycott the 3 October election, and several days later, the Senate of the South Vietnam National Assembly adopted a resolution asking President Thieu to postpone the election, but the President ignored the request.[34]

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33. (TS) Briefing Book CJCS WESTPAC Trip, 2-14 Nov 71, (S) Item #12, J-5 Files. NY Times, 30 Aug 71, 1; 31 Aug 71, 1.

34. NY Times, 2 Sep 71, 1; 4 Sep 71, 1; 17 Sep 71, 1; 23 Sep 71, 1; 24 Sep 71, 10.

(U) The United States had also reconciled itself to the uncontested election in South Vietnam, and Secretary of State Rogers told a press conference on 3 September that he viewed the forthcoming vote as a test of public confidence of the Thieu Administration. The New York Times reported some days later that "United States officials" had cautioned South Vietnamese generals against any coup against President Thieu in the present election crisis and that any such attempt would lead to an end of US support. The files of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, reveal no indication of such US action.[35]

(C) The presidential election took place as scheduled on 3 October 1971. Despite enemy shellings of a dozen cities and hamlets, including Saigon and four provincial capitals, approximately 87 percent of the eligible seven million voters in South Vietnam went to the polls. This figure represented a slight increase over the 83 percent participation in the previous presidential election in 1967. Nguyen Van Thieu received 94 percent of the ballots cast with only six percent left blank or mutilated. Obviously, the Buddhist call for a boycott went largely unheeded, and although Nguyen Cao Ky refused to vote, he took no action to disrupt the election.[36]

(U) President Thieu took his oath of office for his second four-year term on 31 October in a ceremony held under tight security conditions. Speaking before a carefully selected audience, including US Secretary

35. NY Times, 4 Sep 71, 1; 24 Sep 71, 1.

36 (TS) Briefing Book, CJCS WESTPAC Trip, 2-14 Nov 71, (S) Item #12, J-5 Files. NY Times, 3 Oct 71, 1; 4 Oct 71, 1.

of the Treasury John Connally representing President Nixon, the South Vietnamese President proposed an immediate cease-fire and welcomed peace initiatives from "anywhere." In a more realistic vein, he reminded his fellow countrymen that they would soon be fighting alone and called for national attempts for self-sufficiency. He also called upon the United States to continue military, economic, and social assistance to enable South Vietnam to continue to fight while rebuilding and moving toward self-reliance. In honor of the inauguration, the Republic of Vietnam began the release of approximately 3,000 Viet Cong prisoners to be completed over the next few days. The great majority of those released would undergo a Chieu Hoi indoctrination program and then would be set free, though they would be subject to military service.[37]

Economic Matters

(U) To attain the self-sufficiency called for in the inaugural address, President Thieu launched a program of economic reform to cut South Vietnam's reliance on US assistance and to combat the chronic inflation in South Vietnam. Unveiling his plan in a speech before a joint session of the South Vietnamese National Assembly on 15 November 1971, he called for a devaluation of the piaster by almost 50 percent. This action, he anticipated, would make the piaster "more realistic," defeating the black market in dollars and attracting foreign investment. Other aspects of the program included: tariff reform, including higher levies on importation of non-essential items; a pay increase for both RVN civil

37. NY Times, 31 Oct 71, 1; 1 Nov 71, 1.

servants and the RVNAF; and a new investment law to stimulate further foreign investment in the RVN economy.[38]

(U) United States officials, too, were concerned about economic reform in South Vietnam. As Vietnamization proceeded, they realized that, if South Vietnam was to become truly independent, it must be self-sufficient economically as well as militarily. This would be no easy task to accomplish. The large US military presence in South Vietnam accompanied by US economic assistance over the previous years had made the South Vietnamese economy largely dependent on the United States, and in December 1971, it was estimated that US assistance accounted for over 60 percent of the total RVN national budget.[39] Although the United States did not contemplate either an immediate end or even a drastic reduction in its economic assistance to South Vietnam, President Nixon and his advisers recognized that South Vietnam must have help to become more economically independent.

(C) Even though a complete discussion of US economic programs for South Vietnam is beyond the scope of this volume, consideration of the Department of Defense involvement in this area is necessary. Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird had long been aware of the economic problems caused by the US military presence in South Vietnam. In August 1970, he had told Admiral Moorer that the implications of the South Vietnamese economic situation necessitated full participation by his office and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in development

38. NY Times, 15 Nov 71, 1. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) pp. VIII-88 - VIII-89.
39. NY Times, 4 Dec 71, 2.

of US economic policies to insure the success of Vietnamization. To that end, he had suggested an economic adviser for COMUSMACV to work with other elements of the US mission in Saigon and, through the OJCS, with his office. Accordingly, COMUSMACV established the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Affairs (MACEA) on 4 September 1970, and Brigadier General William Watkin, USA, was appointed to the position. In reporting this action to the Secretary, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred in the validity of the Department of Defense assistance for South Vietnamese economic problems.[40]

(C) General Watkin's tour in Vietnam would end in October 1971, and in anticipation of that event COMUSMACV urged CINCPAC and Admiral Moorer in June 1971 to continue the position. He explained:

> The experience of the past nine months has more than justified the decision to establish an economic affairs office in MACV. The office plays a dynamic and highly effective role by developing and guiding MACV programs which stimulate RVN economic development, by collaborating with the USEMB and USAID on measures designed to control inflation and to rationalize the GVN economic system and by providing DOD with an independent source of analysis, information, and advice concerning the RVN economy.

General Abrams felt that the economic affairs office was an invaluable element of his headquarters and he foresaw no lessening of the importance of the office in the near future. The commander's superiors agreed and

40. (C-GP 4) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 21 Aug 70, Att to JCS 2472/660, 24 Aug 70; (C-GP 4) JCSM-457-70 to SecDef, 23 Sep 70, Encl A to JCS 2472/660-1, 15 Sep 70; JMF 911/145 (21 Aug 70). (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (C) pp. IX-117, A-1.

the position of Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Affairs was continued.[41]

(S) In an effort to assist the South Vietnamese economy, the Deputy Secreary of Defense requested in July 1971 that COMUSMACV and the Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFACENGCOM) jointly develop a program for the expansion of the South Vietnamese construction industry. General Abrams and the NAVFACENGCOM commander prepared the requested program and the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted it to the Secretary of Defense on 11 August as an "interim enhancement program" that could serve as the start for a long-term project.[42]

(C) President Nixon followed the economic situation in South Vietnam, and on 26 July 1971, Dr. Kissinger informed various US officials, including the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, of the President's decision to establish a special economic development fund for South Vietnam. In effect, what the President wanted, as Dr. Kissinger pointed out, was "Vietnamization" of the South Vietnamese economy. The President planned to ask Congress for a five year authorization of about $150 million per year to facilitate reduction of US economic assistance. Developmental elements in existing US programs would be brought together and funds would be supplied for machinery, spare parts, construction materials,

41. (S-GP 4) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and CJCS, 7 Jun 71, JCS IN 55664. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. A-2.

42. (S-GP 1) Memo, DepSecDef to SecNav and CJCS, 7 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/762, 9 Jul 71; (C-GP 4) JCSM-370-71 to SecDef, 11 Aug 71 (derived from JCS 2472/762-1); JMF 911/534 (2 Jul 71).

equipment, and other investment goods. Dr. Kissinger requested a study on this matter for the Senior Review Group consideration by 15 August 1971.[43]

(C) The requested paper was prepared, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff were only minimally involved. Prior to completion of the study, a member of the Chairman's Staff Group advised Admiral Moorer: "The JCS will, of course, coordinate on the paper but in my view there is very little of substance we can contribute." Subsequently the Senior Review Group held consideration of the paper in abeyance because of the "political climate" in both Washington and Saigon, and no further action resulted on this matter.[44]

(S) Since the economic development fund did not prove feasible, the President and Dr. Kissinger turned to other means to promote the economic independence of South Vietnam. On 3 January 1972, Dr. Kissinger asked the Vietnam Special Studies Group for an evaluation of the economic support required by South Vietnam during the coming years as well as alternative ways of meeting that need. As the first phase, he wanted consideration of foreign exchange support for the Republic of Vietnam during 1972. As sources for such support, he mentioned such possibilities as diversion of money from US AID projects and certain Department of Defense projects

43. (C-GP 4) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState, DepSecDef, CJCS et al., 26 Jul 71, Att to JCS 2472/772, 27 Jul 71, JMF 911/534 (26 Jul 71).

44. (C) Reg. of Personnel Handling Class. Doc., "Economic Development Fund for Vietnam," 27 Jul 71, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul 71. (TS) Briefing Book, CJCS WESTPAC Trip, 2-14 Nov 71, (C) Item #37, J-5 Files.

that might slow the drain of South Vietnam's foreign exchange.[45]

(C) The Vietnam Special Studies Group prepared the study, and after considering it, the President made his decision on 17 February 1972. He selected the second option presented by the Study Group, providing South Vietnam $680 million of US economic support in 1972 and requiring $385 million in FY 1972 supporting assistance funds. This assistance would be used to encourage the Republic of Vietnam to increase domestic taxes, improve government efficiency, adjust the exchange rate, and take other appropriate actions to reduce the level of US support needed in future years. The President directed the Secretary of Defense to review his 1973 budget to find ways of providing an additional $60 million for economic support of South Vietnam.[46]

(C) After an appropriate review, which included initial recommendations by COMUSMACV, the Secretary of Defense informed Dr. Kissinger that there was no excess in the Department of Defense FY 1973 budget. He believed, however, that the additional $60 million requested by the President could be met through expansion of military construction in South Vietnam, increased in-country procurement, direct military budget support to the Republic of Vietnam, and other expedients, some involving the use of unobligated FY 1971 funds. At the same time, the Secretary of Defense informed the Service Secretaries, the

45. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to USecState and DepSecDef, 3 Jan 72, Att to JCS 2472/793, 7 Jan 72, JMF 911/534 (3 Jan 72).

46. (C-GP 1) Extracts of NSDM 154, 17 Feb 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) NSDMs. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. D-4.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Service Chiefs, and CINCPAC of his approval of these above actions and enjoined their "whole-hearted" support in order to meet the economic assistance levels established by the President.[47]

(C) Subsequently, on 19 May 1972, Dr. Kissinger related to the Secretary of Defense that he and the President had discussed the Department of Defense proposed action for economic support for South Vietnam and that the President had approved those proposals. "Your support," Dr. Kissinger told Mr. Laird, "and that of the Department of Defense on this critical matter has been outstanding."[48]

Pacification in 1972

(S) Pacification was succeeding at the beginning of 1972. Over the past several years, combat operations had pushed main-force enemy units back into the jungles and mountains while the RVN community defense and local development program had eroded Viet Cong control of essential resources in the populated areas of South Vietnam. But, by the latter months of 1971, growing indicators had appeared that the enemy, recognizing the RVN pacification success, planned counter efforts. In repeated instances, captured Viet Cong documents called "counter-pacification operations" the "pivotal" task at present. Exhorting the Viet Cong cadre members to return from their jungle hideouts to the villages, these documents emphasized the low profile tactics that

47. (C) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, 2 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/793-1, 25 May 72, JMF 911/534 (3 Jan 72). (C-GP 4) Msg, SecDef 9407 to SecArmy et al., 2 May 72.

48. (C-GP 4) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 19 May 72, Att to JCS 2472/793-1, 25 May 72, JMF 911/534 (3 Jan 72).

had worked so well in the early 1960's to gain control over large areas of the countryside.[49]

(C) Both South Vietnamese and US officials also observed the pacification success during 1971 and saw no need to change either basic objectives or approaches, even with the indications of possible enemy counter efforts. Rather, what was required, they believed, was steady, continuous progress toward established goals. These officials did consider that the time had come when it was not only possible but necessary to plan pacification on a longer-term basis. As a result, the Republic of Vietnam published in early 1972 a new plan covering the four year period from March 1972 through 1975. This Four Year Community Defense and Local Development Plan, 1972-1975 (hereinafter referred to as the Four Year Plan) called essentially for the completion of all pacification tasks resulting in a secure and stable South Vietnam. It contained the same basic goals as in the previous plans but added emphasis on long-range programs to support national economic development. As in earlier plans, the new one focused attention on: consolidation and maintenance of security for the entire country; elimination of communist guerrillas and terrorism; efficiency and integrity of government administration at all levels; and emphasis on social and economic progress.

(C) The new Four Year Plan continued to organize all programs under the three basic objectives of local self-defense, local self-government, and local self-development. All the programs of the 1971 plan were

49. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) Dept of State, Research Study, REAS-44, "South Vietnam: Revolutionary War Back to Phase One?," 17 Dec 71, Hist. Div. Files.

retained and five new ones were added. In the area of self-defense, the Four Year Plan called for full security (A HES rating) for 100 percent of the hamlets of South Vietnam by 1975, for full manning of the Regional and Popular Forces at authorized levels, for a trained and effective National Police at the approved strength of 122,000 in 1972, and elimination of all forms of communist sabotage, terrorism, and subversion. The self-defense portion of the Four Year Plan continued the Chieu Hoi and Phung Hoang Programs and included a new effort, an Administrative Security Program to protect government officials, installations, and documents at all levels. Local self-government in the Four Year Plan encompassed the same objectives and activities as in the previous plan and added the new Local Revenue Development Program to enhance financial self-sufficiency of the provinces, cities, and villages. All the economic and social efforts fell under the local self-development portion of the Four Year Plan. There was also one new aspect in this section, a program to improve the financial system and supply services for needed economic development. The special urban and ethnic programs of the 1971 plan were carried forward in the new plan and two more special ones were added: one to eradicate all "social evils" such as drug use, venereal disease, crime, and the like; and administrative reform to streamline governmental procedures and public services, eliminating corruption and reducing delays.[50]

(C) The Republic of Vietnam launched the Four Year Community Defense and Local Development Plan on

50. (C-EX) RVN, Four Year Community Defense and Local Development Plan, 1972-1975, n.d.; (C) Ltr, COMUSMACV to JCS et al., n.d. (received in JCS on 18 Apr 72); JMF 911/350 (Jan 72).

1 March 1972 with high hopes for its success, but almost immediately the massive North Vietnamese offensive, beginning on 31 March 1972, dealt a reeling blow to pacification momentum. Large areas of South Vietnam fell under North Vietnamese control, lines of communication were interrupted, and tremendous numbers of new refugees were created. Not only were many pacification projects disrupted, but both personnel and resources from others were diverted to meet emergency situations. By the end of August 1972, the offensive had been blunted and the Republic of Vietnam undertook recovery efforts to return the community defense and local development program to its original course. Special plans prepared in 17 affected provinces identified actions to rebuild security, restore governmental services, and reconstruct damaged public facilities, and the Republic of Vietnam reprogrammed 848 million piasters for these projects. The United States supplied financial assistance for the recovery operations and CORDS advisers worked closely with the South Vietnamese on these efforts. As a result, by the end of 1972, the pacification effort was largely restored to the point where it had stood at the start of the year.[51]

51. All information on pacification goals in 1972 is from (C-EX) RVN Four Year Community Defense and Local Development Plan, 1972-1975, n.d., JMF 911/350 (Jan 72). All information on the conduct of pacification in 1972, except as otherwise stated, is from (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, Annex D. Also see (C) Dept of State, Intelligence Note, REAN-55, "South Vietnam: The Communists Strike at Pacification," 2 Aug 72, Hist. Div. Files.

(C) When the Four Year Plan was launched, 82.7 percent of all hamlets were judged fully secure, a fact that seemed to place the 100 percent objective within reach. The enemy offensive, however, quickly changed the situation and statistics for territorial security more than any other indicator showed disruption wrought by the offensive. The number of Viet Cong-controlled hamlets rose from seven in February to 1,164 in May, and the percentage of secure hamlets, country-wide, fell proportionally, dropping to 70.3 percent at the beginning of August 1972. Thereafter the overall country rating began a gradual rise as the South Vietnamese forces reasserted control. By the end of December 1972, the figure for fully secure hamlets, country-wide, had reached 79.6 percent.

(C) The North Vietnamese offensive provided an effective test of the RVN territorial security forces, and the results were not altogether encouraging. The performance of the Regional and Popular Forces, who retained responsibility for local defense and security under the Four Year Plan, varied from outstanding to poor. In Quang Tri and Binh Long Provinces, the Regional Forces took a determined stand against superior forces, but in Binh Dinh and Kontum, neither the Regional nor the Popular Forces made much effort to stop the enemy in the initial days of the offensive. The territorial forces were spread too thin in MR 4 during the early part of the offensive, and numerous bases were overrun or abandoned. The offensive caused a decline in the strength of both forces in the first half of the year, though these largely recovered by the end of the year.

(C) Similarly, the performance of the People's Self Defense Force, with a few exceptions, proved marginal during the offensive. This weakness of the PSDF was a serious obstacle to hopes of effective

security at the grass-roots level. The RVN attempted to strengthen the PSDF during the recovery period, and significant numbers of combat members attended refresher training to improve their combat performance.

(C) The Four Year Plan called for further strengthening of the National Police within the approved 122,000-man ceiling and creation of an effective police presence throughout the countryside by deploying 30,000 National Police to the village and establishing police stations in all secure villages. Although the enemy offensive prevented accomplishment of the latter objective, National Police performance was judged "adequate" during the offensive and was particularly effective in helping prosecute a special anti-VCI campaign. Despite the offensive, National Police training proceeded on schedule during 1972 and the National Police did assume responsibility for Phung Hoang operations from the province and district intelligence centers as previously planned.

(C) Phung Hoang operations were one area of the pacification program that did not suffer from the enemy offensive. Phung Hoang neutralizations increased substantially during the period of the offensive in all Military Regions, except MR 3, primarily because the increased tempo of enemy activity made the VCI "more vulnerable." On the other hand, terrorism against the South Vietnamese naturally increased sharply during the early stages of the offensive, but then tapered off again by the summer.

(C) The Four Year Plan set an overall goal of 48,000 Hoi Chanh (ralliers) for the Chieu Hoi program with 14,000 in 1972. Once again, the enemy invasion hampered this effort. The number of Hoi Chanh fell sharply in April 1972 and continued to decline, though at a slower rate, through May and June. In July the rate began to rise and in August it nearly equaled that

of the previous March. The last three months of the year saw a decline in the Chieu Hoi ralliers, largely attributable to the reduced military activity and the uncertainty about the peace negotiations. Consequently by the end of the year, some 10,052 Hoi Chanh had rallied to the Republic of Vietnam, missing the established goal by almost 4,000.

(C) The North Vietnamese offensive also dealt a considerable set-back to the local self-government programs of the Four Year Plan. Combat operations in the period April-August 1972 disrupted 260 South Vietnamese villages although many of these villages continued to function in refugee locations. The Republic of Vietnam anticipated using Province Mobile Assistance Teams in 1972 to supervise and assist village officials, but the offensive forced abandonment of team visits in many areas. In other aspects of local self-government, however, some success was attained. The Four Year Plan introduced the Local Revenue Improvement Program to build fiscal self-sufficiency for villages and provinces, and the year 1972 saw considerable progress in that effort. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam proceeded with administrative reforms to cut red tape and simplify government procedures for its citizens.

(C) The most important aspect of the community defense and local development effort in 1972, necessarily so because of the offensive, was the refugee program. Prior to April 1972, the Republic of Vietnam had made considerable progress in resettlement of its homeless citizens and elimination of the refugee problem seemed within reach. Then the offensive broke leaving nearly 1.3 million people homeless at some time during the next nine months. The Republic of Vietnam acted with dispatch to meet the challenge, initiating emergency assistance to provide shelter, medical care,

and other necessities to the growing number of refugees. This emergency relief took precedence over all other programs with the single exception of the conduct of the war itself. The United States assisted, providing more than 14 billion piasters ($31 million) for refugee relief as well as contributing an additional $1.26 million in direct dollar costs. The United States also supplied over 2,000 tents as temporary housing for refugees, and abandoned US military bases were used as refugee sites. By the close of 1972, the Republic of Vitnam had assisted over 400,000 refugees to return to their villages while about 790,000 were receiving assistance in some 150 RVN refugee camps located in 22 provinces.

(U) Within the constraints necessitated by the North Vietnamese offensive, the Republic of Vietnam proceeded with the other economic and social programs of the local self-development portion of the Four Year Plan. In spite of the diversion of resources to meet emergency needs, the reconstruction of roads, railroads, and bridges progressed, and by the end of December four-fifths of the year's objectives in these areas had been completed. Even though distribution of land ceased in contested areas, land reform moved ahead elsewhere. Consequently, by December 1972, the republic of Vietnam had approved 924,947 hectares for distribution and had actually redistributed 694,573 hectares, and expected to reach the goal of distributing one million hectares by 26 March 1973, the third anniversary of the land reform law. Nevertheless, despite the progress in land reform, the Republic of Vietnam did not become a rice exporter in 1972 as planned. The enemy offensive combined with bad weather precluded that eventuality and the Republic Vietnam

would have to import rice in the coming year. Finally, veterans programs continued and education suffered no permanent set back in 1972. The offensive did destroy school buildings in many areas, forcing a shortened school year. But the Republic of Vietnam began school reconstruction in July and nearly all schools in South Vietnam were repaired, staffed, and ready when the fall term began in September. Moreover, school attendance in the fall of 1972 was at previous levels and there were no critical shortages of teachers, buildings, or supplies.

(U) By the end of 1972, the civil defense and local development campaign had made a remarkable recovery from the distruption caused by the enemy spring offensive. Consequently, at the start of 1973, the pacification picture in South Vietnam was much the same as it had been a year previously. But, with all signs indicating an imminent political settlement of the war, the question then more than ever was: Could the fragile pacification gains be maintaind and continued?

(C) As will be related in subsequent chapters, the United States and North Vietnam did reach a negotiated agreement on the war in January 1973. A cease-fire went into effect throughout South Vietnam on 27 January 1973, and the United States agreed to withdraw all its military forces from South Vietnam within 60 days. This agreement, however, did not bring an immediate end to the fighting in South Vietnam. In fact, the mere announcement of the settlement spurred heavy fighting as both sides attempted to increase their control of territory before the cease-fire came into force. As a result, the percentage of fully

secure hamlets under RVN control fell during January 1973 by over three points from 79.6 to 76.1.[52]

(C) With the signature of the agreement and the withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam, the United States dismantled its organization for military support of pacification efforts. The CORDS structure was disbanded and ceased to exist on 27 February 1973. Various functions and civilian personnel were transferred to US civilian agencies in South Vietnam. Advisory assistance for the Chieu Hoi program was shifted to the Special Assistant to the Ambassador for Field Operations; refugee support became the responsibility of the US AID office; and CORDS civilian personnel in the field were retained under newly established Directorates for Resettlement and Reconstruction under four consuls-general in Da Nang, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, and Can Tho.[53]

(U) Now, after many years of effort and great expense, US military support for pacification in South Vietnam had ended. Reduced assistance, carried on by civilian personnel, would continue, but a crucial question remained. Would this reduced assistance be sufficient now that the Republic of Vietnam had to face the continuing enemy threat alone? If the peace settlement had brought an end to the fighting, perhaps, the Republic of Vietnam could have built on the foundation laid by the pacification programs to become a truly viable nation. But since North Vietnam and the Viet Cong never intended to live up to the agreement, the pacification achievements could not prevent the ultimate fall of the Republic of Vietnam.

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52. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) pp. 116, 125-126, 129-139, D-32.

53. Ibid., pp. D-43 - D-44.

CHAPTER 11

THE NEGOTIATIONS TO END THE WAR IN 1971 AND 1972

(U) At the beginning of 1971, the Paris talks to end the war in Vietnam had been in progress for almost two years. Prsident Johnson on 31 March 1968 had restricted the US bombing of North Vietnam to the area immediately above the DMZ in an effort to get talks started, and on 13 May 1968, US and North Vietnamese representatives began meetings in Paris to consider procedural matters preliminary to substantive negotiations. Finally on 31 October 1968, the United States ceased all bombing of North Vietnam in return for agreement to begin expanded talks, and on 25 January 1969, delegations of the United States, the Republic of Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the National Liberation Front, or Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam (as they redisignated themselves in June 1969), met for the first time in plenary session in Paris at the old Majestic Hotel.[1]

(U) Delegates of the four parties held 97 plenary sessions during 1969 and 1970, but had reached no agreement on a settlement. The United States and the Republic of Vietnam had sought a verified withdrawal of all external forces from South Vietnam, release of all prisoners, and a political solution decided by the South Vietnamese themselves free of outside interference. North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government, however, rejected all allied proposals,

1. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 453-455, 460.

insisting on unconditional removal of all non-Vietnamese forces but without provision for withdrawal of the North Vietnamese troops in the south. Moreover they refused to discuss a political settlement in South Vietnam and demanded the overthrow of President Thieu and his Government.[2]

The Mechanics

(U) The US participation in the Vietnam neogotiations in 1971 and 1972 followed a pattern that had developed early in 1969. The preparation for and conduct of the talks in Paris were carried out by the Department of State at the direction of the President. Despite the political nature of the negotiations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff participated in this aspect of the Vietnam story though their involvement was not so readily apparent.

(U) In the years 1971 and 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff never took a formal position on the Vietnam negotiaions. Nor did they provide the Secretary of Defense any views or recommendations on this subject for submission to Dr. Kissinger, the Secretary of State, or the President. Undoubtedly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the peace talks among themselves and with the Secretary of Defense, but no written record of such deliberations is available.

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff did, nevertheless, have a voice in the negotiations by other means. From the start of the Paris talks in 1968, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had provided a military adviser to the US

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 453-512.

Delegation. Although he had no independent voice in the delegation decisions, he was, in practice, a full participant in that body's discussions. He kept the delegation informed of the current military situation in Vietnam, evaluating such developments as combat high points and lulls and changes in infiltration levels. He also advised on the military significance of actions under consideration by the delegation and supported the Department of Defense and JCS positions in those considerations. In addition, the military adviser attended all plenary sessions of the Paris talks.[3]

(C) Another vehicle of JCS influence on the negotiations was the Joint Staff participation in the NSC interdepartmental bodies in Washington that dealt with the talks. There were two of these, the Indochina Ad Hoc Group and the Vietnam Special Studies Group, and officers of the plans and policy Directorate, J-5, were members of both, together with representatives of the NSC staff, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). The Indochina Ad Hoc Group was charged with coordination of guidance and direction for the plenary Paris talks. It reviewed and approved proposals from the US Delegation for presentation at the weekly sessions. The second body, the Vietnam Special Studies Group, was responsible for broad planning and development of overall negotiating strategy. Completed papers of both groups were usually reviewed by the Senior Review Group. There the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as a member, had a voice in the considerations. Certainly, he spoke for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in those

3. (TS) J-5 Briefing for DJS, "Briefing on Negotiations for Peace in Indochina," 25 Aug 72, J-5 Files.

meetings as well as at NSC meetings, and he must have reported back to the other Chiefs on the discussions and decisions reached in these meetings. But the reports must have been oral since, again, no record of them has been found.[4]

(C) Within the Joint Staff, the Southeast Asia Watch Group on a Negotiated Settlement (SEAWAGONS) monitored the negotiations and kept the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed of current developments. Operating under the overall direction of the Director, J-5, the SEAWAGONS was under the immediate supervision of the Chief, Far East/South Asia Division, J-5, and included one principal and alternate from each Directorate of the Joint Staff and from the Defense Intelligence Agency. The SEAWAGONS also served as the point of contact with the military advisers at the Paris talks.[5]

(C) In addition to the plenary Paris peace negotiations, there were also the intermittent private talks between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, which had begun in August 1969. These meetings were conducted in extreme secrecy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had no input into or detailed knowledge of them. A J-5 briefing in the summer of 1972 on the current status of the negotiations stated that no information on the private talks was available. Even as late as October 1972, when the private talks had reached a critical state, the Joint Staff had "no information" on them.[6]

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4. (TS) J-5 Briefing, "The Current Status of Negotiations," n.d. (summer 1972); J-5 Briefing for LTG Seignious, n.d., J-5 Files.

5. (TS) J-5 Briefing for DJS, "Briefing on Negotiations for Peace in Indochina," 25 Aug 72, J-5 Files.

6. (TS) J-5 Briefing, "The Current Status of Negotiations," n.d. (summer 1972), J-5 files. (S-NOFORN) Agenda for SEAWAGONS, 12 Oct 72, J-5 Action Officer Files (SEAWAGONS Agendas).

Refinement of the US Negotiating Position

(U) With the entry of President Nixon into office in January 1969 and the initiation of the Paris peace talks, the United States had undertaken the development of a comprehensive position on the various issues foreseen in the pursuit of a peaceful settlement. During 1969, US officials in Washington had prepared within the revamped NSC system a series of papers dealing with mutual withdrawal, verification, political settlement, and international guarantees of a settlement. In the first half of 1970, a cease-fire paper was prepared, and the existing negotiating papers were refined and updated.[7]

(S) On 7 October 1970, President Nixon publicly offered a new peace proposal that included, for the first time, "a cease-fire in-place."[8] Subsequently, the President asked for preparation of a US position on possible cease-fire negotiations, and Dr. Kissinger notified the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 16 October 1970 of this requirement. The President wanted development of "specific and comprehensive" negotiating criteria on all aspects of enemy behavior under an in-place cease-fire. The President also asked for a thorough examination of verification and control, including such matters as ways of insuring South Vietnamese compliance, means of assessing enemy performance under a cease-fire, and possible supervisory bodies. Finally, the study was to include alternative US cease-fire negotiating postures, with consideration of probable enemy

7. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 468-470, 485-496.

8. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1970 (1971), pp. 825-828.

responses and initiatives, and possible cease-fire arrangements in both Laos and Cambodia.[9]

(S) The Working Group of the Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) was assigned actual preparation of the study, and drafting was done by two panels: one on negotiations chaired by a Department of State representative and another on military arrangements in South Vietnam directed by a representative of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). Members of the Joint Staff participated on both panels. On 30 October 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC and COMUSMACV to furnish information to the Joint Staff as expeditiously as possible to insure that the views of the field commanders were incorporated into the new cease-fire paper.[10]

(S) Dr. Kissinger had asked for the study by 10 December 1970, but due undoubtedly to the lack of any progress in the negotiations, that deadline was not kept. The VSSG Working Group cease-fire paper went through two initial drafts during the spring of 1971 with the final version completed on 10 June 1971. In this paper, the Working Group treated a cease-fire as an "interim measure" to halt fighting and create an environment leading to a final settlement. The Working Group limited its assessment to in-place cease-fire alternatives designed to maintain the status quo by

9. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secys State and Defense, DCI, and CJCS, 16 Oct 70, Att to JCS 2472/679, 24 Oct 70, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 2.

10. Ibid. (S-GP 3) DJSM-1615-70 to CJCS, 30 Oct 70; (S-GP 3) Msg, JCS 14650 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 30 Oct 70; J-5 Files.

stopping or reducing military activity in a way that prevented either side from improving its military position after implementation of the cease-fire.

(U) A principal concern of the Working Group was that the enemy would use his main forces to upset the status quo achieved in a cease-fire. He might employ them for overt military action (at a level too low to constitute a formal breach) or to provide support and encouragement for similar action by local forces. Or his main forces could be held in reserve and rebuilt to resume hostilities at a more favorable time. In order to develop realistic alternatives, the Working Group analyzed representative areas within South Vietnam to identify enemy main force activities and potential for violation that would need to be neutralized in a cease-fire. The Working Group then extended this analysis to the country as a whole and, as a result, presented two alternatives or "cease-fire terms" as it designated them.

(S) The first term (Alternative I) provided for main forces of both sides to freeze in-place with locations and unit designations established on the ground by a joint military commission within negotiated agreements as to size of the areas. A variant of this term was identical except there would be no formal machinery for enforcement. The second term (Alternative II) would require main forces to remain in "sanctuary" areas identified by negotiation, which might not be entered by the military, administrative, or police forces of the other side.

(S) Of the two terms, the Working Group favored Alternative II because it would provide an opportunity to remove enemy main forces from populated areas. Conversely, since Alternative I allowed location of

enemy main forces near populated areas, it posed greater potential for changes in control of the population, encouraging greater activity by local forces and the VCI. Under either alternative, the Working Group predicted a buildup of enemy supplies and personnel since the communists were unlikely to give up voluntarily the option of strengthening their forces.

(S) Since the nature of the war as well as the political situation in Laos and Cambodia was fundamentally different from South Vietnam, the Working Group supplied separate cease-fire terms for those two countries. In Laos, the Working Group considered that a cease-fire would offer benefits to both sides and, hence, should be followed by a period of "good observance and relative military stability." In Cambodia, however, the Working Group expected both sides to continue to struggle for political control with any cease-fire directly related to the outcome in South Vietnam.[11]

(S) The cease-fire paper was scheduled for consideration by the Senior Review Group (SRG) on 20 July 1971, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) and the Director of the Joint Staff prepared a talking paper for use by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Assistant Secretary and the Director considered the methodology of the paper good and the work "very detailed," but noted that, except for specific data input, the final paper had not been coordinated with the military commands, the field agencies, or the Paris delegation. Moreover, they

11. (TS-GP 1) VSSG Paper, "Indo-China Cease-Fire Terms," 10 Jun 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/770, 26 Jul 71, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 2.

considered the paper to a great extent "judgmental" with outcomes that could be considered far from certain.

(S) In consideration of cease-fire papers the previous year, the Defense position had maintained that any cease-fire must be linked to withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam.[12] The President, however, had ignored that advice and his 7 October 1970 speech had called for a cease-fire in-place without mention of any condition for withdrawal. In accordance with the President's proposal, the 10 June 1971 VSSG Working Group paper included no provision at all for withdrawal. Nor did the Assistant Secretary or the Director advocate a withdrawal alternative. As the Defense position on the control aspect of the new study, they supported Alternative II provided it would be so applied as to leave the ARVN widely dispersed in battalion-sized sanctuaries while grouping enemy forces into a smaller number of larger (regimental-size) sanctuaries away from population centers. Should Alternative I be negotiated, the two Defense officials urged great emphasis on agreement for an effective international supervisory body present at each main force location. With regard to enemy main force buildup and possible resumption of hostilities, the Assistant Secretary and the Director found neither alternative clearly preferable. To discourage a resumption of hostilities by the enemy, the two Defense officials believed that "a credible deterrent" based on the threat of retaliation would be necessary. Until the RVNAF could provide such a capability, they said, the threat of US retaliation must fill the deterrent gap. In conclusion, they considered the paper a first

12. See The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1970, pp. 486, 492-494.

step and recommended that it be provided to the US Embassies in Saigon, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh and the US Delegation in Paris. Thereafter, a second phase study to translate objectives into specific negotiating proposals, should be developed if warranted.[13]

(S) The Senior Review Group meeting was postponed until 22 July 1971 when all the principals--Dr. Henry Kissinger, Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms, and Admiral Thomas Moorer--gathered to consider the cease-fire paper. In a general discussion, Admiral Moorer commented upon the difficulty of negotiating enemy sanctuaries away from the population as compared with the ease of negotiating an in-place cessation. He also believed that it would be difficult to get the Government of Vietnam "to allocate its sovereign territory for use as NVA sanctuaries." Citing experience with the 1954 Indochina accords, Deputy Secrtary Johnson confirmed that negotiation of sanctuaries was impractical. There followed general agreement that the in-place provisions of Alternative I were the most practical approach. After some discussion of an appropriate international supervisory body, Dr. Kissinger concluded the meeting by listing the actions still to be accomplished on the cease-fire terms: comments from the field; further

13. (TS-GP 1) Joint TP for DepSecDef and CJCS for SRG Mtg on 20 Jul 71, "Indo-China Cease-fire Paper," n.d., Att to JCS 2472/770, 26 Jul 71, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 2.

work on the matter of a supervisory body; and preparation of a final paper for the President.[14]

(S) Accordingly, the VSSG paper was dispatched to the field for comment. General Abrams found the scope of the study "a very narrow basis for developing a US position on cease-fire terms." Further, he observed that the study conclusions indicated a distinct disadvantage for the friendly governments of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos under cease-fire terms in an insurgency environment. The enemy, he believed, accustomed to covert and clandestine methods, would be much less inhibited by the proposed supervisory mechanism than would the South Vietnamese. Consequently, he suggested an extension of the study in order to create an atmosphere "equally restrictive" to both sides during subsequent negotiations for settlement. Specifically, he urged inclusion of "a planned withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese combat forces" as another alternative cease-fire term and suggested that a more effective control mechanism would be needed. CINCPAC concurred in the COMUSMACV position.[15]

(S) Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon replied on 21 August that the scope of the study was so limited that it failed to provide an adequate basis for "cease-fire negotiating alternatives." Further he found the study unrealistic in the assumptions

14. (TS) Memo for Record by BG W. C. Burrows, USAF, Chief Far East Div., J-5, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on 22 July 1971, concerning the VSSG Indo-China Cease-fire Terms Paper (C)," 23 Jul 71, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/770-1, 28 Jul 71, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 2.

15. (TS-GP 1) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 300720Z Jul 71, JCS IN 67169. (TS-GP 1) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 060315Z Aug 71, JCS IN 66841.

that it made about the kind of cease-fire terms the enemy was likely to accept. As a general observation, he emphasized the importance of viewing a cease-fire "not as an end in itself, but as a stage in an interlocked process intended untimately to eliminate the causes of the fighting."[16]

(S) Ambassador Philip C. Habib, the interim head of the US Delegation to the peace talks in Paris, in his reply addressed the question of the acceptability of a cease-fire to both sides. The study, he stated, seemed to be based on the supposition that North Vietnam was losing the war and that the allied side could impose the terms of a settlement. It was Ambassador Habib's best evidence that the North Vietnamese did not think they were losing the war nor were they prepared to enter into negotiations on a US-proposed cease-fire. Even it they should, the Ambassador doubted they would agree to the concessions required by the VSSG study. He found the study useful in defining an opening allied position, but considered the scenarios set out therein unrealistic portrayals of the final product.[17]

(S) Upon receipt of the field comments, the VSSG Working Group prepared a new paper, "Alternative Sets of Cease-Fire Terms," which was completed on 23 August 1971. This paper went beyond the 10 June 1971 study in that it described the "general conceptual framework in which cease-fire terms might be considered," though without any attempt to relate the terms to the political and other issues of an overall settlement. The

16. (TS) Msg, Saigon 13455 to State, 21 Aug 71, JCS IN 98419.
17. (TS) Ltr, Amb Habib to Dep AsstSecState for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 6 Aug 71, J-5 Files.

new paper gave additional attention to the problem of supervision of a cease-fire and provided additional cease-fire terms. The terms now included four alternatives. The first provided for all forces, both main and local, to freeze in-place with supervision by the current International Control Commission (ICC). Alternative 2 would locate enemy main forces in sanctuaries while friendly main forces would be widespread with local forces free to conduct defensive operations. Supervision would be by "a new, large International Supervisory Body." Under both alternatives, military forces in Laos and Cambodia would be separated along a line reflecting current troop dispositions, and RVNAF forces would withdraw from Cambodia. Alternative 1, however, would allow certain adjustments in the line in favor of the enemy. Alternative 3 would freeze all main forces in-place with South Vietnamese forces free to conduct defensive operations. The supervision aspect would be as in Alternative 2. Alternative 4 was identical to Alternative 3 except supervision would be by the current International Control Commission rather than by thr new International Supervisory Body.

(S) In assessing these terms, the Working Group believed that Alternative 1 would prove attractive to North Vietnam and, hence, would be easier to negotiate than the other alternatives. Accordingly, the first alternative did not constitute an "attractive" negotiating position for the allied side, at least initially. Alternative 2, on the other hand, the Working Group stated, was the most favorable to "our side," but would probably be rejected "out of hand" by Hanoi. Alternative 3 offered a more favorable prospect for negotiation than the two preceding ones since it struck a degree of compromise on supervision and placed nearly equal restriction on both sides' main forces,

calling for a "genuine" freeze in-place of all main forces; moreover, it dropped any idea of relocating enemy main forces into sanctuaries. The fourth alternative would be less acceptable to the allied side because of the weaker supervision provided by the ineffective International Control Commission.

(S) In the 23 August paper, the Working Group also examined the possibility of an unilateral allied cease-fire as a tactic to draw the enemy into fruitful negotiations for a final settlement. Such a possibility would have strong political and psychological impact on the world community as well as placing the burden of response on the enemy. But it would also involve certain risks. The enemy might seize the opportunity to improve his military situation surreptitiously while giving the appearance of a favorable response, thus making it difficult for the allied side to justify a resumption of offensive operations. In an annex on verification and enforcement of a cease-fire, the Working Group considered the following international supervisory bodies in order of effectiveness: (1) a UN-sponsored body; (2) a new international organization; (3) an expanded and strengthened International Control Commission; (4) the current International Control Commission supplemented by observers.[18]

(S) The Senior Review Group considered the new cease-fire paper on 1 October 1971, and in anticipation of the meeting, the Assistant Secrtary of Defense

18. (TS-GP 1) VSSG Paper, "Alternative Sets of Cease-Fire Terms," 23 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/770-2, 29 Sep 71, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 3.

(International Security Affairs) and the Director of the Joint Staff again supplied the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff a talking paper for the meeting. On the basis of expected declines in GVN control and continued enemy buildup under all four alternative terms, as well as the seeming dependence of a stable Cambodia on the outcome in South Vietnam, the Assistant Secretary and the Director considered a cease-fire in-place prior to a final settlement undesirable. They believed that a cease-fire must be linked to political agreement that would prevent a continued struggle for control. One goal for such a final solution, they said, should be a verified mutual withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces. Without such political linkages, the two Defense officials considered the new cease-fire study an unrealistic approach to negotiation and recommended against referring it to the National Security Council.[19]

(S) At the 1 October Senior Review Group meeting, there was a general consensus that Alternative 1 and 4 of the cease-fire study were disadvantageous to the allied side and should not be considered. There was also agreement that Alternative 2 was the most favorable from "our viewpoint" though the participants recognized that its unacceptability to the North Vietnamese made it an impractical option. Consequently, Deputy Secretary of Defense Parckard stated that Alternative 3 was the most "practical and realistic" approach and should be used as a point of

19. (TS-GP 1) Joint TP for DepSecDef and CJCS for SRG Meeting on 1 Oct 71, "VSSG Alternative Sets of Cease-Fire Terms Paper," n.d., Att to JCS 2472/770-4, 12 Oct 71, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 3.

departure. Lieutenant General Richard T. Knowles, USA, the Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who represented Admiral Moorer at the meeting, suggested consideration of something between Alternatives 2 and 3 since the in-place cease-fire provision of Alternative 3 posed too many disadvantages for the allied side. No final action was taken on the paper, and in closing the meeting, Dr. Kissinger stated that three more things were needed to round out the cease-fire study: a paper on possible enemy actions prior to implementation of a cease-fire; evaluation and development of concepts to monitor infiltration and military violations during a cease-fire; and preparation of a "political framework" that should "surround" a cease-fire agreement based on Alternative 3.[20]

(U) Subsequently, on 11 October 1971, President Nixon presented a private peace initiative to the North Vietnamese that included provision for a cease-fire. This proposal was not publicly revealed until the following January[21] and, even then, few details were released. The cease-fire offered, however, was not one such as considered in the VSSG Working Group paper. Rather, the President proposed "a general cease-fire throughout Indochina" to begin when an agreement was signed, and, as set forth in the overall initiative, the agreement would include prisoner release, a political settlement in South Vietnam based on free

20. (TS-GP 3) Memo for Record by BG W. C. Burrows, USAF, Chief, Far East Div, J-5, "NSC Senior Review Group Meeting on Alternative Sets of Cease-Fire Terms (U)," 4 Oct 71, Att to JCS 2472/770-3, 6 Oct 71, JMF 911/305 (25 May 70) sec 3.

21. See below, pp. 603-605.

elections, and respect for the 1954 Geneva Agreements. In any event, the offer quickly became moot. The North Vietnamese made no positive response, and the matter proceeded no further.[22]

(S) Meantime, the three papers requested by Dr. Kissinger at the 1 October SRG meeting were prepared in late October and early November. The one on probable enemy actions prior to implementation of a cease-fire was expanded to include possible actions by the allied side as well. This paper predicted that both sides would undertake a series of major actions to expand their territorial control and political influence in an attempt to strengthen their respective strategic, tactical, and negotiating postures. The second paper examined not only problems of monitoring a cease-fire, but also the manpower requirements involved. With respect to the former aspect, the conclusion was that, in the twentieth century, cease-fires ending non-decisive combat were rarely effective without international supervision. Moreover, the particularly non-decisive nature of the struggle in Indochina made the presence of an international supervisory body "a matter of greater than normal importance." Since the tasks of such a body in Indochina would be monumental, the paper proposed an "optimum practical size" for such a body of 8,500 to 12,000 personnel. A force of 17,200 to 22,000 would do a better job, but probably could not be attained, while one of less than 3,000 to 5,000 was considered too small, offering little more than a substantial International Control Commission. These first two papers were prepared by a NSC task force. The Indochina Ad Hoc Group supplied the remaining one, a detailed, step-by-step negotiating scenario,

22. Public Papers Nixon, 1972, pp. 103-106.

incorporating a cease-fire as contained in Alternative 3 of the VSSG Working Group paper.[23]

(C) No further action followed on these three studies. Nor is there any available evidence that the Senior Review Group considered further the 23 August 1971 cease-fire paper or that the paper was ever presented to the National Security Council and the President. Presumably, the complete lack of any progress in either the private negotiations efforts or the Paris talks during 1971 removed the necessity for any further Washington review of the negotiating position in late 1971.

The Paris Talks in 1971

(C) At the first plenary session of the Paris talks in 1971, on 7 January, South Vietnamese delegate Phan Dang Lam reviewed the lack of progress in the talks and asked the other side to engage in serious discussions. United States representative David K. E. Bruce followed and briefly recounted US proposals for a settlement. The most recent was the peace initiative set forth by President Nixon in his 7 October 1970 speech. In addition to provision for an in-place cease-fire throughout Indochina with effective international supervision,[24] that proposal included: a peace conference to deal with the conflict in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; US readiness to negotiate an agreed timetable for complete withdrawal of its forces as part of an overall settlement; a political settlement that truly met the aspirations of all South Vietnamese; and immediate unconditional release of all

23. (TS-GP 3) Memo, Dir, Vietnam Task Group to Dir, Program Analysis, NSC, 26 Oct 71; (S) Memo, Dep AsstSec State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs to Chm, SRG, 4 Nov 71; J-5 Files.
24. See above, p. 570.

prisoners of war. Ambassador Bruce urged the other side to reconsider its approach and join in negotiating an early and honorable end to the war.[25]

(C) Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh, speaking for the PRG, charged the United States with a variety of crimes in Vietnam and repeated the PRG demands "in standard terms": total and unconditional withdrawal of US and other non-Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam by 30 June 1971 and a coalition government in South Vietnam that did not include President Thieu or Vice President Ky. Xuan Thuy, the leader of the North Vietnamese delegation, supported the PRG demands and charged the Nixon Adminstration with intensifying the war. This initial meeting of the year with its lack of any understanding or progress set a pattern for the months to follow.[26]

(C) Throughout the year, the allied side would devote increasing attention in the negotiations to the issue of those held prisoner and missing. At the meeting on 14 January, Ambassador Bruce presented an updated list of US men currently missing in Southeast Asia and asked for any information on those men. The other side refused to accept the list, and the US Ambassador and his deputy, Mr. Philip Habib, proceeded to read the 156 names not on previous lists into the record.[27]

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25. (C) Msg, US Del France 291 to State, 7 Jan 71, JCS IN 29585. Public Papers, Nixon, 1970, pp. 825-829.

26. (C) Msg, US Del France 291 to State, 7 Jan 71, JCS IN 29585.

27. (C) Msgs, US Del France 641 and 645 to State, 14 Jan 71, JCS IN 41948 and 42103.

(C) At the same session, Ambassador Lam repeated an announcement made earlier in a December 1970 session that his government would repatriate a group of sick and wounded NVN prisoners during the Tet holiday period. It was hoped that North Vietnam would reciprocate with a similar action but none was forthcoming. Nevertheless, South Vietnam proceeded with its plan. On 24 January, 37 disabled NVN prisoners were placed in rubber life rafts and allowed to paddle across the Benhai River in the DMZ.[28]

(C) The South Vietnamese, with US air support, launched a ground incursion into Laos on 8 February 1971, and this action, LAMSON 719,[29] dashed any chance of serious negotiations in the spring of 1971. Predictably, Mme. Binh and Xuan Thuy used the 11 and 18 February sessions of the Paris talks as a forum to denounce the South Vietnamese action and charge the United States with extension of the war. Thereafter both of the chief communist delegates boycotted the talks for a six-week period and were represented by their deputies. As a further protest, the communist side cancelled the 25 March session entirely, and the allied side responded by postponing for a week the session scheduled for 1 April.[30]

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28. (C) Msgs, US Del France 641 and 645 to State, 14 Jan 71, JCS IN 41948 and 42103. NY Times, 25 Jan 71, 3.

29. See Chapter 1.

30. (C) Msg, US Del France 2208 to State, 11 Feb 71, JCS IN 14034. (C) Msgs, US Del France 2530 and 2552 to State, 18 Feb 71, JCS IN 27044 and 26955. (C) Msgs, US Del France 2924, 3360, 3841, 4324, and 4921 to State; 25 Feb, 4 Mar, 11 Mar, 18 Mar, and 8 Apr 71; JCS IN 39979, 53238, 66786, 80232, and 98908. NY Times, 28 Mar 71, 13.

(U) The South Vietnamese troops withdrew from Laos in late March, and on 7 April 1971, President Nixon declared that the results of LAMSON 719 proved the success of Vietnamization. Because of that success, he was able to announce the withdrawal of another 100,000 US forces from South Vietnam during the period May through November 1971, observing that US involvement in Vietnam was coming to an end. He quickly added that the United States would infinitely prefer to end the war even sooner through negotiation. He recalled his 7 October 1970 proposal and appealed to Hanoi to engage in serious negotiations. He "especially" called upon the North Vietnamese to agree to the release of all prisoners throughout Indochina. The President also noted the pressure upon him to set a date for the end of US involvement in Vietnam, and once again explained why he could not. To announce such a date, he said, would throw away the principal US bargaining chip to win the release of US prisoners of war and would remove the enemy's strongest incentive to end the war by negotiation.[31]

(C) Mme. Binh returned to the talks on 8 April only to attack President Nixon for failing to set a date for complete US withdrawal and to state that the United States must bear the responsibility for the impasse in the negotiations. Xuan Thuy rejoined the talks the following week, on 15 April, having indicated beforehand that he would bring a new proposal. But his new proposal turned out to be a reiteration that the United States agree to complete withdrawal by 30 June 1971 or by some other "reasonable" date and accept a peace government in Saigon without President Thieu. Ambassador Bruce dismissed the proposal on 22 April

31. Public Papers, Nixon, 1971, pp. 522-527.

as the "same old unacceptable preconditions and unreasonable demands," and again set forth the President's 7 October 1970 proposals as a basis for a settlement.[32]

(C) Meantime, the allied side continued to press the matter of prisoners. On 8 April, Ambassador Lam suggested to the other side direct repatriation or internment in a neutral country of all able-bodied prisoners of war who had been held for a long time. He also proposed immediate and unconditional release of all sick and wounded prisoners held in South Vietnam who desired to return to the north. Mme. Binh, however, dismissed these suggestions as "US schemes."[33]

(C) The allied side raised the prisoner issue again on 29 April, asking the other side to name a specific humanitarian organization or impartial third-party government to inspect and monitor conditions of captivity of all prisoners of war held by both sides. In reply, Xuan Thuy suggested discussion of a date for the withdrawal of all US forces from South Vietnam, the security of the withdrawing troops, and the release of prisoners. The North Vietnamese representative seemed to go a shade farther than in previous positions, implying that the establishment of a withdrawal date would lead to early repatriation of prisoners.[34]

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32. (C) Msgs, US Del France 5624 and 5645 to State, 8 Apr 71, JCS IN 34696 and 34788. (C) Msg, US Del France, 6011 to State, 15 Apr 71, JCS IN 48220. (C) Msg, US Del France 6388 to State, 22 Apr 71, JCS IN 62130. NY Times, 16 Apr 71, 2.

33. (C) Msgs, US Del France 5624 and 5645 to State, 8 Apr 71, JCS IN 34696 and 34788.

34. Msg, US Del France 6903 to State, 29 Apr 71, JCS IN 76201. (C) Msg, US Del France 6950 to State, 29 Apr 71, JCS IN 76359. NY Times, 30 Apr 71, 1.

(C) Ambassador Bruce posed a series of questions to Xuan Thuy at the meeting the following week, seeking clarification on the relation of a withdrawal deadline to prisoner release. Xuan Thuy's answers, Ambassador Bruce reported to Washington, dispelled any hope that there had been a change in position. North Vietnam insisted that the setting of a date for US withdrawal had to be "unilateral and unconditional" and remained a precondition for discussion of all other questions.[35]

(U) The allied side continued to seek a prisoner repatriation, and in the latter part of May, the Republic of Vietnam proposed and North Vietnam accepted an offer to return 570 sick and disabled North Vietnamese prisoners of war. Agreed arrangements called for the repatriation to be accomplished on 4 June 1971 with the transfer taking place from civilian ships at sea near the 17th Parallel. On 29 May, the International Committee of the Red Cross interviewed those prisoners identified for return and found only 13 who wished to go back to North Vietnam. Accordingly on 3 June, those 13 were placed aboard ship at Da Nang for a rendezvous the following day with North Vietnamese vessels. But, by means of a statement released in Paris and a radio braodcast in Vietnam after the prisoners were already at sea, North Vietnam cancelled the repatriation because so few of the 570 men offered were being returned. At the next Paris meeting, in June, Ambassador Bruce stated that the allied side remained ready to release all sick and wounded prisoners willing to return, but there was no further action in this area.[36]

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35. (C) Msg, US Del France 7348 to State, 6 May 71, JCS IN 88616.

36. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. X-3. NY Times, 4 Jun 71, 1. (C) Msg, US Del France 9980 to State, 10 Jun 71, JCS IN 62334.

(C) During June the Paris talks were completely stalled. The allies still pressed for prisoner release, and the communists proceeded with demands for a definite deadline for the withdrawal of US forces. Moreover, the release of the Pentagon Papers[37] in the course of the month only added to the impasse, allowing Mme. Binh and Xuan Thuy additional opportunities to charge the United States with "lies" and "crimes" over the past ten years.[38]

(U) On 24 June 1971, Le Duc Tho, a high-ranking NVN government member, arrived in Paris to consult with the NVN delegation, giving rise to speculation that a new communist peace proposal might be forthcoming. This speculation proved accurate, and on 1 July, Mme. Binh announced that the communists were ready to release all war prisoners held in North and South Vietnam by the end of the year if all US troops were removed by that time. Her offer was part of a seven-point PRG proposal that included: (1) complete US withdrawal by the end of 1971 with release of prisoners occurring as the withdrawal was carried out; (2) a coalition government in South Vietnam and the removal of President Thieu; (3) settlement of the question of Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam by the Vietnamese parties concerned; (4) reunification of Vietnam on a step-by-step basis; (5) a foreign policy of neutrality for South Vietnam; (6) US reparations for damage in the two zones of Vietnam; (7) guarantees of respect for the agreement.[39]

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37. See Chapter 2, pp. 118-119.

38. (C) Msgs, US Del France 10419 and 10420 to State, 17 Jun 71, JCS IN 75042 and 75205. (C) Msg, US Del France 10909, 24 Jun 71, JCS IN 87316.

39. Msg, US Del France 11378 to State, 1 Jul 71, JCS IN 99047. NY Times, 25 Jun 71, 1; 2 Jul 71, 1.

(U) The PRG proposal actually contained little that was new. The principal new element was the promise to release prisoners in exchange for an unconditional US withdrawal by 31 December 1971. Nothing in the proposal met the often stated US condition that South Vietnam must be left with a reasonable chance to defend itself and to determine its own future. It was equally clear that the PRG had put forth the proposal in an effort to increase domestic dissent in the United States. Nevertheless, the proposal did appear to represent progress in the talks, and Ambassador Lam promised to study it. In Washington, a White House spokesman said the offer showed "positive as well as clearly unacceptable elements," but would not elaborate further.[40]

(C) At the next session, on 8 July, Ambassador Lam said that he did not find any significant changes in the other side's demands. Ambassador Bruce agreed, but added that the United States was ready to consider the seven-point proposal. Observing that there were unacceptable aspects to the seven points, Ambassador Bruce asked for further information, presenting Mme Binh a number of questions concerning the other side's willingness to negotiate. He also requested that further discussion of the proposal be conducted in restricted sessions "free from the glare of publicity and without the need to make public statements . . . ." Both Mme. Binh and Xuan Thuy rejected the US requests, demanding acceptance of the seven points and unconditional US withdrawal from South Vietnam by the end of the year.[41]

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40. Msg, US Del France 11378 to State, 1 Jul 71, JCS IN 99047. NY Times, 2 Jul 71, 1.

41. (C) Msgs, US Del France 11772 and 11799 to State, 8 Jul 71, JCS IN 20056 and 20247. NY Times, 9 Jul 71, 1.

(C) The deadlock of the 8 July meeting remained unbroken in the succeeding sessions in July. Ambassador Bruce pressed for further elaboration on the seven points and for restricted sessions while the communist side adamantly refused both, asserting that the seven points needed no further clarification. At the conclusion of a fruitless session on 29 July 1971, Ambassador Bruce announced that this was his last attendance at the talks, as he was resigning as the US representative. The President confirmed the Ambassador's retirement in Washington and named William J. Porter, currently the US Ambassador to South Korea and former Deputy Ambassador to South Vietnam, as Ambassador Bruce's replacement at the Paris talks.[42]

(C) During the interim in August 1971, following Ambassador Bruce's departure and before Mr. Porter's arrival in Paris, Mr. Philip Habib, US Deputy at the talks, represented the United States at the weekly meetings. He proceeded to ask for answers to the US questions on the seven-point proposal, but received no satisfaction. It was obvious that North Vietnam and the PRG were marking time awaiting both the arrival of the new US representative and the outcome of the presidential election in South Vietnam scheduled for 3 October 1971.[43]

(C) After a visit to the United States and a discussion with President Nixon on the negotiations,

42. (C) Msgs, US Del France 12135, 12607, 13004, and 13008 to State; 15 Jul, 22 Jul, 29 Jul, and 29 Jul 71; JCS IN 31795, 43144, 54277, and 54419. NY Times, 29 Jul 71, 12; 30 Jul 71, 3. Dept of State Bulletin, 16 Aug 71, p. 181.

43. (C) Msgs, US Del France 13396, 13769, 14105, and 14512 to State; 5, 12, 19, and 26 Aug 71; JCS IN 65650, 76593, 88451, and 10699.

Ambassador Porter arrived in Paris in early September and attended his first meeting on 9 September. Ambassador Porter brought no new US proposal to the talks. He met privately with Xuan Thuy before the formal meeting to exchange greetings, but they did not discuss substantive issues. In the plenary session, Ambassador Porter suggested that his arrival presented an opportunity for progress. He emphasized that President Nixon continued to give high priority to the talks and suggested a realistic look at the situation as well as a fresh appraisal of the basis for successful negotiation. The new US representative promised to deal with the PRG's seven points, but repeated the US request for clarification and consideration of them in restricted sessions.[44]

(C) Ambassador Porter's proposal elicited the same response as had those of Ambassador Bruce. In reply, on 9 September, and again the following week, the NVN and PRG representatives rejected the US proposals.[45]

(U) On 21 September 1971, the United States carried out an air strike against air defense targets in the lower part of North Vietnam.[46] Certainly, the President and his advisers realized, when approving this action, that it would remove any chance of progress in the Paris talks in the coming weeks. Apparently, they considered that the military value of the attack

44. (S) Msg, US Del Paris 15225 to State, 9 Sep 71, JCS IN 34510. (C) Msgs, US Del France 15235 and 15263 to State, 9 Sep 71, JCS IN 34355 and 34610.

45. (C) Msgs, US Del France 15651 and 15676 to State, 16 Sep 71, JCS IN 46591 and 46707. (C) Msgs, US Del France 15235 and 15263 to State, 9 Sep 71, JCS IN 34355 and 34610.

46. See Chapter 5, p. 266.

outweighed the political disadvantages, finding little in the record of the talks to date to indicate any possibility of an immediate breakthrough there. A columnist in the New York Times speculated that the Nixon Administration had written off the talks for the time being, but wanted to retain the Paris contact with North Vietnam in hope of eventually arranging a prisoner exchange.[47]

(C) In any event, the North Vietnamese and PRG representatives in Paris cancelled the session scheduled for 23 September with only two hours notice. The meetings were resumed the following week, but neither Xuan Thuy nor Mme Binh attended. There followed a period of prolonged absence by the two communist chief delegates. Xuan Thuy's absence lasted for two months; Mme. Binh, who had not been present at a session since 12 August, continued her boycott until well into the following year.[48]

(C) The reelection of Prsident Nguyen Van Thieu in South Vietnam with 94 percent of the vote (although in an unopposed contest) contributed yet another factor to lessen the likelihood of any immediate progress in the Paris talks. Xuan Thuy and Mme. Binh continued to stay away from the meetings and at the 7 October session their subordinates dismissed the South Vietnam election as an "odious farce." On 13 October, the North Vietnamese Embassy in Paris notified Ambassador Porter that Xuan Thuy was suffereing from "the grippe." "As a courtesy," he wanted the US delegation to know that he planned an absence from the talks for recuperation--and not for "any procedural reason." Despite

47. NY Times, 23 Sep 71, 43.
48. (C) Msgs, US Del France 16081, 16505, and 16537 to State, 23, 30, and 30 Sep 71, JCS IN 58465, 70246, and 70419.

this gesture, there was no progress in the talks in the following weeks.[49]

(C) In late October, the allied side again began to press the prisoner issue. To commemorate the inauguration of President Thieu on 31 October, the Republic of Vietnam released approximately 3,000 prisoners who had petitioned for release and had pledged loyalty to the government in the south. Nearly 2,300 of those prisoners were transferred to Chieu Hoi centers and 623 former VC were released to their home provinces. At the Paris session on 28 October, Ambassador Porter praised the impending RVN release as a major humanitarian act and a step toward resolution of the prisoner of war question.[50]

(C) At the meeting the following week, Ambassador Porter pursued the prisoner issue further. The new US representative in his two months in Paris had taken a tougher approach to the talks than his predecessor and on 4 November, he chided the other side's "negative record" on this question. He also accused North Vietnam of sharply reducing the amount of mail it allowed its US prisoners to send home and demanded an explanation.[51]

(C) Ambassador Porter informed the Department of State on 8 November that his presentation four days

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49. (C) Msgs, US Del France 16896 and 16908 to State, 7 Oct 71, JCS IN 82183 and 82411. NY Times, 8 Oct 71, 4. (S-GP 3) Msg, US Del France 17177 to State, 13 Oct 71, JCS IN 91374.

50. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. X-3. (C) Msg, US Del France 18219 to State, 28 Oct 71, JCS IN 26644.

51. (C) Msg, US Del France 18673 to State, 4 Nov 71, JCS IN 38131.

earlier on the prisoner matter had brought a "wide and favorable reaction." The weekly session scheduled for 11 November had been previously postponed in deference to the French holiday honoring veterans, and Ambassador Porter proposed to cancel the 18 November meeting as further evidence of US concern about and dissatisfaction with the communist attitude on the prisoners. But the Secretary of State did not agree and instructed the Ambassador not to cancel the meeting. Rather, he was simply to state that the United States had made its position clear and had nothing further to say pending a meaningful response from the other side.[52]

(C) Xuan Thuy returned to the meetings on 18 November, ending his two-month absence. In execution of his instructions, Ambassador Porter limited his remarks at that session to the following statement:

> We have repeatedly made our position clear, we are awaiting a constructive reply, and, therefore, have nothing further to say.

The only answer from the other side was criticism of President Nixon's 12 November announcement of further troop withdrawals[53] for failing to fix a final withdrawal date for US forces.[54]

(C) The Paris meeting the next week was cancelled by mutual agreement because it fell on Thanksgiving, and two futile meetings followed on 2 and 9 December. Thereafter, the United States cancelled the last three consecutive sessions in December as further indication

52. (S-GP 3) Msg, US Del France 18860 to State, 8 Nov 71, JCS IN 44933. (S-GP 3) Msg, State 209193 to US Del France, 17 Nov 71, JCS IN 61685.
53. See Chapter 3, pp. 159-160.
54. (C) Msgs, US Del France 19531 and 19532 to State, 18 Nov 71, JCS IN 62075 and 62108.

of its impatience with the progress of the talks. Actually, there was some confusion over who cancelled the last meeting of the year which should have taken place on 30 December. Beginning on 26 December, the United States launched a five-day series of air strikes against North Vietnam,[55] and on 27 December, the North Vietnamese delegation announced a news conference for the following morning. Anticipating North Vietnamese cancellation of the 30 December meeting, a US liaison officer delivered a note to the North Vietnamese on the morning of 28 December cancelling the forthcoming meeting at nearly the same moment the North Vietnamese were also announcing cancellation of it. Regardless of who was responsible, the 30 December 1971 meeting did not occur, and the Paris talks remained at a complete impasse.[56]

Consideration of Negotiating Positions in 1972

(U) There were no formal reviews of US negotiating positions during 1972 as there had been in the preceding several years. On 25 January 1972, President Nixon presented publicly a peace plan that he had offered privately the previous October.[57] As already mentioned,[58] this offer included provision for a cease-fire, but not the one considered by the VSSG Working Group in 1971. Perhaps, the President and his advisers

55. See Chapter 5, pp. 270-271.
56. (C) Msgs, US Del France 20472 and 21017 to State, 2 and 9 Dec 71, JCS IN 85186 and 97692. (S-GP 3) Msg, US Del France 22217 to State, 30 Dec 71, JCS IN 43142. NY Times, 16 Dec 71, 5; 29 Dec 71, 3.
57. For detailed coverage of the offer, see below, pp. 602-605.
58. See above, p. 581.

planned to use the Working Group cease-fire paper if the enemy proved receptive to the plan and negotiations reached a stage where the issue of a cease-fire came under active consideration. But the situation never reached that point for the North Vietnamese and the PRG rejected the plan.

(S) The question of an in-place cease-fire was raised during the North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam in April 1972. At that time, there was growing speculation among US officials that the enemy might make such a proposal to take advantage of his territorial gains in South Vietnam. This possibility was mentioned in the almost daily Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG) meetings in April 1972 that directed the US response to the North Vietnamese offensive and, on two occasions, 10 and 14 April, the Joint Staff (J-5) prepared papers on this subject for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the judgment of the J-5, the North Vietnamese long-range goals of unification of all of Vietnam under a communist regime and the extension of its hegemony throughout Indochina remained unchanged. Should North Vietnam make such an initiative, the Joint Staff officers believed that it would be designed to gain major concessions on cease-fire terms while allowing a more favorable position to pursue political goals in Indochina after a cease-fire. The Joint Staff officers also recalled that, on previous occasions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had consistently opposed any form of cease-fire in-place. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders," they said, "have always opted for a final settlement which includes provisions for a verified mutual withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces from the RVN." Because of military, political, and psychological disadvantages of a possible

enemy intiative, the United States should not accept an immediate cease-fire in-place if the enemy held major population centers in South Vietnam.[59]

(S) The question of an enemy initiative for an in-place cease-fire was formally scheduled on the WSAG agenda for 28 April 1972, and the Director of the Joint Staff and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) provided the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff a position paper for the meeting. The two officials concluded that such a development would be clearly to enemy advantage, resulting in major territorial concessions throughout Indochina, threatening the security of US and South Vietnamese forces, and causing a significant psychological impact on both friendly military forces and civilian population of Indochina. Further, they believed that an enemy cease-fire would permit continuation of covert communist political-military actions, cause political turmoil throughout Indochina, and undermine the credibility of the Nixon Doctrine "in the eyes of other Southeast Asian nations." For these reasons, the Assistant Secretary and the Director reached the same consensus as had the earlier Joint Staff assessments. "From a military viewpoint, the United States should not accept or support any proposal for an immediate cease-fire in-place without pre-conditions which are clearly to

59. (TS) J-5 TP for CJCS, "An Analysis of the Advantages and Disadvantages of the US/GVN Accepting a DRV/PRG Initiative for an Immediate Cease-Fire In-Place (U)," 10 Apr 72, J-5 Files. (TS) J-5 paper for CJCS for use at WSAG Mtg, "Enemy Initiative for Cease-Fire In-Place," 14 May 72, J-5 WSAG Files.

its advantage." They doubted, moreover, that the enemy would find such conditions acceptable.[60]

(S) Following the 28 April meeting, Dr. Kissinger asked the Under Secretary of State to incorporate the Defense-JCS position, as presented at the meeting, into a new paper in which military views would be balanced with political considerations. The resulting State-Defense paper was presented to the WSAG on 2 May 1972. The recommendation in this paper was that any decision on a cease-fire should not be addressed solely on military merits, but should include various other considerations. An astute public North Vietnamese proposal that included prisoner release would be even more difficult to cope with than a simple cease-fire offer. Additionally, neither Congressional nor public reaction to a US rejection of a cease-fire proposal could be overlooked, especially in an election year. Finally, the ability of North Vietnam to continue a "rolling offensive" in various parts of South Vietnam during the next six months, even without the capture of significant additional territory, would create the impression of the military initiative being retained by Hanoi to the detriment of South Vietnam. Hence the Department of State considered it "imprudent," in advance and in the abstract, to attempt to formulate a precise reaction to an enemy cease-fire offer. Instead, the United States should be prepared to evaluate an offer in the context of the existing military, political, and psychological circumstances. Such preparation, the Department added, should include

60. (TS) ASD(ISA)/DJS TP for DepSecDef and CJCS for WSAG Mtg of 28 Apr 72, "A Military Assessment of an Immediate Cease-fire In-place (U)," n.d., J-5 WSAG Files.

review of the matter "as objectively as possible" with President Thieu when there was indication such a proposal might be imminent.[61]

(U) No enemy cease-fire offer was forthcoming and, consequently, the necessity for US consideration of an appropriate response did not arise. Indeed, President Nixon's 8 May 1972 announcement of the mining of North Vietnamese ports[62] dashed prospect for an immediate cease-fire offer by the enemy, and the WSAG pursued the matter no further. The expanded cease-fire paper presented on 2 May did, however, remain in the WSAG "Vietnam Issues Book" until 14 June 1972.[63]

(U) There was no further conideration of the cease-fire issue by US officials during the summer of 1972. In July, the Director of the Joint Staff did raise the possibility of "a fresh look" at the subject of international supervision of a cease-fire in Indochina. He wanted to assure that the United States was not "caught short," but the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) saw "little profit" in furthering planning in this regard, "at least at this time." Later, in early September 1972, in a discussion of the status of the Paris negotiations, the Deputy Director, J-5, referred to the 1971 VSSG study and its four alternatives, seeming to indicate that the study was still the current US position on the cease-fire question.[64]

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61. (S) State-Defense Paper, "Possible North Vietnamese Cease-Fire Offer," 2 May 72, J-5 WSAG Files.
62. See Chapter 7, pp. 380-381.
63. WSAG Vietnam Issues Books, May-Jun 72, J-5 WSAG Files.
64. (U) J5M 1081-72 to DJS, 19 Jul 72; (TS) Memo, DepDir, J-5 to LTG Stillwell, USA, Army OpDep, 8 Sep 72; J-5 Files.

The Negotiations in 1972

(U) The failure of US officials to prepare further formal negotiating papers undoubtedly reflected the complete absence of any progress in the talks. Until there was some indication of movement at Paris, there was little necessity for additional positions. At the start of 1972, the negotiations to end the war were at a complete standstill would remain so throughout the ensuing months. Almost three years of futile talks had brought the opposing sides no nearer to a settlement than when they began meeting in January 1969. President Nixon, however, who faced a reelection campaign in 1972, remained optimistic. In a televised interview on 2 January 1972, he foresaw "a possibility" for progress in the talks. He cited the US offers for a cease-fire throughout Indochina, total US withdrawal, and prisoner exchange and called upon the other side to consider these proposals seriously when the meetings in Paris resumed the following week.[65]

(C) The Paris talks reconvened on 6 January 1972 after a three-week interruption[66] and continued regularly throughout the remainder of the month. But no progress resulted. The United States and South Vietnam pressed for acceptance of their proposals, especially on matters relating to the prisoners, but the other side remained intransigent. The communist representatives maintained that the United States could have its prisoners back when it withdrew all its forces from Vietnam and stopped backing the Thieu regime. Beginning at the session on 13 January the representative of the Republic of Vietnam began to take a more prominent role in the talks. In accord with a policy

65. (U) Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 3-5.
66. See above, pp. 595-596.

suggested by Ambassador Porter and approved by the Secretary of State, South Vietnam spoke on problems concerning South Vietnamese internal problems while the United States addressed matters of direct US concern, such as troop withdrawal and prisoner release.[67]

(U) In late January 1972, President Nixon decided that action was needed to get the negotiations moving and, perhaps, at the same time, to end some of the political divisiveness in the United States over a solution to the Vietnam conflict. In a television address on 25 January, he recounted that over the past three years, the United States had made a series of public offers to end the war, but these had all been rejected. Now he thought "the purpose of peace" would best be served by publicly revealing other proposals that had been made privately. "Nothing is served by silence," the President said, "when the other side exploits our good faith to divide America and to avoid the conference table. Nothing is served by silence when it misleads some Americans into accusing their own government of failing to do what it has already done." Just as secret negotiations could sometimes break a public deadlock, the President hoped that public disclosure now might help break a secret deadlock.

(U) President Nixon then revealed that, beginning on 4 August 1969, Dr. Kissinger had traveled to Paris on 12 occasions to hold secret negotiations with the North Vietnamese. He met seven times with Hanoi

67. (C) Msgs, US Del France 326 and 338 to State, 6 Jan 72, JCS IN 52406 and 52604; (S-GP 3) Msg, US Del France 455 to State, 10 Jan 72, JCS IN 58397. (S) Msg, State 4910 to US Del France, 11 Jan 72, JCS IN 60115. (C) Msgs, US Del France 752 and 803 to State, 13 Jan 72, JCS IN 64026 and 64422. (C) Msgs, US Del France 1261 and 1294 to State, 20 Jan 72, JCS IN 76862 and 77186. NY Times, 7 Jan 72, 1.

Politburo member Le Duc Tho and five times with Xuan Thuy, but no progress had resulted. On 31 May 1971, the United States had offered to set a deadline for US withdrawal in return for the release of all prisoners of war and a cease-fire. The North Vietnamese had rejected this proposal at a private meeting on 26 June 1971, countering with a nine-point plan that included the overthrow of the Government of South Vietnam. Five days later, on 1 July 1971, the PRG had publicly offered its seven-point proposal at the weekly Paris session.[68] This development placed the United States in a quandary. Should it respond to the secret nine-point or the public seven-point plan? Dr. Kissinger inquired at another secret meeting on 12 July 1971 and received an answer that the United States should deal with the nine-point proposal. Meantime, both North Vietnam and the PRG heaped public invective on the United States for failing to reply to the public seven-point plan.

(U) The President went on to reveal that, in a subsequent private meeting on 16 August 1971, the United States had offered a complete US withdrawal within nine months of an agreement on an overall settlement, suggesting a terminal date of 1 August 1972 provided an agreement was signed by 1 November 1971. This, too, was rejected by the North Vietnamese. In October 1971, President Nixon had made yet another attempt to break the deadlock. After consultation with President Thieu, Mr. Nixon had sent the North Vietnamese a private communication on 11 October 1971 with a new peace offer and urged a private meeting between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. North Vietnam replied suggesting a meeting on 20 November 1971, but three days

68. See above, p. 589.

before that date cancelled the meeting, stating that Le Duc Tho was ill. The United States had then offered to meet with Tho as soon as he was recovered or with any other authorized leader "who could come from Hanoi." There had been no further response from North Vietnam, the President said, except increased troop infiltration into the south and military offensives in Laos and Cambodia.[69]

(U) The President had now decided to make public his 11 October 1971 offer. He presented the proposal on behalf of the United States and "the Government of South Vietnam, with the full knowledge and approval of President Thieu." It included the following eight points: (1) withdrawal of all US and allied forces from South Vietnam within six months of an agreement; (2) release of all prisoners; (3) acceptance of the principle that the political future of South Vietnam should be decided by the people of South Vietnam, provision for a free and democratic presidential election in South Vietnam within six months of an agreement, and the resignation of President Thieu and Vice President Huong one month before the election; (4) respect by both sides of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Indochina and those of 1962 on Laos; (5) settlement of problems among the Indochinese

69. Subsequently, on 1 February 1972, the White House Press Secretary acknowledged that the United States had turned down on 20 November 1971 a North Vietnamese proposal for a private meeting with Xuan Thuy. The Press Secretary stated that the negotiations could not be productive unless conducted by a member of Hanoi's political leadership. Thus it appeared that North Vietnam cut off the secret negotiations at the Politburo level while the United States declined to continue them at a working level. NY Times, 2 Feb 72, 3.

countries by the Indochinese parties on the basis of mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and noninterference in each other's affairs; (6) a general cease-fire throughout Indochina to begin when the agreement was signed; (7) international supervision of the military aspects of the agreement; (8) an international guarantee for the fundamental national rights of the Indochinese peoples. The President had instructed Ambassador Porter to present this plan at the next Paris plenary session.

(U) President Nixon stated that the United States was ready to negotiate on this plan and to conclude a comprehensive agreement on all military and political issues. He considered the proposal "generous"; the only thing it did not include was the overthrow of "our ally," which "the United States of America will never do." Should the enemy reject this offer, the United States would continue to end its involvement by withdrawing remaining forces as the South Vietnamese developed their capability to defend themselves. Should the enemy step up his military attacks, President Nixon was fully prepared to "meet my responsibility as Commander in Chief of our Armed Forces to protect our remaining troops." He did not prefer such a course, rather he hoped that the negotiations would proceed.[70]

(C) In Paris, on the following day, both the North Vietnamese and the PRG delegations issued statements denouncing the President's plan as a "perfidious maneuver to deceive the American electorate in an election year" and as a scheme to maintain US puppet regimes in Indochina. On 27 January 1972, at the regular session

70. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 100-106. NY Times, 26 Jan 72, 1.

of the Paris talks, Ambassador Porter and South Vietnamese Ambassador Lam formally introduced the eight-point plan. The communist delegates again denounced the offer and attacked President Nixon for disclosing the secret talks. They repeated their long standing position that there could be no settlement until the United States set a specific withdrawal date and the present South Vietnamese government was ousted. Both, however, stopped short of a categorical rejection of the offer, leaving some encouragement that meaningful negotiation might follow.[71]

(C) Any hope that the President's disclosure of the secret eight-point plan might bring some movement in the talks was quickly dispelled. On 31 January 1972, North Vietnam made public in Paris the nine-point plan of the previous June, charging that the United States had never seriously considered it. At the following session, on 3 February, both the PRG and the North Vietnamese representatives dismissed President Nixon's plan as unacceptable and presented a revised version of the PRG seven-point offer of 1 July 1971. At first glance this revised offer appeared more conciliatory, but it still called for "a precise date" for complete and unconditional US withdrawal and a political settlement in South Vietnam that encompassed the resignation of President Thieu.[72]

(U) During January and early February 1972 a hardening in the North Vietnamese position had begun to

71. NY Times, 27 Jan 72, 1 and 15; 28 Jan 72, 1. (C) Msgs, US Del France 1714 and 1722 to State, 27 Jan 72, JCS IN 89423 and 89663. (LOU) Final Transcript, Paris Meetings on Vietnam, 142d Plenary Sess, 27 Jan 72, J-5 Negotiations Files (in RAIR).

72. NY Times, 1 Feb 72, 1; 4 Feb 72, 1. (C) Msgs, US Del France 2198 and 2202, 3 Feb 72, JCS IN 11892 and 11787.

emerge from the various statements of its representatives in Paris. On 6 February 1972, Xuan Thuy made this change explicit in a television interview. He stated that North Vietnam would no longer consider separately the political and military issues of the war as it had been prepared to do during the previous summer. He made clear that the establishment of a date for the removal of all US forces from Vietnam would no longer be sufficient for a settlement. Now North Vietnam and the PRG insisted upon the immediate resignation of President Thieu as the principal condition for a rapid ending of the war. President Nixon was quick to respond to this new demand. "Under no circumstances," he told a press conference on 10 February, "are we going to negotiate with our enemy in a way that undercuts our ally."[73]

(C) Thereafter, the Paris talks settled again into a familar deadlock. At the 10 February session, the communist side repeated its denunciation of the allied eight-point offer and held fast to its position of the previous week. At the conclusion of the meeting, Ambassador Porter refused to agree to meet the following week. His announced reason was to protest a three-day anti-war rally of delegates from some 75 countries gathering at Versailles. He informed the Department of State on 21 February that the cancellation of the meeting left the other side "unusually perturbed." He believed their reaction confirmed earlier signs that the communists felt a strong need for the Paris talks. This was especially true of the PRG who, unlike North Vietnam, had no other useful propaganda outlet in the West. Moreover, the US Ambassador considered that both North Vietnam and the

73. NY Times, 7 Feb 72, 1. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 351-352.

PRG were anxious to hold the sessions during President Nixon's visit to Peking (21-28 February 1972) in order to keep Chinese attention focused on their cause as well as to demonstrate to the United States that the visit would change none of their demands.[74]

(C) The Paris meetings reconvened on 24 February, but the communist side walked out in protest against increased US B-52 and tactical bombing raids in Vietnam and the movement of extra US aircraft carriers off the Vietnamese coast--actions taken by the United States in light of the increasing indications of an impending North Vietnamese offensive. Subsequently, the United States and South Vietnam refused to meet on 2 and 9 March, citing the other side's lack of cooperation. Both sides returned to the table on 16 March where the United States proposed an international inspection of prisoner-of-war camps. The following week, on 23 March, Ambassador Porter brought out the other side's intransigent attitude to date in the negotiations and questioned the usefulness of continuing the Paris discussions in their present form. Consequently, he suspended the meetings. The allied side, he said, would come back to the meetings when the other side showed some sign it was "disposed to engage in meaningful exchanges." The following day, President Nixon confirmed the suspension, stating that the United States was trying to break a three-year North Vietnam "filibuster" at the Paris talks.[75]

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74. (C) Msgs, US Del France 2699 and 2704 to State, 10 Feb 72, JCS IN 23244 and 23520. NY Times, 11 Feb 72, 17. (S-GP 3) Msg, US Del France 3267 to State, 21 Feb 72, JCS IN 41126.

75. (S-GP 3) Msg, US Del France 3458 to State, 24 Feb 72, JCS IN 46082. (S-GP 3) Msgs, US Del France 5091 and 5137 to State, 16 Mar 72, JCS IN 85056 and

(U) The massive North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam which began on 30 March 1972[76] and the subsequent retaliatory US air strikes against North Vietnam foreclosed any chance of an immediate resumption of the Paris talks. Some viewed the offensive as the last all out North Vietnamese military effort and a possible prelude to serious negotiation. In any event, on 20 April, the North Vietnamese and PRG proposed a resumption of the talks, indicating that they would meet whether or not the United States halted its bombing attack. Another hopeful sign for the negotiations was an announcement on 25 April by Dr. Kissinger that he had visited Moscow the previous week. He indicated that his discussions had included Vietnam although he provided no further details.[77]

(U) On 26 April, President Nixon reviewed the Vietnam situation in a television address. On the basis of the current assessment of General Abrams, and after consultation with President Thieu, Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Porter, and his senior advisers in Washington, the President announced three decisions: he had decided that Vietnamization had been proved sufficiently successful to allow the United States to continue withdrawal of its forces despite the current offensive; he had directed Ambassador Porter to return to the Paris negotiating table the following day; and he had ordered continuation of the US air and naval

85372. (C) Msgs, US Del France 5606 and 5682 to State, 23 Mar 72, JCS IN 98668 and 99598. NY Times, 8 Mar 72, 2; 17 Mar 72, 9; 24 Mar 72, 1. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 488.

76. See Chapter 7.

77. NY Times, 9 Apr 72, 1; 21 Apr 72, 1; 26 Apr 72, 1.

attacks on military installations in North Vietnam until the North Vietnamese stopped their offensive in the south. In announcing the US return to the talks, the President made no new offer. The United States was not resuming the Paris meetings, he said, simply to hear more "empty propaganda and bombast." Rather it was returning with "the firm expectation that productive talks leading to rapid progress will follow through all available channels." The first order of business would be to secure a halt to the enemy invasion and the return of US prisoners.[78]

(C) On 27 April 1972, the allied and communist delegates, including Mme Binh who had not attended the meetings since 12 August 1971, reassembled around the conference table at the Majestic Hotel. The allied side requested an end to the invasion and a withdrawal of the North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam, but received in reply only criticism for prolonging the war. In fact, the only agreement at the meeting was to meet the following week.[79]

(C) Three days later, on 30 April, Le Duc Tho arrived in Paris from Hanoi, stating that he was there to negotiate with the United States for "a just and equitable peaceful solution of the Vietnamese problem." But while the North Vietnamese talked of peaceful solution in Paris, they maintained their offensive on the South Vietnam battlefield, and a subsequent meeting on 4 May brought no indication that the communists were prepared to end their offensive. Ambassador Porter put to the other side eight

78. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 550-554.
79. (C) Msgs, US Del France 8073 and 8126 to State, 27 Apr 72, JCS IN 76182 and 76564.

questions dealing with its readiness to negotiate. When the North Vietnamese and PRG representatives did not reply, Ambassador Porter suspended the talks, stating that the allied side would be ready to resume when the other side gave some indication that discussions could be useful.[80]

(U) On 8 May 1972, President Nixon again addressed the nation over television to announce a further decision with regard to Vietnam. He recounted that the United States had responded to the massive North Vietnamese offensive by undertaking "wide-ranging new peace efforts." He had sent Dr. Kissinger to Moscow to emphasize the US desire for a rapid solution and had resumed the Paris talks. Further, the President revealed that Dr. Kissinger had met secretly with Le Duc Tho in Paris on 2 May. But, in both the private and public contacts, the United States had heard only "bombastic rhetoric." Mr. Nixon then briefly reviewed the various US and RVN offers for peace and stated that there were only two issues left for the United States in the war. "First, in the face of a massive invasion do we stand by, jeopardize the lives of 60,000 Americans, and leave the South Vietnamese to a long night of terror? . . . Second, in the face of complete intransigence at the conference table do we join with our enemy to install a Communist government in South Vietnam?" These things, the President said, the United States would never do. In the current situation, he foresaw three possible choices for the United States: immediate withdrawal; continued attempts at negotiation; or "decisive military action to end the war." The first

80. NY Times, 1 May 72, 1; 2 May 72, 21. (C) Msgs, US Del France 8611 and 8581 to State, 4 May 71, JCS IN 90370 and 89985.

choice was politically impossible for the President, and the second had proved unsuccessful despite repeated efforts during the past three years. Therefore, the President concluded: "It is plain then that what appears to be a choice among three courses of action for the United States is really no choice at all." He then proceeded to announce his decision to mine the entrances to the North Vietnamese ports and to continue air and naval strikes against military targets in North Vietnam in order to deprive that country of the weapons and supplies needed to continue its aggression.[81] These actions would cease, the President stated, when all US prisoners of war were returned and when there was an internationally supervised cease-fire throughout Indochina. At such time, the United States would also be prepared to withdraw all its forces from Vietnam within four months.[82]

(U) Predictably, the North Vietnamese and the PRG denounced the US action, but Le Duc Tho remained in Paris stating that he was ready for serious negotiation. Thereafter, on 16 May and again on 30 May, the communist delegates in Paris proposed a resumption of the talks, but the United States ignored these initiatives. Ambassador Porter returned to Washington in mid-May for prolonged consultations, and the suspension of the talks continued throughout the remainder of the month.[83]

(U) During June 1972, indications began to appear that both sides were prepared to resume the Paris talks. On 12 June, Ambassador Porter returned to Paris, stating upon his arrival that President Nixon

81. See Chapter 7, pp. 380-381.
82. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 583-587.
83. NY Times, 13 May 72, 1; 17 May 72, 17; 31 May 72, 6.

was "intensely" interested in arriving at some kind of negotiated settlement in Vietnam. At the same time, Xuan Thuy, who was in Hanoi, said that he would return "soon" to Paris with new directives. Then, on 29 June, President Nixon announced that the United States and South Vietnam would return to the Paris sessions on 13 July 1972.[84]

Prospects Begin to Look Up

(C) On 13 July 1972, the four parties resumed the weekly plenary sessions of the Paris talks, and these meetings continued throughout July and during August. Neither side budged from its established position, but there was a subtle change in the tone of the meetings. Absent was much of the invective and abusive language of earlier sessions and a sense of restraint seemed to be discernible. Moreover, the North Vietnamese now appeared to be calling only for the United States to stop supporting President Thieu rather than demanding his removal as had previously been the case.[85]

84. NY Times, 13 Jun 72, 1. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 706.

85. Final Transcripts, Paris Meetings on Vietnam, 150th Plenary Sess, 13 Jul 72, and 152d Plenary Sess, 27 Jul 72, J-5 Negotiations Files (in RAIR). (C) Msgs, US Del France 13955 and 13975 to State, 20 Jul 72, JCS IN 60296 and 59705; US Del France 14867 and 14891 to State, 3 Aug 72, JCS IN 85227 and 85602; US Del France 15312 to State, 10 Aug 72, JCS IN 98929; US Del France 15621 and 15660 to State, 17 Aug 72, JCS IN 21270 and 21501; US Del France 16096 and 16098 to State, 24 Aug 72, JCS IN 34684 and 34946; US Del France 16514 and 16544 to State, 31 Aug 72, JCS IN 47589 and 48000. (C) Dept of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Note, "Communist Shift in Paris?." 18 Jul 72, J-5 Files.

(U) It was rapidly apparent, however, that any progress in the negotiations would come from the private talks rather than in the semi-open plenary sessions. Le Duc Tho returned to Paris on 15 July 1972, expressing readiness to resume his dialogue with Dr. Kissinger. The two men met privately on 19 July and again on 1 and 14 August. No details on their discussions were released, but following the 14 August meeting, Dr. Kissinger traveled to Saigon to talk with President Thieu and Le Duc Tho returned to Hanoi, giving rise to speculation that the private talks were progressing. Moreover, there seemed to be signs that the communist side might be modifying its position. Intelligence sources reported PRG notification to army, political, and bureaucratic cadres that a cease-fire might require a temporary acceptance of Nguyen Van Thieu as the leader of the South Vietnam regime.[86]

(U) Further hopeful signs in August and early September added to the speculation and rumors of an approaching settlement. On 11 August, the last US ground combat unit, the Third Battalion, 21st Infantry, was deactivated in South Vietnam, and on 29 August, the White House Press Secretary announced that 12,000 additional US troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam over the following three months. Then on 2 September, the North Vietnamese national day, officials in Hanoi announced the release of three US pilots held prisoner in North Vietnam.[87]

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86. NY Times, 16 Jul 72, 4; 20 Jul 72, 1 and 4; 2 Aug 72, 1; 15 Aug 72, 1; 16 Aug 72, 1; 18 Aug 72, 1.

87. NY Times, 12 Aug 72, 1; 30 Aug 72, 1; 2 Sep 72, 1. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 830n.

(C) During September and in early October, the plenary sessions met in Paris week after week. On 11 September, the PRG broadcast from Hanoi a statement of its terms for a peace settlement. The PRG called for a solution to the internal problems of South Vietnam based on the actual existing situation and for a provisional "government of national concord." The PRG was ready, the broadcast said, to agree that neither "a Communist regime nor a U.S. stooge regime" should be imposed on South Vietnam. The following two Paris sessions on 14 and 21 September were devoted almost entirely to discussion of this statement, but no consensus emerged.[88]

(U) Meantime, attention focused on the private meetings where events appeared to be building toward a climax. Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho continued their talks in Paris, meeting on 15 September and for a two-day session on 26-27 September. Again no details were released, but on 1 October, Major General Alexander M. Haig, USA, Dr. Kissinger's assistant, went to Vietnam to see President Thieu. Spokesmen indicated the discussions included developments in the Paris talks, adding to the growing rumors of an approaching Paris accord.[89]

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88. (C) Msgs, US Del France 16862 to State, 7 Sep 72, JCS IN 59390; US Del France 17367 and 17378 to State, 14 Sep 72, JCS IN 74406 and 74806; US Del France 17869 and 17876 to State, 21 Sep 72, JCS IN 88251 and 88945; US Del France 18387 to State, 28 Sep 72, JCS IN 11999; US Del France 18906 to State, 5 Oct 72, JCS IN 25610; US Del France 19408 to State, 12 Oct 72, JCS IN 38120. NY Times, 12 Sep 72, 12.

89. NY Times, 16 Sep 72, 3; 27 Sep 72, 1; 28 Sep 72, 1; 5 Oct 72, 4.

(U) At a news conference on 5 October, President Nixon was asked about the possibility of a negotiated settlement. He replied that one would come "just as soon as we can possibly get a settlement which is right--right for the South Vietnamese, the North Vietnamese and for us," one that would secure the return of US prisoners, and one that would not impose a communist regime on South Vietnam. He also indicated that the timing of a settlement would not be influenced by the approaching election in the United States. "If we can make the right kind of a settlement before the election," he said, "we will make it. If we cannot, we are not going to make the wrong kind of settlement."[90]

(U) The rumors of an impending Vietnam settlement received added impetus when Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met again in Paris on 8 October. It was, in fact, at this meeting that a real breakthrough came. Le Duc Tho presented a draft agreement to end the war that, in Dr. Kissinger's words: "enabled us to accelerate the negotiations. Indeed, for the first time they made a proposal which made it possible to negotiate concretely at all." The North Vietnamese draft, by dropping the demand for a coalition government in South Vietnam, allowed for the continuance of the Thieu regime, a point long insisted upon by the United States. The draft agreement provided for a cease-fire to be followed within 60 days by the return of prisoners and the removal of all US forces; thereafter "the two present administrations in South Vietnam" would settle internal questions between themselves. The mechanism to accomplish the internal settlement would be a "National Council of Reconciliation and Concord" composed of

90. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, p. 953.

representatives of the Republic of Vietnam and the PRG as well as "neutral members." The draft agreement, however, contained no provision for withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from the south since Le Duc Tho still maintained the fiction that none were there.[91]

(U) Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho discussed the draft for four consecutive days and agreed on a tentative schedule for proceeding with the negotiations. They would meet again in Paris on 17 October to resolve remaining issues. Thereafter, Dr. Kissinger would go to Saigon to present the agreement to President Thieu and secure his approval. Subsequently, Dr. Kissinger would travel on to Hanoi where he would initial the agreement with the North Vietnamese on 22 October. Then Dr. Kissinger would return to Washington and a joint announcement would follow on 26 October. The cease-fire would take effect on 30 October when the agreement would be formally signed in Paris by the foreign ministers of each party.[92]

(U) On 12 October, Dr. Kissinger returned to Washington and reported to the President. Since Dr. Kissinger had promised some indication of the President's reaction within 48 hours, Mr. Nixon sent a

91. The official documents dealing with the secret peace negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam during 1972, including reports by Dr. Kissinger to President Nixon and message exchanges between President Nixon and the North Vietnamese, were not available when this account was written. The sequence of events in October 1972 related in this chapter was pieced together from statements subsequently issued by the North Vietnamese and Dr. Kissinger on 26 October (printed in the NY Times, 27 Oct 72, 18 and 19) and the account by Richard Nixon in The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (1978), pp. 687-707. For the substance of the draft agreement presented on 8 October, see the NVN and Kissinger statements and Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 691-692.

92. Nixon, Memoirs, p. 693

message to the North Vietnamese in Paris the following day, 13 October. He accepted the North Vietnamese draft subject to several substantive changes and resolution of "some technical issues." As a further indication of his reaction, President Nixon ordered a restriction of the bombing of North Vietnam. At no time during the consideration of the draft agreement in October were the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided a copy of it or afforded an opportunity to review it.[93]

(U) As previously agreed, Dr. Kissinger flew back to Paris on 17 October, meeting this time with Xuan Thuy. Only a few areas of disagreement remained at the conclusion of the session. Dr. Kissinger refused to accept the North Vietnamese position for the release of all civilian political prisoners held by the Republic of Vietnam; Xuan Thuy opposed a strict US interpretaton of provisions for the replacement of war materiel following the cease-fire and refused to give what Dr. Kissinger considered "satisfactory language" regarding US POWs held in Laos and Cambodia.[94]

(U) Following this 17 October meeting, Dr. Kissinger flew on to Saigon where he was joined by the newly sworn in US Army Chief of Staff and former COMUSMACV, General Creighton Abrams. Meantime, on 18 October, President Nixon wrote to the North Vietnamese. Another meeting would be needed between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, he said, to settle the remaining issues. The North Vietnamese, however, replied accepting the US position on materiel replacement, and President Nixon wrote backing stating that "the agreement could now

93. Ibid., p. 693. Interview, Robert J. Watson with ADM Thomas H. Moorer, 16 May 79. For coverage of the bombing restriction, see Chapter 7, pp. 436-437.
94. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 694-695.

be considered complete." Only the questions of the arrangements for the cease-fire and the return of US POWs in Cambodia and Laos still had to be "clarified," and President Nixon told the North Vietnamese "once these problems had been taken care of, we could be counted on to proceed with the schedule as amended, leading to the signing [of the agreement] on October 31.". On 21 October the North Vietnamese accepted the US position on the cease-fire arrangements and POWs in Laos and Cambodia. Agreement between the United States and North Vietnam was now complete, and on 22 October, the United States ceased all air and naval gunfire operations against North Vietnam in the area above 20° north effective 0700 Vietnam time, 23 October.[95]

(U) The one remaining hurdle before the agreement could be implemented was the approval of President Thieu. He had been indicating increasing apprehension with the progress of events, fearing a settlement that included a coalition government in South Vietnam. On 12 October, he had publicly declared his opposition to such an eventuality. History had proved, he said, that "coalition with the Communists meant death." For South Vietnam, he continued, the best answer was military victory. "We have to kill the Communists to the last man before we have peace." Subsequently, President Thieu summoned home his representative at the Paris talks, Ambassador Phan Dang Lam, as well as the South Vietnamese Ambassadors in Washington and London for consultations on the latest developments in the peace efforts.[96]

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95. Ibid., p. 695. For coverage of the bombing restriction, see Chapter 7, pp. 437-438.

96. NY Times, 13 Oct 72, 1 and 4; 16 Oct 72, 1.

(U) Dr. Kissinger and General Abrams arrived in Saigon on 18 October with the task of presenting the agreement to the South Vietnamese. Dr. Kissinger carried a letter from President Nixon, urging Nguyen Van Thieu that there was "no reasonable alternative but to accept this agreement," and assuring him that the United States would view any breach of faith by the North Vietnamese with utmost gravity. As a further inducement, President Nixon approved on 20 October Project ENHANCE PLUS,[97] the infusion of large amounts of military supplies and equipment into South Vietnam before a cease-fire.[98]

(U) Dr. Kissinger met with President Thieu and members of his government during the period 18-22 October. On 21 October, President Nixon sent Dr. Kissinger additional instructions. If President Thieu appeared unwilling to accept the agreement, Dr. Kissinger was to warn him that the United States might consider making a separate peace with North Vietnam. Later that day, when the last remaining issues between the United States and North Vietnam had been resolved, President Nixon sent a further message to President Thieu urging him to accept the agreement. President Nixon pointed out "practical and compelling" reasons:

> Were you to find the agreement to be unacceptable at this point and the other side were to reveal the extraordinary limits to which it has gone in meeting demands put upon them, it is my judgment that your decision would have the most serious effects upon my ability to continue to provide support for you and for the government of South Vietnam.[99]

97. See Chapter 9, pp. 499-501.
98. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 696-697.
99. Ibid., pp. 698-700.

The Aborted Settlement

(U) On 22 October, President Thieu rejected the entire agreement. Any settlement, he insisted to Dr. Kissinger, must provide for total withdrawal of the North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, absolute guarantees of the DMZ, and "total self-determination of South Vietnam." He also feared that the proposed "National Council of Reconciliation and Concord" was merely a disguised coalition government. Dr. Kissinger met with Presient Thieu again on 23 October in a final attempt to dissuade him from his opposition, but failed to do so.[100]

(U) President Nixon now had no choice but to ask for a delay in the implementation of the agreement. Accordingly, on 23 October, he asked the North Vietnamese for one final meeting to attempt to resolve the issues raised by President Thieu. The North Vietnamese, however, held to the implementation schedule already worked out and an impasse ensued.[101]

(U) On the morning of 26 October 1972, Radio Hanoi announced that North Vietnam and the United States had agreed on a cease-fire in Vietnam, but that subsequently the United States had reneged, citing difficulties with the South Vietnamese. The broadcast outlined the terms of the agreement worked out between North Vietnam and the United States as well as the schedule for implementation with the anticipated signature of the final document on 31 October.[102]

(U) At the regular weekly session of the Paris talks on the same day, Xuan Thuy put into the record the text of the nine-point agreement stating that the

100. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 702-703.
101. Ibid., p. 703.
102. NY Times, 27 Oct 72, 1 and 19.

United States had accepted it on 22 October. This document filled out in more detail the settlement announced earlier by the Hanoi broadcast. Xuan Thuy proceeded to castigate the United States for accepting a settlement and then raising obstacles. All the while, he maintained, the United States was doing everything possible to convince public opinion of its efforts toward a peaceful settlement. Thus North Vietnam had no choice, Xuan Thuy said, but to reveal the actual status of the negotiations in order to set forth the "truth."[103]

(U) Later on 26 October, Dr. Kissinger held a press conference to clarify the US position on a possible settlement. "We believe peace is at hand," he told the waiting reporters. He confirmed the substance of the agreement under consideration between the two countries as announced by the North Vietnmese, stating "we have no complaint with the general description of events as it was given by Radio Hanoi." With regard to the schedule for completion of the agreement, Dr. Kissinger said that the United States had agreed to make "a major effort" to conclude the negotiations by 31 October. It was true, he continued,

> that we did from time to time, give schedules by which this might be accomplished. It was, however, always clear, at least to us--and we thought we made clear in the records of the meetings--that obviously we could not sign an agreement in which details remained to be worked our simply because in good faith we had said we would make an effort to conclude it by a certain date.

103. (C) Msgs, US Del France 20448 and 20483 to State, 26 Oct 72, JCS IN 64382 and 64889. Final Transcript, Paris Meetings on Vietnam, 164th Plenary Sess, 26 Oct 72, J-5 Negotiations Files (in RAIR).

> It was always clear that we would have to discuss anything that was negotiated first in Washington and then in Saigon.

Dr. Kissinger admitted the South Vietnamese reluctance to accept the agreement, stating that the South Vietnamese had "every right" to have their views heard. Nevertheless, the United States would make its own decisions, he said, and Hanoi was mistaken to believe that the United States could simply impose any solution on South Vietnam.

(U) Dr. Kissinger believed that by far the greater difficulties in reaching a settlement had been overcome, and he described, in general terms, the obstacles still to be resolved. In addition to the question of South Vietnamese acceptance of the settlement, he enumerated the question of the actual form of the final document, precision of language dealing with cease-fire and the international supervisory body, and linguistic refinements to insure that both English and Vietnamese versions conveyed the same meanings. He did not mention, however, the more major issues of the DMZ and removal of North Vietnamese troops raised by President Thieu. Nonetheless, Dr. Kissinger was optimistic. The remaining questions, he said, could be settled in one more meeting, and the United States was willing to stay at that meeting for as long as necessary to complete the agreement.[104]

(U) The matter of a possible settlement in Vietnam fell into a state of suspended animation during the remaining days of October. There was much speculation

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104. News Conference by Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, 26 Oct 72, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 30 Oct 72, pp. 1565-1571. NY Times, 27 Oct 72, 1 and 18.

in the press, and officials in Washington, though unwilling to be quoted, were convinced that a settlement was imminent even if not by 31 October. But no announcement or further action followed, and there was no indication that North Vietnam had followed up Dr. Kissinger's call for a further meeting to complete the agreement. With the US Presidential election little more than a week away, North Vietnam, obviously, wanted to cause Mr. Nixon as much domestic political embarrassment as possible over the aborted settlement. Nor did President Nguyen Van Thieu abandon his objection to the proposed agreement.[105]

(U) Tuesday, 31 October 1972, passed without a settlement, and at the Paris meeting, on 2 November, the communist side spent the entire session chiding the United States for failing to sign the agreement. On the evening of 2 November, in the course of a political address to the nation, President Nixon cited the "major breakthrough" toward the goal of peace in Vietnam, but quickly added that "some issues" still remained. He went on to explain:

> We want peace--peace with honor--peace fair to all and a peace that will last. That is why I am insisting that the central points be clearly settled, so that there will be no misunderstandings which could lead to a breakdown of the settlement and a resumption of the war.
>
> I am confident that we will soon achieve that goal.
>
> But we are not going to allow an election deadline or any other kind of deadline to force us into an

105. NY Times, 28 Oct 72, 1; 30 Oct 72, 1; 31 Oct 72, 1.

> agreement which would be only a temporary truce and not a lasting peace. We are going to sign the agreement when the agreement is right, not one day before. And when the agreement is right, we are going to sign, without one day's delay.[106]

(U) Democratic President candidate Senator George S. McGovern did not accept the President's explanation. Senator McGovern had been a consistent critic of the Vietnam war and of President Nixon's handling of it. Upon securing the Democratic nomination in July 1972, he had pledged to halt the bombing on Inauguration Day and withdraw US forces from Vietnam within 90 days. Throughout the campaign, he had repeated his call for an immediate US withdrawal from Vietnam and, on 10 October 1972, he had set forth his solution for the war. His plan encompassed: a halt to US bombing of North Vietnam and of all US support to South Vietnam on Inauguration Day; immediate withdrawal of US forces from all of Indochina; dispatch of the Vice President to Hanoi to speed arrangements for the return of US prisoners; a political settlement arranged by the Vietnamese themselves with US cooperation to gain international recognition of that solution; and closing of US bases in Thailand after the return of all prisoners.

(U) Now, during the last several days of the campaign, Senator McGovern launched an intensified attack against the President's conduct of the negotiations, charging Mr. Nixon with only pretending to be near a settlement. The President's actions, the

106. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 1084-1089.

Senator claimed on 3 November, were part of a reelection strategy based on "cruel political deception." He disputed the President's assertion that further negotiations were necessary to resolve the details of the agreement and accused the President of missing an opportunity for peace. On the two successive days, 4 and 5 November, the Senator stepped up his accusations. Mr. Nixon had no plan for ending the war; rather he was "intensifying" the conflict. Senator McGovern warned the American voters against trusting a man who had misled them in 1968 with respect to his peace plans and who was leading them down "the false hope of peace once again in 1972."[107]

(U) Richard Nixon was reelected President of the United States on 7 November 1972, and the passage of the election removed the pressure of negotiating against a deadline. In a statement on the night of his election victory, President Nixon renewed his pledge to seek "peace with honor" in Vietnam, and on the following day, he sent General Haig to Saigon to confer again with President Thieu. There was now a general expectation throughout the United States that a settlement in Vietnam was near. Yet, almost three months, marked by continued fighting and a massive air campaign against North Vietnam, would elapse before a final agreement was achieved.[108]

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107. NY Times, 4 Nov 72, 1; 5 Nov 72, 1; 6 Nov 72, 1.

108. Public Papers, Nixon, 1972, pp. 1140-1142. NY Times, 9 Nov 72, 1.

CHAPTER 12

PEACE IN THE BALANCE, OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1972

Post-Hostilities Contingency Planning

(TS) Even though the anticipated cease-fire in October 1972 aborted, US officials expected an early end to the war and began extensive preparations for that eventuality. Dr. Kissinger organized the effort, employing the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG). On 30 October 1972, he set up four interdepartmental working groups within the WSAG for the task. Working Group A dealt with the diplomatic aspects and was chaired by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William H. Sullivan. Working Group B, headed by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, was responsible for military matters and included a reprsentative from the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) and two from the Joint Staff, Major General John W. Pauly, USAF, of J-3 and Brigadier General Arthur P. Hanket, USA, of J-5. The remaining two groups treated intelligence and economic matters.[1]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff had not awaited the establishment of the WSAG groups to begin planning the military aspects of a cease-fire. They, the Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General George M. Seignious, II, USA, and the Chairman's Assistant, Vice Admiral John P. Weinel, USN, had already started "close-hold" discussions of the issues of troop withdrawal and command organization in Southeast Asia after a cease-fire. Following the events of 26 October, the

1. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7237 to AmEmb Bonn (ADM Weinel to CJCS), 302137Z Oct 72. (S) Data from J-5 Cease-fire Documents Book, "Organization for Implementation of Agreement," n.d., J-5 Action Officer Files.

North Vietnamese revelation of the terms of the aborted agreement and Dr. Kissinger's "peace is at hand" news conference, Admiral Weinel cabled Admiral Moorer, who was attending a NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting in London, suggesting that they "loosen up a bit" on the cease-fire planning. He proposed to go ahead "in a coordinated way with the Services and CINC's."[2]

(TS) A little later that same day, 26 October, Admiral Weinel cabled Admiral Moorer again. He had seen the cease-fire planning directives that the Secretary of Defense intended to issue to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and he relayed the essence of them to the Chairman. These directives called for planning to implement a cease-fire and US force withdrawal to a level of a 50-man attache office in South Vietnam within 60 days of the cease-fire, the period specified in the tentative US-North Vietnamese agreement. The reduction would also cover the 7th Fleet and US tactical air and B-52 assets in Thailand. Also required would be revised rules of engagement and temporary augmentation authorities to protect US troops and other Free World forces until completion of the withdrawal. Cease-fire preparations were also to cover command and control arrangements for US forces in Southeast Asia; intelligence support from out of country for US and South Vietnamese forces; and the composition, mission, and functions for the attache office.[3]

(TS) It is interesting to note that the Secretary of Defense apparently prepared these directives without any consultation with or assistance from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Also indicative of the milieu in

2. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 2374 and 3624 to CINCUSNAVEUR (VADM Weinel to CJCS), 252209Z and 262252Z Oct 72.
3. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3627 to CINCUSNAVEUR (VADM Weinel to CJCS), 262256Z Oct 72.

which the Joint Chiefs of Staff were operating at that time was the following report to the Chairman by Admiral Weinel also on 26 October:

> Gen Abrams passed an unsigned MACV plan for reducing to 0 force levels in 60 days. It was passed on an extremely close-hold basis with none allowed to see it except a few Joint Staff people. The plan reportedly was prepared on direction from HAK [Henry A. Kissinger] to MACV. . . . CINCPAC hasn't seen it nor the Services.[4]

(C) Based on the impending Secretary of Defense directives, the Joint Chiefs of Staff dispatched cease-fire planning instructions to CINCPAC and CINCSAC the following day, 27 October. They requested the development of plans in three major areas: withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam, command arrangements for US forces remaining in Southeast Asia after the withdrawal from South Vietnam, and continued US support for the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. The two commanders were to be prepared, upon notice from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to execute a cease-fire in South Vietnam and to end all military operations against North Vietnam, although US combat operations in support of the Laotian and Cambodian governments would continue "at about current levels." The Joint Chiefs of Staff designated the date of the cease-fire as "X-Day" and directed the commanders to plan the removal of all US and Free World forces as well as specified materiel from South Vietnam within 60 days (X+60) of the cease-fire. During this redeployment, CINCPAC was to insure

4. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3624 to CINCUSNAVEUR (VADM Weinel to CJCS), 262252Z Oct 72.

the security of forces, materiel, and facilities and to establish a Defense Attache Office (DAO). This office, the establishment of which was to be coordinated with the US Embassy in Saigon, would consist of not more than 50 US military spaces and no other US military personnel would be authorized in South Vietnam except US Embassy security guards.[5]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed planning for command arrangements outside of South Vietnam for control of residual US missions and responsibilities in Southeast Asia that were currently assigned to COMUSMACV. Specifically, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that, when directed after X-Day, COMUSMACV would relinquish operational control of land-based combatant air forces in Southeast Asia concurrently with the establishment of a US military command in Thailand for air command and control. In addition, CINCPAC and CINCSAC were to plan the reduction of US forces in Thailand and US naval forces on station off Vietnam. Forces in Thailand were to be reduced to an interim level capable of 4,700 (with a surge capability to 6,700) tactical air and 1,000 B-52 combat sorties per month; the naval force level was to be reduced to one CVA with necessary escort and support ships on station with two additional CVAs prepared to arrive off Vietnam within 96 hours and one week, respectively.

5. On 2 November, the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC that, if US military personnel were planned as embassy guards in South Vietnam, they must be included in the 50 allowable military billets. But after clarification with "higher authority," they reversed that decision later the same day, advising that any US military assigned as embassy guards would not be included or counted against the 50-man DAO. (S) Msgs, JCS 1994 and 2143 to CINCPAC, 022021Z and 022248Z Nov 72.

(C) In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff laid down guidance for residual support of the RVNAF after the US withdrawal in the areas of consumable supply (POL, ammunition, and spare parts), training, communications, and computer services. Moreover, CINCPAC was to plan JGS/RVNAF liaison with US forces in Thailand and the supply of critical intelligence support for both the RVNAF and remaining US air operations in Southeast Asia from US assets pending greater assumption of this mission by the RVNAF. Without explicitly so stating, the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated that support of the RVNAF would be provided by means of DOD civilian and contract personnel. They did state that the US phase-down in South Vietnam would not include US civilian personnel or contractors, adding that authority and funds would be available for expanded and additional contracts. They cautioned that no US civilian personnel would be used in "a military, paramilitary, or police-type role or function." To allow additional support for the RVNAF, the Joint Chiefs of Staff granted COMUSMACV authority to plan the transfer to the GVN, without formal authorization, of "transferable equipment" to meet currently stated requirements and to approve RVNAF force structure changes within the approved 1.1 million manpower ceiling.

(C) In further post-hostilities planning guidance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also provided for: continued operation of LORAN sites in South Vietnam with civilian contract personnel; transfer of the Joint Information Center (JIC), including the Joint Personnel Recovery Center and Joint Graves Registration Office, to Thailand; review of communications-electronic equipment to determine what could be turned over to the RVNAF and the retrograde of all remaining items; withdrawal of

communications security (COMSEC) equipment currently under US control; and retention of capability for air reconnaissance, both manned and tactical reconnaissance and drones, over South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted CINCPAC to designate temporary staging bases in Thailand and elsewhere to expedite the orderly withdrawal of US forces and equipment from South Vietnam. They requested CINCPAC to provide the required plans to accomplish all the above tasks as well as to determine civilian requirements and organization in South Vietnam to manage and supervise support for the RVNAF.[6]

(TS) The WSAG met on 30 October to consider the matter of cease-fire planning, and it was at that meeting that Dr. Kissinger set up the already mentioned working groups. Admiral Moorer was still absent from Washington, and Admiral Weinel attended the meeting in the Chairman's stead. He reported to Admiral Moorer that the DOD Working Group was "to get going" on all the items that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already finished or had underway. It was Admiral Weinel's estimate that "we are about a week ahead of HAK." The Admiral also related that the WSAG would meet once or twice a week thereafter in order to provide Dr. Kissinger reports on the planning. The WSAG did meet frequently in the succeeding weeks to hear progress reports, but Working Group B, responsible for the military aspects of a cease-fire did not meet since all the actions were already in progress.[7]

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6. (TS) Msg, JCS 4907 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC (info COMUSMACV, COMUSMACTHAI, CINCUSARPAC, CINCPACFLT, CINCPACAF, and CGFMFPAC), 272238Z Oct 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1.

7. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7237 to AmEmb Bonn (VADM Weinel to CJCS), 302137Z Oct 72. (S) Data from J-5 Cease-fire

(C) On the next day, 31 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense of their actions to prepare for a cease-fire. Because of the 60-day limit contemplated between the cease-fire and the completion of the US withdrawal, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed it prudent to secure in advance the authorities needed to implement the cease-fire. Although recognizing that action on some authorities must await the terms of the final cease-fire agreement, they requested immediate approval to implment the following: establishment of a Defense Attache Office in Saigon of not more than 50 military spaces, headed by a general or flag officer as the Defense Attache; expansion of existing and establihment of additional civilian conracts to provide continued support for the RVNAF; hiring of US civilian personnel required to supervise this contractual support; transfer of title, as deemed appropriate, of in-country equipment not already identified in existing RVNAF improvement programs to the GVN without regard to formal authorization; and authority to approve RVNAF force structure changes necessary to support PROJECT ENHANCE PLUS while remaining within the approved 1.1 million manpower ceiling.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff set forth a second category of authorities, recommending approval for implementation when execution of a cease-fire was ordered. These included: authority to exceed, temporarily, the current US force level and established ceiling in Thailand for certain specific functions, such as intelligence; introduction of temporary duty

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Documents Book, "Organization for Implementation of Agreement," n.d., J-5 Action Officer Files. (C) J-5 Calendar of NSC Group Meetings, Oct-Dec 72, J-5 NSC Files.

US personnel into South Vietnam to assist the withdrawal of US forces and equipment; operation of LORAN sites with civilians; redeployment of augmentation forces from Southeast Asia as appropriate; continuation of off-shore training programs for the RVNAF; and relocation of the Joint Information Center from South Vietnam to Thailand before completion of the US withdrawal from South Vietnam.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also asked the Secretary of Defense to approve the following authorities for planning purposes: US overflight of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia after the US withdrawal from South Vietnam, to include manned and unmanned reconnaissance, logistical, and other non-tactical flights; RVNAF staff liaison in Thailand; off-shore US aerial surveillance to support the RVNAF; Joint Information Center operations in Southeast Asia to resolve the status of missing personnel; use of South Vietnamese air bases for emergency recovery of US military aircraft; permission for US naval combatant vessels to enter South Vietnamese territorial waters during the US withdrawal; US armed escort, both air and ground, to provide security to US and Free World forces during the withdrawal; and operation of Military Airlift Command and PACOM transport and resupply flights into South Vietnam aerial ports after the withdrawal. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the provision of funds to support all these above authorities by means of supplemental funding or budget amendment.[8]

8. (TS) JCSM-462-72 to SecDef, 31 Oct 72, Encl to JCS 2339/360-1, 31 Oct 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1.

(C) Without awaiting CINCPAC's cease-fire plans, the Joint Staff had developed two alternatives to carry out US military functions in Southeast Asia after the US withdrawal from South Vietnam. The first called for a USAF headquarters in Thailand for air operations and planning and a separate Support Activities Group in Thailand for advisory assistance functions. The second alternative would move a truncated MACV organization to Thailand as a subordinate unified command under CINCPAC. This latter organization would be designated US Joint Support Activities Command.[9]

(TS) Finally on 2 November 1972, the Secretary of Defense provided the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the cease-fire planning directives that Admiral Weinel had already seen on 26 October. This formal guidance contained only one change from that reported by Admiral Weinel. The Secretary instructed the Chairman to be prepared to end combat operations under either of two conditions: a cease-fire throughout Indochina, including Cambodia and Laos; or in only North and South Vietnam. He wanted to be prepared to reduce the US military presence in South Vietnam to a 50-man attache staff prior to X+60. Further he directed readiness either to continue operations in Cambodia and Laos at current levels or to reduce the US military presence in the two countries to small attache staffs similar to that in South Vietnam. Upon implementation of the cease-fire on X-Day, the Secretary said, all US forces were to remain in place until otherwise instructed. Pertinent rules of engagement, operating authorities, and temporary augmentation authorities for all of

9. (TS) J-5 Point Paper for CJCS (for info), "Post-hostility Organizational Arrangements for Southeast Asia (U)," 1 Nov 72, J-5 Action Officer Files.

Indochina or only North and South Vietnam, as appropriate, would be cancelled on X-Day. The Secretary also ordered provision of logistic support for the complete reduction of ROK and other Free World Forces in South Vietnam prior to X+60. Mr. Laird wanted plans to accomplish these tasks by 13 November 1972.[10]

(C) On the same day, 2 November, CINCPAC submitted his views on the withdrawal planning. With respect to command structure, he favored "a sub-unified command" in Thailand with an Air Force commander and an Army deputy to conduct Southeast Asia land-based air and logistic operations. Admiral Gayler warned the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the enemy was rapidly resupplying at that time in addition to preparing for a dry season push. He believed that the enemy would be able to resume main force operations in MR 1 and major attacks in the other regions within two to three months.[11]

(C) The US Ambassador in Thailand, Mr. Leonard Unger, was less certain about the cease-fire planning. He had "important" reservations with regard to creation of a US support command in Thailand. "The political ramifications of burdening the Thais, and US-Thai relations, in the final phases of the Indochina war with a major new US military activity that may make Thailand's sense of exposure more acute," the Ambassador said, "should be fully considered." He believed it in the "long-term interest" to trim US post cease-fire requirements in Thailand to "bare essentials."[12]

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10. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 2 Nov 72, Att to JCS 2339/360-2, 3 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1.

11. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 022345Z Nov 72, JCS IN 78934.

12. (TS) Msg, Bangkok 15706 to State, 6 Nov 72, JCS IN 85303.

(C) On 7 November the Secretary of Defense approved, with certain exceptions, the JCS 31 October request for cease-fire planning authorities. He authorized, for planning purposes, the establishment of the Defense Attache Office, reiterating the restriction of only 50 US military personnel in South Vietnam. He deferred action on authority to exceed the established US personnel ceiling in Thailand and to redeploy augmentation forces from Southeast Asia pending review of the cease-fire plans he had ordered on 2 November. He did approve for planning the introduction of US temporary duty personnel into South Vietnam to assist in the withdrawal of US forces and equipment, but with the stipulation that all such personnel would be subject to approval by his office. He did not grant authority for the Joint Chiefs of Staff to approve RVNAF force structure changes; rather he preferred to retain that function to insure that US follow-up support was available. Finally, he decided that bases in South Vietnam could be used by US military aircraft after the US withdrawal only for approved logistic flights and for emergency landings when the lives of crew and passengers were at stake.[13]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff then proceeded with the preparation of implementing plans and, in the period 7-13 November 1972, submitted to the Secretary of Defense a series of plans and documents. On 7 November, the Chairman provided basic rules of engagement assuming a cease-fire either in all of Indochina or only in South Vietnam. These rules, cast in the form of draft messages, defined hostile aircraft, vessels, and forces and allowed for US attack as

13. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 7 Nov 72, Att to JCS 2339/360-3, 7 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1.

appropriate. The following day, the Chairman gave the Secretary the operating authorities that would be needed in the event of a cease-fire throughout Indochina or only in South Vietnam. Again in the form of draft messages, these authorities set forth in considerable detail the type of US operations permitted after a cease-fire went into effect.[14]

(C) Several days later, on 11 November, Admiral Moorer addressed Secretary Laird on the matter of augmentation authorities. Initial planning indicated, the Admiral said, that the authorities presently in effect would need to be continued for the period immediately following the cease-fire. Moreover, additional augmentations, for such matters as mine clearance, might be required. The Chairman provided the Secretary a list of those augmentation authorities then in effect, requesting that they be continued until after X-Day. At that time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would recommend cancellation of those authorities as appropriate on "a phased basis in accordance with overall phasedown planning."[15]

(C) In their planning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered it essential to maintain US support of the RVNAF. To accomplish this objective without interruption either during or after the US withdrawal, the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored the immediate establishment of an organization to provide a continuing "supervision ans surveillance" of the RVNAF in the areas of operations, logistics, communications-electronics, training, and intelligence. Accordingly, on 10

14. (TS-EX) CM-2286-72 to SecDef, 7 Nov 72; (TS-EX) CM-2289-72 to SecDef, 8 Nov 72; JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1.

15. (TS) CM-2293-72 to SecDef, 11 Nov 72, same file.

November, they recommended to the Secretary of Defense creation of a Defense Resource Surveillance and Termination Office (DRSTO) as soon as possible. The DRSTO would function under COMUSMACV until his command was disestablished. Thereupon the DRSTO would become part of the Defense Attache Office, but would report to the commander of the new command planned in Thailand and, eventually, would report directly to CINCPAC. The DRSTO, as recommended by the Joint Chiefs Staff, would, in fact, constitute the major element of the DAO and would consist of a large number of civilians and 44 of the 50 military personnel allowed in South Vietnam after the US withdrawal. The organization would be commanded by an Army major general with an Air Force brigadier as the deputy.[16]

(C) At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also requested immediate authority to establish a Defense Attache Element as a part of the Defense Attache Office in Saigon. With the reduction of MACV operations accompanying the US troop withdrawal, the Joint Chiefs of Staff foresaw a need to resume the traditional attache functions in South Vietnam. The mission of the Saigon Element would be the traditional attache one outlined in appropriate DOD directives, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed an Attache Element of 21 billets, six US military, eight US civilians, and seven foreign nationals.[17]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also wanted to develop the best possible current intelligence with respect to

16. (TS) JCSM-475-72 to SecDef, 10 Nov 72, Encl to JCS 2339/360-8, 10 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2.

17. (TS) JCSM-476-72 to SecDef, 10 Nov 72, Encl A to JCS 2028/65, 10 Nov 72, JMF 245 (10 Nov 72).

North Vietnam prior to implementation of a cease-fire. Accordingly, on 11 November 1972, they directed CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and COMUSMACV to plan and execute "sustained maximum effort reconnaissance of North Vietnam" to establish a current photographic data base. This effort, nicknamed Operation POST WATCH, was to supply high resolution photographic coverage of major ports and logistic complexes; lines of communication, including railroads, highways, and pipelines; major airfields; and POW camps.[18]

The JCS Present a Plan

(C) Meantime, both COMUSMACV and CINCPAC submitted their comments and proposals in response to the JCS guidance of 27 October.[19] After review of the field submissions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13 November 1972 presented the Secretary of Defense the culmination of all their cease-fire planning, including plans for withdrawal of the remaining US and Free World forces from South Vietnam, the movement of essential command and control functions from South Vietnam to Thailand, the phase-down of US air assets in Thailand and 7th Fleet assets off Vietnam, and continued support for the RVNAF. They informed the Secretary of their readiness to terminate all combat operations in all of Indochina or only in North and South Vietnam as soon as a cease-fire took effect. In addition they were prepared to carry out the phased withdrawal of all US and Free World forces from South Vietnam during the 60-day period between X-Day and X+60 with the exception of

18. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3285 to CINCSAC, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV, 111652Z Nov 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 72.

19. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 020100Z and 050001Z Nov 72, JCS IN 77479 and 83414.

those few military personnel permitted to remain. The majority of US and Free World forces would be airlifted from South Vietnam prior to X+45, leaving a small roll-up force that would depart on or prior to X+60, and the bulk of the equipment would be transported out of Vietnam by sealift. Such military functions as remained in South Vietnam after X+60 would be performed by the Defense Attache Office. As described above, the DAO would include the Defense Attache Element and the DRSTO and would consist of 50 US military personnel plus US Civil Service and contractor employees.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also provided for an orderly transfer of command and control functions from South Vietnam to Thailand. Their plans called for a multi-Service integrated headquarters in Thailand, designated the US Support Activities Group/7th Air Force (USSAG/7AF). This new body, organized along the lines of the existing MACV/7th Air Force pattern and located in Nakhon Phanom, would plan and be ready to conduct combat air operations as directed by CINCPAC and would control the DRSTO.

(C) United States force levels in Thailand, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary, could not be resolved until definite details of the cease-fire were known, particularly whether the agreement would extend to Cambodia and Laos. Current planning, however, called for US air assets in Thailand to phase down eventually to 42 B-52s, 36 KC-135s, one tactical reconnaissance squadron, special reconnaissance forces, one gunship squadron, and various support units, a force capable of sustaining 4,700 USAF tactical air combat and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month, requiring an approximate US military strength in Thailand of 36,500. At the same time, US naval forces off South Vietnam

would be reduced to one CVA on station, one in position to arrive off South Vietnam in 96 hours, and a third positioned to arrive within one week. This force could provide 2,200 tactical air combat sorties per month.

(C) To maintain a US intelligence capability in Southeast Asia to support strategic and tactical requirements, the Joint Chiefs of Staff planned to relocate US intelligence assets as necessary (leaving as many in South Vietnam as allowable under the settlement), to exploit assets in Laos and Cambodia, and to rely on the RVNAF for in-country intelligence collection, meanwhile accelerating the improvement of RVNAF intelligence capabilities. The JCS plan included provision for an intelligence staff element within both Headquarters, USSAF/7AF and the DRSTO, DAO, Saigon.

(C) Continued logistic support of the RVNAF, under JCS plans, would be the function of the DRSTO, already described above. With respect to communications-electronics matters, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that a substantial realignment of facilities and modification of procedures would be required by the withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam. The most significant would be associated with provision of adequate support for the USSAG/7AF. Residual US requirements in South Vietnam and out-of-country communications from Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos would be met by using RVNAF facilities. Should it become necessary to end use of these RVNAF facilities, the Defense Communications Agency had alternative solutions under study. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to the Secretary of Defense contingency plans for both Cambodia and Laos in the event of either continuing operations or cease-fire.[20]

20. (TS) JCSM-480-72 to SecDef, 13 Nov 72, Encl A to JCS 2339/360-6, 12 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1.

(C) On one cease-fire planning issue, the place of the USSAG/7AF in the US command structure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not agree. The Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Chairman would have the commander carry out assigned tasks under the direction of CINCPAC. Since such an arrangement would exclude control over both SAC and 7th Fleet air resources, the Chiefs of Staff of both Army and Air Force were opposed. They thought it essential that responsibility for the total effort in North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia be vested in a single commander. Hence they wanted the COMUSSAG/7AF to have authority to target and task all combat air forces, including the resources of SAC and the 7th Fleet, in the area. In a separate memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, Admiral Moorer reiterated his position on the matter. He opposed the Army and Air Force view as tantamount to the establishment of a new unified command in Southeast Asia, a move "in exactly the opposite direction" from the one towards which the United States should be going at that time.[21]

(C) Another problem that arose during the JCS cease-fire planning was the question of continued support for the rear element of the US Military Equipment Delivery Team, Cambodia (MEDTC-Rear). This organization was located in South Vietnam and was supported by COMUSMACV. General Weyand had already indicated that the continuing redeployment of US forces from South Vietnam made it impossible to support the MEDTC-Rear beyond 20 November 1972. Now the possibility of a cease-fire agreement with attendant denial

21. (TS) JCSM-480-72 to SecDef, 13 Nov 72; CM-2297-72 to SecDef, 13 Nov 72; Encls A and B, respectively, to JCS 2339/360-6, 12 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1.

of support for Cambodia through South Vietnam gave added impetus to shifting this support through Thailand. At JCS request, CINCPAC prepared an appropriate concept plan for support of Cambodia by relocating the MEDTC-Rear in Thailand. The Joint Chiefs of Staff aproved the plan on 13 November 1972, subject to negotiation with the Royal Thai Government and provision for a 90-day stockage of ammunition to include possible out-of-country storage in the third phase of the plan.[22]

(C) Meanwhile, the Joint Staff had developed an illustrative concept plan for the redeployment of US forces following a cease-fire in Southeast Asia, which the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded to CINCPAC and CINCSAC on 17 November 1972. It expanded on the original guidance provided the commanders on 27 October and was designed to remove forces in increments, allowing maximum security for remaining US forces and a capability to react to possible contingencies. With regard to land-based tactical air forces, the concept would permit reestablishment of the CINCPAC strategic reserve, reconstitution of tactical air forces in CONUS and Europe, and resumption of normal unit readiness training. All US air forces in Thailand would remain in place initially after the cease-fire and, then, on dates to be subsequently determined, various units would withdraw. The remaining forces, as already described in the discussion of the JCS cease-fire planning submission to the Secretary of Defense,[23] would

22. (S) JCS 2339/360-7, 12 Nov 72; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 030403Z Nov 72, JCS IN 79675; (S) Msg, JCS 5039 to CINCPAC, 140048Z Nov 72 (derived from JCS 2339/360-7); JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2.

23. See pp. 641-642.

be able to carry out 4,700 tactical and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month. The concept plan also provided for incremental phasedown of the 7th Fleet off Vietnam. If incremental withdrawal was not required, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred simultaneous deployment. In either case, remaining naval assets could provide 2,200 sorties per month with one CVA on station off Vietnam and two more positioned to arrive within a week. Escorts and support ships would be provided as required for the CVA levels, and two amphibious ready groups would be available on conditions of readiness appropriate to existing contingencies.[24]

The Secretary Reaches a Decision

(C) On 17 November, the Secretary of Defense notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff of his decision on cease-fire planning. He approved for planning purposes the JCS plan of 13 November for the withdrawal of US and Free World forces from South Vietnam. He took similar action on the contingency plans for Thailand, in effect approving the majority JCS position for a US Support Activities Group/7th Air Force (USSAG/7AF) in Thailand under CINCPAC. He approved the following authorities for implementation when appropriate and subject to the proper diplomatic clearances: establishment of an advanced element of the USSAG (USSAG ADVON) at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, prior to X-Day; disestablishment of Headquarters, MACV before X+60; and establishment of USSAG/7AF at Nakhon Phanom before X+60.

(C) The Secretary wanted the shift of command headquarters from South Vietnam to Thailand to be as simple as possible with a minimum of disruption. Once the US

24. (TS) Msg, JCS 1192 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 172315Z Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2.

withdrawal from South Vietnam was complete, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were to examine the tasking and targeting of all US air assets to determine if a more efficient and effective command structure was possible. At that time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff should recommend retention, abolition, or modification of the USSAG/7AF Headquarters. The Secretary also noted that, with respect to command relationships, political understandings with the Royal Thai Government required the Commander of the USSAG/7AF to deal directly with the Chief of US Mission in Thailand.

(C) The Secretary of Defense concurred in the JCS planning concept for US force reduction in Thailand, but added that longer range force structure objectives would be necessary after "the difficult transition period" following the cease-fire. He approved aircraft redeployment goals for Thailand and viewed the JCS proposed US force level in Thailand of 36,500 as neither a ceiling nor a floor on US personnel in that country. The "longer range (post-transition period) force structure" objective for Thailand, he said, would be a 32,200-man structure concentrated at five bases, capable of providing 4,700 tactical air and 1,000 B-52 sorties monthly as well as residual Southeast Asia logistics, intelligence, and command and control functions. Mr. Laird also approved for planning purposes the JCS plans for reduction of US naval forces off Vietnam, for intelligence support for US and South Vietnamese forces, for continued logistic support for the RVNAF, and for communications-electronics realignment as well as the contingency plans for Cambodia and Laos.[25]

25. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 17 Nov 72, Att to JCS 2339/360-10, 18 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2.

(C) On the following day, the Secretary of Defense approved the immediate establishment of both the Defense Resource Surveillance and Termination Office (DRSTO) and the Attache Element of the DAO as recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He requested a more detailed organization and terms of reference for the DRSTO, clearly establishing it as an integral part of the Attache Office and "not vice versa." He authorized direct coordination between the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Department of State concerning the establishment of the Attache Element instructing that the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) be kept informed throughout the process.[26]

(C) That same day, 18 November, Secretary Laird approved for planning purposes the basic rules of engagement and the operating authorities proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for operations following a cease-fire. With regard to the operating authorities, he approved with the understanding that final approval would be contingent upon the provisions of the final cease-fire agreement. On 18 November, the Secretary also granted the JCS request for extension of the temporary Southeast Asia augmentation authorities then in effect with the continuing provision that they be reviewed monthly pending "achievement of a stabilized force level in Southeast Asia." Mr. Laird wanted to review the JCS plan for incremental phasedown of US forces in Southeast Asia as soon as possible after the specific cease-fire terms were known, and he expected to review all temporary augmentations by X+15. He

26. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 Nov 72, Att to JCS 2339/360-11, 18 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 Nov 72, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2028/65, 20 Nov 72, JMF 245 (10 Nov 72).

anticipated that this review would provide for the immediate return of one CVA and associated escorts to CONUS followed by a phased reduction to three CVAs in WESTPAC as quickly as possible thereafter. In addition, Secretary Laird ruled that the 36,500 force limit for Thailand would include cryptologic personnel withdrawn from South Vietnam.[27]

(C) During the next few days, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the necessary instructions to implement the Secretary's decisions. On 18 November, they authorized COMUSMACV to activate the Defense Resource Surveillance and Termination Office Several days later, on 22 November, they changed the name of the organization to Defense Resources Support and Termination Office, seeking to avoid any connotation of surveillance in the sense of aerial reconnaisance. At that time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC and COMUSMACV that the recently designated head of the Office, Major General John E. Murray, USA, would have th title of Defense Attache and would serve as Chief, DRSTO, as an additional duty.[28]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency on 20 November to plan the establishment of the Attache Element of

27. (TS) Memos, SecDef to CJCS, "Changes in Existing Military Procedures in Southeast Asia" (there are two memos of this subject and date) and "Temporary Augmentation Authorites," 18 Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 1. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 18 Nov 72, Att to JCS 2339/360-12, 20 Nov 72, same file, sec 2.

28. (S) Msg, JCS 2132 to CSA, CNO, CSAF, CMC, CINCPAC, and COMUSMACV, 182317Z Nov 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 4825 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV, CINCSAC et al.), 220021Z Nov 72; JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2. (TS) Msgs, JCS 4774 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV and COMUSMACTHAI), 212338Z Nov 72; JCS 5943 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 222136Z Nov 72; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

the DAO, coordinating directly with the Department of State, and keeping the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) informed. The next day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to establish the 21-man Attache Element, using in-country resources. They subsequently advised CINCPAC that the terms of reference for the DRSTO must accord with any cease-fire as ultimately accepted and that the military and civilian members of the DAO were not to function as advisers.[29]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff also forwarded to CINCPAC and CINCSAC the rules of engagement and operating authorities for a cease-fire that had been approved for planning, stressing that both the authorities and rules could be significantly affected by the provisions of the final cease-fire agreement. They notified the appropirate commanders that the current augmentation authorities for Southeast Asia were extended through 31 December 1972. The requirement for further extension beyond that date would be reviewed prior to the end of the year.[30]

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29. (TS) SM-577-72 to Dir, DIA, 20 Nov 72, Encl B to JCS 2028/65, 19 Nov 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 4580 to CINCPAC, 212036Z Nov 72 (derived from JCS 2028/65-1); JMF 245 (10 Nov 72). (TS) Msg, JCS 4825 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV, CINCSAC et al.), 220021Z Nov 72, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2.

30. (TS) Msgs; JCS 6101, 6123, 6131, 6133, and 6136 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC; 230012Z 230051Z, 230105Z, 230112Z, and 230121Z Nov 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 8680 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, CINCLANT, and USCINCRED, 25 Nov 72, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72. The substance of the rules of engagement and the operating authorities is not discussed since these were not the final approved versions. For coverage of both the rules and authorities as issued, see Chapter 14.

(C) Meantime, at the request of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had considered the civilian strength of the proposed DAO and examined two possible strength figures, 1,600 and 900. The Director, Joint Staff, drew up a proposed table of organization for 1,600 which he sent to ISA, warning that such a figure did not include personnel for intelligence, for civil operations and rural development, or for other non-DOD activites. Should a ceiling of 900 civilian personnel be imposed, the Director said, it would be necessary to increase contractor support at the risk of reduced control and management of RVNAF activities. He promised the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on this matter pending review of proposals from COMUSMACV and CINCPAC.[31]

(C) Ultimately, President Nixon reviewed and approved the cease-fire planning assumptions developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. Certainly, he must have done so before the implementation of the cease-fire, but it was only on 12 February 1973, more than two weeks after the Vietnam agreement entered into force, that the Secretary of Defense formally notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Presidental decision.[32]

(C) In planning the US withdrawal from South Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had envisioned use of US temporary duty personnel to assist in the

31. (TS) Memo, Actg ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 17 Nov 72, Att to JCS 2339/360-9, 17 Nov 72; Note to Control Division, "JCS 2339/369-13, DOD Civilian Personnel in the RVN, 22 Nov 72," 22 Nov 72; DJSM-2209-72 to ASD-(ISA), 22 Nov 72, Att to JCS 2339/360-15, 28 Nov 72; JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2.

32. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Feb 73, Att to JCS 2339/369-20, 13 Feb 73, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 3.

process. Accordingly, they had asked the Secretary of Defense to approve this assumption for planning purposes, and he had done so with the proviso requiring introduction of such personnel into South Vietnam during the period X-Day through X+60 to be approved by his office.[33] Subsequently, CINCPAC requested authorization for COMUSMACV to employ temporary duty personnel through X+59 under existing procedures, which did not require OSD approval, so long as the number of accountable personnel did not exceed the X-Day ceiling, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed this request to the Secretary of Defense on 6 December 1972. They assumed that the US imposed ceiling as of X-Day would continue in effect through X+59 and, thus, temporary duty personnel if not exceeding that ceiling could be placed in South Vietnam without violation of the cease-fire agreement.[34]

(C) The Secretary of Defense approved the JCS proposal on 13 December with the following caveat:

> I fully appreciate the delays and administrative workload which could result from clearing each and every TDY requirement with my office. However, all personnel involved must realize that the eyes of the world will be on the progress achieved during the withdrawal phase. Furthermore, an excessive delay in showing a marked reduction of US in-country strength could delay release of US POWs. Therefore, TDY must be held to an absolute minimun

33. See above, pp. 633-634, 637.
34. (TS) JCSM-515-72 to SecDef, 6 Dec 72 (derived from JCS 2472/846), JMF 911/374 (4 Dec 72).

and not must be allowed to hold US strength at or near the X-Day level until late in the 60-day period.[35]

Preparations for Mine Countermeasure Operations

(TS) In any suspension of hostile actions against North Vietnam, clearance of US mines in North Vietnamese waters would be a major task, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were readying appropriate plans simultaneously with the previously described cease-fire preparations. The Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet had already produced a mine countermeasures plan, nicknamed FORMATION SENTRY, in July 1972. It provided for clearance in the waters of Haiphong, Cam Pha, Hon Gai, Vinh, and Thanh Hoa. With the initiation of the intensive cease-fire planning in late October 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked for a revision of the FORMATION SENTRY plan to include the ports of Quang Khe and Dong Hoi as well as other bays, river mouths, and water approaches. They dispatched the appropriate directive to CINCPAC on 30 October 1972 and CINCPACFLT submitted the expanded plan, designated FORMATION SENTRY II, on 12 November.[36]

(TS) Meantime, on 2 November, the Secretary of Defense had ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be ready to implement the first phase of FORMATION SENTRY, pre-positioning US mine countermeasure forces in South Vietnamese waters close by North Vietnam to await

35. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Dec 72, Att to JCS 2472/846-1, 14 Dec 72, same file.

36. (TS) OCJCS Summary Sheet for CJCS, "FORMATION SENTRY (U)," 30 Oct 72; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 6968 to CINCPAC (info CINCPACFLT), 301713Z Oct 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 72. (TS) Msg, CINCPACFLT to CINCPAC, 120405Z Nov 72, JCS IN 98302, same file, Nov 72.

execute orders. Priority for clearance, the Secretary instructed, would be the Haiphong shipping channel and approaches and then the other main North Vietnamese ports, bays, rivers, and inland waterways. The Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the necessary order, and CINCPAC began movement of Helicopter Minesweep Squadron 12 (HM-12) to the Philippines. But on 10 November, at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suspended further positioning of mine clearance forces although allowing forces in transit to continue to the Philippines. They directed CINCPAC to be prepared to proceed with either of two alternatives--resumption of preparations for clearance operations or retrograde of assembled equipment to the United States.[37]

(TS) In the succeeding weeks of November and early December, cautious preparations for mine clearance continued although no forces were moved beyond the Philippines. The Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the movement of three minesweepers (MSOs) from the West Coast of the United States to Hawaii, and, subsequently, authorized the embarkation of a Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) with CH-53D helicopters aboard ships in Hawaii for possible movement to the Philippines. With respect to the mine countermeasure forces in the Philippines, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the reassembly of the helicopters of HM-12 and the conduct of local flight training to insure pilot and equipment readiness. At the request of the field commanders, the Joint Chiefs of Staff secured

37. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Mine Countermeasures Operations (Formation Sentry)," 2 Nov 72; (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 3689 and 2404 to CINCPAC, 040204Z and 102313Z Nov 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 72.

Secretary of Defense approval for modification of USMC CH-53D helicopters as required for mine clearance operations. In all these actions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to avoid any public notice, instructing CINCPAC not to make any announcement or answer any queries concerning the actions.[38]

(TS) The mine countermeasure forces gathered in the Philippines in early December 1972 were authorized to conduct pilot training and modify assigned helicopters as required for clearance operations. They could not, however, carry out actual training to assemble, test and tow airborne mine the equipment. Both CINCPACFLT and CINCPAC recommended such training and, on 11 December, Admiral Moorer told the Secretary of Defense that the inability to reassemble, test and tow sweep gear was having an adverse effect on the readiness of the mine countermeasure forces. Therefore Admiral Moorer requested authority for training with the mine countermeasures equipment in the Subic Bay with as little visibility as possible, but the Secretary turned down the request. In notifying CINCPAC of the decision, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did grant the field commander the authority needed to prevent deterioration of the sweep gear provided the equipment was not assembled, tested, or towed.[39]

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38. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 1960, 2006, and 5959 to CINCPAC, 181656Z, 181805Z, and 222158Z Nov 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Nov 72. (TS-EX) CM-2320-72 to SecDef, 23 Nov 72; (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "FORMATION SENTRY II," 29 Nov 72; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 4883 to CINCPAC, 301919Z Nov 72; same file.

39. (TS) Msg, CINCPACFLT to CINCPAC, 060655Z Dec 72, JCS IN 54479; (U) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 062236Z Dec 72, JCS IN 55089; (TS) Msg, JCS 7460 to CINCPAC 102015Z Dec 72; (TS-EX) CM-2356-72 to SecDef, 11 Dec 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 3232 to CINCPAC, 142326Z Dec 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72. SecDef action is indicated by a handwritten notation on CM-2356-72.

(TS) The Joint Staff was reluctant to accept the Secretary of Defense's decision, and on 20 December, the Operations Directorate (J-3) proposed to Admiral Moorer another request to the Secretary of Defense to reassemble, test, and tow the equipment at sea "over-the-horison" and out of sight of populated areas. Air strikes and reseeding of mines had now been resumed against North Vietnam in the LINEBACKER II action, and the Assistant to the Chairman, Vice Admiral John P. Weinel, did not wish to press such a request. He told Admiral Moorer:

> This does not seem the proper way to proceed at the moment.
>
> Conducting mine sweeping operations "over-the-horizon" will be known by every B girl in Olongapo and consequently to NVN.
>
> It doesn't make sense to be sending a tough signal in NVN with our air effort and at the same time send a soft signal with mine sweeping.
>
> The message to the B-Girls should be "all mine sweeping is off!"

Admiral Moorer agreed and no request went forward to the Secretary.[40]

(U) Meanwhile, in the course of the secret negotiations going on in Paris, North Vietnam presented the United States a draft protocol for mine clearance.

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40. (TS-EX) Draft CM-2391-72 to SecDef, n.d., attached to OCJCS Summary Sheet, 20 Dec 72, same file. Handwritten note on Register of Personnel Handling Classified Document (attached to draft CM-2391-72), "Readiness of FORMATION SENTRY II Mine Countermeasures (MCM) Forces (U)," 21 Dec 72, same file. Handwritten notation indicated that no action was taken.

Consisting of seven articles, the protocol required the United States to remove, deactivate permanently, or destroy all mines in "the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways of North Vietnam" with such action carried out "simultaneously in all the mined areas." The draft further provided that North Vietnam and the United States should reach an agreement on a priority order for each area and that the United States should furnish its plan for mine clearance to North Vietnam. With regard to what was termed "waterways" the draft protocol called for North Vietnam to join the United States in destroying or removing mines with the United States supplying the means of surveying, removal, and destruction. Finally, the proposed protocol required the United States to respect the sovereignty of North Vietnam.[41]

(C) At the request of the President, Admiral Moorer reviewed the draft protocol. Although further negotiation and various modifications were needed, the Chairman believed that the US obligation for clearing coastal waters could be fulfilled within 210 days of an execute order. Clearing inland waters would take an additional 130 days. The protocol should require only the "neutralization" or "destruction" of mines, since "removal" was unduly hazardous and constituted an "imprudent risk" to clearance crews. Because both personnel and equipment were limited, Admiral Moorer thought it impossible to clear all areas simultaneously.

41. NVN Draft Protocol on Removal, Permanent Deactivation or Destruction of Mines in Territorial Waters, Ports, Harbors and Waterways of North Vietnam, n.d., Att to (TS) Ltr, DepAsst to President for NSA to Mil Asst to SecDef, 15 Dec 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72.

Concerning destruction of ordnance in "waterways," which Admiral Moorer interpreted as meaning inland waterways, he urged that this task remain'the responsibility of North Vietnam, with the United States supplying appropriate equipment and training. In addition, he found the language of the draft imprecise in its provision for US respect for the sovereignty of North Vietnam. He recommended revision to insure North Vietnamese guarantee of the safety of all US personnel on or over North Vietnamese territory insofar as possible and the exemption of US personnel from North Vietnamese civil and criminal jurisdiction. In return, the Unitd States would pledge its forces to respect the laws of North Vietnam and to abstain from any activity inconsistent with the spirit of the agreement. Finally the Chairman recommended that a mine countermeasures expert be available to the negotiators when the protocol was considered again.[42]

Planning for the Four-Party Joint Military Commission

(TS) While the Joint Chiefs of Staff were preparing for the military aspects of a cease-fire, the Administration discussed with the South Vietnamese the establishment of the supervisory machinery provided for in the October cease-fire agreement. On 30 October 1972, the Department of State informed Ambassador Bunker that planning should be undertaken in Saigon to have supervisory machinery in place as soon as a cease-fire went into effect. United States officials in Saigon were to

42. (TS) Memo, DepAsst to Pres for NSA to MilAsst to SecDef, 15 Dec 72; (TS) CM-2382-72 to SecDef, 20 Dec 72; (TS) Memo, MilAsst to SecDef to DepAsst to Pres for NSA, 20 Dec 72; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72, (In the final version of the protocol, Admiral Moorer's comments were only partially reflected; see Chapter 13, pp. 708-709.

plan for a two-party joint military commission, composed of the GVN and the PRG, and a four party commission that added the United States and North Vietnam. Since difficulties in obtaining South Vietnamese agreement were anticipated, the Department of State directed Ambassador Bunker to bring General Weyand into the planning. The General was to form a "very small" planning staff to work out the details of a four-party joint military commission (FPJMC).[43]

(TS) General Weyand chose two officers of his staff to work with him and his Chief of Staff, Major General G. H. Woodward, USA, and by 3 November 1972, this group had drafted an outline for the organization and operation of the four-party joint military commission. The planning group called for a Central Commission in Saigon, composed of a general officer representative from each party, assisted by a secretary. Below the Central Commission were four Regional Control Groups, one for each of the four Military Regions of South Vietnam. These groups would be headed by a colonel from each party and would include small operations and administrative staffs. Each of the control groups would have five control teams, composed of a single representative of each party, to supervise activities in outlying areas.[44]

(TS) Ambassador Bunker forwarded the working group draft to Washington and received back further instructions requesting development of detailed working

43. (TS-EX) Final Rpt, US Del, Four-Party Joint Military Commission (Tab K), n.d., Att to JCS 2472/873, 20 Jun 72, JMF 911/533 (20 Jul 73) (hereinafter referred to as Final Rpt, FPJMC). (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, p. G-13.

44. (TS-EX) Final Rpt, US Del, FPJMC.

procedures and concepts to implement a cease-fire agreement. General Weyand's group went to work again and, after consultations with General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the RVNAF Joint General Staff, prepared a draft military commander's agreement containing 87 articles. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not consulted during this process; General Weyand's channel with Washington was through the Ambassador and the Department of State. On 10 November 1972, however, General Weyand sent a copy of the draft commanders' agreement to Admiral Moorer.[45] On 10 November 1972, Major General Haig and several other members of the NSC staff arrived in Saigon. General Weyand's small group met with the NSC planners and various revisions and changes were made in the draft commanders' agreement.[46]

(TS) The Department of State reviewed the documents produced in Saigon and prepared alternative drafts of the protocol for the four-party commission and the commanders' agreement. The Washington versions were brief and would do no more than establish the commission and provide a general description of its organization and mission, leaving the commission to arrange its working procedures. The Secretary of State asked Ambasador Bunker on 17 November to have General Weyand obtain the concurrence of General Vien in these revisions. The two generals did discuss the revised documents, and certain changes were made in them. Thereafter both the draft protocol and the commanders'

45. The Final Report, US Del, FPJMC (Tab K, p. 7), specifically stated: "There was no reaction or exchange of ideas between the Joint Chiefs and General Weyand during this period . . . ."

46. (TS-EX) Final Rpt, US Del, FPJMC.

agreement were tabled in a private negotiating session between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho in Paris.[47]

(C) On 1 December 1972, the Secretary of Defense noted the progress in planning for a four-party joint military commission. He believed it essential for the United States to be ready to field its element of the commission immediately following announcement of a cease-fire. Accordingly, he requested Admiral Moorer to supply detailed plans for the US element, including assignment by name of US personnel and a nomination for the senior US representative to the commission.[48]

(C) Admiral Moorer replied to the Secretary on 7 December, furnishing the main features of the plan already developed by General Weyand. He nominated Major General Woodward to be the Chief of the US Delegation to the four-party joint military commission and Brigadier General J. A. Wickham, USA, to be Deputy. He advised the Secretary that all US personnel for the commission could be in place within 24 hours of an implementing directive. Secretary Laird approved the plan and nominations on 22 December.[49]

(TS) Meantime, during private negotiating sessions in Paris in early December, Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho considered a cease-fire and the machinery to supervise it. They discussed this matter in light of the drafts prepared by General Weyand's working group

47. Ibid. (S-EX) Msg, State 209476 to Saigon, 170039Z Nov 72, CJCS File 323.3 MACV (Nov 70-Dec 72).
48. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Four-Party Joint Military Commission," 1 Dec 72, JMF 800 (1 Dec 72).
49. (S) CM-2343-72 to SecDef, 7 Dec 72; (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Four-Party Joint Military Commission," 22 Dec 72; JMF 800 (1 Dec 72).

and of an alternative draft submitted by the North Vietnamese, which combined into a single document provisions for both the two and four party commissions with an outline of the organization and functions. The US delegation in Paris forwarded the North Vietnamese protocol to Saigon on 12 December for review where General Weyand's planning group found it unacceptable. Consequently, this group developed a revised proposal, but the breakdown of the negotiations and the resumption of bombing on 18 December precluded further action on this matter.[50]

The Negotiations in Late 1972

(C) While planning to implement a cease-fire progressed in November and December 1972, the negotiations proceeded in an effort to reach a peaceful settlement that included a cease-fire. Following the reelection of President Nixon on 7 November, there was widespread optimism that diplomatic efforts would move swiftly to a successful conclusion, but this expectation was not fulfilled. The semi-public Paris meetings throughout the rest of November were brief and uneventful, obviously awaiting further developments at the private level.[51]

(U) Meantime, the United States and North Vietnam had agreed that Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho would meet again later in November. President Nixon was particularly anxious to be assured of President Thieu's cooperation before proceeding with further negotiations, and he dispatched Major General Alexander M. Haig, USA, to Saigon on 9 November with a letter for

50. (TS-EX) Final Rpt, US Del FPJMC.
51. (C) Msgs, US Del France 21321, 21976, and 22913 to State; 9, 16, and 30 Nov 72; JCS IN 92476, 16666, and 42014.

the South Vietnamese president. The United States would exert "maximum efforts," President Nixon wrote, to secure the changes in the draft October settlement that the South Vietnamese desired. He cautioned, however, that the new US Congress convening in January would be "even more dovish" than the current one. Consequently, if a settlement was not reached before January, and should it appear that the South Vietnamese were the obstacle in achieving one, the new Congress might cut off funds for South Vietnam.[52]

(U) In both discussions with General Haig and a letter replying to President Nixon, President Thieu repeated his earlier objections, especially with respect to the issue of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. President Nixon responded on 14 November. He repeated his intention to pursue the changes desired by President Thieu. "But far more important than what we say in the agreement," President Nixon continued,

> is what we do in the event the enemy renews its aggression. You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action.[53]

(U) Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resumed their private talks on 20 November. They continued their discussions for five days but made no progress except to agree to meet again within several days.[54]

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52. Richard Nixon, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (1978), p. 718.

53. Ibid. Ltr, Pres Nixon to Pres Thieu, 14 Nov 72, released in Washington on 30 Apr 75 by a former minister of the Thieu government, printed in the NY Times, 1 May 75, 16.

54. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 720-723.

(U) At this point, President Nixon believed that the next session between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho would be crucial. Either an agreement would be reached or the talks broken off and, in the latter eventuality, the United States would have to resume strong military action against North Vietnam. As an indication of US "good faith and desire" to reach a settlement, President Nixon further restricted the bombing of North Vietnam. In implementation of that decision, the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed the field commanders on 26 November to limit air action against North Vietnam to 100 tactical and 30 B-52 sorties per day in the presently authorized area between the DMZ and 20° north.[55]

(U) On 29 November, President Nixon met at the White House with Nguyen Phu Duc, President Thieu's representative at the Paris talks, in a further effort to convince the South Vietnamese of the necessity for completing an agreement. In what Richard Nixon later described as "a brutally tough presentation," he again emphasized that, if an agreement was not concluded by January, the new Congress might end the war by cutting off further funds.[56]

(U) The following day, 30 November, President Nixon met with Dr. Kissinger, General Haig, Secretary Laird, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss military plans in the event that the talks were broken off or that an agreement once concluded was subsequently violated by the North Vietnamese. For the former situation, the participants discussed bombing strikes against North

55. Nixon, Memoirs, p. 723. (TS) Msg, JCS 9222 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 261749Z Nov 72.
56. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 723-724.

Vietnam. For the latter, the President was "adamant" that the US response whould be "swift and strong."[57]

(U) According to plan, Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met again in Paris on 4 December. They continued their daily sessions for ten days but failed to resolve remaining differences. On 13 December the two negotiators broke off their talks, and Dr. Kissinger returned to Washington. In a terse statement at the Paris airport, Dr. Kissinger said that he was returning home and would exchange messages with Le Duc Tho as to whether a further meeting was necessary.[58]

(U) On arrival in Washington on 14 December, Dr. Kissinger reported to the President. Mr. Nixon was now convinced that only the "strongest action" would convince the North Vietnamese "that negotiating a fair settlement . . . was a better option for them than continuing the war." Accordingly, he decided to resume full-scale military action, both bombing and renewed mining against North Vietnam--a decision that would be implemented several days later.[59]

(U) On 16 December, Dr. Kissinger held a press conference to explain the US position. While acknowledging that the South Vietnamese objections to a

57. Nixon, Memoirs, p. 724. No record of this meeting with the President has been found in the files of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The NY Times reported it the following day stating that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had "signed on" to the peace settlement then being negotiated with North Vietnam. NY Times, 1 Dec 72, 1. Admiral Moorer remembered the meeting and confirmed the account of it given by former President Nixon in his Memoirs. Interview, Robert J. Watson with Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, 16 May 1979.

58. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 724-733. NY Times, 4 Dec 72, 1; 13 Dec 72, 1; 14 Dec 72, 1.

59. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 733-734.

settlement were serious, Dr. Kissinger insisted that North Vietnam was to blame for the current impasse. He recounted the frustrations in his recent negotiations with Le Duc Tho. The 20-25 November session had gone well, and Dr. Kissinger returned to Paris on 4 December confident that two or three more days of effort could resolve the remaining issues. But then the North Vietnamese proceeded to withdraw agreed changes and to raise issues anew where agreement was already complete. One question would finally be settled only to have Le Duc Tho bring up another or reopen an old one. Dr. Kissinger described several remaining problems, ones he had previously described in the "peace is at hand" news conference on 26 October. "Linguistic difficulties" persisted. Changes were discussed and made in the English text, but upon examination, it was often discovered that the changes had not been incorporated into the Vietnamese text. Another was the question of international machinery to supervise the cease-fire. The United States wanted a large force with freedom of movement while North Vietnam favored a much smaller body restricted in means of transportation and communication.

(U) Dr. Kissinger stated that, although it was "tempting" to continue the talks, the President had decided to break them off. Mr. Nixon felt that it was unfair to hold the prospects of continuing talks before the American people in light of North Vietnam's lack of cooperation and its ploy of repeatedly bringing up one further new issue just when agreement seemed complete. Dr. Kissinger summed up the current status as follows:

> We are now in this curious position: Great progress has been made, even in the talks. The only thing that is lacking is one decision in Hanoi to settle the remaining issues in terms that two weeks previously they had already agreed to.
>
> So we are not talking of an issue of principle that is totally unacceptable.
>
> . . . . .
>
> So we are in a position where peace can be near but peace requires decision. This is why we wanted to restate once more what our basic attitude is.[60]

LINEBACKER II

(U) The decision to resume full-scale bombing and mining of North Vietnam reflected a political decision rather than a military necessity. With the suspension of the bombing of North Vietnam above 20° north on 22 October, the United States had proceeded with air operations, both tactical and B-52, in North Vietnam below that limit during November and the early weeks of December. But, while the field commanders and Admiral Moorer had sought various modifications of authorities within this approved area, they made no recommendations for renewed bombing in the rest of North Vietnam.

(TS) As it began to grow apparent by late November that the North Vietnamese were not serious about the negotiations, President Nixon and his advisers began to consider military pressure as a means of forcing the other side into a more conciliatory position. As

60. News Conference by Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, 16 Dec 72, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 18 Dec 72, pp. 1764-1770. Another version of this interview, with minor differences in language, appears in NY Times, 17 Dec 72, 34.

already discussed above, they considered such an eventuality in the meeting on 30 November. Subsequently, at the request of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff prepared a contingency plan for intensive air and naval operations throughout North Vietnam. Designated PRIMING CHARGE, it was designed to impose maximum damage on the enemy's "warmaking capability" while also producing a "mass shock effect in a psychological context." This plan included some 58 targets throughout North Vietnam selected in order of priority to allow maximum B-52 and tactical air concentration. It also provided for naval gunfire to complement the air attacks and mine reseeding in the principal deep-water ports of North Vietnam. The Acting Chairman, General John D. Ryan, USAF, who forwarded PRIMING CHARGE to the Secretary of Defense on 7 December, estimated that all the included targets could be completely destroyed within seven days, though he cautioned that poor weather typical of December might require a longer implementation time. General Ryan was ready to execute the operations within 48 hours of authorization.[61]

(TS) Subsequently, Dr. Kissinger, who was in Paris posed a number of questions about expanded operations against North Vietnam. How soon could a plan be prepared, he wondered, for "a limited duration operation" against "military and high psychological impact targets" with emphasis on sites not hit before? He also asked about the reaction time required to reseed the minefields. "Should we have a separate order to mine," he continued, and were diversionary bombing attacks necessary in conjunction with reseeding operations? In a memorandum of 13 December, Secretary

61. (TS-EX) CM-2344-72 to SecDef, 7 Dec 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72.

Laird informed Dr. Kissinger of the PRIMING CHARGE plan, which had already been forwarded to the White House, stating that it could be executed within 48 hours. The mine reseeding would also require 48 hours, Mr. Laird said, if MK-52 destructors were used, though MK-36s could be reseeded on short notice. The Secretary favored a separate order for the mining, but believed that diversionary bombing, although desirable, was not required for mining operations.[62]

(TS) On the following day, 14 December, Admiral Moorer gave the Secretary of Defense some further information on PRIMING CHARGE. All B-52 aircraft would carry maximum ordnance loads and the B-52 effort would be "surged" to the fullest extent possible on the first day of the attack. He recommended a three-day strike option as "an absolute minimum" in view of the weather conditions over North Vietnam.[63]

(TS) Dr. Kissinger had now returned from Paris convinced of the need for military action to move the North Vietnamese toward serious negotiations, and the President decided to proceed with this approach. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC on 14 December: (1) to conduct "reseeding mine laying operations" in minefield segments 2111A and 2111B in the Haiphong channel prior to 160400Z December, with all mines set to self-destruct within 116 days; (2) to resume tactical photographic reconnaissance above 20° north upon completion of the mining. Later in the evening of 14 December, they alerted CINCPAC and CINCSAC to prepare for a three-day, maximum effort air

62. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, "Southeast Asia Air Operations," 13 Dec 72, CJCS File 091 SEA Air Ops, Jul 72-Jan 73.

63. (TS-EX) CM-2371-72 to SecDef, 14 Dec 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72.

strike, using both tactical and B-52 assets against 32 targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. They wanted the attck to begin at approximately 171120Z December and authorized naval gunfire above 20° north to complement the air effort. The following day, however, the dates for all these operations were postponed by 24 hours.[64]

(TS) Admiral Moorer issued the execute order for expanded air operations against North Vietnam on 16 December, instructing CINCPAC and CINCSAC to carry out an attack in accordance with the guidance provided on 14 December. The operation was to begin at approximately 181200Z December, and the objective was "maximum destruction of selected military targets in the vicinity of Hanoi/Haiphong." The Chairman directed the commanders to use all resources that could be spared without "critical detriment" to operations in South Vietnam. All B-52 aircraft were to carry maximum ordnance loads and restrike of approved targets was authorized. Admiral Moorer also authorized naval gunfire along the North Vietnamese coast to complement the air strikes. Later, on 18 December, the Chairman also ordered renewed mine and destructor seedings in North Vietnamese waters.[65]

(U) Accordingly, the United States resumed both mining and full-fledged bombing of North Vietnam on 18

64. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3028 to CINCPAC, 141958Z Dec 72; (TS) Msg, JCS 3038 to CINCPAC, 142015Z Dec 72; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3348 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 150147Z Dec 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 4219 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 151816Z Dec 72.

65. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5384 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 170010Z Dec 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72. (TS) Msg, JCS 6292 to CINCPAC, 181617Z Dec 72.

December 1972. In the air attack, designated LINEBACKER II, B-52 and tactical fighter bombers carried out an all-night mission against the Hanoi area, and the Haiphong channel and waters around Cam Pha and Hon Gai were reseeded in operations that continued under the name POCKET MONEY. In announcing these actions, the White House Press Secretary stated that the bombing and mining of North Vietnam would cease when all prisoners were released and an internationally supervised cease-fire was in force. Subsequently, after a peace agreement was reached, President Nixon elaborated on this decision, confirming that he had ordered the renewed bombing and mining in order to break the diplomatic deadlock.[66]

(TS) On the day that LINEBACKER II began, CINCPAC asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to add nine more targets to the approved list to provide adequate targets for tactical air strikes in the event of bad weather. Admiral Moorer incorporated these nine into a list of 50 additional targets he presented to the Secreary of Defense on 19 December. Of this total, 43 were in Hanoi and Haiphong (26 within and 17 without the control areas) and 7 were in the Chinese buffer zone. Admiral Moorer asked approval of these additional targets in order to maintain a concentrated effort against the Hanoi and Haiphong areas as well as to allow tactical air to take advantage of localized breaks in the weather. Secretary Laird approved 39 of the targets that same day and then immediately afterwards, approved five more in the Chinese buffer zone.

66. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) p. B-14. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, p. 192. NY Times, 18 Dec 72, 1; 19 Dec 72, 1. Public Papers, Nixon, 1973, p. 235.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed the new authorizations to the field, stipulating that the five strikes in the buffer zone were contingent upon weather that would allow visual and/or laser guided bomb attack and avoidance of overflight of the PRC border.[67]

(TS) The initial directive for LINEBACKER II called for a three-day attack, but the President and his advisers quickly decided to extend the bombing. Accordingly, with Secretary of Defense approval, the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC and CINCSAC on 19 December to continue air and naval gunfire operations against North Vietnam until further notice. The primary area of concentration remained the Hanoi and Haiphong area (Route Packages 6A and 6B) with attack on the previously authorized targets.[68]

(TS) Thereupon the US air operations against North Vietnam continued without interruption until 24 December. On that date, the United States initiated a Christmas standdown in all air, naval gunfire, and mining operations against North Vietnam for the period 241700Z to 260459Z December 1972. This bombing halt in North Vietnam overlapped a holiday cease-fire in South Vietnam from 241000Z to 251000Z.[69]

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67. (TS-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 180808Z Dec 72, JCS IN 75389; (TS-EX) CM-2383-72 to SecDef, 19 Dec 72; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7656 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 192058Z Dec 72 (handwritten notation of SecDef approval on draft msg); (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7850 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 200021Z Dec 72 (handwritten notation of SecDef approval on draft msg); CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72.

68. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7807 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and COMUSMACV, 192320Z Dec 72 (draft msg had handwitten notation of SecDef approval), CJCS File 091 SEA, Jul-Dec 72.

69. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3491 to CINCPAC, 231842Z Dec 72.

(S) In the LINEBACKER II campaign to this point, US planes had attacked communications and transport facilities, command and control sites, road and rail targets, power plants, MIG bases, SAM and AAA sites, and air defense radars. In all more than 1,000 tactical and 435 B-52 sorties had been flown against North Vietnam in the seven-day period. The B-52 strikes had occurred in two phases. From 18 to 20 December US pilots directed 315 of the sorties against 11 target complexes in the Hanoi area, and thereafter 120 sorties were launched against targets not only in Hanoi but also in Haiphong, Long Dun Kep, and Thai Nguyen as well as against various SAM sites.[70]

(TS) The United States had no intention of extending the Christmas standdown in the LINEBACKER II attacks, and on 23 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed both CINCPAC and CINCSAC to resume the air campaign against North Vietnam "with maximum effort" on 26 December. The major objectives were: first, to complete "an achievable level of damage" against approved targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong complex and in the Chinese buffer zone; second, to isolate Hanoi from the rest of North Vietnam; third, to resume destruction of the northeast LOCs. The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted a surge in both tactical and B-52 strikes on the initial day of the resumption and sustained pressure on the enemy thereafter. They told CINCPAC to use tactical air to maintain "round-the-clock" pressure by means of both visual and all-weather bombing systems. In accord with the JCS directive, the United States

70. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) pp. B-14 - B-15.

renewed the air attack on North Vietnam on 26 December with a massive surge of tactical and B-52 strikes against the Hanoi and Haiphong areas.[71]

(TS) With the resumption of LINEBACKER II, several additional authorities were granted for operations against North Vietnam. On 21 December, Admiral Moorer had requested removal of the existing restriction against psychological operations in North Vietnam above 20° north and the Secretary granted this request on 23 December. The authority became effective with the resumption of LINEBACKER II and would continue for the duration of that operation. In response to another request by Admiral Moorer, Deputy Secretary of Defense Rush approved on 27 December the laying of destructors in minefield segments not previously seeded in the Hon Gai and Cam Pha areas.[72]

(TS) Another new authority involved the attack of KOMAR-class guided missile patrol boats. The recently resumed photo reconnaissance of North Vietnam above 20° north had detected four such vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin, probably offloaded from Soviet merchant ships. Each KOMAR boat, as Admiral Moorer explained to the Secretary of Defense on 17 December, had two STYX missile launchers, giving the North Vietnamese an antiship missile capability. Pending conclusive evidence of the transfer of the KOMARS to the North

71. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3580 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 232247Z Dec 72, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) p. B-15.

72. (TS) CM-2385-72 to SecDef, 21 Dec 72; (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Authority for PSYOPS against North Vietnam," 23 Dec 72; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3492 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 231847Z Dec 72. (S-EX) CM-2398-72 to SecDef, 24 Dec 72; (TS-EX) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, "POCKET MONEY Seeding/Reseeding," 27 Dec 72; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7171 to CINCPAC, 282043Z Dec 72; CJCS File 092 Vietnam, Dec 72.

Vietnamese, Admiral Moorer had requested authority to strike any KOMAR patrol boat in North Vietnamese internal or teritorial waters south of the Chinese buffer zone as well as those displaying the North Vietnamese flag or showing "hostile intent" in the Gulf of Tonkin west of 108° east. The Secretary granted this authority and the Joint Chiefs of Staff passed it to CINCPAC on 27 December.[73]

(TS) In anticipation of the continuing campaign against North Vietnam after the Christmas standdown, Admiral Moorer began a series of requests for validation of additional targets. The new targets would allow greater flexibility for B-52 and tactical air strikes in the northeastern portion of North Vietnam. Admiral Moorer presented the first list of 12 additional targets on 23 December, and the Secretary approved three as requested, one for tactical strike only, and three for strike by guided weapons; then on 25 December, the Chairman asked approval of seven more targets and the Secretary approved; on 26 December, Admiarl Moorer sought approval to strike two railroad sidings and Gia Lam airfield outside of Hanoi, and Mr. Laird approved the two rail targets but not the airfield. To reduce target validation to a more manageable system, Admiral Moorer proposed the following procedure to the Secretary on 26 December: (1) validated targets would be struck and restruck to attain the desired level of destruction; (2) targets within the Hanoi and Haiphong control circles and the Chinese buffer zone and not previously authorized would be submitted to the Secretary; (3) targets approved for LINEBACKER I and outside of the control

73. (TS-EX) CM-2376A-72 to SecDef, 17 Dec 72, CJCS CM Chron File. (TS) Msg, JCS 6514 to CINCPAC, 280325Z Dec 72.

circles or the Chinese buffer zone might be authorized by the Chairman on a case-by-case basis; (4) all new B-52 targets would require Secretary of Defense validation; (5) selected armed reconnaissance would be conducted in area around Hanoi and Haiphong to the Chinese buffer zone, particularly along the northeast LOC, including high value fleeting targets outside restricted circles and the Chinese buffer zone. Secretary Laird concurred in this procedure on 27 December, at the same time approving an additional B-52 target nominated by Admiral Moorer.[74]

(C) By 29 December, President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger had received indication of North Vietnamese willingness to resume serious negotiations and, with no advance warning the President ordered a halt of all US air and naval actions in North Vietnam above 20° north. Admiral Moorer passed the necessary instruction to CINCPAC and CINCSAC at 291407Z terminating LINEBACKER II. The cessation was to be effective 292359Z December though air and naval operations, including mining and naval gunfire, would continue below the 20th Parallel. Admiral Moorer authorized the commanders to conclude any search and rescue efforts underway

74. (TS-EX) CM-2399-72 to SecDef, 23 Dec 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 4010 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 241739Z Dec 72. (TS-EX) CM-2405-72 to SecDef, 25 Dec 72. (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "LINE BACKER II Strike Authorization Request," 26 Dec 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 4829 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 261709Z Dec 72. (TS-EX) CM-2402-72 to SecDef, 26 Dec 72. (TS-EX) CM-2403-72 to SecDef, 26 Dec 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5911 to CINCPAC, 271710Z Dec 72. (TS) CM-2406-72 to SecDef, 26 Dec 72 (has handwritten notation of SecDef concurrence). (TS-EX) CM-2407-72 to SecDef, 27 Dec 72. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 6320 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 272326Z Dec 72. All in CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Dec 72.

at the time of the halt. He did not want the commanders to discuss the decision to stop the bombing with the press, directing them to "stonewall" all queries with the reply "we do not discuss on-going military operations." Finally, Admiral Moorer asked CINCPAC to hand-deliver a copy of this instruction to Secretary Laird who was in Hawaii at that time. On the following day, 30 December, the President's deputy press secretary announced the bombing halt. He gave no further details, stating only that Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho would resume talks on 8 January.[75]

(S) The final four days of LINEBACKER II, following the Christmas pause, continued the B-52 and tactical air strikes in the Hanoi, Haiphong, and Chinese buffer zone areas. Transportation, communication, power generating, and air defense sites were struck and US planes flew more than 300 B-52 sorties against 13 target complexes. Overall, LINEBACKER II caused serious damage in North Vietnam, and both military assessments and press reports revealed "very heavy" destruction in the target areas. But, if the United States inflicted considerable damage in LINEBACKER II, it also received the same in terms of losses of aircraft and personnel. During the twelve-day campaign, the enemy downed 13 US tactical aircraft. More significantly, however, was the enemy destruction of B-52s. Heretofore, only one B-52 had been lost to enemy action in the Southeast Asian operations,[76] but during

75. (TS) Msg, JCS 7826 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 291407Z Dec 72. NY Times, 31 Dec 72, 3.

76. The United States had employed B-52 aircraft in Southeast Asia since June 1965, but none had been lost to enemy action until 22 November 1972 when one was downed by a SAM in the lower part of North Vietnam. See (S-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, pp. 165-166.

LINEBACKER II, enemy SAMs downed 15 of the strategic bombers. In addition, US aircrew casualties during the expanded bombing of December amounted to 93 missing with 31 reported captured.[77]

(U) The LINEBACKER II campaign produced a public outcry both in the United States and abroad. From the time of the initial strikes on 18 December, the North Vietnamese repeatedly charged the United States with the destruction of civilian targets, claiming damage to hospitals, prisons, cultural and social institutions, and suburban areas with thousands of civilians killed or injured. Moreover, the North Vietnamese press agency announced that the US raids on Hanoi had struck a number of foreign missions, including the embassies of Cuba, Egypt, India, Bulgaria, East Germany, and Albania. Spokesmen at COMUSMACV's headquarters in Saigon, however, insisted that the US strikes were directed only against military targets.[78]

(U) The reaction of North Vietnam's supporters was as might have been expected. The People's Republic of China protested damage to a Chinese freighter anchored in Haiphong harbor and charged the United States with "a new barbarous crime." Subsequently, the Chinese promised to support North Vietnam as long as the United States proceeded in its war of aggression. The Soviet Union also denounced the "barbarian acts" of the United States, calling for an end of the bombing and a prompt agreement for a peaceful settlement.[79]

77. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) p. B-15. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1972, pp. 164-166. NY Times, 28 Dec 72, 1; 31 Dec 72, 1. Knappman, South Vietnam, pp. 217-220.

78. NY Times, 22 Dec 72, 1; 26 Dec 72, 8; 28 Dec 72, 1, 2; 29 Dec 72, 1, 3. Knappman, South Vietnam, pp. 211-213.

79. NY Times, 20 Dec 72, 2; 21 Dec 72, 16; 22 Dec 72, 1, 10, 12. Knappman, South Vietnam, p. 21.

(U) Elsewhere in the world, Pope Paul IV deplored the bombing and called for patient negotiations for peace. At the United Nations, Secretary General Waldheim similarly asked for renewed efforts to end the war. Swedish Premier Olof Palme, an established critic of US policy in Vietnam, compared the new bombing of North Vietnam to the Nazi atrocities in World War II, and the United States responded by asking Sweden not to replace its ambassador in Washington who was returning home in January.[80]

(U) In the United States, the bombing rekindled dissent by the war critics as well. In the Senate, Democratic Senators Mansfield, Muskie, McGovern, and Tunney and Republicans Javits, Saxbe, and Case all decried the President's action. Protests occurred in New York and various other cities scattered throughout the country, and 41 religious leaders issued a pastoral letter on 22 December condemning the bombing and calling for an immediate end of the war based on the proposed agreement of the previous October. At the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D. C., a letter was circulated and signed by many participants criticizing the bombing as an "outrageous misuse of the fruit of science for death and destruction." The bombing halt on 29 December, however, stilled the criticism and now, both in the United States and around the world, all eagerly awaited the resumption of the negotiations.[81]

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80. NY Times, 21 Dec 72, 16; 23 Dec 72, 1; 24 Dec 72, 4. Knappman, South Vietnam, pp. 213, 218-219.

81. NY Times, 20 Dec 72, 15; 21 Dec 72, 16; 23 Dec 72, 1, 7; 29 Dec 72, 3. Knappman, South Vietnam, pp. 213-214, 217-218.

CHAPTER 13

THE AGREEMENT

The Talks Resume

(U) On 26 December 1972, the day the United States resumed LINEBACKER II after a brief Christmas stand-down, President Nixon received a message from the North Vietnamese. Although condemning the bombing, they indicated readiness to continue the negotiations. They did not insist on a bombing halt as a precondition and suggested that Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho meet in Paris on 8 January. In reply, President Nixon proposed that technical talks begin on 2 January, if the Kissinger-Tho meeting was to be delayed until 8 January. He also offered to halt the air attacks above 20° north once arrangements for the meetings were complete. The North Vietnamese accepted the US proposal on 28 December, confirming the 2 and 8 January dates. Accordingly, President Nixon restricted the bombing of North Vietnam on 29 December[1] and, the following day, the United States publicly announced the resumption of the negotiations.[2]

(U) In accord with the agreed plan, US and North Vietnamese "technical experts" met in Paris on 2 January for discussions on enforcement of a cease-fire. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William H. Sullivan traveled from Washington to lead a US team of five. The North Vietnamese delegation was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. The discussions continued for four successive days in suburban Paris, meeting alternately in a house chosen by North

1. See pp. 675-676.
2. Richard Nixon, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (1978), p. 741. NY Times, 31 Dec 72, 3.

Vietnam and then one selected by the United States. No public statements were issued at the conclusion of the daily sessions and neither delegation commented on the progress of the talks. But, by the conclusion of the meeting on 5 January, the two sides had engaged in nearly 30 hours of discussions, indicating the seriousness and level of detail of these technical talks.[3]

(U) Meantime, on 4 January, the United States, the Governments of North and South Vietnam, and the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government reconvened their weekly plenary peace talks. Ambassador William J. Porter and Pham Dang Lam represented the United States and South Vietnam, but Xuan Thuy and Mme. Binh, chief delegates of North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government did not attend and were represented by their deputies. The allied side set forth its standard position calling for the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese forces from the south, restoration of the DMZ, and acknowledgment of the existence of two sovereign states in Vietnam. The communist side responded by criticizing the December bombing and demanding the immediate signature of the October accord.[4]

(U) South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu had greeted the resumed talks with restraint. At a New Year's reception at the Presidential Palace, he had said that his country wanted "a durable, long-lasting peace, not just an armistice which the Communists can exploit to renew their aggression." Otherwise, he made no comment on the renewed negotiations. He did, however, dispatch two diplomats to foreign capitals to

3. NY Times, 3 Jan 73, 1; 4 Jan 73, 3; 5 Jan 73, 3; 6 Jan 73, 2; 9 Jan 73, 12.
4. (C) Msgs, US Del France 198 and 260 to State, 4 Jan 73, JCS IN 13922 and 14400.

generate support for his stand on the sovereignty of South Vietnam. Subsequently, on 4 January, he announced that he was sending five South Vietnamese senators to Washington. Unofficial reports indicated that this mission would attempt to persuade the US Congress to continue aid for South Vientnam.[5]

(U) In yet another attempt to persuade the South Vietnamese president to accept a possible agreement, President Nixon wrote to him on 5 January. He assured President Thieu that the United States would present the South Vietnamese views to the communists. With respect to the question of North Vietnamese forces in the south, however, Mr. Nixon was not too optimistic that South Vietnamese desires would be accommodated. He cautioned President Thieu that, if the two outstanding substantive issues relating to the DMZ and the method of signature of an agreement could be resolved, and if acceptable supervisory machinery could be arranged, the United States would proceed to conclude a settlement. President Nixon went on to warn:

> The gravest consequence would then ensue if your government chose to reject the agreement and split off from the United States. . .
>
> As we enter this new round of talks, I hope that our countries will now show a united front. It is imperative for our common objectives that your government take no further actions that complicate our task and would made more difficult the acceptance of the settlement by all parties.

Once again, President Nixon promised further support if South Vietnam accepted the agreement, stating:

5. NY Times, 2 Jan 73, 1; 5 Jan 73, 2.

> You have my assurance of continued assistance in the post-settlement period and that we will respond with full force should the settlement be violated by North Vietnam.[6]

(C) In anticipation of the renewed negotiations, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned US field commanders against actions indicating preparation for a settlement in Vietnam. "Until a cease-fire is actually signed," he told CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and Deputy COMUSMACV on 6 January, "great care must be exercised that we do not give the wrong 'signal' to Hanoi," The commanders must guard against planning that, if known to North Vietnamese leaders might convince them the United States had decided on a cease-fire regardless of the cost. Recognizing the necessity to proceed with certain planning, Admiral Moorer advised the commanders that "a fine sense of judgment" was required to avoid activities that could give the North Vietnamese the wrong impression. Specifically, he ordered holding in abeyance movement of advance parties of the US Support Activities Group/7th Air Force to Thailand or movement of elements of the Joint Casualty Resolution Center. In addition, any planning with third countries was to be conducted with care.[7]

(U) Dr. Kissinger arrived in Paris on 7 January for his scheduled meeting with Le Duc Tho. "President Nixon has sent me back," he said on arrival, "to make one more major effort to conclude the negotiations."

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6. Ltr, Pres Nixon to Pres Thieu, 5 Jan 73, released in Washington on 30 Apr 75 by a former minister of the Thieu government, printed in NY Times, 1 May 75, 16.

7. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 6357 to CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, Dep COMUSMACV, 060609Z Jan 73.

The next day the two negotiators met at a house in suburban Gif-sur-Yvette, a site selected by the North Vietnamese. No signs of affability, smiles or handshakes, preceded the session as had been the practice at earlier meetings. In fact, when Dr. Kissinger arrived, he received no public reception at all; rather, after waiting a minute in the rain, he opened the door and let himself in. The talks lasted four and a half hours and adjourned without public comment by either party. Meanwhile, the technical experts held a separate session on secondary aspects of a cease-fire.[8]

(U) On the following day, 9 January, Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met again. In accordance with prior agreement, the principals' meetings, like those of the technical experts, alternated between sites chosen by the two parties. Dr. Kissinger hosted the meeting on 9 January at a house in outlying St. Nom-la-Breteche. In a reversal of the situation the preceding day, Le Duc Tho arrived, let himself in, and departed after the five and a half hour session without any public attendance from Dr. Kissinger.[9]

(U) The two negotiators continued their meetings on 10 and 11 January but made no public statements. On 11 January, however, Dr. Kissinger cabled President Nixon: "We have finished the complete text of the agreement." Subsequently, Le Duc Tho and Dr. Kissinger held two more sessions, apparently to resolve remaining details, and then Dr. Kissinger left for the United States on the evening of 13 January. His only public comment was a brief departure statement at the airport that the six days of talks had been "very extensive and useful." He was returning, he said, to report to

8. NY Times, 8 Jan 73, 1; 9 Jan 73, 1.
9. Ibid., 10 Jan 73, 3.

President Nixon who would decide what further steps should be taken. Similarly, the North Vietnamese limited their public remarks on the negotiations, merely acknowledging "progress" in the talks.[10]

(U) Meantime, the technical experts had proceeded with their separate meetings. On 10 January, Major General G. H. Woodward, USA, the MACV Chief of Staff and a participant in the small MACV group studying control and supervision of a cease-fire, arrived in Paris to join the US team, and on 11 January, the technical experts met in joint session with the principals. Following Dr. Kissinger's departure for the United States, the US technical experts remained in Paris, meeting with their North Vietnamese counterparts to resolve remaining technical problems.[11]

(U) Despite the tentative agreement reached by Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho on 11 January, there was no indication of that development in the session of the formal peace talks held that same day at the Majestic Hotel. As had been the case throughout the four years of these talks, the public and press were excluded from the meeting, but at the close, a full transcript was released. While the exchanges were "restrained and moderate" in tone, no progress resulted.[12]

(U) Dr. Kissinger flew directly from Paris to Homestead Air Force Base in Florida, arriving early in

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10. Nixon, Memoirs, p. 749. NY Times, 9 Jan 73, 1; 10 Jan 73, 3; 11 Jan 73, 1; 12 Jan 73, 1; 14 Jan 73, 1.

11. NY Times, 9 Jan 73, 1; 10 Jan 73, 3; 11 Jan 73, 1; 12 Jan 73, 1; 13 Jan 73, 1; 14 Jan 73, 1. (TS-EX) Final Report, US Del., FPJMC, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/813, 20 Jun 73, JMF 911/533 (20 Jun 73).

12. (C) Msgs, US Del France 752 and 767 to State, 11 Jan 73, JCS IN 27301 and 27342.

the morning of 14 January. He went immediately to Key Biscayne to confer with President Nixon at the Florida White House. Several hours later, President Nixon dispatched General Alexander Haig, previously Dr. Kissinger's deputy and now the Army Vice Chief of Staff, to South Vietnam. White House Press Secretary Ronald Zeieler said that General Haig would consult with President Thieu on the negotiations and would also visit Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Admiral Moorer relayed to General Weyand a copy of the Department of State dispatch alerting the US Embassies concerned of the impending visit. As set forth therein, the trip was "for the purpose of conferring with the leaders of the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and with key Embassy and military officials." Although the Department of State did not elaborate further, the Haig mission followed a precedure that had evolved the previous fall, when, after a significant development in the private negotiations, Dr. Kissinger returned to report to the President who then sent an envoy to Saigon to notify President Thieu.[13]

(U) The President and Dr. Kissinger conferred throughout most of the day on 14 January. The following morning, White House Press Secretary Ziegler announced that because of the progress in the negotiations the President had directed a suspension of all bombing, shelling, and further mining of North Vietnam, effective 1000 Washington time. In the course of subsequent questioning, Mr. Ziegler explained that the suspension of mining applied to any additional mining; removal of seeded mines was a matter then under negotiation. The Press Secretary added that Dr. Kissinger

13. NY Times, 15 Jan 73, 1. (S) Msg, JCS 5482 to COMUSMACV and COMUSMACTHAI, 142027Z Jan 73.

ould return to Paris in "the relatively near future" but provided no details on further negotiations.[14]

(C) As had been the case the preceeding fall, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had no oportunity to review the draft agreement. They did, however, act at once to implement the President's decision to halt the bombing in North Vietnam. They instructed CINCPAC and CINCSAC late on 14 January to suspend all offensive operations againt North Vietnam, including the Demilitarized Zone above the PMDL and within territorial waters claimed by North Vietnam, effective 151500Z January. This suspension encompassed air strikes, artillery fire, mining and seeding, and naval bombardment; psychological operations involving overflight of North Vietnam or the Demilitarized Zone north of the PMDL were also prohibited. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did allow immediate pursuit into North Vietnamese territorial seas and airspace. In addition, reconnaissance operations over North Vietnam were allowed, but limited to drone and SR-71 aircraft. Nothing in these restrictions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told CINCPAC and CINCSAC, was to construed as preventing any commander from defending his command. Moreover, ground, air, and naval operations in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as then authorized were not affected. Subsequently, on 18 January, the Joint Chiefs of Staff extended the restrictions on actions against North Vietnam to include special operations and leaflet and mini-radio operations regardless of method of delivery.[15]

14. NY Times, 16 Jan 73, 12.

15. Interview, Robert J. Watson with ADM Thomas H. Moorer, 16 May 79. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 5597 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 150356Z Jan 73 (draft of this message has handwritten approval of CJCS and SecDef); (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 9015 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 180014Z Jan 73; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 9017 to CINCPAC, 180014Z Jan 73; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 73.

Waiting for a Cease-Fire

(U) There was now widespread optimism in the United States and around the world that a tentative agreement had been reached for the settlement of the Vietnam war. The White House Press Secretary refused to comment, however, on the possibility of an agreement, stating that the United States and North Vietnam had a mutual agreement not to discuss "the details or the substance" of the negotiations. But events, both the suspension of US operations against North Vietnam and the dispatch of General Haig to Saigon, seemed a clear indication that some decisive movement in the negotiations was imminent.[16]

(U) General Haig arrived in Saigon on 16 January with the formidable task of convincing President Thieu to accept the just concluded agreement. Once again he carried a letter from Richard Nixon. The US President wrote that he had "irrevocably" decided to initial the agreement on 23 January and sign it five days later. If necessary, he continued, he would do so alone, but,

> in that case, I shall have to explain publicly that your government obstructs peace. The result will be an inevitable and immediate termination of U.S. economic and military assistance . . . .

President Nixon hoped, however, that such would not be the case and repeated the assurance he had previously conveyed:

> At the time of signing the agreement I will make emphatically clear that the United States recognizes your government as the only legal government of South Vietnam; that we do not

16. NY Times, 16 Jan 73, 12; 17 Jan 73, 10.

> recognize the right of any foreign troops to be present on South Vietnamese territory; and that we will react strongly in the event the agreement is violated. It is my firm intention to continue full economic and military aid.

President Thieu's initial reaction was negative but, after two days of discussions with General Haig and another letter fromn President Nixon, he reluctantly gave his assent.[17]

(U) Meantime, in Paris, the technical experts had continued their long daily sessions, working out the precise wording and details of a cease-fire. But, as before, neither side commented on what transpired at the meetings. On 18 January 1973, representatives of the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government held what turned out to be the last session of the formal Paris talks. Presentations by both sides were moderate and restrained, but no announcements were made or agreements reached. This final meeting typified the dismal record of the four years of the plenary talks.[18]

(U) The 18 January session of the plenary talks was completely eclipsed in the public's attention by a joint US-North Vietnamese announcement that same day that their negotiators would return to Paris on 23 January to complete the text of an agreement to end the war. In Washington, White House Press Secretary Ziegler read the text of the joint statement, and this announcement was the first official US acknowledgement of the existence of a draft agreement. In subsequent

17. Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 749-751. NY Times, 16 Jan 73, 12; 17 Jan 73, 1 and 10; 18 Jan 73, 1.

18. NY Times, 17 Jan 73, 10. (C) Msgs, US Del France 1292 and 1338 to State, 18 Jan 73, JCS IN 40148 and 40599.

fire on the initial day of the action. The marines renewed the attack on 20 January, but despite fierce fighting, no significant ground was taken. In Military Region 3, earlier in the month, South Vietnamese forces had launched an operation along the Saigon River corridor, northwest of the capital in Binh Duong, Binh Long, and Tay Ninh Provinces. The action had proceeded with little enemy resistance until the period 18-20 January. Then heavy contact with the enemy occurred in the area of an old Michelin rubber plantation, and artillery, and tactical air strikes assisted the South Vietnamese ground forces. Thereafter the enemy broke contact and the ARVN troops returned to populated areas to resume security duties. Elsewhere in the country, the RVNAF began shifting troops in anticipation of a cease-fire, and the enemy increased hamlet infiltration, highway interdiction, stand-off attacks, and limited ground attacks against South Vietnamese territorial units.[21]

The Announcement

(U) Dr. Kissinger returned to Paris on 22 January, and the following day, he and Le Duc Tho met in a private session at the International Confernce Center in the old Majestic Hotel, the site of the plenary Paris peace talks. They emerged from the meeting without public comment, but waved at newsmen and shook hands "enthusiastically" for the television cameras. Shortly thereafter, it was announced in Washington that the President would speak to the nation that evening.[22]

21. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) pp. 116, 125-126, 129-130.
22. NY Times, 24 Jan 73, 1 and 16.

questioning, he added only that the objective of the agreement was to stop the fighting, restore peace, and end the war. He would not elaborate further and would not speculate on how long Dr. Kissinger might remain in Paris. In answer to a reporter's question, he said that Dr. Kissinger would have no public statement to make before his departure.[19]

(U) Now all awaited the resumption of the negotiating sessions between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho on 23 January. In Paris, the daily meetings of the US and North Vietnamese technical experts proceeded. In Wshington, Richard Nixon was inaugurated President of the United States for a second term on 20 January 1973. In his inaugural address, he made no specific mention of Vietnam or a settlement there though he did refer in passing to the coming end of "America's longest and most difficult war." General Haig returned briefly to Saigon on 20 January for a final meeting with President Thieu and then flew home via Korea. He arrived in Washington the following day and met at once with the President and Dr. Kissinger.[20]

(C) Military action in South Vietnam had been relatively light during the first half of January, but with the prospect of an approaching settlement, significant fighting erupted as both sides attempted to improve their positions before a cease-fire. In Military Region 1, RVN marines launched an attack on 17 January toward the Cua Viet River in Quang Tri Province, just below the Demilitarized Zone. This attack met strong resistance and heavy attacks by fire including an estimated 4,000 rounds of mortar and artillery

19. NY Times, 19 Jan 73, 3.
20. Ibid., 20 Jan 73, 1; 21 Jan 73, 1; 22 Jan 73, 1. Public Papers, Nixon, 1973, pp. 12-15.

period, all US forces would withdraw from South Vietnam. Moreover, the President said, "the people of South Vietnam have been guaranteed the right to determine their own future, without outside interference."

(U) The President told the American people that, throughout the years of negotiations, the United States had insisted on peace with honor. He believed that the agreement just concluded accomplished that purpose. The United States had been in "the closest consultation" with President Thieu and the Government of Vietnam and the settlement met the goals and had the "full support" of the South Vietnamese President and his government. President Nixon went on to announce that the United States would continue to recognize the Government of Vietnam as "the sole legitimate government of South Vietnam" and would continue to aid it within the terms of the agreement.

(U) Finally, President Nixon recognized that the agreement was only the first step toward building peace. "All parties," he said, "must now see to it that this is a peace that lasts." The United States was ready to adhere scrupulosly to the agreement and do everything required by its terms. The President expected similar action from the other parties and specifically called upon the people and government of North Vietnam as follows:

> As we have ended the war through negotiation, let us now build a peace of reconciliation. For our part, we are prepared to make a major effort to help achieve that goal. But just as reciprocity was needed to end the war, so too will it be needed to build and strengthen the peace.[24]

24. Public Papers, Nixon, 1973, pp. 18-20.

(U) In a television address at 2200, Washington time, on 23 January 1973, President Nixon announced that an agreement had been concluded to end the war and bring "peace with honor" in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. He read the following statement that was being issued simultaneously in Hanoi:

> At 12:30 Paris time today, January 23, 1973, the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was initialed by Dr. Henry Kissinger on behalf of the United States, and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
>
> The agreement will be formally signed by the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam on January 27, 1973, at the International Conference Center in Paris.
>
> The cease-fire will take effect at 2400 Greenwich Mean Time, January 27, 1973. The United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam express the hope that this agreement will insure stable peace in Vietnam and contribute to the preservation of lasting peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia.[23]

(U) President Nixon then proceeded to characterize the agreement, the text of which, with accompanying protocols, would be released the next day. An internationally supervised cease-fire would begin at 1900, Washington time, on 27 January, and within 60 days of that date all Americans held prisoner throughout Indochina would be released. During the same 60-day

23. Public Papers, Nixon, 1973, p. 18.

> It will be our challenge in the future to move the controversies that could not be stilled by any one document from the level of military conflict to the level of positive human aspirations, and to absorb the enormous talents and dedication of the people of Indochina in the tasks of construction rather than in the tasks of destruction.[27]

(U) On the same day, 24 January, Le Duc Tho held a news conference in Paris to discuss the agreement. He, too, claimed victory, a victory for the Vietnamese people and "the crowning of a valiant struggle waged in unity by the army and the people of Vietnam on all fronts. . . . " In contrast to what Dr. Kissinger said, Le Duc Tho maintained that the agreement just completed was "basically" the same as the one reached the previous October. Nor did the North Vietnamese negotiator give any indication of recognition of the sovereignty of South Vietnam. With the return of peace, he said, the struggle entered "a new period," indicating that unification of Vietnam remained a definite goal. "The Vietnamese people," he concluded, "has . . . every reason to believe in the victorious accomplishment of its tasks in the new period. No reactionary force will be able to slow down the march forward of the Vietnamese people."[28]

(U) According to plan, US Secretary of State William P. Rogers, South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam, North Vietnamese Foreign Minister

27. News Conference of Dr. Kissinger, 24 Jan 73, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 64-74.
28. NY Times, 25 Jan 73, 22.

(U) President Thieu announced the agreement on the morning of 24 January in Saigon but, actually, because of the time difference, his speech coincided with President Nixon's annoucement in Washington. The South Vietnamese President claimed victory over North Vietnam, stating that "our people" had truly destroyed the communist troops from the north. "The Communists," he said, "have been forced to stop the conflict because they cannot beat us by force or by violence." He assured the South Vietnamese people that the communists had been forced to recognize two Vietnams and that North Vietnam would respect the sovereignty and independence of South Vietnam. He cautioned, however, that the accord was only "a cease-fire agreement," adding that whether there would be "real peace" must wait to be seen. Although he could not guarantee true peace, he pledged to "see to it that peace will come."[25]

(U) Dr. Kissinger, who had returned to Washington, released the text of the agreement with its protocols on 24 January, indicating that the final documents would be signed in Paris on 27 January 1973 by the foreign ministers of the four parties involved. He then went over the agreement clause by clause, explaining and elaborating on each.[26] He stated that the agreement as finally accepted contained, at US insistence, substantial "adaptations" and "clarifications" of the text proposed in October 1972. He admitted that the settlement was not perfect in every respect and that whether it brought a lasting peace depended on the spirit in which it was implemented. He added:

25. NY Times, 24 Jan 73, 1 and 16.

26. Dr. Kissinger's comments on specific aspects of the agreement, as appropriate, are included in the description of the substance of the agreement, below, pp. 696-709.

The Agreement

(U) The "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" comprised a basic document in nine chapters with four supporting protocols. Chapter I consisted of one short sentence: "The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam." Significantly absent was any language recognizing a separate South Vietnam, a point long deemed essential to any settlement by President Thieu and his government. The matters of South Vietnam's existence and the reunification of Vietnam were treated, however, in subsequent chapters which could be interpreted as recognition of a separate South Vietnam.

(U) Chapter II called for the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of troops. A cease-fire would take effect throughout South Vietnam at 2400 hours Greenwich Mean Time on 27 January 1973 (0800, 28 January, Saigon time), and the United States would stop all ground, air, and naval actions against North Vietnam. In addition, the United States would end the mining of North Vietnam waters and "remove, permanently deactivate, or destroy" all mines in such waters as soon as the agreement went into effect. Within 60 days of the signaure of the agreement, all US forces, as well as the forces of those other foreign nations allied with the United States, would be withdrawn from South Vietnam. The second chapter also required the "dismantlement" of all US military bases in South Vietnam and forbade the introduction of military personnel and advisers, armaments, munitions, or "war

Nguyen Duy Trinh, and Provisional Revolutionary Government Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Thi Binh signed the "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam" with accompanying protocols at the International Conference Center in Paris on 27 January 1973. In the words of Henry Kissinger, the procedure was "somewhat convoluted," and two sets of documents were actually signed. In the morning the US Secretary of State and the three Vietnamese foreign ministers signed a four-party document that did not mention the parties by name except on the signature pages. The United States and South Vietnamese representatives signed on one page while those of North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government placed their signatures on a separate page. This format allowed both South Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government to sign the Agreement even though each still refused to recognize the other. In the afternoon, Secretary Rogers and Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh signed a two-power document that was identical to the morning version except for the preamble and the concluding paragraph. Whereas the four-power document referred only to the "parties" participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam, the two-power one named the parties as the "United States, with the concurrence of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam," and the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the concurrence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam."[29]

29. "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" (two versions), 17 Jan 73, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 45-64. For the text of the Agreement and the accompanying protocols, see Appendix 3 , pp. 855-875.

States and North Vietnam pledged to respect the principles of "self-determination" for the South Vietnamese people, including "free and democratic general elections under international supervision" to decide the political future of South Vietnam. Chapter IV also called upon the two South Vietnamese parties to form a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord to promote a spirit of cooperation and to implement the agreement. Dr. Kissinger explained that the United States had consistently maintained that it would not impose any political solution on South Vietnam, and Chapter IV, he believed, met that obligation. The existing government in Saigon could remain in office; no political settlement was imposed on South Vietnam; and the political future of that country depended on agreement among the South Vietnamese parties concerned.

(U) In Chapter V, the parties agreed that reunification of Vietnam should be carried out "step by step through peaceful means on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Vietnam, without coercion or annexation by either party, and without foreign interference." Pending reunification, the chapter continued, the military demarcation line between the "two zones" at the 17th Parallel was "only provisional and not a political or territorial boundary." Here again, the agreement went counter to the position of President Thieu who had advocated recognition of the demarcation line as a national boundary. The next section of the chapter, however, did require both "North and South Vietnam" to respect the Demilitarized Zone on both sides of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line, a stipulation that President Thieu had insisted upon.

(U) In discussing Chapter V, Dr. Kissinger stated:

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material" into South Vietnam. But both "South Vietnamese parties" were permitted to replace military equipment in South Vietnam at the time of the agreement on a one-for-one basis under international supervision and control.

(U) Chapter III dealt with prisoners of war, specifying the return of all captured military personnel and foreign civilians during the same 60-day period. Also, the parties were to help each other obtain information of missing personnel. The question of the return of Vietnamese civilians captured and detained in South Vietnam would be resolved by "the two South Vietnamese parties." In describing this aspect of the agreement on 24 January, Dr. Kissinger said that the United States had insisted upon separation of the question of US prisoners from that of the detention of Vietnamese civilian personnel.[30] The United States took this position because of the "enormous difficulties" in distinguishing Vietnamese civilians detained for reasons of civil war from those held for criminal activities. This matter, Dr. Kissinger said, proved "one of the thorniest issues" of the negotiations, but he believed it had been resolved to US satisfaction. The return of US prisoners was "unconditional," and Dr. Kissinger expected that they would be released at intervals of two weeks or 15 days in roughly equal installments. All would be turned over to US medical evacuation teams in Hanoi.

(U) Chapters IV and V implicitly recognized the existence of South Vietnam. In Chapter IV, The United

30. All reference to Dr. Kissinger's explanation and amplification of the agreement are from his news conference of 24 January 1973, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 64-74.

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thereafter the Two-Party Commission would enforce the cease-fire throughout South Vietnam. The functions and organization of all three bodies were spelled out in detail in the protocols to the basic agreement.

(U) In the final provision of Chapter VI, the parties agreed to convene an international conference within 30 days

> to acknowledge the signed agreements; to guarantee the ending of the war, the maintenance of peace in Vietnam, the respect of the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights, and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination; and to contribute to and guarantee peace in Indochina.

The United States and North Vietnam, on behalf of the parties participating in the agreement, proposed attendance of the following states: the People's Republic of China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, the four countries of the International Commission of Control and Supervision, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, together with the four parties to the agreement.

(U) In Chapter VII, the parties pledged to respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Cambodia and the 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos, recognizing the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of those two countries. Specifically, the parties agreed: to refrain from using the territory of either Laos or Cambodia to encroach on the sovereignty or security of one another or of other countries; to end all military activities in those two countries; and to withdraw totally and refrain from reintroducing troops, military advisers, armaments, and war material there. Additionally, the internal affairs of the two countries were to

> it is obvious that there is no dispute in the agreement between the parties that there is an entity called South Vietnam, and that the future unity of Vietnam, as it comes about, will be decided by negotiation between North and South Vietnam, that it will not be achieved by military force, indeed, that the use of military force with respect to bringing about unification, or any other form of coercion, is impermissible according to the terms of this agreement.

He went on to state that the United States had insisted on respect for the Demilitarized Zone in order to restrict infiltration and enforce the restrictions of the agreement against the introduction of men and materiel into South Vietnam.

(U) Chapter VI provided for machinery to implement the agreement. Specifically included were: a Four-Party Joint Military Commission, composed of representatives of all four signatories, to insure compliance with the cease-fire, troop withdrawal, base dismantling, return of prisoners, and exchange of information on missing military personnel; a Two-Party Joint Military Commission, consisting of representives of the two South Vietnamese parties, to carry out those provisions assigned to them in the agreement; and an International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS), made up of representatives of Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, and Poland, to oversee implementation of the agreement and report any violation. The Four-Party Commission was to begin operations immediately upon signature of the agreement and cease its activities 60 days later, following the withdrawal of US forces;

with two sets of documents signed at separate ceremonies. Only the United States and North Vietnam were parties to the mine removal protocol and it was signed only once at the afternoon ceremony.[32]

(U) The prisoner of war protocol provided for the parties to exchange lists of all captured military personnel and foreign civilians on the day of signature. The return was to be accomplished without delay at places arranged by the Four-Party Joint Military Commission. It was to be completed within 60 days of the signature of the agreement "at a rate no slower than the rate of withdrawal from South Vietnam of United States forces and those of other foreign countries." The two South Vietnamese parties were to exchange lists of captured and detained Vietnamese civilians within 15 days of the cease-fire and to carry out the return of such personnel "in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord with a view to ending hatred and enmity in order to ease suffering and to reunite families." The protocol specified that all captured military personnel and captured foreign civilians were to be treated humanely and that two or more national Red Cross societies could visit the places where such personnel were held within 15 days of the cease-fire to contribute to improvement of living conditions there. The Joint Military Commisions were

32. Protocols to the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam Concerning: The Return of Captured Military Personnel and Foreign Civilians and Captured and Detained Vietnamese Civilian Personnel; The Internation Commission of Control and Supervision; The Cease-fire in South Vietnam and the Joint Military Commissions; and The Removal, Permanent Deactivation, or Destruction of Mines in the Territorial Waters, Ports, Harbors, and Waterways of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 51-64.

be settled by their own people free of foreign interference. Dr. Kissinger, in explanatory remarks, indicated his expectation of a formal cease-fire in Laos "within a short period of time" and a "de facto" cease-fire in Cambodia "over a period of time relevant to the execution of this agreement."

(U) Chapter VIII anticipated an improvement of relations between North Vietnam and the United States based on mutual respect for each other's independence and sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. Dr. Kissinger explained that:

> It is our firm intention in our relationship to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to move from hostility to normalization, and from normalization to conciliation and cooperation.

Under conditions of peace, he believed, the United States could and would contribute to a "realization of the humane aspirations" of all people throughout Indochina. The final Chapter, IX, contained the implementing and signature provisions of the agreement.[31]

The Protocols

(U) Four protocols supplemented the basic agreement, setting out in greater detail the provisions with respect to prisoners of war, the International Commission of Control and Supervision, the cease-fire and the Joint Military Commissions, and the removal of mines from North Vietnamese waters. The first three protocols were signed by all four parties and went through the same elaborate procedure as the basic agreement,

31. "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam," signed 27 Jan 73; News Conference of Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, 24 Jan 73; Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 45-51, 64-74.

(U) The matter of the International Commission of Control and Supervision, Dr. Kissinger indicated, was one area where US persistence in the negotiations paid off. The previous December, the North Vietnamese had proposed an international supervisory body with a membership of only 250 personnel, of whom more than half would be in Saigon, with no organized logistics or communication, and completely dependent for authority to move on the party it was investigating. The body provided in the final protocol consisted of more than 1,000 members from Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, and Poland and was authorized to receive from the signatory parties the "necessary means of communication and transport" or to purchase any equipment not thus forthcoming. The ICCS was to be organized as follows: (1) a headquarters in Saigon of 108 personnel; (2) seven regional teams of 20 members each; (3) a number of eight-member teams based in localities throughout South Vietnam, including 26 at places where forces were in contact or where violations of the cease-fire were considered most likely to occur, 12 at possible entry points (including the DMZ), 7 for assignment at other possible entry points to supervise replacement of military equipment in South Vietnam, and 7 to supervise the return of prisoners. The Headquarters was to be operational and in place within 24 hours after the cease-fire, all seven regional teams and three of the prisoner supervisory teams within 48 hours, and the remaining teams within 15 to 20 days. The protocol charged each of the four parties to cooperate and assist the International Commission, and the Joint Military Commissions and the International Commission

assigned responsibility to determine the "modalities" for implementing this protocol and the Four-Party Joint Military Commission was to ensure action for the exchange of information on missing personnel. When the Four-Party Joint Military Commission ceased to exist at the end of the specified 60-day period, a Four-Party Joint Military team was to carry on the task of resolving the status of military personnel missing in action. Finally, any matter on which the Four-Party Joint Military Commission could not reach agreement was to be referred to the International Commission of Control and Supervision for assistance.[33]

(U) The second protocol established the International Commission of Control and Supervision in accordance with Chapter VI of the agreement. The International Commission was to monitor implementation of the agreement by means of communications with the parties and "on-the-spot" observation. In addition, either at its own initiative or at the request of the Joint Military Commissions, the ICCS would investigate violations of the agreement. When serious violations were discovered and no remedy could be found, the International Commission would report the matter to the four parties to the agreement. Significantly, the protocol provided that such reports must be made with the "unanimous agreement" of all four members of the Commission. When unanimity could not be reached, the differing views would be provided to the four parties to the agreement, but not as "reports" of the ICCS.

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33. Protocol to the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam Concerning the Return of Captured Military Personnel and Foreign Civilians and Captured and Detained Vietnamese Civilian Personnel, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 51-54.

"demolition objects, minefields, traps, obstacles, and other dangerous objects" within 15 days, and the United States was to inform the Four-Party Joint Military Commission within 15 days of its "general plans for timing of complete troop withdrawals which shall take place in four phases of fifteen days each."

(U) The third protocol also elaborated on the duties of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission. Composed of representatives of the United States and the three Vietnamese parties, that body was responsible, in the 60-day period following the cease-fire, for ensuring joint action by the parties to carry out the agreements, i.e. implementation of the cease-fire, the withdrawal of US and other foreign troops from South Vietnam, the dismantling of US and foreign bases in South Vietnam, the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians, and the exchange of information on missing military personnel and foreign civilians. To that end, the Four-Party Commission would "coordinate, follow, and inspect" implementation of the pertinent provisions of the agreement. In addition, the commission was responsible for deterring and detecting violations, dealing with violations, and settling conflicts between parties; for dispatching joint teams to any part of South Vietnam to investigate alleged violations of the agreement and assist in preventing recurrence of similar cases; and for engaging in observation "at the places where this is necessary in the exercise of its functions."

(U) The Four Party Commission was organized with a central headquarters and subordinate regional and local bodies in much the same manner as the International Commission for Control and Supervision. There was to be a Central Joint Military Commission located in

were to maintain "regular and continuous liaison" and to "cooperate with and assist each other."[34]

(U) The protocol on the cease-fire and Joint Military Commissions required the high commands of "the parties in South Vietnam" to issue prompt orders to all military forces--regular, irregular, and armed police--to end all hostilities throughout South Vietnam at 2400 hours Greenwich Mean Time, 27 January. As soon as the cease-fire came into force, and until the Joint Military Commissions issued regulations, all combat forces were to remain in place. These prohibitions were not to restrict: civilian supply or movement; use of military support elements to assist the civilian population; or normal military proficiency training. In areas where armed forces were in direct contact, the commanders of the opposing forces were to meet as soon as the cease-fire came into force "with a view to reaching an agreement on temporary measures to avert conflict and to ensure supply and medical care for these armed forces." The entry of replacement armaments, munitions, and war supplies into South Vietnam, as permitted in the basic agreement, was to take place under the supervision and control of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission and the ICCS and through entry points designated by the two South Vietnamese parties. All parties were to do their "utmost" to complete removal or deactivation of all

34. Protocol to the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam Concerning the International Commission of Control and Supervision, 27 Jan 73; News Conference of Dr. Kissinger, 24 Jan 73; Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 54-57, 64-74.

(U) In the final protocol, the United States agreed to clear all the mines it had placed in "the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways" of North Vietnam. This action was to be accomplished "by rendering the mines harmless through removal, permanent deactivation, or destruction." When considering a draft mine clearance protocol in December,[36] Admiral Moorer had suggested deletion of the specific term "removal," but in this instance his advice was not followed. As stated in the protocol, the mine clearance operations were to begin simultaneously with the entry of the cease-fire into effect, and North Vietnam and the United States were to consult immediately "on relevant factors" and agree on the earliest possible completion date. Provisions for the planning and actual operations followed the language of the December draft. Representatives of the two parties would meet and plan implementation; the United States would provide a plan for the operations; and North Vietnam would supply all available maps and hydrographic charts and indicate mined areas. The United States was charged with mine clearance in "inland waterways" of North Vietnam, even though Admiral Moorer had opposed acceptance of such a responsibility. North Vietnam was to participate in this aspect of the clearance "to the full extent of its capabilities," with the United States supplying the means of survey, removal, and destruction and technical advice.

Commisions, 27 Jan 73; (U) News Conference by Dr. Kissinger, 24 Jan 73; Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 58-62, 64-74.

36. For the December consideration of the draft mine clearance protocol and ADM Moorer's comments thereon, see Chapter 12, p. 655-657.

Saigon with a delegation of 59 persons, headed by a general officer, from each party. There would also be seven Regional Joint Military Commissions of 64 members, equally apportioned among the four parties, and located at the same sites as the ICCS regional teams. Below the Regional Commissions would be 26 joint military teams, colocated with the 26 ICCS local teams. The schedule for activation of the Four-Party Commission paralleled that of the ICCS--the central machinery to go into operation within 24 hours after the cease-fire, the regional commissions within 48 hours, and the teams within 15 days. Dr. Kissinger observed that the provisions for activation of both the Four-Party Commission and the International Commission met the long-held US objective to have effective and timely control machinery to enforce a cease-fire.

(U) The protocol called for appropriate delegations of the two South Vietnamese parties to meet within 24 hours of the cease-fire to reach agreement on organization and operation of a Two-Party Joint Military Commission. Until it became operational, its tasks would be performed by the representatives of the two South Vietnamese parties to the Four-Party Commission at all levels. Should agreement not be reached on the two-party body by the time the Four-Party Commission ceased its operations at the end of the alloted 60 days, then the delegations of the South Vietnamese parties to the latter group were to continue to work temporarily as a provisional two-party group. In application of the principle of unanimity, the Joint Military Commissions would have no chairmen and any representative could request a meeting.[35]

35. Protocol to the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam Concerning the Cease-fire in South Vietnam and the Joint Military

(U) In the conduct of the clearance operations, the United States pledged its personnel to respect the sovereignty of North Vietnam and the terms of the agreement. In return, US personnel would be immune from North Vietnamese jurisdiction for the duration of the operations and North Vietnam would insure the safety of US personnel while in its territory. These provisions resembled closely those that Admiral Moorer had recommended for inclusion in a mine clearance protocol.[37]

(U) Now, after over seven years of fighting and almost as many years of effort to reach a negotiated settlement, the United States had obtained a peace agreement in Vietnam. How successful it would prove, however, was still far from certain. The agreement was not, as Dr. Kissinger candidly admitted, completely satisfactory, nor did it meet all the concerns of President Thieu. Yet it did provide for a cease-fire in South Vietnam and the return of US prisoners. The first and most immediate test was implementation of the agreement, and the United States turned forthwith to that task.

37. Protocol to the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in South Vietnam Concerning the Removal, Permanent Deactivation, or Destruction of Mines in the Territorial Waters, Ports, Harbors, and Waterways of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, 27 Jan 73, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 63-64.

all commanders that these instructions reach all affected subordinate units prior to the time of execution.[1]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the withdrawal of all naval surface forces in the Gulf of Tonkin to waters below 16° 50' north except ships required for Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone (PIRAZ), search and rescue, and notification line operations. Vessels engaged in those tasks might operate in international waters of the Gulf as required for search and rescue and for implementation of minefield notification procedures. No naval gunfire was permitted in the cease-fire area against North Vietnamese ships or water craft, except in the case of self-defense. The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the field commanders that appropriate operating authorities and rules of engagement would be forthcoming. In the interim, ground, air, and naval operations in Laos and Cambodia were not affected, but US forces based in or operating from South Vietnam would not be employed in support of actions in either neighboring country.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized both overflight and reconnaissance, manned and unmanned, over South Vietnam, but strictly forbade any overflight of North Vietnam or the Demilitarized Zone above the PMDL by military aircraft, including drones and SR-71s. In addition, US naval and air forces would respect the claimed territorial waters and airspace of North Vietnam. The overflight authorities were modified slightly the following day to allow escort and barrier combat air patrol/MIG operations over

1. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 6408 to ZEN/AIG 7076, 240456Z Jan 73, Att to JCS 2472/853-1, 24 Jan 73, JMF 911/305 (24 Jan 73).

CHAPTER 14

WINDING DOWN THE WAR

(U) The intensive negotiations during the first three weeks of January 1973 to end the Vietnam war were the province of Dr. Kissinger and the President with little, if any, participation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But once the settlement was reached, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a major task of implementing actions to carry out the US military commitments of the peace agreement.

Immediate Implementing Actions

(S) Late in the evening of 23 January, following the President's televised announcement of the agreement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the necessary directive to the field commanders:

> Effective 272359Z Jan 73, an internationally supervised ceasefire in SVN and the DMZ will be instituted. At that time, discontinue all acts of force initiated by US forces in NVN and SVN and the DMZ. All airstrikes, artillery fire, and naval bombardment, as well as other fire or munitions expenditure including mines/destructors will be terminated. PSYOP targeted against NVN and SVN and the DMZ are prohibited.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff emphasized to all concerned the significance of this cease-fire directive:

> The importance of compliance at the effective time of execution cannot be overstressed. It is incumbent upon

armaments, munitions, and war materiel ("major end items") would cease when the cease-fire came into force at 272359Z January 1973. The only exception would be on "a one-for-one" replacement basis. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed action to redistribute assets available in-theater to bring stockage in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to currently prescribed levels. Later, on 27 January, just a few hours before the institution of the cease-fire, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reminded the Service Chiefs that equipment inventory located in South Vietnam as of 272359Z January 1973 would be the base level for the RVNAF after the cease-fire. He requested "extraordinary efforts" to return any out-of-country RVNAF-owned equipment to South Vietnam prior to effective time of the cease-fire.[3]

(TS) Although the cease-fire would end all US air operations in North and South Vietnam, the United States decided to increase its air activity in neighboring Laos, and on 25 January, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed the necessary instruction to CINCPAC and CINCSAC. When the cease-fire went into effect in South Vietnam, the Chairman told the two commanders, they should increase B-52 and tactical air sortie levels in Laos "with primary emphasis on the land battle area while maintaining pressure on the established resupply routes such as the Ho Chi Minh Trail." Accordingly, Admiral Moorer directed an

3. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 6408 to ZEN/AIG 7076, 240456Z Jan 73, Att to JCS 2472/853-1, 24 Jan 73, JMF 911/305 (24 Jan 73). The supplemental instructions are contained in: (S) Msg, JCS 7531 to CINCPAC, 250038Z Jan 73; (S) Msg, JCS 1331 to CSA, CNO, CSAF, and CMC, 271643Z Jan 73.

international waters to protect US aircraft carrying out reconnaissance and intelligence collection over the Gulf of Tonkin. Such flights would avoid both North Vietnamese land areas and territorial seas, with the only exception being immediate pursuit of attacking aircraft.[2]

(S) Nothing in these instructions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, was to be construed so as to prevent any commander from taking necessary action to defend his forces. In any attack of US forces or installations, the "minimum force" necessary for protection was authorized. Normal training to maintain unit readiness was allowed, but "no ordnance other than that normally regarded as self-defensive in nature" would be carried by US planes conducting training missions in the vicinity of North or South Vietnam.

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not address US troop withdrawal in this initial directive, indicating that the matter wold be handled separately. They did state that priorities for withdrawal of personnel and equipment would be assigned, based on a MACV program and cease-fire requirements. Moreover, airlift requirements for personnel would be arranged between the Services and the Military Airlift Command. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the continuation of all logistic operations then in progress and planned through X+60. The next day, however, they revised this latter direction to conform with the Vietnam agreement, stating that the introduction of additional military

2. For the supplemental instruction, see (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7516 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 250020Z Jan 73.

to preclude overflight or the necessity for protective reaction. "We simply cannot afford any mistakes," he concluded.[5]

(C) Late on 25 January 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the directive for the withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam. They ordered CINCPAC to redeploy all US military personnel from South Vietnam during the period X-Day through X+60. The only US military personnel allowed in South Vietnam thereafter would be the 50 assigned to the Defense Attache Office, Saigon and those US forces required for the Four-Party Joint Military Commission. United States forces were to be removed from South Vietnam in four approximately equal increments in accord with the provisions of the protocol on the joint military commissions.[6] Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not specifically so state, these four increments would correspond with the release of US prisoners, which was also to occur in four stages. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied the following numbers for the first two withdrawal increments: 6,000 to 6,500 personnel (including USMC A-4 squadrons) during X-Day to X+15; another 4,000 to 4,500 from X+16 to X+30. The size of the final two increments would be determined later based on the performance of the other side in releasing US prisoners. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed redeployment of ROK forces in South Vietnam in accordance with COMUSMACV plans.[7]

(C) During their cease-fire planning in November 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after securing

5. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 9125 to CINCPAC (info CINCSAC), 261722Z Jan 73.
6. See Chapter 13, pp. 705-706.
7. (S) Msg, JCS 8465 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 260029Z Jan 73.

increase in the air activity levels in Laos to 15 B-52 and 200 tactical air sorties per day. Carrier aircraft overflight of South Vietnam and Laos was allowed with "extreme precautions" to preclude inadvertent penetration of North Vietnamese air space. Shortly before the cease-fire went into effect on 27 January, the Joint Chiefs of Staff raised the permitted level of daily B-52 sorties in Laos to 30 and, on 1 February 1973, nearly four days after the cease-fire entered into force, they raised the level again to 50.[4]

(TS) Following the initial authorization on 25 January for increased air action in Laos, Admiral Moorer dispatched a special caution to CINCPAC and CINCSAC:

> During the next sixty days the most important single event will be the return of our prisoners of war. Parenthetically I would also add that possession of our POW's is the only leverage the NVN have. Therefore, it is absolutely mandatory that we conduct our air operations in such a manner that there will be no cause to overfly NVN territory or deliver ordnance against targets in NVN.

In Washington deliberations, Admiral Moorer had resisted imposition of a buffer zone in Laos along the Vietnam border. Consequently, he wanted US pilots to understand the situation and conduct themselves accordingly. "We cannot permit advertent or inadvertent violations of the NVN border which might slow down the return of POWs." Air operations in Laos near the Vietnam border, he instructed, were to be planned so as

4. (TS) Msg, JCS 8315 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 251734Z Jan 73. (TS) Msg, JCS 1446 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 272058Z Jan 73. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 6266 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 012332Z Feb 73.

forces might conduct search and rescue operations, inspect crash and grave sites, and recover US aircraft crews in South Vietnam; with the completion of the US withdrawal, South Vietnamese air bases might be used as emergency recovery bases for US military aircraft conducting approved operations in Southeast Asia. During the withdrawal, US forces might provide armed escort for US force movements within South Vietnam and conduct normal training to maintain readiness. In that same period, US naval combatant vessels and logistics craft were permitted to operate in South Vietnamese territorial waters, but thereafter, US combatant vessels would enter South Vietnamese waters only with specific GVN approval. During and after withdrawal, air and surface logistic operations related to replenishment of consumable supplies (petroluem, ammunition, and spare parts) and maintenance support were authorized within the terms of the basic agreement. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized surveillance activities, similar to MARKET TIME, in and over the South Vietnamese territorial waters to furnish early warning to the RVNAF; after the completion of the US withdrawal such operations would require appropriate clearance by the Government of Vietnam. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff specified an RVN Positive Control Area, a five-nautical mile strip in Laos and Cambodia along the South Vietnam border where all air strikes, except for B-52, would be conducted under a forward air controller, and set out detailed authorities for US action in both Laos and Cambodia.[8]

8. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 9906 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC (info COMUSMACV), 270657Z Jan 73. This JCS directive

Secretary of Defense approval, had dispatched to the appropriate commanders for planning purposes operating authorities and rules of engagement for Southeast Asia in the event of an end to hostilities there. Now, with the conclusion of the final agreement with North Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff revised these authorities and rules in accordance with the terms of the actual agreement and dispatched approved versions to CINCPAC on 27 January. These documents spelled out in considerable detail both the allowed and prohibited actions in Southeast Asia, the broad outlines of which had already been provided in the JCS cease-fire directive of 23 January.

(TS) In North Vietnam, the operating authorities prohibited "military operations of all types" except for mine countermeasure operations, search and rescue of US personnel, crash and grave site inspections, immediate pursuit to repel attacks on US forces, and defensive response. In South Vietnam, operations employing tactical air, B-52s, rotary wing gunships artillery, naval bombardment, and other fire expenditures or ordnance expenditures were allowed against hostile forces only in direct support of US forces under attack and only until completion of the US withdrawal. In case of such attack, response appropriate to the magnitude of the attack was authorized, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff reiterated that US forces operating from bases in South Vietnam would not take part in operations in Laos and Cambodia. Confirming the 23 January directive, overflight and both manned and unmanned reconnaissance of South Vietnam were permitted, as were immediate pursuit of attacking forces into South Vietnamese territorial seas and air space and defensive response to protect US forces, when all other alternatives had failed. United States

(TS) During the North Vietnamese offensive into South Vietnam in April 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had secured Secretary of Defense approval for authority to deploy various US air and naval augmentation forces in Southeast Asia, and these authorities were extended on a month-to-month basis thereafter. Each extension required a specific JCS request and a Secretary of Defense approval. The current augmentation authorities were scheduled to expire on 31 January 1973, and Admiral Moorer approached the Secretary of Defense on this matter on 27 January 1973. He realized that the rationale previously used to support the continued augmentation no longer applied with the conclusion of the cease-fire agreement. Nevertheless, Admiral Moorer requested extension of those authorities through 28 February 1973, pending final resolution of withdrawal and redeployment plans. Mr. Elliot Richardson, who became Secretary of Defense on 30 January approved the extension that same day, adding that he wished to review the JCS plan for incremental phase-down of US forces in Southeast Asia not later than X+15, 12 February 1973.[10]

(TS) Officials in Washington were keenly interested in the implementation of the Vietnam agreement and any

File 091 SEA, Jan-Apr 73. Again, this directive superseded efforts initiated earlier in January to revise existing rules of engagement. See (TS) CM-2452-73 to SecDef, 25 Jan 73, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Apr 73.

10. (TS-EX) CM-2462-73 to SecDef, 27 Jan 73; (TS-EX) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Temporary Augmentation Authorities (U)," 30 Jan 73; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 4010 to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, CINCLANT, and USCINCRED, 310025Z Jan 73; CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Apr 73.

(C) In the rules of engagement for Southeast Asia also dispatched on 27 January 1973, to be effective 272359Z January 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff carefully defined the terms Southeast Asia, territorial seas, internal waters, territorial airspace, friendly and hostile forces, hostile aircraft and vessels, attacks, and immediate pursuit. They then proceeded to authorize US forces operating in Southeast Asia to attack and destroy any hostile aircraft or vessel and hostile ground forces attacking US personnel in South Vietnam or US and friendly forces, facilities, materiel, or population centers in Laos or Cambodia. They also authorized immediate pursuit should US forces be attacked in South Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, North Vietnam, or Southeast Asian international waters or airspace. United States forces conducting such pursuit into unfriendly territory were not allowed to attack other unfriendly forces or installations encountered unless attacked first by those forces, and then only to the extent necessary for self-defense. No immediate pursuit was permitted into the People's Republic of China. The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded the rules of engagement with the usual caveat that nothing therein modified "the requirement of a military commander to defend his unit against armed attack with all means at his disposal."[9]

superseded plans that were begun, shortly before the final agreement, to amend the existing operating authorities. See (TS-EX) CM-2442-73 to SecDef, 21 Jan 73 and CM-2443-73 to SecDef, 22 Jan 73, both in CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Apr 73).

9. (TS) Msg, JCS 9912 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 270703Z Jan 73. Draft of this msg had handwritten notation of SecDef approval, dated 26 Jan 73, see CJCS

serious nature." All attacks on US or Free World forces were considered serious violations, and this category also included armed conflict that endangered local government agencies in South Vietnam and that, if continued, would endanger the central government and any other "gross violation" by North Vietnamese land, sea, or air forces.[12]

(C) The President, too, wanted to be kept informed and requested a daily report on the implementation of the Vietnam agreement, including the topics of prisoner return, US and ROK force withdrawals, cease-fire violations, mine clearance operations, and assistance to South Vietnam. Dr. Kissinger relayed this request to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence on 28 January 1973, and Admiral Moorer tasked CINCPAC to provide information for military aspects of this report. Within the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Military Command Center was charged with compilation of a daily JCS post-cease-fire report.[13]

(C) In an attempt to enhance North Vietnamese acceptance of a cease-fire, a high-level interagency committee, the PSYOP Pressure Operations Group, had requested the US Ambassador in Saigon and CINCPAC in late 1972 to plan an intensive leaflet and mini-radio

12. (S) Msg, JCS 7526 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 250029Z Jan 73.

13. (TS) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to Secys State and Def and DCI, "Post Ceasefire Reporting," 28 Jan 73; (U) OPS 59-73, Memo, DepDir for Ops (NMCC), "JCS Post Cease-fire Daily Report," 1 Feb 73; J-5 Action Officer Files. (S) Msg, JCS 3963 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 302333Z Jan 73.

violation of the cease-fire. On 23 January 1973, Admiral Moorer addressed a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense discussing the possibility of enemy violations and the range of US responses available. On the basis of limited experience of holiday cease-fires in previous years, Admiral Moorer anticipated deliberate infractions of the cease-fire. Such occurrences, he observed, could range from minor harassment activities to a massive invasion of South Vietnam by North Vetnamese forces. The precise character of the US response could not be fully determined without knowledge of the actual situation, but Admiral Moorer believed that sufficient US forces would be available in Southeast Asia to allow a wide range of reaction should North Vietnam abrogate the agreement. These forces would have the capability to lay mines, give close air support, interdict lines of communication, furnish naval gunfire support, bomb, resupply indigenous forces, and conduct psychological warfare. "A central point," the Admiral continued, was that the US "threshold of response" would change drastically when the US withdrawal was complete. Prior to that date, US reaction to violations threatening the safety of US forces would have to be timely and deliberate; thereafter the "threshold of provocation" would undoubtedly rise considerably. How high, he said, would depend on the economic, political, and military stability of South Vietnam.[11]

(C) On 24 January, following announcement of the agreement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to report immediately cease-fire violations of "a

11. (TS-EX) Memo, CJCS to SecDef, "SEAsia Cease-fire Violations," 23 Jan 73, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Apr 73.

communist forces also pressed efforts against populated areas, interdicting lines of communication and occupying or infiltrating government-controlled hamlets. The level of activity dropped during February, but never, throughout the 60-day period of the US withdrawal, did the fighting in South Vietnam cease completely.[16]

(U) Despite the lack of a true cease-fire in South Vietnam, the United States began the withdrawal of its remaining forces from South Vietnam on 28 January 1973, X-Day as it was designated in the military planning and operations. General Weyand had prepared tentative plans in accordance with the JCS guidance supplied the previous November,[17] and with the agreement on a final settlement, he carried out those plans in accordance with the JCS troop withdrawal directive of 25 January. On 28 January 1973, 23,335 US military personnel, 35,396 ROK forces, and 113 others from Thailand, the Philippines, and the Republic of China awaited removal from South Vietnam, and as specified by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 6,000 to 6,500 US men were to leave in increment one, the period X-Day to X+15 (28 January-11 February). The actual redeployment, Operation COUNT DOWN,[18] got under way slowly, but by the end of 11 February, 6,145 US troops had departed South Vietnam, leaving a total of 17,190 still to be moved. During this same period, 8,929 ROK forces redeployed.[19]

16. For a description of the military activities in South Vietnam during the period 28 January-29 March 1973, see (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) pp. 141-149.

17. See Chapter 12, pp. 644-649.

18. In initial planning the operation was nicknamed THUNDER BOLT. For the change in name see (C) Msg, JCS 6913 to CINCPAC, 241522Z Jan 73.

19. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) pp. H-2 - H-3. (TS) NMCC OPSUM 35-73, 13 Feb 73.

campaign throughout South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in the brief interim between the initialing and effective date of an agreement. The thrust of the effort was to emphasize the cease-fire theme and to pressure North Vietnamese forces to return home. The plan was readied with a supply of leaflets prestocked in Thailand and over 30,000 radios disseminated in anticipation of implementation of the operation, nicknamed TEMPO SURGE. On 24 January, the PSYOP Pressure Operations Group directd execution. Between that time and termination of TEMPO SURGE at 270133Z January 1973, US C-130s in 13 sorties delivered 160 million leaflets and two B-52 sorties dropped an additional seven million leaflets into South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.[14]

The US Withdrawal Begins

(U) At 272400Z (0800 Saigon time) January 1973, the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam with its attendant cease-fire in South Vietnam enterd into force. That event, however, did not end the fighting. As described in the previous chapter,[15] both sides launched concerted efforts in the days preceding the announcement and signature of the agreement to increase the territory and population under their control, and this intensified combat continued in the period immediately following the cease-fire. In MR 1, major activity centered in Quang Tri and Quang Ngai Provinces where NVA and PRG forces attempted to expand their control into population centers by seizing hamlets and isolating defending troops. In the other three military regions, the

14. (S) DJSM-83-73 to CJCS, 12 Jan 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 73. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, pp. 171-172.
15. See pp. 689-690.

Hanoi on 12 February. On the same day, the PRG released 19 military and 8 civilian prisoners at Loc Ninh in South Vietnam, and the freed men were flown to Clark Air Base in the Philippines for medical examination and reporting before returning to the United States. The prisoner return operation received the name HOMECOMING.[22]

Organizational Changes

(U) Upon implementation of the cease-fire in South Vietnam, the various organizational changes planned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for that eventuality began to come into effect. The previous November, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended and the Secretary of Defense had approved, the establishment of a Defense Attache Office (DAO), Saigon, composed of a Defense Attache Element and a Defense Resource Support and Termination Office (DRSTO). Limited to 50 US military personnel, augmented by a large number of Department of Defense civilian and contract personnel, this organization would carry out US residual military functions in South Vietnam after the cease-fire and US withdrawal and would be the sole US military presence in the country.[23]

(C) Shortly before the final agreement was completed on 15 January 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied

22. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 22-73, 29 Jan 73; 35-73, 13 Feb 73. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (U) p. 600. The name originally was EGRESS RECAP, but it was changed by the Secretary of Defense to HOMECOMING on 8 January 1973. See (U) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts, CJCS, et al., 8 Jan 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 73.

23. See Chapter 12, pp. 638-639, 642, 647.

(U) The US withdrawal was tied directly to the return of US prisoners. This was in accord with the Vietnam agreement and the accompanying protocol on prisoners,[20] which provided for the return to proceed and be completed simultaneously with the US withdrawal. It was also decided in an oral agreement at the Paris conference that North Vietnam and the PRG would release the US prisoners in 15-day increments paralleling the US redeployments. Further negotiations and actual exchange arrangements for the return were conducted in the Four-Party Joint Military Commission in Saigon, and COMUSMACV set up a Prisoner of War Liaison Division as part of the US Delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission to insure implementation of the protocol concerning the return of captured personnel. In Washington, planning and arrangements for the return of the US prisoners was handled by a special Department of Defense Task Force for Prisoners-of-War/Missing-in-Action located in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). This Task Force dealt directly with the Services and CINCPAC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not involved in these activities.[21]

(S) North Vietnam and the PRG presented US officials in Paris on 27 January with lists of names of personnel that they had captured. The combined lists totaled 717 men, including 555 US military, 22 US civilians, and 140 others comprised of foreign nationals, previously released prisoners, and deceased. With the completion of the first increment of the US withdrawal from South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese released the first group of 116 US military prisoners at Gia Lam Airfield in

20. See Chapter 13, pp. 702-703.
21. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (U) p. 600.

(TS) After the final agreement was completed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC on 25 January 1973 of the following US personnel ceilings in South Vietnam: for the Defense Attache Office, 50 US military and 1,200 DOD civilians. In addition, 5,500 contractor personnel were authorized and there was no limit on the number of third-country nationals employed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff specified, however, that all DOD civilians must depart South Vietnam within one year of the cease-fire date. Subsequently, CINCPAC requested authority to recruit and fill the DAO ceilings and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved on 27 January. On the next day, the Defense Attache Office, Saigon, was activated under the operational command of COMUSMACV with an initial staff of 190 permanent DOD employees and 46 temporary duty personnel. On 2 February 1973, the Secretary of Defense confirmed the DAO personnel ceilings issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 January. Exempted from the 50 US military limit in South Vietnam were US members of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and DOD personnel sponsored by the Department of State.[25]

(U) In the cease-fire preparations in November 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had provided for a joint headquarters, the US Support Activities Group/7th Air Force (USSAG/7AF), located in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand to plan and be ready to conduct combat air operations in Southeast Asia as required. The Secretary of

25. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 8209 to CINCPAC, 251719Z Jan 73. (S) Msg, JCS 1341 to CINCPAC, 271659Z Jan 73. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, pp. G-9 - G-11. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Personnel Ceiling for Defense Attache Office, Saigon (U)," 2 Feb 73, Att to JCS 2339/360-19, 9 Feb 73, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 3.

the Secretary of Defense interim terms of reference and detailed organizational information for the DAO. In late December 1972, the Secretary had requested that the US residual defense organization in South Vietnam include a capability to support various on-going US economic support programs in South Vietnam, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff included that function in the interim terms of reference. Command relations, as outlined in the terms of reference, provided for a Defense Attache to head the Office, who would also be Chief, DRSTO, and serve as the senior US military representative to the US Diplomatic Mission in Saigon. For intelligence matters, the Defense Attache would be responsible to the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; as Chief, DRSTO, he would be under the command of COMUSMACV until the disestablishment of MACV, then under the Commander, US Support Activities Group/7th Air Force, and ultimately under CINCPAC when USSAG/7AF was eliminated. For all security assistance planning and coordination, the Defense Attache/Chief, DRSTO, would report directly to CINCPAC. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary that any further changes required in the terms of reference to accord with "any future cease-fire agreement" would be supplied within 15 days (X+15) of the date the agreement went into force. On the same day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded these interim terms of reference to CINCPAC, stating that they were approved, pending changes required by the final agreement. They authorized CINCPAC to hire 234 US civilians for the organization.[24]

24. (TS) JCSM-25-73 to SecDef, 15 Jan 73, Encl A to JCS 2339/360-17, 10 Jan 73; (C) Msg, JCS 5977 to CINCPAC, 15 Jan 73; JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 3.

located at Udorn, Thailand. This element provided "operational interface" between the 7th and 13th Air Forces and was the organization through which the 13AF exercised its command, administrative, and logistical support functions in Thailand. Earlier, on 13 January 1973, the Secretary of Defense had inquired about the role of the Deputy Commander 7/13AF and his staff when the cease-fire was implemented. Admiral Moorer replied on 31 January that this organization at Udorn was the means by which the 13AF would conduct training to maintain combat readiness in the cease-fire situation. Once the 7AF Headquarters moved to Thailand, however, the responsibilities of the Deputy Commander 7/13AF would be reduced. But, because of the uncertainties surrounding the cease-fire, Admiral Moorer recommended retention of this headquarters until the US withdrawal was completed. Further consideration would then be given its disposition.[28]

(C) With the establishment of the USSAG/7AF at Nakhon, the Deputy Commander 7/13AF ceased to perform the combat operations control function on behalf of the Commander 7AF. He did, however, continue to carry out command and support functions for the Commander 13AF. Accordingly, CINCPACAF redesignated the organization at Udorn the 13AF ADVON, responsible for such functins as command, administration, logistics, facilities manage-ment, training, and operational control of noncombat sorties. In the process the strength of the headquar-ters was reduced from 97 to 63 personnel. Subsequently,

28. (TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Jan 73, Att to JCS 2339/360-18, 16 Jan 73; (TS) CM-2473-73 to SecDef, 31 Jan 73, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 2339/360-13, 2 Feb 73; JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 3.

Defense sanctioned this organization, approving deployment of an advance element prior to X-Day and establishment of the entire organization before X+60.[26]

(C) Deployment of the advanced element of the USSAG/7AF was delayed because of difficulties in securing diplomatic clearance, and it was not until 24 January 1973 that the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to move a leading element of 20 officers to Nakhon Phanom after coordination with the US Embassy in Bangkok. Accordingly, this advance element moved to Thailand on 29 January and the Headquarters, USSAG/7AF was activated on 10 February 1973 under the command of General John W. Vogt, USAF, and staffed largely with former MACV personnel. The headquarters became operational five days later when it took over control of air assets from MACV, and the phased movement of aircraft from Vietnam was completed on 18 February 1973. Remaining headquarters and support unit personnel arrived from Vietnam during the next several weeks as their duties there ended. On 23 February 1973, CINCPAC recommended dropping the 7th Air Force portion of the title of the new organization, designating it simply the US Support Activities Group, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not approve the recommendation.[27]

(C) The JCS planning for postwar command control arrangements in Southeast Asia made no provision for the role of the Deputy Commander 7/13AF and his staff,

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26. See Chapter 12, pp. 641, 645.

27. (TS) Msg, JCS 7270 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 242032Z Jan 73. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, pp. G-4 - G-5, H-2. (C) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 230244Z Feb 73, JCS IN 17865; (C) Msg, JCS 9859 to CINCPAC, 6 Mar 73 (derived from JCS 2339/360-23); JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 3.

(S) The Four-Party Joint Military Commission consisted of a Central Commission in Saigon, seven Regional Joint Military Commissions located near key province capitals, and 26 joint Military Teams The Central Commission established three subcommissions to assist in carrying out its responsibilities: one on Captured Military Personnel to arrange the release of US and Vietnamese prisoners of war and captured foreign nationals; another on Operational Procedures to deal with matters of transportation, facilities, privileges and immunities, press relations, and fiscal arrangements; and a Subcommission on Military Affairs to implement the cease-fire. Each delegation to the Four-Party Commission was allowed 825 personnel, comprising 275 delegates and 550 support personnel. The United States sent representatives to all levels of the Four-Party Commission organization and was anxious for the other parties to do likewise. To facilitate the Commission's functioning, the United States offered on 27 January 1973 to provide air transportation to bring North Vietnamese and PRG delegation members from Hanoi to Saigon. This offer was accepted and the airlift began on 29 January. By 8 February, the United States had transported 802 North Vietnamese and 49 PRG personnel from Hanoi to Saigon.[32]

(S) The US, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese delegations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission were at full strength by 8 February 1973, but the PRG had supplied only 152 members. To assist deployment

32. (S) Msgs, JCS 9924 and 1555 to US Del Paris, 270713Z Jan 73 and 280113Z Jan 73. (S-EX) Final Rpt of US Del, Four-Party Joint Military Commission, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/873, 20 Jun 73, JMF 911/533 (20 Jun 73).

in April 1973, CINCPAC issued terms of reference for the USSAG/7AF. The Commander exercised operational control of Thailand-based USAF assets, except for SAC units and C-130 aircraft controlled by the PACOM Transportation Management Agency, when committed to him by CINCPAC for combat air operations; the Commander 13AF, at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, commanded the assigned USAF units when the aircraft were not committed to the USSAG/7AF.[29]

(C) When the Vietnam agreement was reached, the United States had plans ready for its organization to support the Four-Party Joint Military Commission (FPJMC).[30] On 27 January 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to establish the US Delegation to the Four-Party Commission to function in accordance with the agreement and the pertinent protocols. United States control of this body would be exercised in the military chain of command through COMUSMACV, and all instructions to the US Delegation would be coordinated with the US Ambassador in Saigon. Reporting channels for the US Delegation would be to COMUSMACV for further transmission to CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Accounts of minor cease-fire vilolations would be included in the daily COMUSMACV reports and serious violations would be reported immediately to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[31]

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29. (S) Memo, DepUSecAF to ASD(ISA), 27 Mar 73, Encl to Att to 2d N/H of JCS 2339/360-18, 28 Mar 73, JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 2. (C) Memo, Hilbert (OASD/ISA) to ASD(ISA), "13AF ADVON, Udorn, Thailand," 24 Apr 73, J-5 Action Officer Files. (S) Msg, CINC-PACAF to CINCPAC, 240400Z Mar 73, JCS IN 48460. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, p. 49.

30. See Chapter 12, pp. 657-661.

31. (S) Msgs, JCS 1325 and 1505 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 271632Z and 272325Z Jan 73.

In dealings with the PRG members, the Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned that the United States did not "in any way" regard the Provisional Revolutionary Government as "a governmental entity" and acts should be avoided that might suggest formal US relations with the PRG. All US military forces were reminded that the United States recognized "the GVN as the sole legitimate government of South Vietnam and contacts with official representatives of the PRG/NFL should be avoided." In case of doubt, US military personnel in South Vietnam would seek instructions, through proper channels, from the US Ambassador or appropriate members of his staff, and all meetings with representatives of North Vietnam or the PRG were to be reported to the US Embassy in Saigon.[34]

(C) The JCS guidance with respect to the PRG was subsequently confirmed by the Department of State. In a circular to all US diplomatic and consular posts on 2 March 1973, the Secretary of State noted that recent events, including the signing of the Vietnam agreement by the "so-called Provisional Revolutionary Government" as well as its participation in the International Conference on Vietnam, had led some third countries "to look with more responsiveness upon the PRG's claims of enhanced legitimacy." But these events, the Secretary said, did nothing to strengthen PRG claims to represent the people of South Vietnam. He continued:

> Our policy, stated by the President on January 23, is to "continue to recognize the Government of the Republic of Vietnam as the sole legitimate government of South

34. (S) Msg, JCS 1508 to CINCPAC, CSA, CNO, CSAF, and CMC (info COMUSMACV), 272329Z Jan 73.

of the remaining PRG contingent, the Central Commission set up an Ad Hoc Committee on PRG Movement, but that body was of little use. Under the pretexts of inadequate facilities, poor security, and lack of freedom of movement, the PRG delayed sending additional personnel, and when those excuses were removed, the PRG still did not provide its full complement. During the 60-day period following the cease-fire, the PRG sent representatives to only four regions and to no team sites, and the maximum number of PRG members to join the Four-Party Commission was 314. The North Vietnamese initially provided members for all seven Regional Commissions and five team sites. But then, alleging a lack of security, they withdrew from two Regional Commissions and refused to participate in "meaningful" activities in the other five regions. At the time of disestablsihment of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, there were no North Vietnamese at the team sites.[33]

(C) With the establishment of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, US military personnel had to deal with both North Vietnamese and PRG personnel, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued guidance for such encounters on 27 January 1973. All US military personnel were instructed that contacts

> must be limited to those required for the transaction of necessary business and to those which cannot be avoided without breach of courtesy. When such contacts do occur all personnel should conduct themselves in a reserved but correct and courteous manner.

33. (S-EX) Final Rpt, US Del, Four-Party Joint Military Commission, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/873, 20 Jun 73, JMF 911/533 (20 Jun 73).

X+60, though they could not legally engage in coastal traffic between South Vietnamese ports.[36]

(C) The peace agreement provided that "armaments," "munitions," and "war material" in Vietnam could be replaced only "on the basis of piece-for-piece" and, during the withdrawal period, COMUSMACV became concerned about the possibility of conflicting interpretations of these terms. He developed definitions of the three terms as well as specific lists of items for each category, recommending that any other interpretations of these matters be referred to his headquarters prior to issuance. CINCPAC supported this recommendation, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved it on 14 March 1973.[37]

(C) Even the most trivial administrative matters relating to Vietnam during the withdrawal period required the attention of Washington officials. For, on 17 February 1973, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Installations and Logistics) approved a JCS recommendation that a military post office (APO/FPO) be continued in South Vietnam with the Department of the Navy administering it on behalf of the Department of Defense.[38]

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36. (C) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 310549Z Jan 73, JCS IN 63304; (C) Msg, JCS 8896 to CINCPAC, 6 Feb 73 (derived from JCS 2472/855); JMF 911/448 (31 Jan 73). (C) JCS 2472/854, 3 Feb 73; (S) Msg, JCS 9559 to CINCPAC and MSC, 6 Feb 73; JMF 911/448 (2 Feb 73). (U) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 170230Z Feb 73, JCS IN 31879; (U) Msg, JCS 6571 to CINCPAC, 23 Mar 73 (derived from JCS 2472/863); JMF 911/448 (17 Feb 73).

37. (S) Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 120813Z Feb 73, JCS IN 85448; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 142243Z Feb 73, JCS IN 91472; (S) Msg, JCS 5379 to CINCPAC, CSA, CNO, CSAF, and CMC, 14 Mar 73 (derived from JCS 2472/858); JMF 911/495 (12 Feb 73).

38. (S) JCSM-56-73 to SecDef, 12 Feb 73, Encl A to JCS 2472/850, 19 Jan 73; JMF 911/066 (4 Dec 72). Memo,

> Vietnam." Its claims notwithstanding, the PRG does not have a capital, controls . . . but a small percentage of the South Vietnamese population and has none of the outward manifestations commonly associated with any legitimate government.[35]

Problems Requiring Guidance

(U) After the cease-fire came into force, various questions arose that had not been anticipated in the before-the-fact planning and, in response to requests from CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued rulings on various interpretations of the cease-fire. They decided that Delong piers were not war materiel and need not be withdrawn at all since they would be useful in loading other materiel aboard ship for withdrawal. With respect to cargoes en route to Vietnam by sea when the cease-fire became effective, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said that such cargoes could proceed to South Vietnam and be unloaded. The only exception was ammunition, which under the terms of the agreement could be brought in only as replacement; hence COMUSMACV must guarantee that ammunition entering did not exceed the level on hand on 27 January. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned that introduction of all such cargoes must be coordinated closely with the FPJMC in order to avoid allegations of cease-fire violations. Some days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff amplified this guidance directing that en route ships might continue to unload cargoes in Vietnam even after

35. (S) Msg, State 51556 to All Dipl. and Consular Posts, 21 Mar 73, JCS IN 73178.

capability" should it be needed. "Higher authority" had also indicated "they" would consider proposals to reduce the US carrier posture in Southeast Asia. Accordingly, the Chairman requested the Joint Staff to prepare a withdrawal program including the following: (1) a plan to drawdown to three CVAs in the 7th Fleet as soon as possible as well as a CVA posture for Southeast Asia for the periods X-Day to X+60 and post X+60; (2) a plan to reduce US air assets in Thailand and Guam to an ultimate force of nine tactical fighter squadrons, 42 B-52s, 36 KC-135s, one tactical reconnaissance squadron, and one gunship squadron.[40]

(C) On 27 January 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had sought the views of both CINCPAC and CINCSAC on necessary revisions of the November 1972 illustrative concept. After reviewing these comments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the two commanders on 5 February that "higher authority" had approved the withdrawal of certain forces from Southeast Asia. They directed CINCPAC:

> Cancel scheduled deployment of CORAL SEA. Outchop MIDWAY on 23 February 1973 without relief. Outchop AMERICA on 5 March 1973 without relief. Instructions concerning any further withdrawal of naval forces in SEA will be provided at a later date.
>
> Redeploy proportionate numbers of escort and support units with each CVA keeping in mind the requirements for END SWEEP [mine clearance operations].

40. (S) CM-2464-73 to DJS, 29 Jan 73, JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 73).

Withdrawal of US Air and Naval Forces

(C) With the cessation of all US military action in Vietnam, the United States began a reduction of air and naval assets located elsewhere in Southeast Asia. In earlier planning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had prepared in November and the Secretary of Defense had approved an illustrative concept for redeployment of US air and naval forces in Southeast Asia outside of Vietnam following a cease-fire. This planning concept had provided for: a reduction of US tactical air forces in Thailand to nine tactical fighter squadrons, one tactical reconnaissance squadron, one gunship squadron, and appropriate support elements, a force able to supply 4,700 combat sorties per month; redeployment of B-52s from U Tapao down to a level of 35 to 42 aircraft capable of providing 1,000 sorties per month; and incremental phase-down of US 7th Fleet assets off Vietnam to a force able to fly 2,200 sorties per month with one CVA on station off Vietnam and two more positioned to arrive within a week. Actual timing of the specific withdrawals was to be determined after the cease-fire had been accomplished.[39]

(C) On 29 January 1973, Admiral Moorer informed the Director of the Joint Staff that, in discussions with "higher authority," broad guidelines had been reached on the reduction of US air assets in Southeast Asia. The United States would retain for "the time being" its land-based air assets, both Air Force and Marine, to provide a strong deterrent "as well as significant

Actg ASD(I&L) to DJS, 17 Feb 73, Att to JCS 2472/850-1, 21 Feb 73; Memo, Actg ASD(I&L) to SecNav, 17 Feb 73, Encl to Att to JCS 2472/850-1, 21 Feb 73; Msg, JCS 9495 to CINCPAC, 17 Feb 73; same file.

39. See Chapter 12, pp. 641-642, 644-646.

escort and supply ships would also be redeployed. The remaining Western Pacific naval force could provide 2,200 tactical air sorties per month while maintaining a posture of one CVA on-station off Vietnam, one positioned to arrive off Vietnam within 96 hours, and one to arrive within one week. Amphibious ships above those required for two amphibious ready groups (ARGs) would be withdrawn when contingencies permitted, and the two amphibious ready groups would be available on conditions of readiness appropriate to existing circumstances.

(C) The JCS plan for withdrawal of land-based air assets provided for redeployment in three increments. Tactical air assets in Thailand would be reduced in accordance with the November 1972 illustrative concept to nine fighter squadrons, one reconnaisssance squadron, and one gunship squadron--the residual force to provide 4,700 combat sorties per month. The plan also provided for a reduction of B-52s at U Tapao from 52 to 42 and in Guam from 155 to 10; KC-135s would be reduced in Thailand from 53 to 29, in Guam from six to zero, and at Kadena from 59 to 27. The remaining force in Thailand--42 B-52s and 29 KC-135s--could accomplish 1,000 B-52 sorties per month and provide tanker support for tactical air sorties. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not include the actual scheduling of the land-based aircraft other than the 20 KC-135s already ordered redeployed on 5 February. Timing of the rest of the withdrawals, they said, depended on political rather than military considerations.

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff requested the Secretary of Defense to approve both plans as well as the immedi- redeployment of the US Marine Corps A-6 squadron

These redeployments would reduce the 7th Fleet carriers from six to four. In addition, CINCSAC was to redeploy 20 KC-135 aircarft with associated crews, support personnel, and equipment from Takhli to CONUS. Six hours after the issuance of this directive, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to reduce the 7th Fleet on-line force to 3 CVAs with a fourth carrier available within 48 hours.[41]

(C) The Secretary of Defense had requested a JCS plan for the incremental reduction of US forces in Southeast Asia not later than 12 February 1973, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded a plan for the withdrawal of US naval forces and one for removal of land-based air forces on 8 February. These plans followed closely the November 1972 illustrative concept and the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the Secretary that these plans insured an adequate force structure to protect remaining US troops in Southeast Asia as well as to react to contingencies. Moreover, the plans afforded necessary flexibility in the event of North Vietnamese cease-fire violations, problems in the return of US prisoners of war, or other undetermined factors.

(C) The plan for the withdrawal of US naval forces included the redeployment of the USS MIDWAY on 23 February and the USS AMERICA on 5 March as already ordered. Redeployment of a third attack carrier was planned in mid-March although the specific date had not been determined and a proportionate number of

41. (TS) Msg, JCS 1406 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 271905Z Jan 73. (TS) Msg, CINCSAC to JCS, 302110Z Jan 73, JCS IN 66676. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 312334Z Jan 73, JCS IN 65086. (TS) Msg, JCS 8374 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 051456Z Feb 73. (TS) Msg, JCS 8688 to CINCPAC, 052139Z Feb 73. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, p. 226.

CINCPAC to adopt the following carrier posture off Southeast Asia: one carrier on-station on ready alert to provide rapid response for air operations as requested by the Commander, US Support Activities Group (COMUSSAG); a second carrier on-station to provide "logistic support" for mine clearance operations while at the same time remaining on four to six hour notice to supply additional contingency response; and at least one of the two carriers not on-station maintained on a 48-hour reaction time to respond to contingency requirements in Southeast Asia. Two days later, on 7 March, CINCPAC informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, based on the present tempo of activity in the Gulf of Tonkin, he believed one carrier on-station there could supply both ready alert contingency sortie requirements and logistic support for mine clearance forces. Accordingly, he requested authority to plan to reduce the 7th Fleet carrier level in mid-March from four to three in the following posture: one carrier on-station in the Gulf of Tonkin for possible contingencies and for mine clearance support; the second on 96-hour reaction to respond to contingencies in Southeast Asia; and the third in "upkeep status." Admiral Moorer replied to CINCPAC the next day. Although he understood the rationale for the proposed carrier reduction, he believed that the "potentially volatile" situation required maintenance of the existing carrier levels and posture. It was not until 25 May 1973, well after the completion of the US withdrawal from South Vietnam, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to adopt the carrier level and posture he had recommended on 7 March.[44]

44. (TS) Msg, JCS 8735 to CINCPAC, 051745Z Mar 73. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 070325Z Mar 73, JCS IN 39642. (TS) Msg, JCS 2600 to CINCPAC, 080027Z Mar 73. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 2807 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 252154Z May 73.

from Thailand. The Secretary of Defense, however, took no action. The naval withdrawal, as will be related below, was carried out during the next several months, but none of the land-based air forces had been redeployed when the US forces withdrawal from South Vietnam was completed at the end of March 1973.[42]

(C) On 10 February, CINCPAC requested authority to advance the date for the withdrawal of the USS MIDWAY out of the Gulf of Tonkin from 23 to 18 February 1973, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff turned down the request "due to uncertainties of the current situation." A week later, CINCPAC proposed to reduce the on-line CVA posture of the 7th Fleet from three to two. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advised CINCPAC that, until an effective cease-fire was attained in Laos, it was necessary to maintain adequate carrier support for air operations in Laos. Two carriers, they instructed, must be kept on-station for that purpose. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not object to reducing the online posture to two carriers "provided the requirements for the END SWEEP [mine clearance] support CVA can be fulfilled by other means." Following a cease-fire in Laos, they said, the carrier posture question would be reassessed. Apparently, one carrier on-station was considered necessary for mine clearance support and the on-line posture continued unchanged at three.[43]

(C) On 5 March, over two weeks after the 21 February cease-fire in Laos, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed

42. (TS) JCSM-51-73 to SecDef, 8 Feb 73, Encl A to JCS 2472/856, 5 Feb 73; (TS) JCSM-263-73 to SecDef, 14 Jun 73, Encl to JCS 2472/856-1, 13 Jun 73; JMF 911/374 (5 Feb 73).

43. (S) Msgs, JCS 6308 and 4919 to CINCPAC, 111738Z and 182048Z Feb 73.

United States proceeded with the next in the series of four redeployment increments. As specified by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 25 January, the second would occur during the period X+16 through X+30 (12-27 February) and consist of 4,000 to 4,500 US troops. On 17 February 1973, Admiral Moorer approved a second withdrawal of 5,600 spaces and directed planning for a third and fourth increment of approximately 5,800 each. Later, on 21 February, Admiral Moorer changed this guidance slightly, authorizing a third withdrawal of about 5,500 during X+31 to X+45 (28 February through 14 March) and a fourth of approximately 6,000 spaces in the period X+46 and X+60 (15 through 29 March). Meantime increment two continued apace and by 27 February US military strength in South Vietnam had fallen to 12,065.[47]

(U) According to the agreed procedure, the second North Vietnamese and PRG release of US prisoners was to occur on 27 February upon the completion of the second phase of the US withdrawal. During the earlier part of the period, all seemed to be going according to plan. In fact, on 18 February, North Vietnam freed 20 US prisoners ahead of schedule as a goodwill gesture following Dr. Kissinger's visit to Hanoi. But, thereafter, things began to bog down. North Vietnam and the PRG refused to furnish the United States with prisoner names and details of the next scheduled release, and on 27 February, North Vietnam announced that there would be no further release of American prisoners as long as the United States failed to carry out the Paris agreement. A North Vietnamese spokesman in the Four-Party

47. (S) Msgs, JCS 3870 and 7299 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 170449Z and 211443Z Feb 73. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. H-3.

(C) At the same time that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were considering reduction of air and naval assets in Southeast Asia, they were also addressing the requirement for air surge capabilities for the same area. In response to a Secretary of Defense request for recommendations for assumptions on which to base short-term Service munitions procurement and distribution planning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary on 23 February 1973 that an immediate surge capability in Southeast Asia should be maintained at the following monthly levels: 12,000 (10,000 USAF and 2,000 USMC) land-based tactical air sorties; 3,000 B-52 sorties; and 8,400 carrier-based tactical air sorties. Munitions support, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued, should be sufficient to maintain these levels indefinitely. The Joint Chiefs Staff also believed that the Southeast Asia air muntions support posture should provide for a resumption of Royal Laotian Air Force sorties to 3,000 per month, and they recommended that continued US air activity in Cambodia be included although they could not predict at that time the level and duration of such activity. There was, however, no immediate response to their proposals.[45]

COUNT DOWN Continues

(C) With the successful completion of the first increment of the withdrawal of remaining US military forces from South Vietnam on 12 February 1973,[46] the

45. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 12 Feb 73, Att to JCS 2339/360-20, 13 Feb 73; (TS) JCSM-69-73 to SecDef, 23 Feb 73, Encl to JCS 2339/360-21, 22 Feb 73; JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 3.

46. See p. 723.

(TS) Following the North Vietnamese provision of the specific release date, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to resume Operation COUNT DOWN on 4 March with the withdrawal rate adjusted as necessary to complete the third increment redeployment of 5,500 by X+45 (14 March). On 4 March, North Vietnam released 106 US military personnel and two Thais. The following day, the PRG freed 34 additional prisoners in Hanoi (27 US military, three US civilians, and four foreign nationals).[51]

(U) Subsequently, the US withdrawal proceeded, but increasing controversy developed between the two South Vietnamese parties over exchange of their prisoners. Fearing that this dispute might delay the release of further US prisoners, the White House Press Secretary in Washington stated that the return of US prisoners was tied "only to withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam." The US Delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission reiterated that position, insisting that under the 27 January agreement release of US prisoners depended solely upon the withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam and was in no way tied to Vietnamese disputes.[52]

(C) On 8 March, the two South Vietnamese parties resolved their differences on prisoners and began a round of exchanges, but these ended abruptly on

73, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 5 Mar 73, p. 193. NY Times, 28 Feb 73, 1; 1 Mar 73, 1; 2 Mar 73, 3; 3 Mar 73, 1. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. G-24.

51. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7839 to CINCPAC, 031746Z Mar 73. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. H-3. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (U) p. 601. NY Times, 4 Mar 73, 1; 5 Mar 73, 1 and 15.

52. NY Times, 6 Mar 73, 1; 11 Mar 73, 14.

Joint Military Commission accused the United States of encouraging Saigon to create difficulties and obstacles for the Joint Military Commission, claiming that the Thieu regime had conducted 20,000 military operations since the cease-fire began.[48]

(TS) The United States acted at once to meet this challenge. Further US troop withdrawals from South Vietnam and all mine clearance operations were suspended on 27 February. At the same time, President Nixon instructed Secretary of State Rogers, who was attending the international conference on Vietnam[49] in Paris, "to demand clarification" of the prisoner issue from the North Vietnamese delegation on an urgent basis, giving the matter "highest priority" before any other business of the conference. The North Vietnamese delegation assured the US Secretary that all prisoners would be released before the end of the 60-day period stipulated in the agreement but did not specify the timing of the next release, and the United States continued the suspension of troop withdrawals from South Vietnam. Subsequently, on 1 March 1973, the North Vietnamese delivered in Saigon a list of 108 prisoners to be released in the next several days, and on 2 March North Vietnam informed the US delegation at the Four-Party Joint Military Commission of the definite release date of 4 March. On 2 March, the PRG also announced its readiness to turn over 27 US military prisoners in the near future.[50]

48. NY Times, 14 Feb 73, 1; 19 Feb 73, 1; 26 Feb 73, 1; 27 Feb 73, 1. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) pp. G-23 - G-24.

49. See below, pp. 753-754.

50. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3889 to CINCPAC, 271859Z Feb 73. Statement by White House Press Secretary, 27 Feb

resumed the increment 3 redeployment on 14 March and completed it two days later, lowering US militry strength in South Vietnam to 6,289 personnel.[54]

Cease-Fire in Laos

(U) In the "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam," the United States and North Vietnam pledged to respect the 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos and called upon foreign countries to end all military activities and withdraw all military personnel and armaments from that country. The Vietnam agreement further provided that the internal affairs of Laos should be settled by the Laotians free of foreign interference. In describing the Vietnam agreement on 24 January, Dr. Kissinger indicated his expectation of a formal cease-fire in Laos within a short time, and in fact, representatives of the opposing factions in Laos, the Royal Laotian Government and the communist Pathet Lao, had been meeting since October 1972 to achieve a peaceful settlement.[55]

(S) The United States conducted no ground operations in Laos and had no military forces there, but it did carry out both B-52 and tactical air strikes in Laos in support of the Royal Laotian Government as well as various special operations. As related above,[56] the United States increased authorized air activity levels in Laos upon implementation of the cease-fire in Vietnam, and US air strikes there increased

54. NY Times, 13 Mar 73, 14; 14 Mar 73, 3; 16 Mar 73, 4. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. H-3. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (U) pp. 601-602.

55. See Chapter 13, pp. 700-701. NY Times, 12 Feb 73, 1.

56. See pp. 713-714.

10 March when the PRG cancelled further releases, accusing GVN forces of attacking and occupying a prisoner turnover point. In an effort to prevent the Vietnamese impasse from halting further releases of US prisoners, and to put pressure on North Vietnam to free the remaining US detainees on schdule, the United States on 10 March stoped further increment 3 withdrawals.

(C) Admiral Moorer instructred CINCPAC on that date to discontinue the withdrawals immediately. The balance of the increment would be withdrawn on the day that North Vietnam freed the next group of US prisoners, tentatively planned for 14 March. Should the US prisoners be returned over a two-day period, then completion of increment 3 should take place over the same period. With regard to the fourth and final withdrawal increment, Admiral Moorer directed CINCPAC to hold all redeployments until receipt of the final POW release list from North Vietnam. Then the US withdrawal should be completed within 72 hours. Admiral Moorer requested that this timing for the removal of the remaining US forces be announced in the Four-Party Joint Military Commission.[53]

(U) North Vietnam on 12 March provided the United States with a prisoner list for the next release and freed the men on the list in Hanoi on 14 March. The group included 107 US military personnel and one US civilian, and the succeeding day, the PRG released another 32 US prisoners, 27 military and five civilians, in Hanoi. Accordingly, the United States

53. NY Times, 8 Mar 73, 5; 9 Mar 73, 14. (TS) Msg, JCS 7596 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 101731Z Mar 73. (S) Msg, JCS 7952 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV and MAC), 102319Z Mar 73.

(U) With respect to a political settlement, the Laotian agreement included the creation, within 30 days, of a National Provisional Coalition Government and a National Political Coalition Council, each composed of equal numbers of representatives from both sides, "to administer national tasks." "General and free democratic elections" for a national assembly and a permanent national coalition government were also called for, but no date was specified.[59]

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff had anticipated the agreement in Laos, and on 10 February 1973 Admiral Moorer submitted to the Secretary of Defense appropriately revised rules of engagement for US forces in Southeast Asia to reflect a cease-fire in Laos. Upon announcement of the agreement, on 21 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued both revised rules of engagement and operating authorities for use following the cease-fire in Laos. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed all US forces to discontinue all acts of force in Laos, including air strikes and psychological operations, effective 220500Z February 1973. The only exception was B-52 and tactical air strikes in Laos in the event of Pathet Lao/North Vietnamese initiatives in violation of the cease-fire agreement. Such strikes would be conducted only after a request by the Commander, USSAG; validation by Ambassador in Laos; and approval by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[60]

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59. NY Times, 21 Feb 73, 1. Unofficial text of Cease-fire Agreement signed by Laotian Government and Pathet Lao, 21 Feb 73, reproduced in NY Times, 22 Feb 73, 17.

60. (TS-EX) CM-2495-73 to SecDef, 10 Feb 73, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Apr 73. (TS) Msg, JCS 7805 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 212332Z Feb 73. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7811 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 212337Z Feb 73. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 8066 to AIG 7076, 212330Z Feb 73.

significantly during the last days of January and early February 1973.[57]

(U) By early February, there were growing reports of an imminent cease-fire in Laos and speculation on this matter was fueled when Dr. Kissinger stopped in Vientiane on 9 February on his way to Hanoi to discuss the progress of the Laotian peace negotiations. In a further indication of US interest, the White House Press Secretary stated on 14 February that the United States considered the Laotian situation "a matter of great urgency," and the following day, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and former US Ambassador to Laos, William H. Sullivan, arrived in Vientiane for a 24-hour visit.[58]

(U) The reports of a truce in Laos proved accurate, for, on 21 February 1973, the Royal Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao signed a peace agreement ending their 20-year struggle. A cease-fire would enter into effect on noon, local time (220500Z), on 22 February and the two sides would maintain control of the areas then held. The agreement provided for the withdrawal of foreign military forces within 60 days and for an exchange of captured personnel by the two Laotian sides during the same 60-day period. Foreign countries were called upon to cease "completely and permanently" all bombing of Laotian territory and all military movements in Laos. The two parties would immediately establish a military commission to implement the cease-fire and the International Control Commission established by the Geneva Agreements of 1962 would oversee the agreement.

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57. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (S) p. 637.

58. NY Times, 10 Feb 73, 3; 12 Feb 73, 1; 15 Feb 73, 12; 16 Feb 73, 1.

(S) Another effort was the "International Conference" on Vietnam designed to gain major power support, including the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, for the Agreement Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam. The agreement included provision for such a conference to acknowledge the 27 January documents, to guarantee the peace in Vietnam, and to pledge respect for the rights of the Vietnamese people. The conference would assemble within 30 days of the signature of the agreement. Participants would include the four parties to the Vietnam agreement as well as France, Britain, the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and the four members of the International Commission for Control and Supervision (ICCS)--Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, and Poland. In preparation for the conference, Dr. Kissinger ordered on 30 January 1973 a study of objectives and courses of action for the meeting. The study, to be drafted under the direction of the Chairman of the NSC Interdepartmental Group for East Asia, was to consider possible organization for the conference as well as appropriate substantive issues to be pursued there and was to include a proposed "game plan" and negotiating instructions.[63]

(S) The Interdepartmental Group study was completed and circulated for a Senior Review Group meeting scheduled for 6 February 1973. The principal US objective, as set forth therein, was to achieve overall endorsement of the Vietnam agreement, serving "to assure that all Conference participants observe and respect its provisions." In addition the Interdepartmental Group proposed that the United States seek:

63. (S-EX) NSSM 167, 30 Jan 73, Att to JCS 2339/362, 31 Jan 73, JMF 907/075 (30 Jan 73).

(TS) The agreement in Laos did not end the fighting in that unfortunate country. During the morning of 23 February, Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Premier of the Royal Laotian Government, charged the Pathet Lao with launching a general offensive throughout the country and asked renewed US bombing. This request was passed through the designated channels to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Admiral Moorer approved the air strikes later the same day. Thus, before the cease-fire was 24 hours old, nine US B-52s struck enemy locations in the Bolovens Plateau near Paksong in southern Laos. Thereafter the level of fighting dropped off, but the United States conducted further air strikes, both B-52 and tactical, in Laos in April 1973, and the cease-fire was never completely effctive.[61]

Efforts to Make the Peace Secure

(U) Immediately following the signature of the Vietnam agreement on 27 January 1973 the United States participated in several efforts to guarantee the settlement set forth in that document and its protocols. On 31 January 1973, the White House Press Secretary announced that the United States and North Vietnam had reached agreement for Dr. Kissinger to visit Hanoi. The visit, to occur during the period 10-13 February, would seek to guarantee peace and lay the groundwork for reconstruction in Southeast Asia.[62]

61. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 8944 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 222124Z Feb 73. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, p. 637. NY Times, 23 Feb 73, 1; 24 Feb 73, 1; 25 Feb 73, 5.

62. Public Papers, Nixon, 1973, p. 53. NY Times, 1 Feb 73, 1.

establishment of a direct and continuing relationship between the conference, or its participants, and the ICCS; a pledge for respect of the "sovereignty, integrity and neutrality" of Laos and Cambodia, with endorsement of any internal political settlements concluded in those countries before the time of the conference; and a pledge for cooperation in the "rehabilitation and reconstruction of all of Indochina" and the creation of "an appropriate framework" to develop assistance programs. The study concluded with a detailed scenario to accomplish these objectives.[64]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff received a copy of the Interdepartmental Group study, but there is no evidence that they either contributed to it or commented on it. This is understandable since it was essentially a political matter. The Vice Director of the Joint Staff did on 6 February appoint a representative and a point of contact within the OJCS with respect to the study, but available files reveal no further JCS action on the matter.[65]

(U) On 10 February 1973, Dr. Kissinger arrived in Hanoi after a brief visit in Laos.[66] He talked with North Vietnamese leaders for three days and then departed on 13 February without public comment en route to Peking. On the following day, the United States and North Vietnam released a "Joint Communique" on the Kissinger meetings. There had occurred "frank, serious,

64. (S-EX) Memo, Chm, Interdep'tal Group for East Asia to Chm, SRG, 2 Feb 73, Encl to Att to JCS 2339/362-1, 5 Feb 73, JMF 907/075 (30 Jan 73).

65. (S-EX) JCS 2339/362-1, 5 Feb 73; DJSM-234-73 to Office of Asst to Pres for NSC, 6 Feb 73; same file.

66. See above, p. 748.

and constructive exchanges of views on implementation of the agreement on ending the war . . . as well as post-war relations between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States and other subjects of mutual concern." "The two sides" had carefully reviewed implementation of the agreement "in the recent period" and considered "imperative measures" to improve and expedite implementation. "Problems existing between the Indochinese countries" should be settled by "the Indochinese parties on the basis of respect for each other's independence in each other's internal affairs." In addition, according to the communique, the United States and North Vietnam exchanged views on convening the International Conference on Vietnam and on the postwar relationship between the two countries and agreed to establish a Joint Economic Commission composed of equal representation from both parties and charged with developing "economic relations" between the countries.[67]

(U) Delegates of the United States, North Vietnam, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the PRG, and the eight other parties designated in the Vietnam agreement gathered at the Majestic Hotel in Paris on 26 February together with the Secretary General of the United Nations for the International Conference on Vietnam. Representation was at the foreign minister level, and Secretary of State Rogers led the US delegation. The conference set to work at once but its efforts were almost immediately jeopardized by the prisoner release impasse that arose between the United States and North Vietnam on 27 February.[68] As

67. NY Times, 10 Feb 73, 3; 15 Feb 73, 1. US-DRV Joint Communique, 14 Feb 73, reproduced in Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 19 Feb 73, p. 141.

68. See above, pp. 743-744.

already related, President Nixon instructed Secretary Rogers to give that matter priority over any other concern of the conference, and all attention focused on that matter. When on 1 March North Vietnam supplied the United States a list of the US prisoners to be freed in the next contingent, the conference was able to resume its assigned tasks, and the next day it completed and signed a declaration.[69]

(U) In the "Declaration of the International Conference on Vietnam," the participating parties expressed approval of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam and the accompanying protocols as well as the commitments made therein by the United States and the three Vietnamese participants. Additionally, the Declaration included a mechanism to reconvene the conference if the cease-fire in Vietnam broke down. In case of such an eventuality, either the United States and North Vietnam jointly or six of the remaining parties might call the conference back into session, and the Declaration provided that the four parties to the Vietnam agreement might, either jointly or individually, inform the other conference participants about implementation of the agreeement and the protocols. It was also the duty of the four parties to the Vietnam agreement, again either jointly or individually, to forward ICCS reports to the other parties to the Declaration. Finally, in accordance with the objective and efforts of the United States,

69. NY Times, 27 Feb 73, 1; 28 Feb 73, 1; 1 Mar 73, 1; 2 Mar 73, 1. The declaration was signed by the foreign ministers of the 12 countries participating in the conference but, at communist insistence, not by the Secretary General of the United Nations.

the Declaration contained a commitment for the respect of "the independence, unity, territorial integrity, and neutrality" of Cambodia and Laos. The Declaration did not, however, include any pledge for cooperation or machinery for rehabilitation or reconstruction of Indochina, a matter originally among US objectives for the conference.[70]

(U) The conference and its concluding Declaration secured public recognition of the Vietnam agreement by the major powers concerned, but how effective this endorsement would prove remained to be determined. Critics of the Declaration were quick to point out that the arrangements provided therein were "essentially a closed circuit" with no independent outside authority to receive reports from the International Control teams in Vietnam. The ICCS had already proved to be of limited effectiveness, and the conference took no action to remedy that situation.[71]

Casualty Resolution

(U) One of the major concerns of the United States in achieving a peaceful settlement in Vietnam was the return of US prisoners of war. Of equal importance was the resolution of the status of US military personnel officially listed as missing in action. The Vietnam agreement stipulated that the parties "all help each other" to obtain information on both military personnel and foreign civilians missing in action, to locate and recover the remains of such personnel, and to take "any such other measures" as might be required to get information about those still considered missing in action. The Protocol on Prisoners of War charged the

70. Declaration of the International Conference on Vietnam, 2 Mar 73, text printed in NY Times, 3 Mar 73, 6. NY Times, 2 Mar 73, 1.
71. NY Times, 2 Mar 73, 3.

Four-Party Military Commission with ensuring joint actions by the parties to implement this aspect of the agreement, but no specific mechanism was included for the purpose.[72]

(TS) When the Vietnam agreement was reached, the United States had plans ready to resolve the status of missing personnel. At the time of the intensive US post-hostilities preparations in the fall of 1972, this planning included two aspects--"personnel recovery" and "casualty resolution." With respect to the former, CINCPAC CONPLAN 5100 provided for two offshore-based task forces, operating in a hostile environment, to assist in the recovery of US and friendly personnel who had either evaded capture or escaped from enemy control. For casualty resolution in the event of a cease-fire in Southeast Asia, CINCPAC had prepared and the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved a concept for a 60-man Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) (initially called the Joint Information Center) to function in a non-hostile environment to obtain information on prisoners and missing personnel. This Center would operate under CINCPAC while US forces were withdrawing fromn Vietnam. On 3 November 1972, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had informed CINCPAC of the prospects of an "impending" truce in Southeast Asia and directed immediate acceleration and expansion of the casualty resolution aspects of the planning.[73]

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72. "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam," 27 Jan 73; "Protocol on Prisoners of War," 27 Jan 73; both reproduced in Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 45-53.

73. (TS-GP 3) CINCPAC CONPLAN 5100, 19 May 72; (TS-EX) JCS 2054/874, 23 Jan 73; JMF 346 (19 May 72). (C) Msg, JCS 2393 to CINCPAC, 132203Z Sep 72. (TS) Msg, JCS 3552 to CINCPAC, 032346Z Nov 72.

(TS) In compliance, CINCPAC expanded his CONPLAN 5100 in December 1972 to include both personnel recovery in a hostile environment and casualty resolution following a cease-fire. For the latter, the plan visualized search for crash and grave sites by South Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians coordinated by the US Embassies in those countries and supported by CINCPAC and the Joint Casualty Resolution Center. Subsequently, teams led by US personnel would inspect located sites and evacuate remains found. The Joint Casualty Resolution Center would be expanded to a 110-man body located in Thailand.[74]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed CINCPAC's expanded plan and told him on 24 January 1973 to make casualty resolution the subject of a separate plan. In addition, the Joint Casualty Resolution Center was to be designated a joint task force with its commander responsible to the USSAG/7AF, and casualty resolution operations were to include "more direct US participation." The personnel recovery provisions of CINCPAC CONPLAN 5100 would remain in effect. The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense of the CINCPAC planning as well as their action on it and asked him to arrange with the Secretary of State for necessary coordination. Later the same day, 24 January 1973, Admiral Moorer authorized CINCPAC to deploy a JCRC advance party of no more than five persons to Thailand.[75]

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74. (TS-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT et al., 020405Z Dec 72, JCS IN 46255. (TS-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS et al., 141905Z Dec 72, JCS IN 70202.

75. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 7062 to CINCPAC, 241751Z Jan 73 (derived from JCS 2054/874); (S-EX) JCSM-40-73 to SecDef, Encl C to JCS 2054/874, 23 Jan 73; (S-EX) SM-36-73 to CINCPAC, 24 Jan 73, Encl B to JCS 2054/874, 23 Jan 73; JMF 346 (19 May 72). (S) Msg, JCS 7271 to CINCPAC, 242034Z Jan 73.

(TS) Thereafter, on 27 January 1973, CINCPAC circulated his Casualty Resolution CONPLAN 5119, which incorporated the revisions directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. All operations would be coordinated with appropriate US Embassies in Southeast Asia and would be supported with RVN, RLG, and GKR military, paramilitary, and civilian personnel. On the following day, 28 January, COMUSMACV established the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, and the advance party of the Center arrived at Nakhon Phanom Air Base in Thailand on 29 January.[76]

(S) Subsequently, on 9 February 1973, the Secretary of Defense approved the arrangements for casualty resolution as presented to him by the Joint Chiefs of Staff two weeks earlier, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised CINCPAC on 13 February that CONPLAN 5119 was approved for implementation and for coordination with appropriate US Embassies in Southeast Asia. In the meanwhile, the Joint Casualty Resolution Center had been authorized 29 additional personnel, for a total of 139, and 50 of whom were at the Center in Nakhon Phanom by 15 February under the command of Brigadier General Robert C. Kingston, USA, Chief of the JCRC.[77]

(TS) To assist casualty resolution, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed Major General Woodward, Chief of the US Delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military

76. (TS-EX) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV et al., (info JCS), 270347Z Jan 73, JCS IN 57000. (S-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, p. 216.

77. (S) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 9 Feb 73, Att to JCS 2054/874-1, 12 Feb 73; (S-EX) Msg, JCS 8359 to CINCPAC, 132001Z Feb 73; JMF 346 (19 May 72) (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-8.

Commission, on 27 January to secure the following actions in the Commission: (1) an exchange of information by all four parties on lost military and civilian personnel with supporting documentation where possible; (2) cooperation in the return of remains of deceased military and civilian personnel lost by all parties; (3) coordination by the FPJMC or the ICCS, or both, on efforts to determine the status of missing personnel, to include authorization for search teams organized and accompanied by US personnel to locate and inspect crash and grave sites throughout Southeast Asia, for US teams to conduct "massive, all source media, information-reward programs" to solicit information on grave sites, and for US overflight of areas throughout Southeast Asia for crash and grave site location and identification. These matters were duly introduced in the Four-Party Commission, but no action was forthcoming. The Joint Chiefs of Staff again directed General Woodward on 7 March 1973 to press these matters at the Four-Party Commission and to raise the possibility of a four-party team to continue in existence beyond X+60 to pursue casualty questions. The Four-Party Commission did, in one of its last acts, establish a joint team[78] to exchange information on missing personnel, but no other positive action resulted on casualty resolution matters.[79]

(S) Following the establishment of the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, its Chief visited the US Embassies in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand to arrange

78. See below, p. 782

79. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1567 to COMUSMACV (for MG Woodward), 280139Z Jan 73. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 1865 to CINCPAC (info for MG Woodward), 071451Z Mar 73. (S) Msg, Ch, US Del, FPJMC to COMUSMACV (info JCS), 091400Z Mar 73, JCS IN 45306.

appropriate coordination. He found the Ambassadors sympathetic but without positive guidance for cooperation. At CINCPAC's recommendation, joint State/Defense guidance was issued to the US Ambassadors in Laos, South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand on 17 March; even so operations did not get underway immediately thereafter. In fact, no casualty resolution operations had yet been conducted when the US military withdrawal from South Vietnam was completed on 29 March 1973, and it was not until 7 May 1973 that the first ground search operation was carried out.[80]

Progress of the Cease-Fire

(C) By the end of February 1973, the cease-fire had been in effect for more than a month, but peace had not come to Vietnam. As already described, the fighting in South Vietnam increased sharply in the days immediately preceeding and following the 28 January cease-fire. The level of combat had tapered off somewhat by the end of the first week of February, but then flared again as units of both South Vietnamese parties continued to manuever and exchange artillery fire. Throughout February, the RVNAF pursued security operations to regain control of communist infiltrated areas and to reopen and repair lines of communication. By the end of the month the fighting had again fallen off, but had by no means ceased. From 28 January 1973 through the month of February, more than 8,000 communist forces and 1,500 RVNAF soldiers were killed, a number equal to almost half of those killed in the North Vietnamese offensive in the spring of 1972.[81]

80. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (S) pp. 217-218.

81. (TS-NOFRON COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 73-Mar 73, (C) pp. 141-149. NY Times, 28 Feb 73, 8.

(TS) Similarly, the machinery created by the Vietnam agreement to implement the settlement had proved ineffective in the 30-day period following the cease-fire. Although the Four-Party Joint Military Commission was established for the sole purpose of implementing peace in Vietnam, its only success to that date was the arrangement of the release of the prisoners of war, and the Commission machinery to supervise and enforce the peace had not functioned at all. The PRG had failed to man the Commission's joint Military Teams, and North Vietnam, after some initial deployments, refused to complete the manning of the teams or to cooperate in the Regional Military Commissions. The result was to render the Four-Party Joint Military Commission completely ineffective. By the end of February, the only positive Commission action to enforce peace was an appeal by the Central Commission on 17 February to both the Vietnamese parties in South Vietnam to halt further fighting, and even though that call received wide publicity, it went unheeded.[82]

(TS) Likewise the International Commission of Control and Supervision had been unsuccessful in facilitating peace. Charged by the Vietnam agreement with supervision of the cease-fire, the Commission members, including Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, and Poland, interpreted their mission to be one of investigation of violations rather than interposition between the parties to stop military action. But until the fighting ended, there was little opportunity for the Commission to carry out timely or objective

82. NY Times, 17 Feb 73, 1; 28 Feb 73, 1. (TS-EX) Final Rpt, US Del, Four-Party Joint Military Commission, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/873, 20 Jun 73, JMF 911/533 (20 Jun 73).

investigations. Moreover, internal division, with the Hungarian and Polish members opposing all efforts to achieve an impartial supervisory body, further restricted the effectiveness of the International Commission of Control and Supervision.[83]

(TS) The continuing fighting caused considerable concern for US officials, both for those remaining in Vietnam and for those in Washington. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not optimistic about the chances for peace in Southeast Asia and, on 21 February, they directed preparation of contingency plans for possible resumption of US air and naval strikes against North Vietnam. They instructed CINCPAC to plan options for strikes against military targets in the northeast quadrant of North Vietnam and attacks on military targets in the North Vietnam panhandle. Both options were to provide for "massive sustained, all-weather, around-the-clock" air and naval strikes of a duration ranging from three days to continuous operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also requested CINCPAC to prepare and maintain plans for appropriate levels of US military action in Cambodia and Laos.[84]

(C) On 23 February 1973, the Chief of Staff of the US Air Force, General Ryan, informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff of what he considered a "major" cease-fire violation by the North Vietnamese and PRG. Recent aerial photography had revealed two operational surface-to-air (SAM) missile sites in the Khe Sanh valley of South Vietnam. Since there was no

83. (TS-EX) Final Rpt, US Del, Four-Party Joint Military Commission, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/873, 20 Jun 73, JMF 911/533 (20 Jun 73). NY Times, 28 Feb 73, 1.
84. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 6647 to CINCPAC, 210058Z Feb 73; JCS 2339/364, 21 Feb 73; JMF 907/300 (21 Feb 73).

evidence of enemy SAMs deployed in South Vietnam, on the date of the cease-fire, and as the Vietnam agreement clearly forbade the introduction of such weapons, General Ryan wanted the United States to protest this violation. He proposed a protest to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and, if that approach brought no response, then an appeal to the International Commission for Control and supervision.[85]

(C) The Operations Deputies considered General Ryan's proposal the same day but, perhaps because of the dismal record of both the Four-Party Commission and the International Commision for Control and Supervision, did not accept the recommendation. Rather, they agreed that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should handle the matter "in another manner," and the available record does not indicate further action on this proposal.[86]

(C) After the first 30 days of the cease-fire, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker prepared an appraisal of the situation in South Vietnam. In a message for the Secretary of State on 3 March 1973, which was circulated in the Department of Defense, the Ambassador observed that the "level of violence" had declined since the initiation of the agreement. Violations had been flagrant, however, with both sides sharing responsibility. Most areas of South Vietnam lost to communist control in the fighting around the cease-fire date had now been recovered, Ambassador Bunker said,

85. (S) CSAFM 22-73 to JCS, "A Major Cease-Fire Violation," 23 Feb 73, JMF 911/305 (CY 1973).
86. (S) Note to Control Division, "CSAFM 22-73, 'A Major Cease Fire Violation,'" 23 Feb 73, JMF 911/305 (CY 1973).

and the GVN felt fully justified in the use of force to regain this ground and, in some cases, even to attack areas traditionally held by the communists. The Ambassador confirmed that the Four-Party Joint Military Commission had failed to develop into an effective mechanism to enforce the cease-fire despite the determined efforts of the United States This state of affairs was due in part to the stalling and obstruction of North Vietnam and the PRG, but he added that the GVN also deserved some of the blame. It had systematically harrassed and mistreated the North Vietnamese and PRG elements of the Joint Military Commission. As a partial explanation of the GVN attitude, Ambassador Bunker told of reliable intelligence reports revealing communist intentions not to honor the Vietnam agreement and to continue their military buildup in South Vietnam. Two steps were necessary, Ambassador Bunker believed, before the shooting stopped in South Vietnam: (1) "unambiguous commands" to all military units of both sides to cease all offensive activities and remain in place; (2) the establishment of an effecrtive two-party joint military commission, composed of GVN and PRG personnel, to work out the terms of the cease-fire and determine areas of control after completion of the US withdrawal. The Ambassador had pressed these points on President Thieu, but he questioned the confidence of the South Vietnamese president and his government to face up to the communists in a political struggle.[87]

(TS) Two days later, on 5 March, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense of evidence confirming Ambassador Bunker's contention that North Vietnam and

87. (S) Msg, Saigon 8157 to State, 3 Mar 73, J-5 Action Officer Files.

the PRG did not intend to honor the cease-fire. Recent intelligence, the Admiral told the Secretary, indicated the movement of 12 130mm field guns from Cambodia into South Vietnam as well as deployment of an armored unit with 20-25 tanks into MR 1. In addition, Admiral Moorer reported that increasing numbers of trucks carrying supplies were moving through the Demilitarized Zone, that shipments into the Laos panhandle were at the highest levels of the dry season, and that large quantities of military suplies were moving into South Vietnam from Laos and Cambodia. "These developments," he said, "are a direct manifestation of the efforts of the North Vietnamese to establish an improved military posture which can be used for major operations against the Republic of Vietnam."[88]

(C) In mid-February, the Secretary of Defense had requested General Weyand's "personal assessment" of the RVNAF ability to meet the situation in South Vietnam, and the commander provided his views to Admiral Moorer on 7 March 1973. The Chairman, in turn, relayed the assessment to the Secretary, adding that it had not been formally addressed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and should not be considered an expression of their views. In an "overview" of the situation, General Weyand predicted the North Vietnamese and PRG near term objective in South Vietnam to be the extension of influence through political and "lower level" military activities. To achieve that end, the General believed that North Vietnam intended to keep forces in South Vietnam into the mid-term period (1974-1978) and that major areas of concern would be Quang Tri-Thua Thien

88. (TS-EX) CM-2533-73 to SecDef, 5 Mar 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 73.

and Binh Long-Tay Ninh, areas that could afford a base for a viable military option if objectives proved unattainable through the political process. Consequently, COMUSMACV felt that "rapid victory" for the GVN was not "in the offing," but neither did he think "decisive violation" of the cease-fire by North Vietnam and the PRG likely.

(C) With regard to the capabilities of the RVNAF, General Weyand considered the current force stucture more than adequate to meet the foreseeable threat and the number and mix of weapons satisfactory. There were, however, a number of problems remaining, including: a lack of adequately trained military manpower; inadequate counterbattery capability; limited grasp of combined tank-infantry tactics; an ineffective border security and interdiction concept; a minimum maritime air patrol capability; a lack of air cavalry capability; and limited air defense capabilities. General Weyand did not favor any reduction of the current 1.1 million RVNAF force structure, stating that FY 1974 changes could be accomplished within that ceiling. He did believe that regular force divisions could be reduced beyond FY 1978 and that a 400,000-man reserve should be established at that time.[89]

(C) The RVNAF had lost significant numbers of weapons and equipment in the fighting since the

89. (C) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, "Assessment of RVNAF (U)," 17 Feb 73; (C) CM-2555-73 to SecDef, 12 Mar 73; JMF 911/292 (20 Mar 73). The COMUSMACV assessment was contained in MACV Msg 070930Z Mar 73. That msg has not been located, but a detailed summary of the assessment is contained in (TS) Memo, COL True (CJCS Staff Grp) to CJCS, "Assessment of RVNAF," 9 Mar 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 73.

cease-fire, and on 8 March 1973, Admiral Moorer furnished the Secretary of Defense an accounting of this matter. Significant items included 32 tanks, 22 personnel carriers, and five howitzers, and Admiral Moorer wanted immediate authority to replace the RVNAF losses. Such action would be in accordance with the Vietnam agreement which allowed the Vietnamese parties to replace military equipment destroyed or damaged on a one-for-one basis.[90]

(C) Secretary of Defense Richardson, however, did not believe one-for-one replacement prudent. He told Dr. Kissinger on 17 March 1973 that, even with the losses sustained since the cease-fire, the RVNAF inventory was still "ahead of needs" and could amply meet expected attrition over the next several years. Moreover, to replace all items would weaken US readiness posture and require additional appropriations, possibly invoking further Congressional "repercussions." Mr. Richardson thought that, with "careful management," the United States could assist the RVNAF to maintain an optimum combat capability without provoking Congress or degrading the readiness of US forces. Rather than an immediate one-for-one replacement of all equipment as allowed by the Vietnam agreement, the Secretary of Defense proposed that the United States replace only those RVNAF equipment losses that could be accommodated without degradation to US forces or diversion from firm military assistance or sales commitments; remaining losses would be replaced as US equipment was available, maintaining RVNAF stocks of ground equipment at a level providing no less than six months advanced attrition. South Vietnam must be made

90. (TS) CM-2548-73 to SecDef, 8 Mar 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Mar 73.

to understand the basis for such a US policy, the Secretary said, and should recognize that continued US resupply of such items as ammunition indicated a commitment to provide the RVNAF the means for adequate defense.[91]

(C) Dr. Kissinger and the President did not agree, and on 29 March 1973, Dr. Kissinger informed the Secretary of Defense that the President considered it "premature" to move to a policy of "restricted or delayed resupply" for the RVNAF. With North Vietnam continuing to infiltrate men and equipment into the south in "clear violation" of the cease-fire agreement, it was "critically important" for the RVNAF to have all possible supplies immediately available in case of a major offensive. Additionally, the President anticipated that South Vietnam "could and probably would" interpret a restricted supply policy as an indication of reduced US support. Consequently, the President directed continuation of a one-for-one replacement of all RVNAF equipment losses, and the Secretary of Defense issued the necessary directive to the Service Secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to maintain the RVNAF materiel posture at 27 January 1973 inventory levels.[92]

(S) President Nixon was also concerned that the United States provide sufficient economic support to enable South Vietnam to avoid economic instability

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91. (S) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, 17 Mar 73, Att to JCS 2472/861, 20 Mar 73, JMF 911/495 (17 Mar 73).

92. (S) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 29 Mar 73, Att to JCS 2472/861-1, 2 Apr 73; (S) Memo, SecDef to Secys of MilDepts and CJCS, 9 Apr 73, Att to JCS 2472/861-2, 10 Apr 73; JMF 911/495 (17 Mar 73).

that could weaken the South Vietnamese government and affect the prospects for peace. In mid-March he directed a study by the Departments of State and Defense of the essential level of foreign exchange support for South Vietnam in CY 1973 and means of meeting that requirement. He also asked the Department of Defense to review what it could do to provide economic support for South Vietnam. As a result of these studies, in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not participate, the President on 11 April 1973 directed appropriate actions to provide sufficient economic support to South Vietnam to permit the level of imports necessary for rapid economic recovery, for initiation of major reconstruction and refugee resettlement efforts, and for an acceleration of economic development to begin moving South Vietnam toward self-sufficiency. In addition, he wanted the Department of Defense to increase purchases for local procurement in South Vietnam.[93]

Completion of HOMECOMING and COUNT DOWN

(U) When North Vietnam released the third group of US prisoners on 14 March 1973, the United States moved to complete the corresponding increments of its troop withdrawal from South Vietnam, and the last troops of that body left Saigon on 16 March 1973. Now, only one group of US prisoners remained to be returned and a final contingent of approximately 6,000 US

93. (S-EX) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 13 Mar 73, Att to JCS 2472/860, 15 Mar 73, JMF 911/496 (13 Mar 73). (S-EX) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to DepSecys State and Defense, 13 Mar 73, Att to JCS 2472/859, 15 Mar 73, JMF 911/534 (13 Mar 73). (S) Extracts from NSDM 210, 11 Apr 73, JMF 001 (CY 1973) NSDMs.

military personnel awaited redeployment from South Vietnam. Originally, the United States had planned to remove these remaining troops during the period 15 through 29 March, but following the difficulties experienced in the prisoner releases in late February and early March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed CINCPAC on 10 March to hold all US redeployments in the fourth increment until the United States received the final prisoner list from North Vietnam.[94]

(C) The US anticipation that the last prisoner release might be troublesome proved correct. The principal problem arose over the question of US prisoners held in Laos by the Pathet Lao. Although the Vietnam agreement included no provision for the return of US military or civilian personnel detained in Laos, the North Vietnamese had given Dr. Kissinger private assurances when the agreement was negotiated that US prisoners in Laos would be released no later than 60 days following the signature of the agreement, and Dr. Kissinger had said in his 24 January 1973 press conference that US prisoners in Laos would be returned in Hanoi.[95]

(U) At a FPJMC meeting on 19 March 1973, Major General Woodward asked for the list of the last group of US prisoners and inquired whether US prisoners held in Laos were to be returned in Hanoi with the other prisoners. The North Vietnamese delegate replied he had no authority to discuss the release of prisoners

94. See above, pp. 742-746.

95. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (C) p. G-24. News Conference of Dr. Kissinger, 24 Jan 73, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, p. 65.

in Laos, and General Woodward asked Washington for clarification and guidance.[96]

(C) On 21 March 1973, North Vietnam proposed to return all US prisoners held in Hanoi as well as those held by the PRG on 25 March on condition that all US and other Free World forces in South Vietnam were also removed by that date. The proposal, however, contained no provision for US troops held in Laos. Late on 21 March, Admiral Moorer instructed CINCPAC that the US position in reply to the North Vietnamese proposal was as follows:

> The US will complete the withdrawal of its military forces from South Vietnam in accordance with the terms of the [Vietnam] agreement and coincident with the release of all, repeat all American prisoners held throughout Indochina.

Admiral Moorer specifically directed CINCPAC not to begin withdrawal of remaining US troops in South Vietnam until two conditions were met: (1) US receipt of "a complete list" of all US prisoners, including those held by the Pathet Lao, with times and places of release; (2) the actual transfer to US custody of the first contingent of the last group of US prisoners. Once those conditions were fulfilled, and assuming the first US prisoners were freed on 25 March, CINCPAC was authorized to begin carefully staged US deployments during the period 25 through 28 March. Should difficulties arise, all withdrawals would cease until further notice.[97]

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96. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-25.

97. Ibid. NY Times, 22 Mar 73, 13. (TS) Msg, JCS 4319 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 220036 Mar 73.

(U) The US Delegation presented this new position at a FPJMC meeting on 22 March 1973, asking for time and place of the release of US prisoners in Laos, and stating that withdrawal of the remaining US forces from South Vietnam would be delayed until the requested information was supplied. The North Vietnamese, however, rejected the US position, asserting that the question of prisoners in Laos was not part of the Vietnam agreement.[98]

(C) Later, on 22 March 1973, Admiral Moorer instructed General Woodward to seek a private meeting with his North Vietnamese counterpart in the Joint Military Commission. "Our basic concern," the Admiral said, "is the release of the prisoners and we do not object to the PLF [Pathet Lao] playing the central role as long as the men are returned to us." The United States wanted precise information and understanding on the times and places of release of all prisoners. It must have assurances, the Chairman continued, either privately through the Four-Party Joint Military Commission or through other channels, that the US prisoners in Laos would be released by 28 March before it would guarantee completion of the US withdrawals.[99]

(U) A complete impasse ensued for the next several days. North Vietnam refused additional information on the prisoner release and added a further demand that the US Marine security guards at the US Embassy compound in Saigon be included in the final withdrawal. The United States meanwhile continued the holdup troop withdrawals, and on 25 March 1973 the While House Press

98. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-25. NY Times, 22 Mar 73, 13; 23 Mar 73, 1.

99. (S) Msg, JCS 5706 to Ch, US Del, FPJMC, 230459Z Mar 73.

Secretary released a Presidential statement that US forces would remain in South Vietnam until all prisoners of war were released.[100]

(U) On 26 March 1973, General Woodward met privately with Major General Le Quang Hoa, the Chief of the North Vietnamese delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission. General Woodward presented the US position as expressed by Admiral Moorer and the President. In response General Hoa insisted that the language of the Vietnam agreement did not justify linking troop withdrawals with the return of US prisoners held in Laos. He did, however, acknowledge the private US-North Vietnamese understanding on this matter and stated that North Vietnam was attempting to resolve the problem with the Pathet Lao.[101]

(U) At General Hoa's request, he and General Woodward met again later on 26 March. The North Vietnamese delegate announced that the Pathet Lao had agreed to return the US prisoners. To maintain the apearance that the release resulted from US-Pathet Lao negotiations and was not part of the Vietnam agreement, the Four-Part Joint Military Commission would not participate in the release; rather a Pathet Lao representative would turn over the prisoners to a US reception team in Hanoi. General Hoa added that North Vietnam and the PRG would free their remaining prisoners in groups on the successive days, 27, 28, and 29 March and that the North Vietnamese delegation to the Four-Party Commission would end it activities in South Vietnam and return to Hanoi on 29 March. In reply, General Woodward

100. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-25. NY Times, 23 Mar 73, 1; 24 Mar 73, 1; 25 Mar 73, 1; 26 Mar 73, 1.

101. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-25.

promised that all remaining US military personnel would be redeployed from South Vietnam within 72 hours of the resumption of the prisoner release. Presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler immediately announced this agreement at the winter White House in Florida, stating that the President had instructed the Secretary of Defense to proceed with the withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam. "This does and will," Mr. Ziegler declared, "end US military presence in Vietnam."[102]

(C) Accordingly, on 27 March 1973, the PRG freed the last increment of US prisoners in its custody, including 27 military personnel and five civilians; on the following day, 28 March 1973, the Pathet Lao released seven US military personnel, two US civilians, and one Canadian civilian in Hanoi and North Vietnam turned over to United States 40 military prisoners; and on 29 March 1973, North Vietnam freed the last remaining 67 US military prisoners. During this same period the People's Republic of China released three US prisoners, two military and one civilian, and on 1 April 1972 the PRG released a final US military prisoner in Vinh Binh Province of South Vietnam.[103]

(U) As the first planeload of freed US prisoners took off from Gia Lam Airfield in Hanoi on 27 March 1973, the first planeload of the last increment of US military personnel in South Vietnam departed from Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon for the United States. Some 937 US troops redeployed from South Vietnam on

102. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) pp. G-25, H-3. NY Times, 27 Mar 73, 1.

103. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (C) pp. 602-603. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-25.

27 March, 1,745 on 28 March, and 2,578 on 29 March with the last plane lifting off Tan Son Nhut at 1735 local time. Now, at last, the long and controversial US military involvement in Vietnam had ended. The only US military forces remaining in South Vietnam comprised 583 US members of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, who would leave in the next several days; 159 US Marine Corps security guards at the US Embassy; and 50 military personnel who remained as part of the US Defense Attache Office in Saigon.[104]

(U) With the departure of the last US military personnel from South Vietnam on 29 March 1973, the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, was disestablished. General Weyand presided over the furling of the colors. "Our mission has been accomplished," he proclaimed. "I depart with a strong feeling of pride in what we have achieved, and in what our achievement represents." Admiral Moorer sent a message that was read at the ceremony. He expressed "gratitude" and "admiration" to all who had served in the armed forces in Vietnam and lauded the mission of the Command and the "courageous actions" of its members. Thus at 291100Z March 1973, the US Military Assistance Command passed out of existence, ending its eleven-year history.[105]

104. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, (C) pp. 602-603. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) pp. G-25, H-3. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUMs 71-73, 28 Mar 73; 72-73, 29 Mar 73; and 73-73, 30 Mar 73. NY Times, 28 Mar 73, 1; 29 Mar 73, 1; 30 Mar 73, 1.

105. Msg, COMUSMACV to JCS and CINCPAC, 290915Z Mar 73, JCS IN 89925. (C) Msg, JCS 1002 to COMUSMACV, 280014Z Mar 73. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. H-1. NY Times, 30 Mar 73, p. 1.

(C) Upon the termination of USMACV, all residual US military responsibilities in South Vietnam were assumed by the Defense Attache Office, Saigon. Planned the previous November and activated on 28 January 1973,[106] this office was charged with traditional attache duties as well as supervision and coordination of US military assistance and advice to the RVNAF. On 6 March 1973, the JCS had approved a final joint table of distribution for the Defense Attache Office and provided the Secretary of Defense a summary of organizational changes in the Office since activation. This final structure remained within the personnel ceilings of 50 US military and 1,200 Department of Defense civilians previously approved by the Secretary of Defense. At that same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that the term Defense Attache Office would be used in lieu of the Defense Resource Support and Termination Office. Operational command of the Office, which had been under COMUSMACV since its creation, passed to COMUSSAG/7AF upon the MACV disestablishment.[107]

(U) The remaining forces of the Free World nations that had assisted the United States and the Republic of Vietnam also redeployed from South Vietnam in the 60-day period following signature of the Vietnam agreement. The Republic of Korea Forces, Vietnam (ROKFV), was the only Free World element of any size still in Vietnam on 27 January 1973 and withdrawal of those troops began on 30 January 1973. Removal of the

106. See p. 727.

107. (S) JCSM-93-73 to SecDef, 6 Mar 73, Encl A to JCS 2339/360-22, 2 Mar 73; (C) Msg, JCS 1298 to SecDef et al., 0702052 Mar 73 (derived from JCS 2339/360-22); JMF 907/305 (27 Oct 72) sec 3.

ROK forces was not linked to prisoner exchange, and the redeployment proceeded uninterrupted. By 23 March 1973, when the withdrawal was completed, 35,396 ROK forces had departed South Vietnam. On 2 March 1973, both the Thai and Philippine elements (31 and 57 strong, respectively) redeployed from South Vietnam, and the departure of the Republic of China contigent (a total of 31 personnel) in two increments on 12 and 26 March 1973 completed the withdrawal of the Free World military forces from South Vietnam.[108]

Extension of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission

(U) As provided in the Vietnam agreement, the Four-Party Commission was to end its activities within 60 days of the signature of the document and, in the interim, the two South Vietnamese parties were to establish a Two-Party Joint Military Commission to carry on necessary measures to guarantee the cease-fire in South Vietnam. But the Two-Party Commission had not come into being, and in mid-March, US officals considered the possibility of continuing the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, at least briefly, to oversee the cease-fire until the Two-Party Commision was functioning.

(C) On 12 March 1973, officers of the Southeast Asia Branch of the Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5) of the Joint Staff had requested Admiral Moorer to initiate action to extend the operations of the Four-Party Commission. Even though the overall effectiveness of the Commission in dealing with cease-fire

108. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. H-5 - H-6.

violations had been poor, the J-5 officers believed that the Central Four-Party Commission in Saigon remained the only open forum for discussion among the participants and, as such, allowed the United States an oportunity to protest cease-fire violations. Moreover, extension of the Commission would continue the essential cease-fire mechanism until the Two-Party Commission was organized; would allow a legal US military presence throughout South Vietnam; would ensure more time to resolve the status of missing personnel; would give continued stability to the International Commission for Control and Supervision until it was fully staffed and operational; and would bolster wavering Canadian participation on the International Commission.[109]

(C) Admiral Moorer sought the views of both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on such an extension, and neither commander was enthusiastic. General Weyand pointed out the ineffectiveness of the Four-Party Commission to date and stated that the advantages as compared with the disadvantages did not warrant any extension. CINCPAC concurred, generally, with General Weyand though he did wonder how matters of four-party interest would be addressed once the Commission was terminated.[110]

(C) The Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), officials of the Department of State, and Dr. Kissinger, on the other hand, all favored extension of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission. As Acting Assistant Secretary of

109. (S) J5M 358-73 to CJCS, 12 Mar 73, J-5 Action Officer Files.

110. (TS) Msg, JCS 3656 to COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and Ch USDel, FPJMC, 132319Z Mar 73. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV to CJCS, 141000Z Mar 73, JCS IN 57407. (C) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 160200Z Mar 73, JCS IN 63083.

Defense Lawrence Eagleburger explained to Secretary Richardson on 15 March, the impetus behind an extension centered on maintenance of a mechanism whereby the United States could "continue to nudge the other parties toward a more effective cease-fire." Mr. Eagleburger did admit that "a less institutionalized approach" might work although he favored extension of the Four-Party Commission as a better solution. But the mechanism itself was unimportant; the principal objective was to continue US pressure for "a controlled viable cease-fire."[111]

(TS) In the meanwhile, at Dr. Kissinger's direction, Admiral Moorer sent Lieutenant General George M. Seignious, USA, Director of the Joint Staff, to Vietnam on 16 March. The purpose of the trip was to discuss with Ambassador Bunker and Generals Weyand and Woodward the need for meticulous US and GVN observance of the cease-fire agreement as well as the possibility of continuing the Four-Party Joint Military Commission. General Seignious found all three US officals "lucidly" aware of "the larger perception of higher authority's resolve and the need for clean hands" concerning the cease-fire. With regard to extension of the Four-Party Commission, he identified three problem areas: (1) the failure of North Vietnam and the PRG, for political reasons, to deploy personnel for the Commission; (2) President Thieu's lack of support for the Commission, "again for political reasons," because he wanted to deny the North Vietnamese and the PRG access to the press; (3) President Thieu's policy of appointing "low caliber" senior RVNAF officers to the Commission with little authority to negotiate. General Seignious

111. (S) Memo, ASD(ISA) to SecDef, "Extension of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission (U)," 15 Mar 73, OSD Files.

also reported that both Generals Weyand and Woodward were prepared to support extension of the Four-Party Commission for "a limited period" though they were not optimistic about its chances for future success.[112]

(C) During this same period, Ambassador Bunker met several times with President Thieu to discuss possible extension of the Four-Party Commission. The South Vietnamese president, however, showed "no enthusiasm" for the proposal. Seeing little advantage for the allied side, he cited his belief that his government had been the "loser" thus far in the cease-fire. He pointed out the continuing communist infiltration of men and weapons into South Vietnam, the major violations by the other side, and the "ridiculously" small number of military and civilian Vietnamese "detainees" returned by the communists.[113]

(C) On 27 March 1973, General Woodward informed COMUSMACV that North Vietnam had already redeployed 42 of its Four-Party Commission personnel to Hanoi and planned to withdraw 80 more during the next two days. Current plans called for a 29 March rollup of the US personnel with the Commission regional teams

112. (TS) Msg, COMUSMACV (LTG Seignious) to CJCS, 190903Z Mar 73, JCS IN 68847. (TS-EX) Memo for Record by LTG Seignious, "Discussions in Saigon on the Continuance of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission (Four-Party JMC) After X+60 (S)," 21 Mar 73; (TS) J-5 Point Paper for DJS for a Trip to SEA (16-22 Mar 73), "Cease-fire and FPJMC (U)," n.d.; J-5 Action Officer Misc Files.

113. (S) Msg, Saigon 8342 to State, 191111Z Mar 73, JCS IN 69998. (S) Msgs, Saigon 4463 to State, 211251Z Mar 73; Saigon 4836 to State, 230943Z Mar 73; J-5 Action Officer Files. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-25.

and redeployment to Saigon on 30 and 31 March for onward movement. General Woodward would have to begin action to implement these plans on 28 March and he intended to do so unless otherwise directed. The United States, apparently, still had not ruled out a continuation of the Four-Party Commission, for, later on 27 March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided CINCPAC planning guidance in the event of an extension after the disestablishment of MACV. The following day, however, the United States abandoned further efforts to extend the Commission. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to redeploy the US Delegation; in the period between the disestablishment of MACV and the final departure of the US Delegation personnel, the military chain of command for the Delegation would be directly through CINCPAC.[114]

(U) Some members of the US Delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission did depart with the other US military personnel during 27-29 March 1973. As previously mentioned, 583 remained when the main US withdrawal was completed on 29 March; these personnel left on 30 and 31 March, and the US Delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission was disestablished at 1900, Saigon time, on 31 March 1973. Now all US military personnel had departed South Vietnam except for 50 with the Defense Attache Office and the US Marine Corps security guards for the US Embassy. During the same two-day period, 30-31 March, US aircraft flew the last elements of the North Vietnamese

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114. Msg, Ch, US Del, FPJMC to COMUSMACV, 270845Z Mar 73, JCS IN 85228. (S) Msg, JCS 9875 to CINCPAC, 272206Z Mar 73. Msg, JCS 1680 to CINCPAC, 281444Z Mar 73.

delegation to the Four-Party Commission back to Hanoi.[115]

(S) As one of its last actions, the Four-Party Joint Military Commission agreed on 28 March 1973, in accordance with the Vietnam agreement, to establish a Four-Party Joint Military Team (FPJMT) to resolve the status of missing personnel, to determine the location of grave sites, and to arrange repatriation of remains. Accordingly, on 31 March 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized a US Delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Team under the Defense Attache Office, Saigon, and that Delegation, consisting of 14 US military personnel, became operational on 2 April 1973.[116]

Mine Clearance Operations

(U) The final task for the United States in the implementation of the military aspects of the Vietnam agreement was clearance of US mines in North Vietnamese waters.[117] As related in Chapter 12, the United States had anticipated this responsibility well before the final agreement was reached. CINCPAC had prepared

115. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) pp. G-25 - G-28, H-3.

116. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. G-26. (C) Msg, JCS 5617 to CINCPAC, 311812Z Mar 73. Msg, Ch, US Del, FPJMT to DAO Saigon, 020320Z Apr 73, JCS IN 96452. (S-NOFORN) NMCC OPSUM 75-73, 2 Apr 73. (S-EX) Final Rpt of US Del, Four-Party Joint Military Commission, n.d., Att to JCS 2472/873, 20 Jun 73, JMF 911/533 (20 Jun 73).

117. Protocol to the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in South Vietnam Concerning the Removal, Permanent Deactivation, or Destruction of Mines in the Territorial Waters, Ports, Harbors, and Waterways of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, 27 Jan 73, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 29 Jan 73, pp. 63-64. (Hereinafter cited as Protocol on Mine Clearance.)

a mine countermeasures plan and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had ordered movement of three ocean minesweepers (MSOs) to Hawaii and had positioned Helicopter Minesweep Squadron 12 (HM-12) in Subic Bay, the Philippines. Until the time of the agreement, however, these forces were not allowed to assemble, test, or tow their airborne sweeping gear.[118]

(TS) Once the final agreement was complete, Admiral Moorer asked the Secretary of Defense on 24 January 1973 for authority to move the three MSOs at Hawaii on to WESTPAC for employment in the mine clearance operations and to begin training with the airborne gear. The Secretary agreed that same day, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff dispatched the necessary directives to CINCPAC, changing the name of the operation from FORMATION SENTRY II to END SWEEP. The following day, 25 January, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed execution of END SWEEP effective 272359Z January 1973. They instructed CINCPAC to clear major North Vietnamese ports "to 99 percent level." Safety of mine countermeasure forces was "the paramount consideration" and all possible precautions were to be taken to avoid North Vietnamese civilian casualties. United States forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued, were to initiate "no overt hostile action" although they should be "alert" and "prepared for hostile attack."[119]

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118. See Chapter 12, pp. 652-655.

119. (TS) CM-2456-73 to SecDef, 24 Jan 73; (TS) CM-2457-73 to SecDef, 24 Jan 73 (handwritten notation of SecDef approval is contained on draft msgs attached to both CMs); CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jan 73. (C) Msg, JCS 6913 to CINCPAC, 241522Z Jan 73. (TS) Msgs, JCS 7572 and 7579 to CINCPAC, 250110Z and 250115Z Jan 73. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 8280 to CINCPAC, 271705Z Jan 73.

(TS) The mine clearance protocol set forth the broad outline for the clearance operations, but many technical arrangements and details remained to be resolved. To that end, the protocol provided that US and North Vietnamese representatives should meet at "an early date" to agree on a program and plan of implementation, and technical talks began in Paris immediately after the final agreement on 23 January 1973. These talks were conducted by the mine experts, who had negotiated the clearance protocol, under the supervision of US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William H. Sullivan, the head of the US Delegation in Paris after Dr. Kissinger returned to Washington with the completed agreement, and North Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. One of the US technical experts was Commander B. B. Traweek, USN, of the Operations Directorate (J-3) of the Joint Staff.[120]

(TS) During the consultations in Paris, the United States supplied the North Vietnamese a sanitized version of the mine clearance operations plan and informed them that execution would begin on 27 January. The first US minesweepers should be in the Haiphong area to conduct "exploratory precursor" operations by 3 February and actual clearance in Haiphong waters was expected to begin within "30 days after 27 January." The US experts estimated that the Haiphong waters could be cleared for shipping within 70 days of the signature of the Vietnam agreement and that sweeping of all coastal areas would be finished within 180 days of that same date. A final date for completion of all sweeping as required by the Protocol could not be

120. Protocol on Mine Clearance. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1400 to US Del France (CJCS to DepAsst SecState Sullivan) (info CINCPAC), 271853Z Jan 73. RADM Brian McCauley, USN, "Operation END SWEEP," US Naval Institute Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 21.

determined until various information on inland waters was supplied by North Vietnam. Finally, the United States gave the North Vietnamese charts showing the areas seeded with mines in both coastal and inland waters and the "general" characteristics of the magnetic mines and destructors used.[121]

(S) By 27 January, Admiral Moorer was convinced that the technical talks in Paris had fulfilled their usefulness and should be moved closer to the scene of actual operations. Accordingly, with the concurrence of Dr. Kissinger, he proposed to Deputy Assistant Secretary Sullivan that the technical discussions be concluded in Paris as quickly as possible with arrangements to continue the meetings in Southeast Asia. The senior US representative at the relocated meetings would be Rear Admiral Brian McCauley, USN, who would be responsible for the conduct of the actual clearing operations. Admiral McCauley would be empowered with full authority to make necessary decisions on division of responsibility for clearing inland waterways by segments, on allocation and delivery to North Vietnam of available technical equipment, on assignment of technical advisers, and on commencement and estimated completion dates. Deputy Assistant Secretary Sullivan presented this proposal in Paris, and it was accepted. Initial sessions in Vietnam were held in the Four-Party Joint Military Commission at Saigon, but almost immediately it was decided to meet alternately in Haiphong and on board a US Navy ship off Haiphong. In guidance for the US members of the Four-Party Commission while

121. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1562 to CINCPAC, 280126Z Jan 73. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1567 to COMUSMACV (for MG Woodward), 280139Z Jan 73. (C-EX) Msg, JCS 5932 to CINCPAC, 011755Z Feb 73.

these arrangements were being worked out, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed: "We must keep pressing hard for agreement on commencement of these discussions. It is imperative that the record show that delays in starting have been occasioned solely by failure of DRV to respond to US initiatives." On 5 February, Admiral McCauley and a 14-man staff flew to North Vietnam for the discussions at the alternating sites. These meetings continued throughout the time the United States was carrying out actual mine clearing operations.[122]

(S) On 30 January 1973, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed CINCPAC of the decision to move the mine clearance discussions to Vietnam, they advised him the sweeping should begin as soon as feasible and no later than 9 February. They explained that, since North Vietnam had already been informed that the US minesweepers would arrive in the vicinity of Haiphong about 3 February, commencement of actual operations could not be delayed much beyond that date. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also told CINCPAC that initial sweep operations should be in an area other than the Haiphong channel or its approaches, should provide "high visibility" to North Vietnam, and should show "some results (i.e., detonations) during sweeping." Subject to North Vietnamese concurrence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested minefield segment 2111D in the vicinity of Hon Gai as meeting the initial requirements. Subsequently, on 1 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff

122. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 1400 to US Del France (CJCS for DepAsstSecState Sullivan) (info CINCPAC), 271853Z Jan 73. (S-EX) Msg, US Del France 2080 (DepAsstSecState Sullivan) to JCS, 272200Z Jan 73, JCS IN 57933. (S) Msg, JCS 3538 to CINCPAC, 301519Z Jan 73. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 7373 to CINCPAC, 022044Z Feb 73. McCauley, "Operation END SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 21.

revised this guidance, directing CINCPAC to begin initial sweeping with ocean minesweepers off Haiphong to provide an operating area for US vessels engaged in the mine clearance. Such operations should not commence until establishment of mutually agreeable conditions with North Vietnam, but must start not later than 9 February 1973. Should sweeping of this operating area be completed before the arrival of airborne mine clearance units on about 27 February, authorization was granted for MSO check sweeping along the approaches to Haiphong channel though remaining well clear of the channel itself. Sweeping in the channel was tentatively scheduled to begin about 27 February and take approximately 40 days for completion in accordance with the estimate already given the North Vietnamese in Paris. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC not to reveal to the North Vietnamese the progress or completion of the sweeping in the vicinity of Haiphong until so authorized by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[123]

(S) On the following day, 2 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied CINCPAC with guidance for the forthcoming discussions with North Vietnam on the clearance operations. They reiterated that the safety of US personnel, ships, and equipment was of primary importance and stated that US positions should be firmly adhered to even in the face of North Vietnamese threats to report US intransigence. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that, under no circumstances, would US personnel indicate 100 percent confidence in clearance of any minefield or area. With

123. (S) Msg, JCS 3538 to CINCPAC, 301519Z Jan 73. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 5927 to CINCPAC, 011751Z Feb 73.

regard to the timing of the operations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reconfirmed the information previously provided North Vietnam during the Paris discussions: operations in Haiphong channel would begin on or about 27 February (X+30), and should be completed in 40 days (X+70), pending the release of all US prisoners; all clearance of coastal areas should be finished within 180 days of the signature of the Vietnam agreement; and a target date for completion of all mine countermeasure operations would await "firm agreement" with North Vietnam on details or clearance of inland waters. Further, the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC to ensure that North Vietnam was held to its commitment, as stated in the Protocol, to participate to the extent of its capabilities in the clearance of the inland waters.[124]

(C) In the meantime, CINCPACFLT had requested authority to operate US ships and aircraft, including a CVA, in international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin above 16°50' north for logistical support of the mine countermeasure operations. This was, of course, in contradiction to the Joint Chiefs of Staff general cease-fire directive[125] that had ordered the withdrawal of all US Navy surface vessels to waters below 16° 50' north. CINCPAC supported the request, but in submiting it to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Staff was reluctant to recommend the movement of a carrier to the Gulf of Tonkin at that time. Admiral Moorer, however, had no such hesitancy and granted approval on 2 February 1973. He told CINCPAC that he understood fully the need to operate

124. (S-EX) Msg, JCS 7007 to CINCPAC, 021454Z Feb 73.

125. See above, p. 711.

US Navy ships and aircraft, including a CVA, off North Vietnam for logistical support of the mine clearance operations, adding that the mine countermeasures plan given to the North Vietnamese provided for such support. Before movement of the forces, including the carrier, into the Gulf of Tonkin, Admiral Moorer directed that North Vietnam be informed though without requesting concurrence. Finally, the Chairman did not believe a CVA should be committed indefinitely to these support activities. When suitable arrangements could be made for use of support facilities and airfields in North Vietnam, he continued, it might be "feasible and desirable" to withdraw the CVA.[126]

(C) Now the US mine countermeasure forces began to assemble in the Gulf of Tonkin. Four ocean mine sweepers arrived and began initial sweeping on 7 February in waters off Haiphong to prepare anchorage for the amphibious assault ships and amphibious transport docks of the END SWEEP force.[127] Subsequently, at the request of the Navy, the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved diversion of two reserve ocean minesweepers to the active fleet to assist in the mine clearance off North Vientam, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered those ships to WESTPAC on 13 February 1973. Meantime, training of US air mine countermeasure forces progressed in the Subic Bay. Those forces began moving to the Gulf of Tonkin on 23 February. On that date, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told CINCPAC of a message sent by "the White House"

126. (S) J3M 215-73 to CJCS, 31 Jan 73, CJCS File 091 SEA, Jan-Apr 73. (S) Msg, JCS 7385 to CINCPAC, 022050Z Feb 73.

127. According to Admiral McCauley, the sweeping began on 6 February. McCauley, "Operation END SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 21.

to North Vietnamese authorities advising of US readiness to conduct nearly simultaneous sweeping operations in the ports of Haiphong, Cam Pha, and Hon Gai. On the following day, 24 February 1973, CINCPACFLT reported that surface and airborne mine countermeasure forces were ready to execute END SWEEP. Those forces were designated Task Force 78 under the command of Rear Admiral Brian McCauley, USN, and included 20 ships as well as various escorts.[128]

(S) On 27 February, Task Force 78 helicopters conducted the first airborne mission of Operation END SWEEP, making aerial sweeps of the main Haiphong channel. This action marked the first time the United States had employed airborne countermeasures against actual mines in an operational situation. As already related, the United States and North Vietnam reached an impasse on prisoner release that same day and the United States suspended both troop withdrawals and mine clearance. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed CINCPAC to recover all END SWEEP personnel ashore in Haiphong and, upon their recovery,

128. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, pp. 230-231. McCauley, "Operation END SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 73, pp. 21-22. (TS) Memo, DepSecDef to SecNavy, "Use of Reserve Minesweepers (U)," 27 Jan 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 73. (TS) Msg, JCS 8364 to CINCPAC, 132005Z Feb 73. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 1299 to CINCPAC, 232355Z Feb 73.

Task Force 78 consisted of two amphibious assault ships (LPH), three amphibious transport docks (LPD), ten MSOs, one salvage ship (ARS), two fleet ocean tugs (ARF), one tank landing ship (LST), one submarine rescue ship (ASR), six explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) detachments, one underwater demolition team (UDT) detachment, two tactical air control squadron (TACRON) detachments, and four air mine countermeasures (AMCM) units. See (C) J3M-253-73 to CJCS, 5 Feb 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Feb 73.

to suspend all operations connected with END SWEEP. The US mine countermeasure forces were to get underway and remain approximately 100 miles from Haiphong.[129]

(TS) As described above,[130] the prisoner snarl was quickly resolved and late on 1 March 1973, the Joint Chiefs of Staff revoked the suspension of the mine clearance operations. They directed the return of END SWEEP forces to previous positions in the Haiphong area in readiness to resume operations. The JCS directive to resume END SWEEP was issued on 3 March and actual sweeping in the main Haiphong channel began again on 6 March. Because the North Vietnamese wanted all forces to clear the Haiphong channel, there was some delay in initiating clearance in the waters of Cam Pha and Hon Gai and operations in those ports did not begin until two weeks after the resumption of the Haiphong sweeping. Thereafter, operations in the three ports proceeded apace, and by 2 April, when all US prisoners had been returned and all US military forces had departed from South Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff relaxed their earlier restriction concerning the release of information to the North Vietnamese on the progress of the clearance.[131]

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129. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3889 to CINCPAC, 271859Z Feb 73. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1973, pp. 230-231, 234. McCauley, "Operation END SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 22.

130. See above pp. 744-745.

131. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 9698 and JCS 6670 to CINCPAC, 020307Z and 021912Z Mar 73. (S) Msg, JCS 7881 to CINCPAC, 031842Z Mar 73. (S) Msg, JCS 6574 to CINCPAC, 021456Z Apr 73. For operational aspects of END SWEEP, see (S) Ctr for Naval Analysis Study CRC 277, "Operation END SWEEP," Feb 75, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center.

(TS) Despite this early progress, the END SWEEP operations did not proceed smoothly. Because of repeated North Vietnamese violations of the Vietnam agreement, the United States suspended mine clearance operations on 16 April 1973. Again, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed recovery of all US END SWEEP personnel from Haiphong and cessation of all mine clearance operations. A few days later, on 22 April, they authorized the return of Task Force 78 to Subic Bay, while maintaining sufficient forces to enable resumption of sweeping in North Vietnamese waters within 48 hours. Subsequently, on 11 May 1973, they relaxed this time requirement to 72 hours.[132]

(U) In late May and early June 1973, Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho held a series of conversations in Paris to review the situation in Vietnam and consider measures to ensure more effective implementation of the Vietnam agreement. These talks culminated in a joint communique signed in Paris on 13 June 1973 by the United States and North Vietnam as well as the Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government. In a procedure patterned after the one used for the 27 January 1973 Vietnam agreement, the communique was signed in two versions, one by the United States and North Vietnam and one by all four parties to the Vietnam dispute. With respect to mine clearance, the United States pledged in the communique to resume the operations within five days and to complete them 30 days thereafter. The United States was also to supply North Vietnam with means "which are agreed to be

132. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 2636 to CINCPAC, 161952Z Apr 73. (S) Msg, JCS 8490 to CINCPAC, 221413Z Apr 73. (S) Msg, JCS 7713 to CINCPAC, 111202Z May 73. NY Times, 20 Apr 73, 1.

adequate and sufficient for sweeping mines in rivers" and to announce when all operations were finished.[133]

(TS) In accord with the communique, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC on 13 June to return the END SWEEP forces to the Gulf of Tonkin in readiness to resume operations not later than five days after receipt of their directive. Actual resumption of the sweeping was dependent upon receipt of appropriate concurrence from North Vietnam. This clearance was duly obtained, and the sweeping began on 18 June 1973.[134]

(C) When END SWEEP resumed on 18 June 1973, the great majority of US mines in North Vietnamese waters had already passed their self-destruct dates, and Task Force 78 personnel believed that any remaining would be inert and totally deactivated. As a result, all sweeping after 18 June was exploratory only, a much less time consuming process than full sweeping. When operations had been suspended in April, the clearance of Haiphong channel was complete except for final demonstration runs. These were now quickly carried out and North Vietnam was informed on 20 June 1973 that the Haiphong channel was open. Sweeps of the Hon Gai and Cam Pha channels were completed on 27 June, and Task Force 78 then moved south and, at North Vietnamese request, began sweeping Vinh, Quang Khe, and the Hon La coastal area. Clearance was finished by 5 July and only the major ports of Dong Hoi and Than

133. Text of Joint Communique of 13 June 73, reproduced in NY Times, 14 June 73, 18. NY Times, 14 Jun 73, 1.

134. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7782 to CINCPAC, 131515Z Jan 73. McCauley, "Operation End SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 22.

Hoa and a number of small minefields remained to be swept in coastal waters. The United States sought North Vietnamese concurrence to proceed with operations in these remaining areas, but permission was refused. The North Vietnamese were concerned over the short time expended on clearance of the Vinh, Quang Khe, and Hon La waterways and questioned whether they were completely safe. To ensure a thorough job, they wanted those areas swept again. But the United States refused, stating that the areas were known to be safe, and explaining that the minefields had already sterilized in any event. A complete impasse ensued.[135]

(C) On 14 July 1973, Admiral Moorer informed the Secretary of Defense of the deadlock in the mine clearance and pointed out that the time period allowed for these operations in the 13 June joint communique would elapse on 18 July. Therefore he proposed that the Commander of Task Force 78 deliver a statement to the North Vietnamese on 18 July indicating that the US mine clearance was complete and that US forces and vessels would be withdrawn. The Secretary of Defense approved, and on 17 July 1973 the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed execution of this course of action. Accordingly, Admiral McCauley informed the North Vietnamese orally on 18 July that the US mine clearance operations were complete and that the END SWEEP forces would leave North Vietnamese waters at 181130Z July. Simultaneously, a Department of Defense spokesman in Washington publicly anounced the end of the minesweeping, and the US forces departed the North Vietnamese waters. Two

135. McCauley, "Operation END SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 22. (S) CNA Study CRC 277, "Operation END SWEEP (U)," Feb 75, Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center.

days later, on 20 July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized CINCPAC to return all Task Force 78 assets to normal operational control.[136]

(TS) The Vietnam agreement, the accompanying mine clearance protocol, and the 13 June joint communique all included provisions for US assistance to North Vietnam in clearing mines in inland waters, but no such operations were conducted. Admiral McCauley conducted long and tedious negotiations with the North Vietnamese on this matter, but could not resolve the issue. The United States did supply some equipment (bulldozers, trucks, and outboard motors) to North Vietnam for this purpose and trained 40 North Vietnamese in mine clearance methods in a special school set up near Haiphong. North Vietnam, however, did not want any US military personnel to participate in operations on the inland waterways but, rather, only requested more US equipment. Consequently, the United States did not conduct or supervise any sweeping in the inland waters of North Vietnam, and the official US statement announcing the end of END SWEEP disclaimed any further responsibility for sweeping mines in North Vietnamese inland waterways or rivers.[137]

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136. McCauley, "Operation END SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 22. (TS-EX) CM-2799-73 to SecDef, 14 Jul 73; (TS) Fact Sheet, "US Obligations . . . for Concluding Mine Clearing Operations in the Waters of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (U)," 18 Jul 73; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Jul-Sep 73. (S) Msg, JCS 7483 to CINCPAC, 180302Z Jul 73; (TS) Msg, JCS 9948 to CINCPAC, 201405Z Jul 73. NY Times, 19 Jul 73, 3. ASD(PA) Briefing, 18 Jul 73, OASD(PA) Files.

137. McCauley, "Operation END SWEEP," Proceedings, Mar 74, p. 22. (S) CNA Study CRC 277, "Operation END SWEEP," p. 17. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 7604 to CINCPAC, 101739Z Mar 73. NY Times, 19 Jul 73, 3. ASD(PA) Briefing, 18 Jul 73, OASD(PA) Files.

Concluding Reflections

(U) The completion of END SWEEP fulfilled the US military obligations incurred under the Vietnam agreement signed in January 1973 and marked the conclusion of US military involvement in Vietnam. The Vietnam war was now over. It was the longest war in US history, though the actual beginning is hard to pinpoint. One could date it from the first deaths in hostile action suffered by US military advisers in 1961, or from the US bombing of North Vietnam in retaliation for the Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964. In any event, the United States was engaged in combat some months before the overt commitment of US ground combat troops in the spring of 1965, and 45,942 members of the US Armed Forces lost their lives in Vietnam.[138]

(U) The Vietnam conflict was also the most controversial of US wars. It fragmented US society, forced a President not to seek reelection, and placed severe strains on the relations between the United States and other countries. In addition, the political difficulties that attended the war limited the range of military options available to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the field commanders in the conduct of operations. Moreover, because of the public opposition, US policymakers were reluctant to ask the nation to make extraordinary sacrifices to pay the cost of the conflict as had been the normal US practice in wartime. Rather, they chose to divert funds and resources from other military programs, where possible, thereby adversely affecting the entire US military position.

(U) The Vietnam war also provided a test of the streamlined command machinery set up by President Eisenhower in the reorganization of 1958. The chain

138. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (U) p. F-14.

of command ran from the President and the Secretary of Defense through the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC to COMUSMACV. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in effect, functioned as the Secretary of Defense's operational staff and exercised "direction" of combat operations. For the first time, the Services were entirely eliminated from the chain of command. Additionally, improvements in communications technology, combined with the sensitive political issues involved in the war, resulted in an unparalleled degree of centralized control over the combat operations in Vietnam. Both Presidents Johnson and Nixon and their Secretaries of Defense carefully monitored operations in Vietnam, and this control often extended down to the tactical level, as in the requirement for approval of individual bombing targets in North Vietnam. Such close control was a marked departure from previous US practice where the theater commander was allowed a considerable degree of latitude in the conduct of operations.

(U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff were, of course, fully aware of the political side of the war in Vietnam. At no time did they lose sight of the purposes for which it was being fought. But there was room for disagreement with their civilian superiors about the best way to attain those purposes. In general, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were inclined to advocate the application of force in larger or more intensive increments than did the President and the Secretary of Defense, who, necessarily, had to be aware of the possible adverse political consequences of letting the military conflict get out of hand. Then, in the latter years of the war, as the United States withdrew its forces from Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs of Staff usually preferred smaller and slower troop

reduction than those ultimately approved by the President. Thus during the Vietnam war, there was not quite the degree of harmony between civilian and military leaders that had, for the most part, been the rule during World War II and the Korean War. But needless to say, the Joint Chiefs of Staff never questioned the right of their civilian superiors to make the final decisions.

(U) At the conclusion of its military involvement in Vietnam in 1973, the United States appeared to have attained its objectives. The North Vietnamese invasion of the south, at least for the moment, had been halted, and the US prisoners of war had been returned. But, whether real and lasting peace had been established, and whether South Vietnam would be allowed the opportunity to determine its political future free of outside interference, only the future would tell.

EPILOGUE

(U) On 29 March 1973, North Vietnam freed the final increment of US prisoners of war. Simultaneously, the last US combat troops departed South Vietnam. That evening, President Nixon addressed the American people:

> For the first time in 12 years, no American military forces are in Vietnam. All of our American POW's are on their way home. The 17 million people of South Vietnam have the right to choose their own government without outside interference, and because of our program of Vietnamization, they have the strength to defend that right. We have prevented the imposition of a Communist government by force on South Vietnam.[1]

(U) The President admitted, however, that problems remained. The most serious was the fighting that persisted in South Vietnam. As described in the preceding chapter the signing of the cease-fire agreement on 27 January 1973 had not brought peace, and fighting had continued throughout South Vietnam during the 60-day withdrawal of US forces. Nor did the completion of the US withdrawal bring any abatement in the level of conflict. The fighting continued, and North Vietnam proceeded with the infiltration of men and war materiel into the south. By mid-April 1973, intelligence reports estimated that such infiltration since the signing of the January agreement amounted to more than 400 tanks and armored vehicles, 300 artillery pieces, 27 tons of supplies, and 30,000 troops.[2]

1. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1973,(1975), p. 234.
2. See US note of protest to North Vietnam, 24 Apr 73, printed in NY Times, 25 Apr 73, 10.

(U) The United States had warned North Vietnam about the continuing infiltration. On 15 March 1973, President Nixon publicly indicated his concern. "Based on my actions over the past four years," he said, "the North Vietnamese should not lightly disregard such expressions of concern." In his statement upon the completion of the US withdrawal on 29 March, the President again cautioned the North Vietnamese, stating that there should be no doubt of the consequences if they failed to comply with the agreement. Further, in late April, the United States formally protested the continuing infiltration into South Vietnam, charging that North Vietnam had set up antiaircraft guns in the south and surrounded Khe Sanh airfield with SAMs.[3]

(S) President Nixon and his advisers were also considering the possibility of stronger action against North Vietnam. In fact, as early as 21 February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directred CINCPAC to prepare contingency plans for possible air and naval strikes against North Vietnam.[4] Then in April, the Washington Special Actions Group reviewed a number of possible measures against North Vietnam, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff alerted the field commanders to be prepared for possible bombing and mining operations in Vietnam.[5]

3. Public Papers, Nixon, 1973, pp. 205-206, 234. NY Times, 25 Apr 73, 10.

4. See Chapter 14, p. 762.

5. (TS-EX) Msgs, JCS 1854, 2705, and 4124 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC, 160244Z, 162133Z, and 172354Z Apr 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 73. (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 3361 to CINCPAC, 291948Z Apr 73, same file. (S) Untitled Paper discussing possible actions against NVN, n.d., bearing handwritten notation "Copy of paper [DepAsst-SecState] Sullivan handed HAK at the WSAG today" with penciled date 16 Apr 73, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Apr 73.

But in the end, President Nixon did not decide upon any military reprisals against North Vietnam, and the only resulting action was a JCS rejection of a CINCPAC recommendation to decrease US Navy MARKET TIME air patrols over the Gulf of Tonkin and the South China Sea. The reason cited by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was "the uncertainty in the current situation in Southeast Asia."[6]

(U) Moreover, it was soon apparent to all the world that even though President Nixon might wish to take military action against North Vietnam, the US Congress would not support him. Increasingly concerned over continuing US air strikes in Cambodia, Congress enacted legislation on 30 June cutting off funds, effective 15 August 1973, for all "combat activities by United States military forces in or over or from off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia."[7] The President's options for retaliation against North Vietnamese violations of the peace agreement were even further restricted when Congress passed the "War Powers Resolution" on 7 November 1973. This measure required the President to consult with Congress before introducing any US armed forces into hostile situations abroad.[8]

At a news conference on 29 Apr 75, at the time of the fall of South Vietnam, then SecState Kissinger confirmed the WSAG review of possible actions against NVN in April 1973. See Dept of State Bulletin, 19 May 75, p. 630.

6. (S) Msg, JCS 8617 to CINCPAC, 021616Z May 73 (derived from JCS 2472/865), JMF 911/332 (6 Apr 73). One explanation of the failure of President Nixon to decide upon stronger action was his preoccupation with the arising crisis caused by the Watergate scandal. See Guenther Lewy, America in Vietnam (1978), p. 204.

7. Public Law 93-52, 1 Jul 73.

8. Public Law 93-148, 7 Nov 73.

(U) In a different approach, President Nixon attempted to bring political pressure to bear on North Vietnam to ensure compliance with the peace agreement. Dr. Kissinger met in Paris with Le Duc Tho in May 1973 and again in June to discuss violations in the peace agreement. The result was a nine-point communique which called for a new ceasefire effective 141200Z June 1973 and compliance by all parties with the original agreement.[9]

(U) The new cease-fire, however, proved no more effective than the original. Some 108 breaches were reported within the first 24 hours with each side charging the other with responsibility for violations. Thereafter, in the following months, fighting was continuous in South Vietnam. By the beginning of November, intelligence analysts estimated North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam since the previous January at more than 70,000 troops. Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met again in Paris during December to discuss the situation, but reached no agreement.[10]

(U) Meantime in October 1973, the North Vietnamese leaders had decided to pursue a "strategic offensive" against South Vietnam. Actual preparations for this offensive began in the spring of 1974 with plans for large scale attacks in 1975. In the interim, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces stepped up their activities throughout the south.[11]

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9. Four Party Joint Communique, 13 Jun 73, printed in Dept of State Bulletin, 9 Jul 73, pp. 50-53.

10. Facts on File, 1973, pp. 482, 506-507, 556, 633, 662, 673-674, 781, 862, 882, 901, 920, 984, 1003, 1029, and 1072.

11. General Van Tien Dung, "Great Spring Offensive," Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Report, Asia and Pacific, 7 Jun 76 (Supp 38), pp. 1-47.

(C) As the communists expanded their fighting in 1974, the United States progressively reduced its support for South Vietnam. During FY 1973, the United States had contributed $2.27 billion for support of the RVNAF. For FY 1974, the Nixon Administration sought another $1.6 billion, but Congress authorized only $1.1 billion. This reduction brought predictions of dire consequences from the US military officers concerned. The US Defense Attache in Saigon reported in March 1974 that the RVNAF faced "a fuel and supply famine" while CINCPAC foresaw an "ominous situation in South Vietnam in the immediate future." More money was needed, he said, if serious deterioration in the RVNAF was to be averted, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the Secretary of Defense on 28 May 1974 that the one-for-one replacement of RVNAF equipment losses, allowed under the January 1973 agreement, was no longer possible under the currently programmed funds.[12]

(C) Despite the pleas of the Nixon Administration, Congress did not approve additional FY 1974 funds for South Vietnam. In fact, for the succeeding year, it reduced the Vietnam assistance even further, authorizing only $700 million for FY 1975 instead of the requested $1.0 billion.[13] To accommodate this reduction, stringent measures were implemented to reduce RVNAF operations and tighten its force structure. Numerous VNAF aircraft were deactivated and flying

12. (S) Msg, Joint State/Defense (State 029839) to US Emb and DAO, Saigon, 132251Z Feb 74, JCS IN 56343. (S) Msg, USDAO, Saigon to CINCPAC (info JCS), 030725Z Mar 74, JCS IN 80947. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 120015Z Mar 74, JCS IN 92948. (S) JCSM-184-74 to SecDef, 28 May 74, Encl A to JCS 2472/884-2, 3 May 74, JMF 911/495 (6 Feb 74).

13. Public Law 93-437, 8 Oct 74.

hours cut by half, and similar reductions were applied to the VNN. The United States also took actions to achieve maximum advantage of the funds available. Ammunition support for the RVNAF was provided from stocks in Okinawa, Japan, and other nearby locations in order both to expedite delivery and reduce transportation and handling costs. To achieve further savings, the Secretary of Defense directed an examination to identify non-essential costs in the Vietnamese assistance effort and possible reprogramming to transfer some charges to other programs.[14]

(C) The efforts of the South Vietnamese and the United States did little to halt the deteriorating military situation. By October 1974, the North Vietnamese had cleared the ARVN from northern Kontum Province and secured important roads in the Central Highlands. By December 1974, CINCPAC saw the enemy threat in South Vietnam as the most serious to date. Enemy troops in the south had increased by 91,000 since January 1973; combat battalions had risen from 344 to 565; and armor, artillery, and air defense had vastly improved. The enemy had also improved his logistics systems and CINCPAC estimated that communist ammunition stockpiles could support an offensive of greater intensity than the one in 1972.[15]

(U) Aware of their improving military position in the south, the North Vietnamese Politburo and Central Committee met in October 1974 to consider future plans.

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14. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1974, (S) pp. 310-311, 432-433. (C) Memo, ASD(ISA) to CJCS, 19 Sep 74, Att to JCS 2472/892, 23 Sep 74, JMF 911/495 (19 Sep 74).

15. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1974, (S) pp. 171-172. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 232122Z Nov 74, JCS IN 02404.

At this meeting, it was decided to launch a "large-scale, widespread" offensive in the Central Highlands (MR 2) of South Vietnam during 1975. In the course of the meeting, the question of US reaction was discussed. The Chief of Staff of the North Vietnamese Army, General Van Tien Dung, summed up the consensus as follows:

> The Watergate scandal had seriously affected the entire United States and precipitated the resignation of an extremely reactionary president--Nixon. The United States faced economic recession, mounting inflation, serious unemployment and an oil crisis. . . . U.S. aid to the Saigon puppet administration was decreasing. Having already withdrawn from the south, the United States could hardly jump back in . . . .[16]

(C) In preparation for the 1975 offensive, the North Vietnamese opened a drive on Phuoc Binh, the capital of Phuoc Long Province on the last day of 1974. After a seven-day siege, Phuoc Binh fell on 7 January 1975, giving the communists control of all of the northernmost province of MR 3.[17] The military situation in South Vietnam had now become critical. The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency told the Secretary of Defense on 24 January 1975:

> The shift in the military balance that began about mid-1974 has already reached the point where the South Vietnamese military have had no choice but to move into an increasing defensive posture. This means

16. General Van Tien Dung, "Great Spring Offensive," FBIS Daily Report, Asia and Pacific, 7 Jun 76 (Supp 38), pp. 5-6.
17. Facts on File, 1975, p. 4.

> abandoning many positions in contested territory in order to concentrate on the defense of vital population and rice-growing regions, and clamping rigorous constraints on the use of such critical items as ammunition and fuel. In essence, the strategic and tactical advantage has passed to the communists in South Vietnam.[18]

(U) The United States immediately charged North Vietnam with flagrant violation of the 1973 agreement and stated that it was now free to break the cease-fire since the North Vietnamese were no longer observing it. Later in January, the RVNAF attempted to regain the offensive in the lower portion of South Vietnam, launching a drive to retake Ba Dien Mountain in Tay Ninh Province. But this effort to secure the strategic heights controlling the northeastern approaches to Tay Ninh City, 55 miles northwest of Saigon, did not succeed.[19]

(U) Following the seizure of Phuoc Binh, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong moved ahead with plans for the Central Highlands offensive. The initial batle was targeted against Ban Me Thuot, the capital of Darlac Province. Throughout the remainder of January and during February, the communists assembled supplies and readied forces. On 10 March the attack began and the following day the city fell to the North Vietnamese. The communists also cut Route 21, the link between Ban Me Thuot and Nha Trang on the coast, and Route 19, the road from Pleiku to the coast.[20]

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18. (S) Memo, Dir DIA to SecDef, "Adequacy of External Military Support to North and South Vietnam (U)," 24 Jan 75, CJCS File 820 Vietnam , 1 Jul 74-31 Mar 75.

19. Facts on File, 1975, pp. 15, 66.

20. Dung, "Great Spring Offensive," pp. 8-30. Facts on File, 1975, p. 154.

(U) In late January, President Gerald Ford had asked Congress for a $300 million supplemental FY 1975 appropriation for South Vietnam. This amount represented the difference between the original $1.0 billion request and the actual appropriation of $700 million. But, despite the worsening military situation, Congress was still unwilling to provide further assistance for South Vietnam, and on 12 March, the day after Ban Me Thuot surrendered, the US House of Representatives rejected the supplemental request.[21]

(U) The original North Vietnamese plan had called for large, wide-spread suprise attacks in 1975, preparing the way for a general offensive and uprising in 1976. But the speed and ease of the Ban Me Thuot victory encouraged the enemy to accelerate plans. Accordingly, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces began to push northward in the Central Highlands toward Pleiku, and the RVNAF continued to fall back. On 20 March 1975, President Thieu announced the decision of his government to abandon Kontum, Pleiku, Darlac, and Phu Bon Provinces in the Central Highlands as well as Quang Tri and most of Thua Thien in MR 1--an area totaling approximately 40 percent of the territory of South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese forces would, President Thieu said, defend the remaining coastal areas in the northern part of the country and MRs 3 and 4.[22]

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21. (TS-NOFORN) CINCPAC Command History, 1975, (U) p. 470. NY Times, 13 Mar 75, 1.

22. All further information on the military operations in South Vietnam, unless otherwise stated, is from Facts on File, 1975, pp. 173-174, 191, 205-206, 225, 227, 245-247, 269-271, 289-291.

(U) The RVNAF, however, were unable to regroup and the enemy offensive rolled on. The South Vietnamese abandoned Hue on 25 March, giving the enemy complete control of Thua Thien Province. Thousands of refugees fled southward to Da Nang. But they found no haven there as Da Nang was quickly isolated when the enemy captured the coastal cities of Tam Ky and Quang Ngai to the south. Da Nang surrended with little resistance on 30 March and the North Vietnamese pushed on down the coast, taking Qui Nhon on 2 April and Tuy Hoa the following day. The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong now controlled two-thirds of South Vietnam and were posing an ever increasing threat to Saigon.

(C) An interagency intelligence report, circulated in Washington on 4 April, predicted the defeat of the Republic of Vietnam. The only question was one of timing. Would the Republic of Vietnam collapse or would it be overwhelmed by military action in a period of weeks or months? The RVNAF had already relinquished much territory, lost nearly half of their regular combat forces, and suffered great equipment and supply losses. In addition, the South Vietnamese military leadership was demoralized and the discipline of remaining troops was in doubt. Most of the US intelligence community was predicting an overwhelming North Vietnamese assault against Saigon in the "very near future."[23]

23. (S) Interagency Intelligence Memo, "Assessment of Military Situation and Prospect for South Vietnam," 4 Apr 75; (S) Memo, Dir DIA to SecDef, DepSeDef, and Actg CJCS, "Large Scale NVA Military Action in MR's III and IV (U)," 4 Apr 75; CJCS File 820 Vietnam, 1 Jul 74-31 Mar 75.

(C) President Ford, well aware of both public and Congressional oposition to any military intervention in South Vietnam, and lacking funds for any such action, could do nothing. Accordingly the Joint Chiefs of Staff watched the military disintegration of South Vietnam powerless to assist the RVNAF. As early as December 1974, they had reviewed "available" military options, including various combinations of US air and naval deployments to Thailand or waters off Vietnam, to signal US purpose and to discourage further expansion of the combat. They refined and expanded these options in January, but none of them was implemented.[24] Subsequently, in March 1975, the Joint Staff considered the possibility of the South Vietnamese mining Haiphong Harbor, but dismissed such a venture as "extremely risky and suicidal."[25]

(C) Indicative of the predicament of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was their action on 29 March. They disapproved a CINCPAC request to use US military transport aircraft to move supplies in South Vietnam and support the VNAF. Although concerned, they told CINCPAC that current operating authorities approved by "higher authority" precluded such movement.[26] The Joint Chiefs of Staff did that same day authorize the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and CINCPAC to evacuate refugees from

24. (TS) CM-178-74 to SecDef, 6 Dec 74; (TS-EX) CM-209-75 to SecDef, 8 Jan 75; (TS-EX) CM-220-75 to SecDef, 31 Jan 75; CJCS File 820 Vietnam, 1 Jul 74-31 Mar 75.

25. (TS) Draft CM-321-75, n.d., Att to DJSM-513-75 to CJCS, 25 May 75, CJCS File 820 Vietnam, 1 Jul 74-31 Mar 75.

26. (S) Msg, JCS 1149 to CINCPAC, 290000Z Mar 75, CJCS File 820 Vietnam, 1 Jul 74-31 Mar 75.

South Vietnam using "commercial air and sealift," and three days later they expanded this authority to include the use of US military amphibious ships, associated landing craft, and helicopters.[27] Then on 2 April 1975, apparently already reconciled to the collapse of South Vietnam, they authorized CINCPAC to begin withdrawal of the personnel of the US Defense Attache Office, reducing to the essential level as quickly as possible.[28]

(U) In early April, President Ford had dispatched General Fred C. Weyand, US Army Chief of Staff and former COMUSMACV, to South Vietnam to examine the situation firsthand. On his return, General Weyand recommended immediate emergency assistance for the Republic of Vietnam. Thereupon, the President appealed to Congress on 10 April for almost a billion dollars ($722 million in military and $250 in "economic and humanitarian" aid) for South Vietnam. These funds, which he wanted by 19 April, would be used to prevent the military collapse of South Vietnam in order to allow efforts for negotiation of a political solution. But, once again, Congress refused the President.[29]

(U) Now, without hope of further assistance, the South Vietnamese braced for the final enemy assault. The North Vietnamese conducted probing attacks around Saigon and assaults throughout the Delta while the RVNAF regrouped for defense of Xuan Loc, the capital of Long Khanh Province, 38 miles east of Saigon.

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27. (S) Msg, JCS 5119 to CINCPAC, CNO, and CSAF, 291917Z Mar 75; (S) Msg, JCS 6039 to CINCPAC, 010216Z Apr 75; CJCS File 820 Vietnam, 1-15 Apr 75.

28. (S) Msg, JCS 3453 to CINCPAC, 2 Apr 75, CJCS File 820 Vietnam, 1-15 Apr 75.

29. NY Times, 9 Apr 75, 1; 11 Apr 75, 1; 18 Apr 75, 1.

(U) The battle of Xuan Loc broke on 10 April and the South Vietnamese made a determined effort to stop the enemy advance. While the battle raged, the situation deteriorated elsewhere. The North Vietnamese captured Phan Rang on the coast on 16 April and, three days later, Phan Thiet, 60 miles south of Phan Rang and the last remaining South Vietnamese coastal enclave, fell. Despite a fierce RVNAF resistance, the North Vietnamese took Xuan Loc on 21 April, opening the way for a final drive on Saigon. Meantime, on 16 April, the communists had further consolidated their control in Indochina when the Lon Nol Government in Cambodia surrendered to the Khmer Rouge.

(U) On the day Xuan Loc fell, President Thieu resigned, blaming the collapse of his government on the failure of the United States to come to his aid, and citing pledges of support from former President Nixon. President Thieu named his Vice President, Trang Van Huong, as his successor. He hoped his resignation would open the way for peace talks with the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, but they refused any negotiations until a new regime, acceptable to them, was formed. The fighting now came closer to Saigon. General Duong Van Minh, prominent in South Vietnamese politics at the time of the fall of Ngo Dinh Diem and known as "Big Minh," succeeded to the presidency of the Republic of Vietnam on 28 April. General Minh was thought to be more acceptable to the Viet Cong, and he attempted to negotiate a truce and coalition government. These efforts were unsuccessful and, as North Vietnamese tanks entered Saigon on 30 April 1975, General Minh announced the unconditional surrender of the Republic of Vietnam.[30]

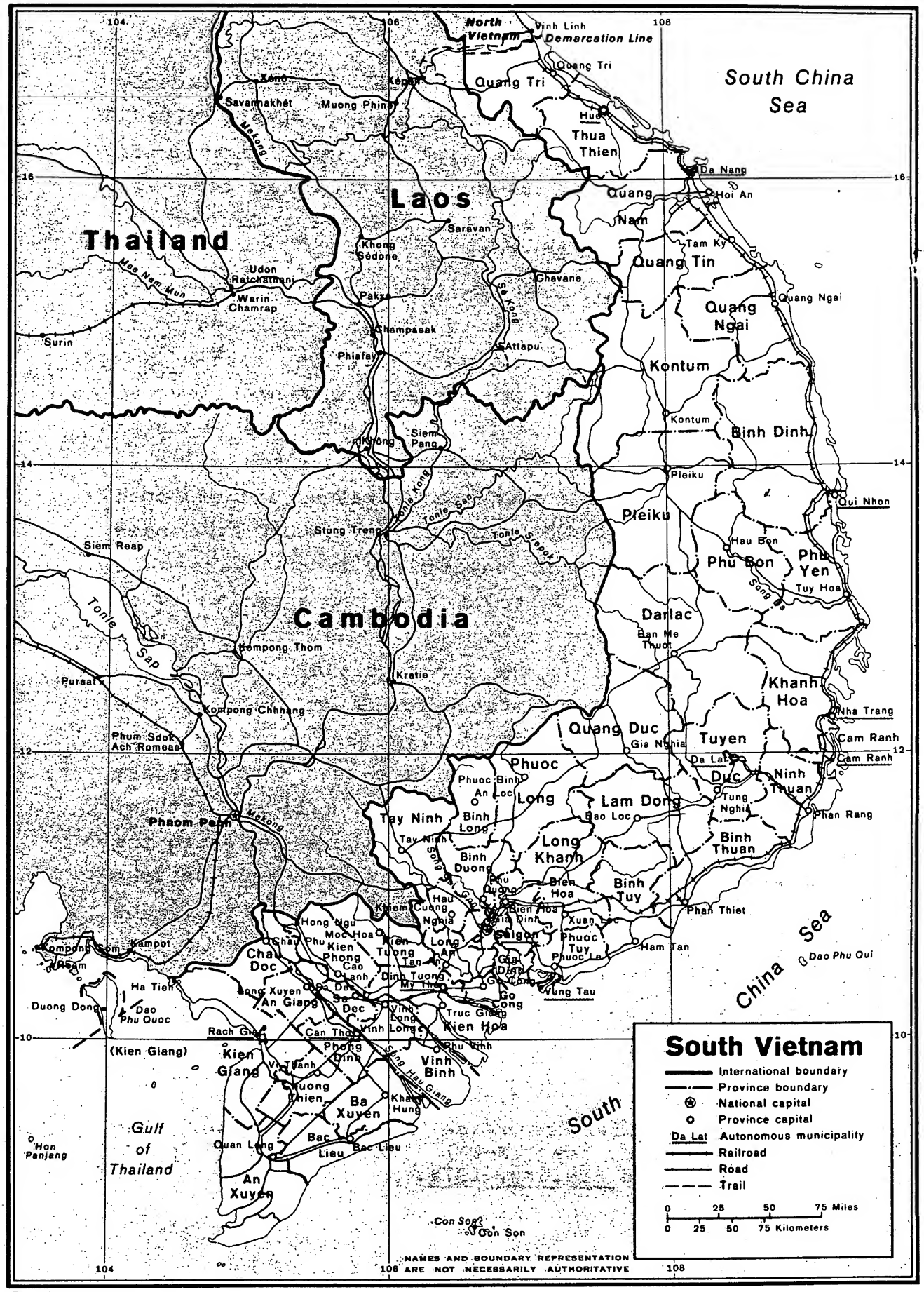
30. NY Times, 28 Apr 75, 1; 29 Apr 75, 1; 30 Apr 75, 1.

(U) When the Republic of Vietnam collapsed on 30 April, all Americans had already departed South Vietnam. In early April, the United States had begun the removal of its citizens as well as South Vietnamese who feared a communist takeover, and this withdrawal accelerated as the month's events unfolded. The United States also undertook a sealift during April to rescue fleeing South Vietnamese. Only on 15 April, however, did Secretary of State Kissinger publicly announce the decision to "reduce" the number of Americans remaining in South Vietnam and, until almost the final collapse, the United States meticiously avoided using the word "evacuation" in public statements. On 24 April, after considerable debate, Congress approved legislation authorizing the President to use US military forces to protect the evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese from Vietnam. But not until 0400 (Washington time) on 29 April, when the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were at the outskirts of Saigon, did President Ford order "emergency evacuation" of all Americans remaining in Vietnam. Then, with enemy fire making Tan Son Nhut Air Base unsafe, the United States resorted to a helicopter lift, picking up evacuees from the US Defense Attache Office area and the US Embassy compound. This emergency evacuation required 18 hours and removed approximately 1,400 US citizens and 5,600 Vietnamese. The final flights from the Embassy roof took out US Ambassador Graham Martin, the last eleven US Marine Embassy guards, and former VNAF Chief of Staff and RVN Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky. Four US servicemen were killed in the operation--two by enemy fire at Tan Son Nhut and two in the crash of an evacuation helicopter. In all, the United States

evacuated 6,763 Americans and 45,125 "others" (mostly Vietnamese) from South Vietnam during April 1975.[31]

(U) The fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia in April 1975, and the subsequent Pathet Lao takeover of the government in Laos the following September, marked the complete and final failure of US policy towards Indochina. Twenty-five years of effort to prevent communist domination of the area had been to no avail. The failure was, however, political rather than military. When the United States withdrew its armed forces from South Vietnam in early 1973, the Republic of Vietnam controlled the majority of its territory and population and had adequately trained and equipped armed forces. With US support, it should have been able to withstand the continuing North Vietnamese aggression. But the United States had grown weary of the long and expensive involvement in Vietnam, and this weariness culminated in the Congressional decisions to reduce significantly assistance for South Vietnam. The cutback of US aid not only demoralized the South Vietnamese but came at just the time when North Vietnam had decided to press on with all-out military action. Whether adequate US assistance would have prevented the ultimate North Vietnamese victory or only have delayed it is open to question. But certainly, the failure of the United States to supply additional help in late 1974 and early 1975 was the final coup de grace for the Republic of Vietnam.

31. For detailed coverage of the US evacuation from South Vietnam, see (TS-EX) "FREQUENT WIND," App IV to CINCPAC Command History, 1975.



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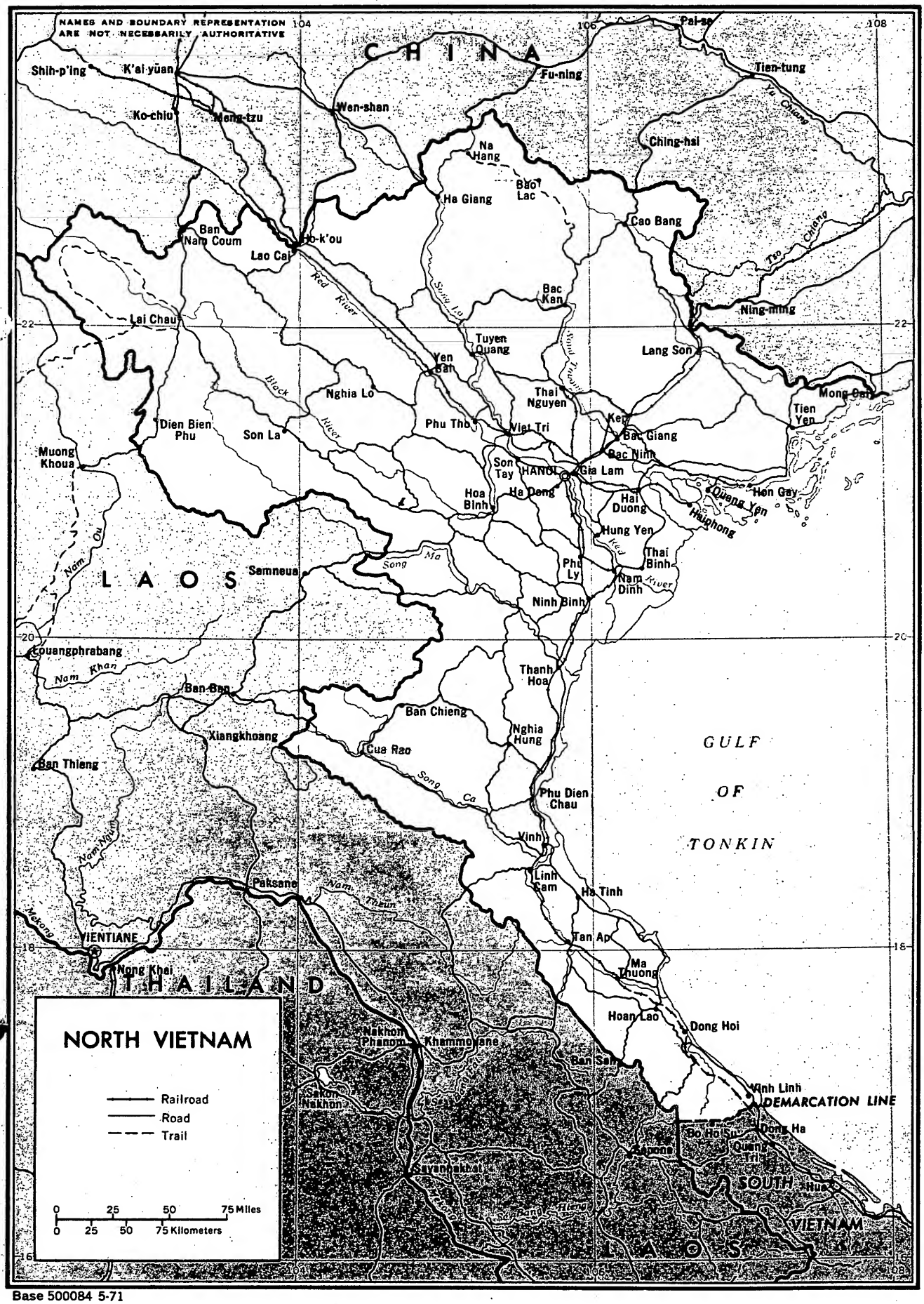
MAP 6



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APPENDIX 1

THE USE OF HERBICIDES IN SOUTH VIETNAM, 1962 - 1973

Herbicide Operations, 1962-1968

(U) The United States employed herbicides in military operations for the first time during the Vietnam war. Chemical spraying was used to kill vegetation for two purposes: defoliation to reveal enemy infiltration routes and storage sites and to clear areas around friendly outposts and improve defenses; and crop destruction to deny food supplies in enemy-held areas. The ecological and environmental hazards involved necessitated careful control. Nonetheless, the use of herbicides aroused considerable controversy during the course of the US involvement in Vietnam.

(U) The United States and South Vietnam tested herbicides for conterinsurgency measures in 1961, and President John F. Kennedy approved the first use by US forces in South Vietnam on 30 November 1961. At the recommendation of the Secretary of State and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, he authorized "a selective and carefully controlled joint program of defoliant operations in Viet Nam starting with the clearance of key routes and proceeding thereafter to food denial only if the most careful basis of resettlement and alternative food supply had been created." President Kennedy also directed "careful prior consideration and authorization" by Washington before execution of any operation.[1]

(S) Herbicide operations in South Vietnam, both defoliation and crop destruction, actually began early in 1962. Initially, every mission required approval

1. NSAM 115 to SecState and SecDef, 30 Nov 61, reproduced in DOD, United States-Vietnam Relations: 1945-1947 (Pentagon Papers), US Government Printing Office, 1971, BK 11, p. 425. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (C) p. XIV-5.

by the Secretary of State but, in May 1962, limited authority was delegated to the field. The US Ambassador in Saigon and COMUSMACV could approve defoliation to clear roadsides, railroads, and other lines of communication as well as areas adjacent to airfields and other field installations. Crop destruction, which was far more sensitive politically, still required Washington approval.[2]

(S) During the next several years, herbicide operations consisted of defoliation missions, nicknamed RANCH HAND, and limited crop destruction missions, known as FARM GATE. The former were flown with USAF aircraft while the latter originally used aircraft with VNAF markings and carrying a VNAF observer. Both COMUSMACV and the Ambassador in Saigon found the requirement for Washington approval of the FARM GATE operations time-consuming and cumbersome and sought appropriate delegation of authority to the field. Accordingly, in March 1964, authority for limited crop destruction was granted to COMUSMACV and the Ambassador and complete authority followed four months later.[3]

(C) The United States gradually increased the use of herbicides in South Vietnam during the years 1962 through 1964; then with the commitment of US combat forces in 1965, these operations expanded markedly. The great majority (approximately 90 percent), as indicated in the figures below, consisted of defoliation missions with crop destruction still conducted on a much more limited scale.

2. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, (S) pp. VII-15 - VII-17.
3. Ibid., (S) pp. VII-15 - VII-18.

Herbicide Operations, 1962-1968
(area in square kilometers)

Year	Defoliation	Crop Destruction	Total
1962	20	3	23
1963	100	1	101
1964	338	442	780
1965	632	272	904
1966	2,297	306	2,603
1967	5,087	656	5,743
1968	5,003	276	5,279[4]

(S) The objectives of the herbicide program evolved to meet the changing needs. In the period 1962-1967, emphasis was given to GVN lines of communication in order to prevent ambushes, to defoliation around base areas, and to the destruction of food grown for the NVA/VC by conscripted villagers. By late 1967, with the increasing GVN control of lowland areas and movement of population from outlying regions into areas under GVN control, emphasis shifted to defoliation along the borders of Laos and Cambodia to make enemy infiltration routes and staging areas more vulnerable to air attack. Restricted buffer zones were established along the actual borders to preclude inadvertent defoliation outside of South Vietnam. The focus of crop destruction also shifted, concentrating on food grown by the NVA/VC for their own use.[5]

(U) Three herbicides, given the names of the color markers of the containers they came in, were employed

4. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, (C) p. XIV-6.

5. (S-GP 3) JCSM-575-70 to SecDef, 18 Dec 70, App to JCS 2472/693-2, 15 Dec 70, JMF 911/313 (20 Nov 70). (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, (S) p. VII-19.

in Vietnam: (1) Orange, an oil-based agent effective against broadleaf vegatation, which achieved maximum results in four to six weeks, with a duration of approximately 12 months; (2) White, a water-based agent, which caused visible injury in approximately four weeks and full effect in six to eight weeks and with a duration of approximately 12 months; (3) Blue, a fast reacting water-based agent which showed visible results within 24 hours. All three were sold commercially in the United States.[6]

(S) Almost from the start, the herbicide operations in South Vietnam had been the subject of questions and charges, and North Vietnam had repeatedly cited the program for propaganda purposes. In 1968, the US Ambassador in Saigon, Ellsworth Bunker, set up a committee in Vietnam, including technical experts from the United States, to review every aspect of the operations. The committee found that the military benefits clearly outweighed the economic and psychological costs and recommended that the program continue. Consequently, no change resulted in the herbicide effort. Actual operations, however, did decline slightly in 1968 and the trend continued in 1969.[7]

Herbicide Operations in 1969 and 1970

(S) Soon after entering office, President Nixon decided to review US policy, programs, and operational concepts for chemical and biological warfare agents, and Dr. Kissinger assigned this task to the NSC Interdepartmental Political-Military Group on 28 May 1969.

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6. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, (U) p. VII-17.
7. Ibid., (S) pp. VII-18 - VII-19.

The Group submitted its report on 15 October 1969 and, among other things, noted the use of herbicides in Vietnam for both crop destruction and defoliation. The latter type operations, the Group reported, were being conducted "on a considerable scale" and had proved effective in clearing the edges of roads, canals, and rivers around encampments. The Group agreed that "use of herbicides as a defoliant is not contrary to international law and is less likely to have international reprecussions than use against crops." The Group did recognize that the question of the ecological effects of herbicides was both relevant and controversial, but found no serious short-term ecological damage. Present evidence, however, did not permit a definitive conclusion for the long term and the Group felt further research was needed in this regard.[8]

(S) Subsequently President Nixon approved a US policy for both a "chemical warfare program" and a "biological research program" on 25 November 1969. The policy reaffirmed renunciation of first use of lethal chemical weapons and applied it to incapacitating weapons as well. But this renunciation did not apply to use of herbicides or riot control agents.[9]

(S) In the meantime, CINCPAC had asked COMUSMACV in September 1969 about a possible reduction of herbicide operations in Vietnam to an objective of 25 percent of the current capability by 1 July 1970. General Abrams replied that the present capability,

8. (S-GP 3) NSSM 59, 28 May 69, Att to JCS 1837/229, 29 May 69; (TS) Memo, Chm NSC Interdepartmental Policical-Military Group to Dr. Kissinger, 15 Oct 69, Att to JCS 1837/229-5, 17 Oct 69; JMF 313 (28 May 69) sec 1.

9. (S) NSDM 35, 25 Nov 69, JMF 001 (CY 1969) NSDMs.

avaraging "400 productive sorties per month," was the minimum necessary for priority targets in the CY 1969 program. While some reduction might be possible, he considered a phasedown of 75 percent "unrealistic"; one of 25 to 30 percent appeared more reasonable for the time frame involved. CINCPAC agreed, directing a phasedown to 70 percent of the current capability by 1 July 1970. Accordingly, COMUSMACV issued the necessary directives. Operations would continue at the 400 productive sorties per month rate until 1 November 1969 and the decline to a level of 280 sorties per month by 1 July 1970.[10]

(C) During the latter part of 1969, mounting evidence began to appear of the danger of herbicide chemicals to both animals and humans. In October 1969, the Director of Defense Research and Engineering informed the Secretary of Defense of possible danger to humans as the result of exposure to herbicides. In anticipation of a DOD review of the continuation of herbicide operations, the Director of the Joint Staff told the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 29 October 1969 that the value of defoliation as a weapon had been clearly established. These operations had reduced ambushes, revealed enemy base camps and supply routes, and prevented countless US and RVNAF casualties. The Director also pointed out that current rules confined defoliation missions to areas remote from the population.[11]

(U) On the same day that the Director forwarded his comments, the Deputy Secretary of Defense informed

10. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, (S) pp. VII-23 - VII-26.
11. (S-GP 4) DJSM-1675-69 to DepSecDef, 29 Oct 69, JMF 313 (29 Oct 69).

the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of a National Institutes of Health report presenting evidence that 2, 4, 5-T, a chemical present in agent Orange, could cause stillbirths or malformation in offspring of mice. Pending a decision by the appropriate Government department on the issue of retaining Orange on the domestic market, Deputy Secretary Packard restricted missions employing Orange in South Vietnam to areas away from population centers. Normal use of agents White and Blue could continue, but Mr. Packard did not want large-scale substitution of Blue for Orange. The Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed this instruction to the field five days later.[12]

(S) During 1969, there were also reports of indiscriminate spraying of defoliants causing damage in Cambodia. Specifically, the Royal Khmer Government claimed some 37,000 acres had been injured with damages estimated at $8.5 million. A team of US civilian experts from the Department of Agriculture and the Agency of International Development visited Cambodia and reported extensive damage. Fruit trees had been defoliated near the South Vietnamese border as the result of wind drift from spraying in Tay Ninh Province and, further north, rubber, fruit, and forest trees had been killed, probably the result of "a direct spray application by an unknown party." With regard to the latter charge, the Secretary of State denied that such a mission had been authorized although he did not rule out the possibility of an accidential overflight. Subsequently, at the request of COMUSMACV, the Commander, 7th Air Force, investigated and reported that no US

12. Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 29 Oct 69, Att to JCS 1837/234, 30 Oct 69; (U) Msg, JCS 3986 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 4 Nov 69; JMF 313 (29 Oct 69).

aircraft had dispensed herbicides within the territorial jurisdiction of Cambodia during the period in question.[13]

(U) On 15 April 1970, the Secretaries of Health, Education, and Welfare; Interior; and Agriculture announced the suspension of uncontrolled domestic use of herbicides containing 2, 4, 5-T. That same day, the Deputy Secretary of Defense suspended temporarily all use of Orange in military operations pending a more thorough evaluation of the situation.[14]

(S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC took immediate issue with the Deputy Secretary's decision. The following day, 16 April, the Director of the Joint Staff told the Chairman that the suspension would have severe operational impacts. On-hand quantities of agent White, the most probable substitute for agent Orange, were sufficient only for about 15 days of operations at present rates. Moreover, although White was available commercially, from 35 to 120 days would be required for resupply once a procurement decision was made. A few days later, on 24 April 1970, CINCPAC requested that the temporary suspension of Orange be lifted as soon as possible. If that action was not possible, then he asked that production of Orange be stopped and production of a suitable substitute undertaken.[15]

(S) On 14 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, themselves, addressed the suspension of the use of Orange.

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13. (TS-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1969, (S) pp. VII-22 - VII-23.

14. Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 15 Apr 70, Att to JCS 1837/251, 16 Apr 70, JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 1.

15. (S-GP 1) DJSM-555-70 to CJCS, 16 Apr 70; (C-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 240335Z Apr 70; JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 1.

As of 1 May 1970, they told the Secretary of Defense, slightly more than one million gallons of the agent were on hand in South Vietnam and another 865,000 gallons awaited shipment from the United States. These quantities represented approximately 15 months of supply at the current employment rate. Since the suspension of the use of Orange, herbicide operations had been continuing with agent White, but only 35,748 gallons (approximately 35 sorties) were on hand at the beginning of May. When the White was expended, all defoliation operations would cease.

(S) To remedy this situation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented three alternatives: (1) terminate all defoliation; (2) procure more White or another suitable substitute; (3) rescind the suspension on the use of Orange. They dismissed the first altogether, explaining the importance of defoliation. These operations had helped eliminate enemy concealment along lines of communication and around base areas and airfields; had permitted reduction in the number of personnel needed for perimeter security; and had lowered the number of men necessary for combat operations, helping to save allied lives. For all these reasons, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted the defoliation program continued. Moreover, since agent White was less effective than Orange, they requested that the temporary suspension on the use of Orange be rescinded.[16]

(C) When more than two weeks had passed without any decision, the Chairman reminded the Secretary of Defense of the urgency in this matter and requested a

16. (S-GP 3) JCSM-232-70 to SecDef, 14 May 70, Encl to JCS 1837/252, 8 May 70, JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 1.

decision as soon as possible. Subsequently, on 15 June, the Deputy Secretary of Defense rejected the JCS request to rescind the suspension on the use of Orange in South Vietnam. Instead, he approved a plan prepared by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (I&L) for procurement and delivery of 330,000 gallons of White to South Vietnam. He also directed that employment of White be held to the "minimum." In advising CINCPAC of this decision, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked him to determine the amount of White needed in FY 1971 to meet minimum operational requirements.[17]

(C) When President Nixon approved the US policy for chemical and biological warfare on 25 November 1969,[18] he decided to submit the Geneva "Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare" to the Senate for advice and consent in anticipation of ratification. This Protocol had been prepared in 1925 and signed by most countries. The United States, however, had never acceded to the protocol and was subjected to continuing criticism over the years for not doing so. Failure to sign the Geneva Protocol combined with the US employment of herbicides in Vietnam was being used by the Soviet Union and other nations for propaganda advantage in the ongoing disarmament negotiations. Consequently, President Nixon wanted to submit the Geneva Protocol to the US Senate.

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17. (C-GP 4) CM-5245 to SecDef, 2 Jun 70, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 1837/252, 4 Jun 70; Memo, ASD(I&L) to DepSecDef, 11 Jun 70, Att to JCS 1837/252-1, 17 Jun 70; Handwritten note by DepSecDef on ASD(I&L) Memo of 11 Jun 70; Msg, JCS 3123 to CINCPAC, 22 Jun 70; JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 1.

18. See above, p. 821.

Before taking this action, he desired an assessment of "the overall value of the United States anticrop chemical spraying program to our military effort in Southeast Asia."[19]

(S) Dr. Kissinger relayed the President's request to the Secretary of Defense on 6 July 1970. Using information supplied by the Director of the Joint Staff, the Secretary replied to Dr. Kissinger on 18 July. He pointed out that the crop destruction program, which represented only five percent of the total herbicide effort in Vietnam, had contributed significantly to the reduction of VC/NVA logistic capability. He estimated the quantity of rice destroyed in the fields in VC/NVA-controlled areas by this means to be about seven times that found in caches during ground operations. Serious food shortages had often led to a curtailment of enemy military action primarily through the requirement to divert combat troops to food production, acquisition, or distribution tasks. Overall Secretary Laird concluded that anticrop operations "in carefully selected target areas" had proven an effective adjunct to the total US military effort in Southeast Asia.[20]

(S) On 2 August 1970, President Nixon approved a general policy governing the use of both chemical herbicides and riot control agents by US forces in time of war. Use of herbicides for either defoliation or crop destruction required Presidential approval. This new policy did not, however, affect "the joint authority of COMUSMACV and the United States Ambassador,

19. (C) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 6 Jul 70, CJCS 091 Vietnam, Jul 70.

20. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Dr. Kissinger, 18 Jul 70, Att to JCS 2472/649, 24 Jul 70, JMF 911/313 (13 Jul 70).

Saigon, to authorize support of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam requests for herbicide operations" and, in effect, brought no change in the herbicide effort in Vietnam.[21]

(C) During 1969 and 1970, there was continuing public criticism of the US herbicide program in Vietnam, including a number of articles in scientific magazines and journals. In the summer of 1970, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) proposed to send a team of civilian scientists to South Vietnam to conduct an on-site investigation of the effects of herbicides on the land and people. Before the team left the United States, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought the views of CINCPAC. The field commander did not believe "an objective, scientifically valid study" of the sort proposed was feasible at that time. He pointed out to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 23 July that herbicide operations had been conducted only in unpopulated or low density population areas and generally in a hostile environment. Hence valid statistics to provide "a base line" for the study did not exist. Therefore any findings would be inconclusive, only fueling the controversy. Moreover, since the areas where herbicides had been used were ones where the enemy still operated, it would be difficult to insure the safety of the team. As an alternative, CINCPAC proposed a study in the United States of the genetic and ecological effects of herbicides. Since the same chemical compounds had been used at home for over 20 years in quantities four times greater than

21. (S-GP 1) NSDM 78, 11 Aug 70, JMF 001 (CY 1970) NSDMs, sec 2.

in Vietnam, he believed appropriate data should be more readily available for such a study.[22]

(C) The alternative proposed by CINCPAC was not adopted and a four-man survey team of the AAAS, led by Dr. Matthew S. Meselson, a Harvard University biologist, visited Vietnam in August 1970. The team members collected soil samples, flew over recently sprayed crop targets, and interviewed Vietnamese villagers in areas where herbicide missions had occurred. They condemned the destruction of mangrove and hardwood forests, called the crop destruction effort a failure, and concluded that the spraying had caused serious harm to both the land and people. They also speculated that the spraying might have been responsible for a high number of still-births and birth defects among Vietnamese in 1967 and 1968, but cautioned that further study was needed to substantiate these charges. CINCPAC dismissed the team conclusions, stating that Dr. Meselson's position on crop destruction was "well known and consistent with his criticism of US/GVN policy."[23]

Consideration of a Herbicide Capability for South Vietnam

(S) By mid-1970, Vietnamization, the US policy of improving and strengthening the RVNAF so that the

22. LTG John H. Hay, Jr., Tactical and Material Innovations, Washington, Dept of the Army, 1974, p. 94. (C-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 230408Z Jul 70, JCS IN 29869. Legislative Reference Service, Library of Congress, "A Technology Assessment of the Vietnam Defoliant Matter, a Case History," Report to Subcom on Science, Research and Development of H. Com on Science and Astronautics, 8 Aug 69, 91st Cong, 2d sess.

23. (C) Joint State/DOD/AID Msg (State 119797) to Saigon (info CINCPAC), 250113Z Jul 70, JCS IN 33213. (C-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 052210Z Jul 70 (retransmitting MAC 12013/041138Z Sep 70). (C-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 052208 Sep 70; CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Sep 70. Hay, Tactical and Material Innovations, p. 94.

South Vietnamese could take over combat operations from US forces, was well under way. At this point, however, the United States had no plans to transfer its herbicide capability to the RVNAF.[24] Then, on 2 September 1970, the Secretary of Defense asked about "political implications" and "military utility" of supporting the South Vietnamese with both herbicides and riot control agents after the removal of US combat forces. He requested his Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs to conduct an appropriate review, specifically including the views of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[25]

(S) The Director of the Joint Staff supplied the JCS input for the review on 15 September. He pointed out to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) the significant military benefits of the herbicide operations, including greatly increased ability to detect enemy infiltration, base areas, and preparations for offensive action. In addition, herbicide operations had reduced friendly casualties, complicated enemy logistic programs, and required the diversion of VC/NVA troops to food production missions. The Director doubted that the withdrawal of US combat forces from Vietnam would decrease the requirement for herbicides as long as active combat continued. To the contrary, redeployment of US forces would place greater emphasis on territorial surveillance and security. Following a cease-fire or other cessation of hostilities,

24. See response given to Senator Gaylord Nelson during a briefing on the herbicide program. (C) DJSM-1163-70 to CJCS, 14 Aug 70, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Aug 70.

25. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to ASD(ISA), 2 Sep 70, Att to JCS 2472/668, 4 Sep 70, JMF 911/313 (2 Sep 70).

defoliation of strips through the heavy jungle on the Cambodian and Laotian borders would provide an excellent means of detecting any new infiltration into the RVN and assist in identification of enemy preparation for attacks in violation of the cease-fire.

(S) The Director observed that the RVNAF capability to disseminate herbicides was "marginal." Plans were in being to provide the South Vietnamese C-123 aircraft and those craft could be equipped with appropriate spraying apparatus. The Director added that neither herbicides nor riot control agents were significantly expensive when compared to other munitions and weapon systems in normal use and both were commercially available.[26]

(S) After reviewing the JCS input and also that of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis), the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) told the Secretary on 28 October that both military and economic considerations clearly called for continued support of the South Vietnamese with herbicides and riot control agents. Further, he believed that "political liabilities of refusing to support the RVN with riot control agents and chemical herbicides after withdrawal of US combat forces appear at this time clearly to outweigh possible benefits that might accrue from such refusal." Therefore the Assistant Secretary recommended continued support at a level determined by military and economic considerations.[27]

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26. (S-GP 3) DJSM-1360-70 to ASD(ISA), 15 Sep 70 (derived from JCS 2472/668-2), JMF 911/313 (2 Sep 70). (DJSM 1360-70 was approved by the JCS.)

27. (S-GP 3) Memo, ASD(ISA) to SecDef, 8 Oct 70, Encl to JCS 2472/668-3, 9 Dec 70, JMF 911/313 (2 Sep 70).

(S) Over a month later, on 7 December 1970, Secretary Laird approved the recommendation of the Assistant Secretary. He cautioned that use of both herbicides and riot control agents in support of combat operations in Vietnam remained a contentious issue and directed that these chemicals and agents "be carefully controlled and employed with discrimination." He wanted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to monitor use and ensure "rigorous application of existing regulations and controls."[28]

Increasing Restriction on Use of Herbicides

(C) Following the suspension of the use of Orange in April 1970, herbicide operations fell off drastically. Whereras 4,852 square kilometers of land in South Vietnam were sprayed with defoliants during 1969, only 892 were so treated in 1970. Crop destruction missions dropped by half as well, the square kilometers treated declining from 263 in 1969 to 132 in 1970. The restriction on Orange influenced COMUSMACV's decision on 10 July 1970 to terminate defoliation by fixed-wing aircraft;[29] all such operations thereafter employed helicopter or ground-based spray equipment. The suspension of the use of Orange also presented COMUSMACV a further problem--the disposition of some 1,400,000 gallons of the agent then stocked in Vietnam.[30]

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28. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to SecArmy and CJCS, 7 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2472/668-3, 9 Dec 70, JMF 911/313 (2 Sep 70).

29. This decision was also based in part on the decision to deactivate the 12th Special Operations Squadron as a result of the critical need for space to accommodate the expanding VNAF. See (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, p. XIV-10.

30. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1970, pp. XIV-5 - XIV-10. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1726 to CINCPAC, 22 Jan 71.

(S) As the field commanders looked for ways to dispose of the stocks of Orange, another question arose. On 16 October 1970, the Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman of recent allegations that Orange had been used in the Americal Division area of operations in South Vietnam. He requested an appropriate investigation. At JCS direction, COMUSMACV conducted the investigation, and Admiral Moorer reported to the Deputy Secretary that Orange had, indeed, been dispensed in six instances following the suspension. The herbicide had been used without the knowledge of the Americal Division commander or his chief of staff and had been used because stocks of White were "essentially depleted." Admiral Moorer assured Mr. Packard that COMUSMACV had reaffirmed to his subordinates the suspension of Orange and, to prevent reoccurrence of similar incidents, had made all stocks of Orange accountable, consolidating them at a central storage area to insure better control.[31]

(C) Meantime, on 21 October 1970, CINCPAC had complained to Admiral Moorer about the maintenance of the large quantities of Orange in Vietnam. Not only was storage of the approximately 1,400,000 gallons of the agent costing an estimated $10 million, but the longer it remained static, the greater the risk of "adverse consequences." Therefore CINCPAC recommended either reinstitution of Orange for combat operations or encouragement of the GVN to continue its use for border control, maintenance of route security, and related purposes.[32]

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31. (S) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 16 Oct 70; (S-GP 3) CM-306-70 to DepSecDef, 20 Oct 70; (C) Atts to JCS 1837/261, 29 Dec 70, JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 1.

32. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 210132Z Oct 70, CJCS File 091 Vietnam, Oct 70.

(C) CINCPAC's recommendation was not accepted and, in fact, further restrictions on herbicide operations were soon under consideration. On 20 November 1970, the President's science adviser, Dr. Edward E. David, Jr., wrote to Dr. Kissinger asking a reconsideration of US defoliation policy in Vietnam. Dr. David expected the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as a result of the visit of its mission to Vietnam during the summer,[33] to present evidence to Congressional committees and the American public charging the United States with use of herbicides in Vietnam with impurities far greater than those allowed at home. Other factors contributing to the need for reconsideration of the US defoliation policy, listed by Dr. David, included: question of storage of Orange in Vietnam, the unauthorized use of Orange, and the possible harmful effects of the chemicals currently used in Vietnam as substitutes for Orange. He thought it might be desirable to use in Vietnam only those herbicide agents authorized for commercial use in the United States and only under the same conditions. Subsequently, on 10 December, Dr. Kissinger asked the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for an appraisal of Dr. David's suggestion, including the nature and significance of any reduction in defoliation capability that might occur if such a policy was adopted.[34]

(S) Even before Dr. Kissinger's request for appraisal of the David proposal, herbicide operations in Vietnam were restricted further. On 9 December 1970,

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33. See above, p. 829.

34. (C-GP 4) Memo, Presidential Science Adviser to Dr. Kissinger, 20 Nov 70; Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 10 Dec 70; Atts to JCS 2472/693, 11 Dec 70, JMF 911/313 (20 Nov 70).

Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams informed Washington of their decision to phase out the crop destruction portion of the program. General Abrams was taking action to stop further procurement or shipment of agents Blue and White to South Vietnam; "herbicide stocks on hand will support base perimeter defoliation and highly selective crop destruction operations until approximately May 1971." The Ambassador and the military commander planned no announcement of the suspension of crop destruction operations. Such a course, they said, would "permit a quiet, orderly, yet rapid phase-out of [the] program while preserving our option to reinstitute [the] program if necessary in [the] future."[35]

(U) On 18 December, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed the David proposal to limit employment of herbicides in Vietnam to the same restrictions observed in the United States. Again, they set out the military benefits of herbicide operations. They found no direct parallel between operations in Vietnam and the use of similar chemicals in the United States; the objectives of the two uses were "entirely different"--for weed control in the United States but for military advantages in Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were not aware of any "reliable evidence" of ill effects from herbicides to human beings--the suspension of Orange had been based "on evidence from laboratory mice." Nor had simulated soil tests in the United States shown any harmful effects. Therefore the Joint Chefs of Staff did not favor Dr. David's proposal, nor did they find any factual basis for retaining the suspension of Orange in portions of Vietnam remote from populated

35. Msg, Joint Saigon/MACV (Saigon 19374) to State, 9 Dec 70, JCS IN 76317.

areas. The option to continue herbicide operations, they said, must be maintained.[36]

(C) After considering the JCS appraisal, the Secretary of Defense prepared a draft memorandum for the President. Among other things he planned to inform the President that the suspension of the use of Orange would be permanent and that any herbicides employed in Vietnam henceforth would be used only under the conditions applying in the United States. Admiral Moorer again expressed the JCS oposition to a permanent suspension of Orange. He listed briefly the JCS arguments set forth in their 18 December submission and explained the problem of disposing of existing stocks.[37]

(C) On 22 December 1970, the Secretary forwarded a memorandum to the President. "The present ban on the use of the herbicide known as 'Orange,'" he told the President, "remains in effect." This statement reflected a slight concession to accommodate the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Secretary did not say the suspension was permanent, as he had proposed in the draft, and left open the possibility of its removal. Mr. Laird went on to relate that Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams were initiating action "to permit an orderly, yet rapid phase-out of other herbicides while preserving the option to reinstitute this program, if necessary, to assure the protection of American lives." The Secretary mentioned no specific date for completion of the phase out, but did state that, during the

36. JCSM-575-70 to SecDef, 18 Dec 70, App to JCS 2472/693-2, 15 Dec 70, JMF 911/313 (20 Nov 70).

37. (C) Draft Memo, SecDef to Pres, n.d.; (S-GP 3) CM-451-70 to SecDef, 21 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2472/693-3, 22 Dec 70, JMF 911/313 (20 Nov 70).

phase out, herbicides would be restricted to "remote, unpopulated areas or around fire bases and US installations in a manner currently authorized in CONUS." In short, Secretary Laird told the President, herbicides would be used only under conditions that applied in the United States.[38]

(C) Six days later, Dr. Kissinger advised Secretary Laird that the President had noted the 22 December memorandum and the actions being taken to reduce use of herbicides in Vietnam, including initiation of a program to permit "an orderly, yet rapid" phase out of herbicide operations. The President did not, however, set any date for completion of the program. He also directed that any extension or approval of the current program or plans, if any, regarding Vietnamization of chemical herbicide capabilities be submitted for his approval. In issuing the necessary implementing order to the field, the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that defoliation by fixed-wing aircraft had ceased on 10 July 1970 and that crop destruction was being phased out with termination by 1 May 1971. Therefore, after that date, herbicide operations would be limited to defoliation by either helicopter or ground-based spray. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reiterated the suspension of Orange; agents Blue and White were to be employed with "discrimination" and in conformity with policies governing the use of herbicides in the United States.[39]

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38. (C) Memo, SecDef to President, 22 Dec 70, quoted in toto in Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 7 Jan 71, Att to JCS 2472/693-5, 8 Jan 71, JMF 911/313 (20 Nov 70).

39. (C-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecDef, 28 Dec 70, Att to JCS 2472/693-4, 4 Jan 71; (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 1726 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 22 Jan 71; JMF 911/313 (20 Nov 70).

Continuing Controversy Over Herbicides in 1971

(C) Still the question of the extent to which herbicides would be employed in Vietnam was not resolved. On 16 January 1971, the Deputy Secretary of Defense again stressed the need for caution in the use of these chemical agents and requested a JCS plan for disposition of the stock of Orange than in Vietnam. He also ordered the immediate termination of all crop destruction operations, accelerating the cutoff date of 1 May 1971 planned by COMUSMACV and the Ambassador. Accordingly, General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker announced jointly on 20 February 1971 the termination of all crop destruction missions. Thereafter herbicide operations in Vietnam were restricted to limited defoliation with Blue and White around friendly fire support bases to preclude enemy use of ground cover. These operations relied on helicopter or ground-based spray.[40]

(S) In the meantime, on 2 February, the Secretary of State had notified Secretary Laird of his intention to ask the President to end all chemical herbicide operations in Vietnam immediately. Such action, Secretary Rogers believed, would assist in securing Senate advice and consent to ratification of the 1925 Geneva Protocol on chemical and biological agents then before the Senate. Secretary Laird did not agree. He could not concur with Secretary Roger's recommendation,

40. (C) Memo, DepSecDef to CJCS, 16 Jan 71, Att to JCS 1837/261-1, 10 Mar 71, JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 1. (S-NOFORN-GP 1) COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, (U) p. VI-20.

he told the President on 19 February, because of the risk it might bring to US forces in Vietnam. Any additional action to speed up the phase out of herbicide operations before 1 May 1971, Mr. Laird believed, should be determined by General Abrams in relation to the military situation in the field rather than being dictated solely by the political situation in Washington. Should there be a requirement to expand herbicide usage in Vietnam or to extend operations beyond 1 May 1971, Secretary Laird would request appropriate approval.[41]

(S) The President took no action to curtail herbicide operations further but, as the Joint Chiefs of Staff had told CINCPAC on 3 February, some agencies in Washinton were interpreting the decision by Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams on 9 December[42] to cease procurement of agents Blue and White, with anticipated exhaustion of stocks on hand by 1 May 1971, as a commitment to terminate herbicide operations by that date. Accordigly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted an evaluation of the need to continue these operations beyond that date.[43]

(S) The field commanders not only wanted to continue the operations but also to supply the South Vietnamese a herbicide capability. CINCPAC explained on 5 February 1971 that procurement and shipment of

41. (TS-GP 1) Draft Ltr, SecState to Pres, n.d., Encl to Ltr, SecState to SecDef, 2 Feb 71, Att to JCS 1837/266, 3 Feb 71; JMF 313 (2 Feb 71). (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 19 Feb 71; Ltr SecDef to SecState, 19 Feb 71; Atts to JCS 1837/266-1, 22 Feb 71, same file.

42. See above p. 834-835.

43. (S-GP 3) Msg JCS 3215 to CINCPAC, 032307Z Feb 71.

White and Blue were suspended to prevent large accumulation of stocks in the face of reductions in usage. Since on-hand stocks of Blue and White were greater than those required to support helicopter and ground spraying on a continuing basis, the field commanders had planned to consume the excess by continuing crop destruction operations until May 1971. But the early termination of crop destruction, as directed by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 16 January, would now mean that stocks of Blue and White available for helicopter and ground spraying would last well into FY 1972. Moreover, CINCPAC considred such spraying essential to preserve and enhance the security of US and allied bases and installations. Therefore he requested authority, without any time limit, to spray for this purpose.[44]

(S) Later, on 6 March, CINCPAC submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan to provide the RVNAF with a helicopter and ground spray capability to improve troop and installation security. Just over a week later, on 14 March, he proposed removal of the suspension of Orange. He wanted to dispose of the Orange in Vietnam by using it in military operations in areas remote from population and agriculture regions.[45]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported CINCPAC. On 9 April, they requested the Secretary of Defense to secure Presidential approval of a plan to provide the RVNAF "a limited herbicide capability" as well as Presidential sanction of continued US defoliation

44. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 051734Z Feb 71, JCS IN 91957.

45. (S-GP 3) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 140401Z Mar 71, JCS IN 71987. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 060407Z Mar 71, JCS IN 57537.

operations around bases and installations "beyond May 1971 until the RVNAF attains the required capability to provide this support." Such continued use, they believed, was essential to preserve and enhance the security of US and allied bases and installations. With regard to Orange, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Secretary on 23 April to remove the suspension to allow use as an option in military operations under the conditions set forth by CINCPAC. They also recommended that the stocks of Orange in South Vietnam remain in the custody of GVN "for selective use in military operations consistent with capabilities provided through the Vietnamization Program." Should the suspension not be removed, then the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored return of Orange to US custody for incineration "in a manner to be determined by detailed cost analysis." These latter recommendations constituted the JCS plan for disposition of Orange as requested by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 16 January 1971.[46]

(S) On 13 May, Secretary Laird informed the President of the JCS request to continue use of herbicides around fire support bases and installations. He supported the Joint Chiefs of Staff, telling the President that such use was "vital to the protection of US and allied forces" from enemy sapper and ambush tactics as US redeployments moved ahead. Mr. Laird also informed the President that he was evaluating a JCS plan to provide the RVNAF a limited herbicide capability. He intended to forward the plan to the

46. (S-GP 4) JCSM-173-71 to SecDef, 9 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 2472/728, 29 Mar 71, JMF 911/313 (6 Mar 71). (S-GP 4) JCSM-191-71 to SecDef, 23 Apr 71, Encl to JCS 1837/261-3, 16 Apr 71, JMF 313 (15 Apr 71) sec 1.

President shortly. Until the RVNAF possessed a herbicide capability, or until 1 December 1971, whichever came first, the Secretary requested authority for US forces to continue to emloy herbicides as needed around fire support bases and installations. He quickly added that current military objectives did not envision any increased use of herbicides at that time and that existing stocks of Blue and White would be used.[47]

(S) The Secretary of State told the President over a month later, on 24 June 1971, that his Department would, on political grounds, prefer no extension of herbicide use in Vietnam. If military reasons were telling, then Secretary Rogers reluctantly agreed to "a limited extension not beyond December 1, 1971 . . . under the definitive and restricted conditions outlined by Secretary Laird except that such use be restricted to 'perimeter of fire bases and U.S. installations.'"[48]

(C) A Presidential decision was not immediately forthcoming and, on 6 August 1971, CICNPAC urgently requested continuing authority to employ agents Blue and White in Vietnam. Base security was being weakened by excessive vegetation growth, he said, and "at a time when redeployment of forces limits the number of personnel available to man perimeters," lives were being lost as the result of inadequate defoliation.[49]

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47. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to Pres, 13 May 71, Att to JCS 2472/728-1, 1 Jul 71, JMF 911/313 (6 Mar 71).
48. (TS-GP 3) Memo, SecState to Pres, 24 Jun 71, Att to JCS 2472/728-1, 1 Jul 71, JMF 911/313 (6 Mar 71).
49. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 062149Z Aug 71, JCS IN 68404.

A Presidential Decision

(S) The President made his decision on 18 August 1971. He directed that "the planned phase-out of the herbicide operations in Vietnam and, as necessary, the introduction of alternate means for clearing perimeters be completed as rapidly as possible and not later than December 1, 1971." He granted Ambassador Bunker and COMUSMACV "joint authority to use herbicides around fire bases and U.S. installations when considered essential for the protection of U.S. and allied forces in those cases where other means are not possible or available." Such use would be restricted to perimeter areas and be conducted only by helicopter or ground-based spray under the same restrictions applied in the United States. This authority extended only until 1 December 1971. The question of US assistance to South Vietnam in developing a herbicide capability, the President said, would be considered as a separate issue. Pending a decision, he wanted no statements or actions to encourage the South Vietnamese in any way to acquire or develop such a capability.[50]

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff relayed the President's decision to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV the following day. They carefully pointed out that the authority to employ herbicides applied only to existing stocks of Blue and White; the suspension of Orange continued.[51]

(S) Several weeks later, on 13 September 1971, the Secretary of Defense ruled on the disposition of Orange. He did not approve use in remote areas of

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50. (S-GP 3) Memo, Dr. Kissinger to SecState and SecDef, 18 Aug 71, Att to JCS 2472/728-2, 18 Aug 71, JMF 911/313 (6 Mar 71).

51. (S-GP 4) Msg, JCS 4025 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 19 Aug 71.

Vietnam as proposed by CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Rather, he directed the return of all stocks to the United States "as quickly as practical"; those with unacceptable levels of impurities would be incinerated once returned. The Joint Chiefs of Staff assigned the Chief of Staff, US Air Force, the task of transporting the Orange to the United States. Subsequently, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) prepared a brief public statement, with follow-up questions and answers, concerning the disposition of herbicides for use by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC. With regard to a possible query about the length of time it took to decide to return the stocks of Orange to the United States following the suspension in April 1970, the Assistant Secretary suggested a response along the lines that the original suspension was only temporary and did not become permanent until many months later.[52]

(C) The President's 18 August 1971 decision authorized defoliation in Vietnam only until 1 December 1971. On 29 September, however, CINCPAC told the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the continuing requirement for vegetation control around fire bases and US installations. Since no other method was as effective as herbicides, he requested permission for US forces to use agents White and Blue in Vietnam on a continuing basis.[53]

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52. (S-GP 3) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Sep 71, Att to JCS 1837/261-4, 15 Sep 71; (S-GP 4) MJCS-290-71 to CSA, CNO, and CSAF, 27 Sep 71, Att to 1st N/H of JCS 1837/261-4, 27 Sep 71; JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 1. (C-GP 4) Msg, SecDef 2297 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 8 Nov 71, same file, sec 2.

53. (S-GP 4) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 291124Z Sep 71, JMF 911/313 (6 Mar 71).

(C) The Joint Chiefs of Staff supported the field commander. They told the Secretary of Defense on 1 November 1971 of their awareness of the political implications of continued use of herbicides in Vietnam. On the other hand, lives were being lost as a "direct result" of inadequate defoliation around allied bases, and saving military lives, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed, should take precedence over the political issues. Moreover, they pointed out that the termination date of 1 December 1971 had no military significance. United States forces and installations would still need protection beyond that date. Therefore they asked the Secretary of Defense to obtain Presidential authority for continuing employment of herbicides in areas surrounding US fire support bases and installations for as long as US troops were "tactically committed in the RVN."[54]

(S) The Acting Secretary of Defense, Mr. Packard, relayed the JCS request to the President on 3 November, and the President reached a decision on 26 November. After 1 December 1971, the US Ambassador in Saigon and COMUSMACV would continue to have "joint authority" to use herbicides around US bases and installations when "considered essential for the protection of US forces in those cases where other means are not available or satisfactory." Such use would still be limited to base and installation perimeter operations conducted by helicopter or ground-bases spray equipment, under the same regulations applied in the United States. Further, the President directed that the United States not take the initiative in any plans for Vietnamization of

54. (S-GP 4) JCSM-478-71 to SecDef, 1 Nov 71 (derived from JCS 2472/728-3), JMF 911/313 (6 Mar 71).

herbicide capabilities or the provision of spray equipment, training, or technical assistance to the South Vietnamese.[55] In addition, he wanted no encouragement of the South Vietnamese to acquire or develop herbicide capabilities. Should they request such assistance, the United States would provide only such ground spray equipment as the Ambassador in Saigon and COMUSMACV determined necessary and was available in Vietnam and not required by US forces.[56]

A State-Defense Dispute

(S) On 3 December, the Secretary of Defense appealed to the President to reconsider his decision with respect to assisting the South Vietnamese in attaining a herbicide capability. Specifically, Secretary Laird asked the President to authorize the turnover of 15 US helicopter spray systems then in Vietnam to the South Vietnamese, the removal of the prohibition against any US initiative toward the development of a South

55. On 9 August 1971, the Secretary of Defense had provided the President a proposal to supply a herbicide capability to the South Vietnamese, and on 30 September, the Secretary of State commented on this proposal, more than likely opposing it. The President referred to both communications in his decision memorandum on 26 November, but neither the Secretary of Defense nor the Secretary of State memorandums are in the file of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Office of the Secretary of Defense was unable to locate these documents.

56. (S) Extracts of NSDM 141, 26 Nov 71, JMF 001 (CY 1971) sec 2.

Vietnamese herbicide capability, and expeditious approval of provision of herbicide stocks to the South Vietnamese in addition to those already in Vietnam.[57]

(S) Once again the Secretary of State disagreed. He did not think a case had been made for providing the helicopter spray systems to the South Vietnamese, he told the President on 4 February 1972. Moreover, he believed that "it would be to our distinct advantage to phase out the program of providing additional herbicide stocks to the Vietnamese as quickly as possible without jeopardizing the RVNAF military posture." He did recognize the military value of herbicides to US and South Vietnamese forces for installation defense. Should the South Vietnamese wish to continue to employ herbicides for this purpose, the Secretary of State believed the GVN should move as rapidly as possible to direct procurement of stocks through commercial channels. To this end, he suggested to the President that Ambassador Bunker raise the problem with the GVN. No change would be required in the President's 26 November 1971 decision.[58]

(S) On 14 February 1972, President Nixon ruled on the matter of providing South Vietnam a herbicide capability. The United States would not make an open-ended commitment to supply additional stocks of herbicides to the Government of Vietnam; rather it would encourage the South Vietnamese to establish

57. Memo, SecDef to Pres, 3 Dec 71, cited in (S) Memo, SecState to Pres, 4 Feb 72, Att to JCS 1837/274, 23 Feb 74, JMF 911/313 (4 Feb 72).

58. (S) Memo, SecState to Pres, 4 Feb 72, Att to JCS 1837/274, 23 Feb 72, same file.

alternative commercial supply channels. Until such sources could be established, the President authorized US forces to supply limited amounts of herbicides to the South Vietnamese for base and installation perimeter operations and LOC control. With regard to the supply of helicopter spray systems, the President granted COMUSMACV and Ambassador Bunker authority, "given a requirement from the GVN," to provide those systems presently possessed by US forces in South Vietnam. These systems would be furnished with the understanding that they would be used only for base and installation perimeter operations. The provision of ground spray equipment, as authorized on 26 November 1971, was not affected. The President still wanted no encouragement or stimulation of the GVN to acquire or develop a herbicide capability beyond that required for perimeter operations.[59]

(S) The President's decision resolved the dispute between the Defense and State Departments, and the two Departments dispatched joint instructions to COMUSMACV and Ambassador Bunker. Thereafter the United States proceeded to transfer the remaining in-country helicopter and ground spray equipment to the South Vietnamese for base perimeter defense and also requested the GVN to establish alternate, commercial supply channels for such herbicide stocks required in the future. Simultaneously, US forces continued limited helicopter and ground spray herbicide missions in South Vietnam to improve base security, using existing supplies of Blue and White. United States forces retained authority for these limited herbicide operations throughout the remainder of their presence in South Vietnam. During 1972, the remaining stocks of Orange in South Vietnam,

59. (S) Extracts of NSDM 152, 14 Feb 72, JMF 001 (CY 1972) sec 1.

some 1,387,045 gallons, were moved to Johnston Island for temporary storage pending disposal in the United States.[60]

The End of US Herbicide Operations

(U) The withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam during the period January-March 1973 ended all US herbicide activity in Southeast Asia. By that time, however, South Vietnam did possess a limited capability for herbicide operations supplied by the United States before its military departure.

(U) Following the termination of all US herbicide operations in South Vietnam and the withdrawal of US military forces, there was one further event in the story of US herbicide activity in Vietnam. As a result of the continuing controversy over these operations, the Congress had enacted legislation in 1970 requiring the Secretary of Defense to have the National Academy of Sciences conduct a comprehensive investigation of the ecological and psychological effects of herbicide spraying in Vietnam, and this task was not completed until 1974.

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60. (TS-NOFORN-EX) COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, (S) p. 36. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6432 to CINCPAC (info COMUSMACV), 24 Mar 72. (TS-GP 1) Msg, JCS 6393 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 29 Apr 72; (TS-EX) Msg, JCS 6895 to CINCPAC and CINCSAC (info COMUSMACV), 30 Oct 72. (TS) Rpt, NSC Interdepartmental Political-Military Group, "Annual Review of US Chemical Warfare and Biological Research Programs as of July 1, 1972," 26 Oct 72 (pp. 24-28), Encl to Att to JCS 1837/279, 18 Nov 72, JMF 313 (15 Nov 72). (U) Memo, SecAF to SecDef, 31 May 72, Att to JCS 1837/261-7, 6 Jun 72, JMF 313 (15 Apr 70) sec 2.

(U) The National Academy of Sciences presented its findings to the Congress and the Secretary of Defense on 15 February 1974. The investigation had been accomplished by a specially appointed committee of experts, headed by Professor Anton Lang of Michigan State University, a "renowned" plant physiologist. Other members included several additional US scientists as well as ones from South Vietnam, Britain, Canada, and Sweden. This committee visited South Vietnam and had access to pertinent classified DOD information and records.[61]

(U) The investigating committee found no indication of direct damage to human health from US herbicide activity in South Vietnam. Examination of hospital records provided no conclusive evidence of association between exposure to herbicides and human birth defects. The sociological, economic, and psychological effects on the South Vietnamese population were more difficult to assess. In fact, the psychological impact could not be measured at all, though the committee did state that the use of herbicides was "an emotionally charged symbol standing for many apprehensions and distresses." The committee did find that herbicide spraying had caused displacement of people from their homes and had contributed to the urbanization of South Vietnam. But the extent of the influence of herbicides in comparison with other military activities in producing population displacement could not be determined.

(U) Chemical spraying had also damaged crops, the committee reported, but, generally, had not resulted

61. All information about the National Academy investigation and report is from (U) National Academy of Sciences, The Effects of Herbicides in South Vietnam, Washington, 1974.

in loss of production for longer than one growing season. With regard to damage to other vegetation, the committee reported mixed findings. Mangrove forests had been heavily damaged and the committee estimated more than 100 years would be needed for reforestation. On the other hand, damage to inland forests, which had received three quarters of all the spraying in Vietnam, was not as readily apparent. The committee believed that most inland forest areas would recover if "large-scale rehabilitation" was undertaken. Further the committee found no permanent damage to the soil. On the basis of tests, it concluded that toxic residues of herbicides had disappeared within one year. Even where traces did persist, they did not seem to hinder the return of native vegetation.

(U) In the end, the National Academy of Sciences' examination did not resolve the controversy over the US employment of herbicides in South Vietnam. The Academy's committee of experts did determine that herbicide spraying had caused ecological damage to the Vietnamese landscape. The committee did not answer, nor did it attempt to, the more difficult question of whether the herbicide damage was any worse than that caused by other types of military activity.

(U) As a final footnote, it should be mentioned that after the US military involvement in Vietnam ended and the controversy over the use of herbicides there had quieted, the United States became a party to the Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. The Senate gave its consent on 16 December 1974, and the President ratified the Protocol on 22 January 1975; it became effective for the United States on 23 March 1975, some 50 years after it was originally written.[62]

62. Washington Post, 23 Jan 75, 15. 26 UST 571.

APPENDIX 2

US REDEPLOYMENTS, 1969-1972

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US REDEPLOYMENTS, 1969-1972

INCREMENT	PERIOD	AUTHORIZED CEILING	SPACES REDUCED	COMBAT FORCES MVR BN	ARTY BN	ATK/FTR SQDNS*
I (KEYSTONE EAGLE)	1 Jul-31 Aug 69	524,500	25,000	9	6	1
II (KEYSTONE CARDINAL)	17 Sep-15 Dec 69	484,000	40,500	10	6	4
III (KEYSTONE BLUEJAY)	30 Dec 69-15 Apr 70	434,000	50,000	17	11	6
IV (KEYSTONE ROBIN ALPHA)	5 Jun-15 Oct 70	384,000	50,000	11	5	11
V (KEYSTONE ROBIN BRAVO)	16 Oct-31 Dec 70	344,000	40,000	14	8	0
VI (KEYSTONE ROBIN CHARLIE)	1 Jan-30 Apr 71	284,000	60,000	15	8	0
VII (KEYSTONE ORIOLE ALPHA)	1 May-30 Jun 71	254,700	29,300	6	2	2
VIII (KEYSTONE ORIOLE BRAVO)	1 Jul-31 Aug 71	226,000	28,700	6	5	5

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US REDEPLOYMENTS, 1969-1972 (CONTINUED)

INCREMENT	PERIOD	AUTHORIZED CEILING	SPACES REDUCED	COMBAT FORCES MVR BN	COMBAT FORCES ARTY BN	ATK/FTR SQDNS*
IX (KEYSTONE ORIOLE CHARLIE	1 Sep-30 Nov 71	184,000	42,000	8	10	2
X (KEYSTONE MALLARD)	1 Dec 71-31 Jan 72	139,000	45,000	6	5	2
XI (KEYSTONE OWL)	1 Feb-30 Apr 72	69,000	70,000	11	3	0
XII (KEYSTONE PHEASANT)	1 May-30 Jun 72	49,000	20,000	4	2	7
XIII (KEYSTONE WREN)	1 Jul-31 Aug 72	39,000	10,000	3	0	0
XIV (KEYSTONE PELICAN)	1 Sep-30 Nov 72	27,000	12,000	0	0	0

* Includes both USAF and USMC squadrons

Source: COMUSMACV Command History, 1971, p. F-1-1; COMUSMACV Command History, Jan 72-Mar 73, pp. F-56 - F-60

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APPENDIX 3

TEXT OF THE VIETNAM AGREEMENT AND ACCOMPANYING PROTOCOLS

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APPENDIX 3

TEXT OF THE VIETNAM AGREEMENT AND ACCOMPANYING PROTOCOLS SIGNED BY THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, AND THE UNITED STATES IN PARIS ON 27 JANUARY 1973

AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM

The Parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam,

With a view to ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam on the basis of respect for the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, and to contributing to the consolidation of peace in Asia and the world,

Have agreed on the following provisions and undertake to respect and to implement them:

Chapter I

THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE'S FUNDAMENTAL NATIONAL RIGHTS

Article 1

The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam.

Chapter II

CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES—WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS

Article 2

A cease-fire shall be observed throughout South Vietnam as of 2400 hours G.M.T., on January 27, 1973.

At the same hour, the United States will stop all its military activities against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam by ground, air and naval forces, wherever they may be based, and end

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the mining of the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The United States will remove, permanently deactivate or destroy all the mines in the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways of North Vietnam as soon as this Agreement goes into effect.

The complete cessation of hostilities mentioned in this Article shall be durable and without limit of time.

Article 3

The parties undertake to maintain the cease-fire and to ensure a lasting and stable peace.

As soon as the cease-fire goes into effect:

(a) The United States forces and those of the other foreign countries allied with the United States and the Republic of Vietnam shall remain in-place pending the implementation of the plan of troop withdrawal. The Four-Party Joint Military Commission described in Article 16 shall determine the modalities.

(b) The armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties shall remain in-place. The Two-Party Joint Military Commission described in Article 17 shall determine the areas controlled by each party and the modalities of stationing.

(c) The regular forces of all services and arms and the irregular forces of the parties in South Vietnam shall stop all offensive activities against each other and shall strictly abide by the following stipulations:

—All acts of force on the ground, in the air, and on the sea shall be prohibited;

—All hostile acts, terrorism and reprisals by both sides will be banned.

Article 4

The United States will not continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Vietnam.

Article 5

Within sixty days of the signing of this Agreement, there will be a total withdrawal from South Vietnam of troops, military advisers, and military personnel, including technical military personnel and military personnel associated with the pacification program, armaments, munitions, and war material of the United States and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a). Advisers from the above-mentioned countries to all paramilitary organizations and the police force will also be withdrawn within the same period of time.

Article 6

The dismantlement of all military bases in South Vietnam of the United States and of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a) shall be completed within sixty days of the signing of this Agreement.

Article 7

From the enforcement of the cease-fire to the formation of the government provided for in Articles 9 (b) and 14 of this Agreement, the two South Vietnamese parties shall not accept the introduction of troops, military advisers, and military personnel including technical military personnel, armaments, munitions, and war material into South Vietnam.

The two South Vietnamese parties shall be permitted to make periodic replacement of armaments, munitions and war material which have been destroyed, damaged, worn out or used up after the cease-fire, on the basis of piece-for-piece, of the same characteristics and properties, under the supervision of the Joint Military Commission of the two South Vietnamese parties and of the International Commission of Control and Supervision.

Chapter III

The Return of Captured Military Personnel and Foreign Civilians, and Captured and Detained Vietnamese Civilian Personnel

Article 8

(a) The return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties shall be carried out simultaneously with and completed not later than the same day as the troop withdrawal mentioned in Article 5. The parties shall exchange complete lists of the above-mentioned captured military personnel and foreign civilians on the day of the signing of this Agreement.

(b) The parties shall help each other to get information about those military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties missing in action, to determine the location and take care of the graves of the dead so as to facilitate the exhumation and repatriation of the remains, and to take any such other measures as may be required to get information about those still considered missing in action.

(c) The question of the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam will be resolved by the two South Vietnamese parties on the basis of the principles of Article 21 (b) of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam of July 20, 1954. The two South Vietnamese parties will do so in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, with a view to ending hatred and enmity, in order to ease suffering and to reunite families. The two South Vietnamese parties will do their utmost to resolve this question within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect.

Chapter IV

The Exercise of the South Vietnamese People's Right to Self-Determination

Article 9

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam undertake to respect the following principles for the exercise of the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination:

(a) The South Vietnamese people's right to self-

determination is sacred, inalienable, and shall be respected by all countries.

(b) The South Vietnamese people shall decide themselves the political future of South Vietnam through genuinely free and democratic general elections under international supervision.

(c) Foreign countries shall not impose any political tendency or personality on the South Vietnamese people.

Article 10

The two South Vietnamese parties undertake to respect the cease-fire and maintain peace in South Vietnam, settle all matters of contention through negotiations, and avoid all armed conflict.

Article 11

Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties will:

—achieve national reconciliation and concord, end hatred and enmity, prohibit all acts of reprisal and discrimination against individuals or organizations that have collaborated with one side or the other;

—ensure the democratic liberties of the people: personal freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of meeting, freedom of organization, freedom of political activities, freedom of belief, freedom of movement, freedom of residence, freedom of work, right to property ownership, and right to free enterprise.

Article 12

(a) Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties shall hold consultations in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, mutual respect, and mutual non-elimination to set up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord of three equal segments. The Council shall operate on the principle of unanimity. After the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord has assumed its functions, the two South Vietnamese parties will consult about the formation of councils at lower levels. The two South Vietnamese parties shall sign an agreement on the internal matters of South Vietnam as soon as possible and do their utmost to accomplish this within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect, in keeping with the South Vietnamese people's aspirations for peace, independence and democracy.

(b) The National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord shall have the task of promoting the two South Vietnamese parties' implementation of this Agreement, achievement of national reconciliation and concord and ensurance of democratic liberties. The National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord will organize the free and democratic general elections provided for in Article 9 (b) and decide the procedures and modalities of these general elections. The institutions for which the general elections are to be held will be agreed upon through consultations between the two South Vietnamese parties. The National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord will also decide the procedures and modalities of such local elections as the two South Vietnamese parties agree upon.

Article 13

The question of Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam shall be settled by the two South Vietnamese parties in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, equality and mutual respect, without foreign interference, in accordance with the postwar situation. Among the questions to be discussed by the two South Vietnamese parties are steps to reduce their military effectives and to demobilize the troops being reduced. The two South Vietnamese parties will accomplish this as soon as possible.

Article 14

South Vietnam will pursue a foreign policy of peace and independence. It will be prepared to establish relations with all countries irrespective of their political and social systems on the basis of mutual respect for independence and sovereignty and accept economic and technical aid from any country with no political conditions attached. The acceptance of military aid by South Vietnam in the future shall come under the authority of the government set up after the general elections in South Vietnam provided for in Article 9 (b).

Chapter V

The Reunification of Vietnam and the Relationship Between North and South Vietnam

Article 15

The reunification of Vietnam shall be carried out step by step through peaceful means on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Vietnam, without coercion or annexation by either party, and without foreign interference. The time for reunification will be agreed upon by North and South Vietnam.

Pending reunification:

(a) The military demarcation line between the two zones at the 17th parallel is only provisional and not a political or territorial boundary, as provided for in paragraph 6 of the Final Declaration of the 1954 Geneva Conference.

(b) North and South Vietnam shall respect the Demilitarized Zone on either side of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line.

(c) North and South Vietnam shall promptly start negotiations with a view to reestablishing normal relations in various fields. Among the questions to be negotiated are the modalities of civilian movement across the Provisional Military Demarcation Line.

(d) North and South Vietnam shall not join any military alliance or military bloc and shall not allow foreign powers to maintain military bases, troops, military advisers, and military personnel on

their respective territories, as stipulated in the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam.

Chapter VI

THE JOINT MILITARY COMMISSIONS, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF CONTROL AND SUPERVISION, THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Article 16

(a) The Parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam shall immediately designate representatives to form a Four-Party Joint Military Commission with the task of ensuring joint action by the parties in implementing the following provisions of this Agreement:

—The first paragraph of Article 2, regarding the enforcement of the cease-fire throughout South Vietnam;

—Article 3 (a), regarding the cease-fire by U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries referred to in that Article;

—Article 3 (c), regarding the cease-fire between all parties in South Vietnam;

—Article 5, regarding the withdrawal from South Vietnam of U.S. troops and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a);

—Article 6, regarding the dismantlement of military bases in South Vietnam of the United States and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a);

—Article 8 (a), regarding the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties;

—Article 8 (b), regarding the mutual assistance of the parties in getting information about those military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties missing in action.

(b) The Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall operate in accordance with the principle of consultations and unanimity. Disagreements shall be referred to the International Commission of Control and Supervision.

(c) The Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall begin operating immediately after the signing of this Agreement and end its activities in sixty days, after the completion of the withdrawal of U.S. troops and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a) and the completion of the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties.

(d) The four parties shall agree immediately on the organization, the working procedure, means of activity, and expenditures of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission.

Article 17

(a) The two South Vietnamese parties shall immediately designate representatives to form a Two-Party Joint Military Commission with the task of ensuring joint action by the two South Vietnamese parties in implementing the following provisions of this Agreement:

—The first paragraph of Article 2, regarding the enforcement of the cease-fire throughout South Vietnam, when the Four-Party Joint Military Commission has ended its activities;

—Article 3 (b), regarding the cease-fire between the two South Vietnamese parties;

—Article 3 (c), regarding the cease-fire between all parties in South Vietnam, when the Four-Party Joint Military Commission has ended its activities;

—Article 7, regarding the prohibition of the introduction of troops into South Vietnam and all other provisions of this article;

—Article 8 (c), regarding the question of the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam;

—Article 13, regarding the reduction of the military effectives of the two South Vietnamese parties and the demobilization of the troops being reduced.

(b) Disagreements shall be referred to the International Commission of Control and Supervision.

(c) After the signing of this Agreement, the Two-Party Joint Military Commission shall agree immediately on the measures and organization aimed at enforcing the cease-fire and preserving peace in South Vietnam.

Article 18

(a) After the signing of this Agreement, an International Commission of Control and Supervision shall be established immediately.

(b) Until the International Conference provided for in Article 19 makes definitive arrangements, the International Commission of Control and Supervision will report to the four parties on matters concerning the control and supervision of the implementation of the following provisions of this Agreement:

—The first paragraph of Article 2, regarding the enforcement of the cease-fire throughout South Vietnam;

—Article 3 (a), regarding the cease-fire by U.S. forces and those of the other foreign countries referred to in that Article;

—Article 3 (c), regarding the cease-fire between all the parties in South Vietnam;

—Article 5, regarding the withdrawal from Vietnam of U.S. troops and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a);

—Article 6, regarding the dismantlement of military bases in South Vietnam of the United States and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a);

—Article 8 (a), regarding the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties.

The International Commission of Control and Supervision shall form control teams for carrying

out its tasks. The four parties shall agree immediately on the location and operation of these teams. The parties will facilitate their operation.

(c) Until the International Conference makes definitive arrangements, the International Commission of Control and Supervision will report to the two South Vietnamese parties on matters concerning the control and supervision of the implementation of the following provisions of this Agreement:

—The first paragraph of Article 2, regarding the enforcement of the cease-fire throughout South Vietnam, when the Four-Party Joint Military Commission has ended its activities;

—Article 3 (b), regarding the cease-fire between the two South Vietnamese parties;

—Article 3 (c), regarding the cease-fire between all parties in South Vietnam, when the Four-Party Joint Military Commission has ended its activities;

—Article 7, regarding the prohibition of the introduction of troops into South Vietnam and all other provisions of this Article;

—Article 8 (c), regarding the question of the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam;

—Article 9 (b), regarding the free and democratic general elections in South Vietnam;

—Article 13, regarding the reduction of the military effectives of the two South Vietnamese parties and the demobilization of the troops being reduced.

The International Commission of Control and Supervision shall form control teams for carrying out its tasks. The two South Vietnamese parties shall agree immediately on the location and operation of these teams. The two South Vietnamese parties will facilitate their operation.

(d) The International Commission of Control and Supervision shall be composed of representatives of four countries: Canada, Hungary, Indonesia and Poland. The chairmanship of this Commission will rotate among the members for specific periods to be determined by the Commission.

(e) The International Commission of Control and Supervision shall carry out its tasks in accordance with the principle of respect for the sovereignty of South Vietnam.

(f) The International Commission of Control and Supervision shall operate in accordance with the principle of consultations and unanimity.

(g) The International Commission of Control and Supervision shall begin operating when a cease-fire comes into force in Vietnam. As regards the provisions in Article 18 (b) concerning the four parties, the International Commission of Control and Supervision shall end its activities when the Commission's tasks of control and supervision regarding these provisions have been fulfilled. As regards the provisions in Article 18 (c) concerning the two South Vietnamese parties, the International Commission of Control and Supervision shall end its activities on the request of the government formed after the general elections in South Vietnam provided for in Article 9 (b).

(h) The four parties shall agree immediately on the organization, means of activity, and expenditures of the International Commission of Control and Supervision. The relationship between the International Commission and the International Conference will be agreed upon by the International Commission and the International Conference.

Article 19

The parties agree on the convening of an International Conference within thirty days of the signing of this Agreement to acknowledge the signed agreements; to guarantee the ending of the war, the maintenance of peace in Vietnam, the respect of the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights, and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination; and to contribute to and guarantee peace in Indochina.

The United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on behalf of the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam, will propose to the following parties that they participate in this International Conference: the People's Republic of China, the Republic of France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, the four countries of the International Commission of Control and Supervision, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, together with the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam.

Chapter VII

Regarding Cambodia and Laos

Article 20

(a) The parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam shall strictly respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Cambodia and the 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos, which recognized the Cambodian and the Lao peoples' fundamental national rights, i.e., the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of these countries. The parties shall respect the neutrality of Cambodia and Laos.

The parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam undertake to refrain from using the territory of Cambodia and the territory of Laos to encroach on the sovereignty and security of one another and of other countries.

(b) Foreign countries shall put an end to all military activities in Cambodia and Laos, totally withdraw from and refrain from reintroducing into these two countries troops, military advisers and military personnel, armaments, munitions and war material.

(c) The internal affairs of Cambodia and Laos shall be settled by the people of each of these countries without foreign interference.

(d) The problems existing between the Indo-

chinese countries shall be settled by the Indochinese parties on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Chapter VIII

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Article 21

The United States anticipates that this Agreement will usher in an era of reconciliation with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as with all the peoples of Indochina. In pursuance of its traditional policy, the United States will contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and throughout Indochina.

Article 22

The ending of the war, the restoration of peace in Vietnam, and the strict implementation of this Agreement will create conditions for establishing a new, equal and mutually beneficial relationship between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on the basis of respect for each other's independence and sovereignty, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. At the same time this will ensure stable peace in Vietnam and contribute to the preservation of lasting peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia.

Chapter IX

OTHER PROVISIONS

Article 23

This Agreement shall enter into force upon signature by plenipotentiary representatives of the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam. All the parties concerned shall strictly implement this Agreement and its Protocols.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the United States of America

WILLIAM P. ROGERS
Secretary of State

For the Government of the Republic of Vietnam

TRAN VAN LAM
Minister for Foreign Affairs

[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

NGUYEN DUY TRINH
Minister for Foreign Affairs

For the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam

NGUYEN THI BINH
Minister for Foreign Affairs

AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM

The Government of the United States of America, with the concurrence of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam,

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the concurrence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam,

With a view to ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam on the basis of respect for the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, and to contributing to the consolidation of peace in Asia and the world,

Have agreed on the following provisions and undertake to respect and to implement them:

[Text of Agreement Chapters I–VIII Same As Above]

Chapter IX

OTHER PROVISIONS

Article 23

The Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam shall enter into force upon signature of this document by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and upon signature of a document in the same terms by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. The Agreement and the protocols to it shall be strictly implemented by all the parties concerned.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

For the Government of the United States of America

WILLIAM P. ROGERS
Secretary of State

For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

NGUYEN DUY TRINH
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Protocol on Prisoners and Detainees

PROTOCOL TO THE AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM CONCERNING THE RETURN OF CAPTURED MILITARY PERSONNEL AND FOREIGN CIVILIANS AND CAPTURED AND DETAINED VIETNAMESE CIVILIAN PERSONNEL.

The Parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam,

In implementation of Article 8 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed on this date providing for the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians, and captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel,

Have agreed as follows:

THE RETURN OF CAPTURED MILITARY PERSONNEL AND FOREIGN CIVILIANS

Article 1

The parties signatory to the Agreement shall return the captured military personnel of the parties mentioned in Article 8 (a) of the Agreement as follows:

—all captured military personnel of the United States and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a) of the Agreement shall be returned to United States authorities;

—all captured Vietnamese military personnel, whether belonging to regular or irregular armed forces, shall be returned to the two South Vietnamese parties; they shall be returned to that South Vietnamese party under whose command they served.

Article 2

All captured civilians who are nationals of the United States or of any other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3 (a) of the Agreement shall be returned to United States authorities. All other captured foreign civilians shall be returned to the authorities of their country of nationality by any one of the parties willing and able to do so.

Article 3

The parties shall today exchange complete lists of captured persons mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 of this Protocol.

Article 4

(a) The return of all captured persons mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 of this Protocol shall be completed within sixty days of the signing of the Agreement at a rate no slower than the rate of withdrawal from South Vietnam of United States forces and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 5 of the Agreement.

(b) Persons who are seriously ill, wounded or maimed, old persons and women shall be returned first. The remainder shall be returned either by returning all from one detention place after another or in order of their dates of capture, beginning with those who have been held the longest.

Article 5

The return and reception of the persons mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 of this Protocol shall be carried out at places convenient to the concerned parties. Places of return shall be agreed upon by the Four-Party Joint Military Commission. The parties shall ensure the safety of personnel engaged in the return and reception of those persons.

Article 6

Each party shall return all captured persons mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 of this Protocol without delay and shall facilitate their return and reception. The detaining parties shall not deny or delay their return for any reason, including the fact that captured persons may, on any grounds, have been prosecuted or sentenced.

THE RETURN OF CAPTURED AND DETAINED VIETNAMESE CIVILIAN PERSONNEL

Article 7

(a) The question of the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam will be resolved by the two South Vietnamese parties on the basis of the principles of Article 21 (b) of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam of July 20, 1954, which reads as follows:

"The term 'civilian internees' is understood to mean all persons who, having in any way contributed to the political and armed struggle between the two parties, have been arrested for that reason and have been kept in detention by either party during the period of hostilities."

(b) The two South Vietnamese parties will do so in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord with a view to ending hatred and enmity in order to ease suffering and to reunite families. The two South Vietnamese parties will do their utmost to resolve this question within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect.

(c) Within fifteen days after the cease-fire comes into effect, the two South Vietnamese parties shall exchange lists of the Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained by each party and lists of the places at which they are held.

TREATMENT OF CAPTURED PERSONS DURING DETENTION

Article 8

(a) All captured military personnel of the parties and captured foreign civilians of the parties shall be treated humanely at all times, and in accordance with international practice.

They shall be protected against all violence to life and person, in particular against murder in any form, mutilation, torture and cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity. These persons shall not be forced to join the armed forces of the detaining party.

They shall be given adequate food, clothing, shelter, and the medical attention required for their state of health. They shall be allowed to exchange post cards and letters with their families and receive parcels.

(b) All Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam shall be treated humanely at all times, and in accordance with international practice.

They shall be protected against all violence to life and person, in particular against murder in any

form, mutilation, torture and cruel treatment, and outrages against personal dignity. The detaining parties shall not deny or delay their return for any reason, including the fact that captured persons may, on any grounds, have been prosecuted or sentenced. These persons shall not be forced to join the armed forces of the detaining party.

They shall be given adequate food, clothing, shelter, and the medical attention required for their state of health. They shall be allowed to exchange post cards and letters with their families and receive parcels.

Article 9

(a) To contribute to improving the living conditions of the captured military personnel of the parties and foreign civilians of the parties, the parties shall, within fifteen days after the cease-fire comes into effect, agree upon the designation of two or more national Red Cross societies to visit all places where captured military personnel and foreign civilians are held.

(b) To contribute to improving the living conditions of the captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel, the two South Vietnamese parties shall, within fifteen days after the cease-fire comes into effect, agree upon the designation of two or more national Red Cross societies to visit all places where the captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel are held.

WITH REGARD TO DEAD AND MISSING PERSONS

Article 10

(a) The Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall ensure joint action by the parties in implementing Article 8 (b) of the Agreement. When the Four-Party Joint Military Commission has ended its activities, a Four-Party Joint Military team shall be maintained to carry on this task.

(b) With regard to Vietnamese civilian personnel dead or missing in South Vietnam, the two South Vietnamese parties shall help each other to obtain information about missing persons, determine the location and take care of the graves of the dead, in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, in keeping with the people's aspirations.

OTHER PROVISIONS

Article 11

(a) The Four-Party and Two-Party Joint Military Commissions will have the responsibility of determining immediately the modalities of implementing the provisions of this Protocol consistent with their respective responsibilities under Articles 16 (a) and 17 (a) of the Agreement. In case the Joint Military Commissions, when carrying out their tasks, cannot reach agreement on a matter pertaining to the return of captured personnel they shall refer to the International Commission for its assistance.

(b) The Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall form, in addition to the teams established by the Protocol concerning the cease-fire in South Vietnam and the Joint Military Commissions, a subcommission on captured persons and, as required, joint military teams on captured persons to assist the Commission in its tasks.

(c) From the time the cease-fire comes into force to the time when the Two-Party Joint Military Commission becomes operational, the two South Vietnamese parties' delegations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall form a provisional sub-commission and provisional joint military teams to carry out its tasks concerning captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel.

(d) The Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall send joint military teams to observe the return of the persons mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 of this Protocol at each place in Vietnam where such persons are being returned, and at the last detention places from which these persons will be taken to the places of return. The Two-Party Joint Military Commission shall send joint military teams to observe the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained at each place in South Vietnam where such persons are being returned, and at the last detention places from which these persons will be taken to the places of return.

Article 12

In implementation of Articles 18 (b) and 18 (c) of the Agreement, the International Commission of Control and Supervision shall have the responsibility to control and supervise the observance of Articles 1 through 7 of this Protocol through observation of the return of captured military personnel, foreign civilians and captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel at each place in Vietnam where these persons are being returned, and at the last detention places from which these persons will be taken to the places of return, the examination of lists, and the investigation of violations of the provisions of the above-mentioned Articles.

Article 13

Within five days after signature of this Protocol, each party shall publish the text of the Protocol and communicate it to all the captured persons covered by the Protocol and being detained by that party.

Article 14

This Protocol shall come into force upon signature by plenipotentiary representatives of all the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam. It shall be strictly implemented by all the parties concerned.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

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[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the United States of America	For the Government of the Republic of Vietnam
WILLIAM P. ROGERS *Secretary of State*	TRAN VAN LAM *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam	For the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam
NGUYEN DUY TRINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*	NGUYEN THI BINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

PROTOCOL TO THE AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM CONCERNING THE RETURN OF CAPTURED MILITARY PERSONNEL AND FOREIGN CIVILIANS AND CAPTURED AND DETAINED VIETNAMESE CIVILIAN PERSONNEL

The Government of the United States of America, with the concurrence of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam,

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the concurrence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam,

In implementation of Article 8 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed on this date providing for the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians, and captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel,

Have agreed as follows:

[Text of Protocol Articles 1–13 same as above]

Article 14

The Protocol to the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam concerning the Return of Captured Military Personnel and Foreign Civilians and Captured and Detained Vietnamese Civilian Personnel shall enter into force upon signature of this document by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and upon signature of a document in the same terms by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. The Protocol shall be strictly implemented by all the parties concerned.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

For the Government of the United States of America	For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
WILLIAM P. ROGERS *Secretary of State*	NGUYEN DUY TRINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

Protocol on the International Commission of Control and Supervision

PROTOCOL TO THE AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM CONCERNING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

The parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam,

In implementation of Article 18 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed on this date providing for the formation of the International Commission of Control and Supervision,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The implementation of the Agreement is the responsibility of the parties signatory to the Agreement.

The functions of the International Commission are to control and supervise the implementation of the provisions mentioned in Article 18 of the Agreement. In carrying out these functions, the International Commission shall:

(a) Follow the implementation of the above-mentioned provisions of the Agreement through communication with the parties and on-the-spot observation at the places where this is required;

(b) Investigate violations of the provisions which fall under the control and supervision of the Commission;

(c) When necessary, cooperate with the Joint Military Commissions in deterring and detecting violations of the above-mentioned provisions.

Article 2

The International Commission shall investigate violations of the provisions described in Article 18 of the Agreement on the request of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, or of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission, or of any party, or, with respect to Article 9 (b) of the Agreement on general elections, of the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord, or in any case where the International Commission has other adequate grounds for considering that there has been a violation of those provisions. It is understood

that, in carrying out this task, the International Commission shall function with the concerned parties' assistance and cooperation as required.

Article 3

(a) When the International Commission finds that there is a serious violation in the implementation of the Agreement or a threat to peace against which the Commission can find no appropriate measure, the Commission shall report this to the four parties to the Agreement so that they can hold consultations to find a solution.

(b) In accordance with Article 18 (f) of the Agreement, the International Commission's reports shall be made with the unanimous agreement of the representatives of all the four members. In case no unanimity is reached, the Commission shall forward the different views to the four parties in accordance with Article 18 (b) of the Agreement, or to the two South Vietnamese parties in accordance with Article 18 (c) of the Agreement, but these shall not be considered as reports of the Commission.

Article 4

(a) The headquarters of the International Commission shall be at Saigon.

(b) There shall be seven regional teams located in the regions shown on the annexed map and based at the following places:

Regions	*Places*
I	Hue
II	Danang
III	Pleiku
IV	Phan Thiet
V	Bien Hoa
VI	My Tho
VII	Can Tho

The International Commission shall designate three teams for the region of Saigon-Gia Dinh.

(c) There shall be twenty-six teams operating in the areas shown on the annexed map and based at the following places in South Vietnam:

Region I
Quang Tri
Phu Bai

Region II
Hoi An
Tam Ky
Chu Lai

Region III
Kontum
Hau Bon
Phu Cat
Tuy An
Ninh Hoa
Ban Me Thuot

Region IV
Da Lat
Bao Loc
Phan Rang

Region V
An Loc
Xuan Loc
Ben Cat
Cu Chi
Tan An

Region VI
Moc Hoa
Giong Trom

Region VII
Tri Ton
Vinh Long
Vi Thanh
Khanh Hung
Quan Long

(d) There shall be twelve teams located as shown on the annexed map and based at the following places:

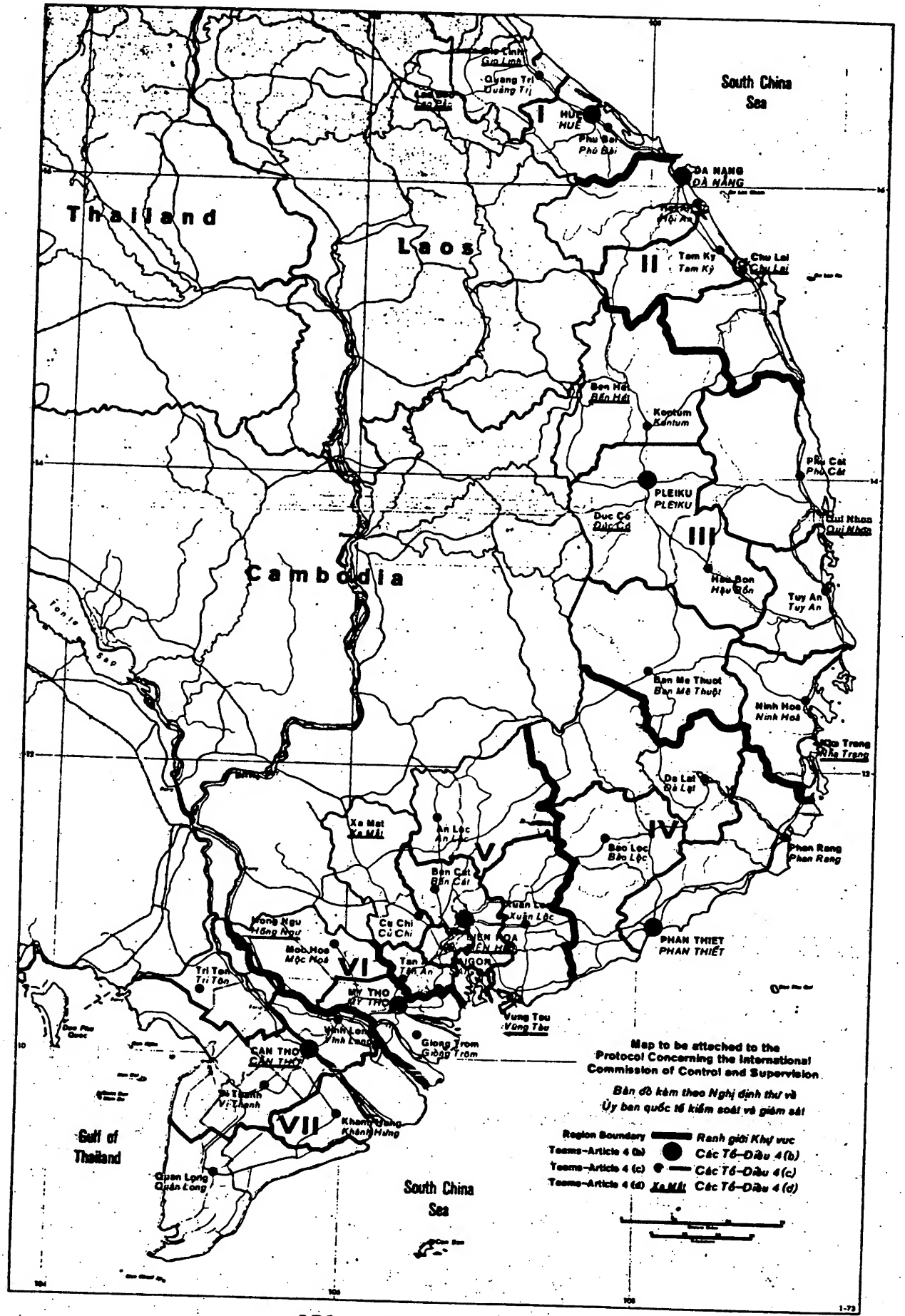
Gio Linh (to cover the area south of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line)
Lao Bao
Ben Het
Duc Co
Chu Lai
Qui Nhon
Nha Trang
Vung Tau
Xa Mat
Bien Hoa Airfield
Hong Ngu
Can Tho

(e) There shall be seven teams, six of which shall be available for assignment to the points of entry which are not listed in paragraph (d) above and which the two South Vietnamese parties choose as points for legitimate entry to South Vietnam for replacement of armaments, munitions, and war material permitted by Article 7 of the Agreement. Any team or teams not needed for the above-mentioned assignment shall be available for other tasks, in keeping with the Commission's responsibility for control and supervision.

(f) There shall be seven teams to control and supervise the return of captured and detained personnel of the parties.

Article 5

(a) To carry out its tasks concerning the return of the captured military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties as stipulated by Article 8 (a) of the Agreement, the International Commission shall, during the time of such return, send one control and supervision team to each place in Vietnam where the captured persons are being returned, and to the last detention places from which these persons will be taken to the places of return.


South China Sea
Thailand
Laos
Cambodia
Gulf of Thailand
South China Sea
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
HUE
DA NANG
Hoi An
Tam Ky
Chu Lai
Quang Tri
Dong Ha
Phu Bai
Bon Het
Kontum
PLEIKU
Duc Co
Phu Cat
Qui Nhon
Hoa Hoi
Tuy An
Ban Me Thuot
Ninh Hoa
Nha Trang
Da Lat
Xa Mat
An Loc
Bao Loc
Phan Rang
Ben Cat
Xuan Loc
PHAN THIET
Mong Nou
Cu Chi
Moc Hoa
Tri Ton
MY THO
Vung Tau
Vinh Long
Giong Trom
CAN THO
Vi Thanh
Khanh Hung
Quan Long
Tonle Sap
Map to be attached to the Protocol Concerning the International Commission of Control and Supervision
Ban đồ kèm theo Nghị định thư về Ủy ban quốc tế kiểm soát và giám sát
Region Boundary
Ranh giới Khu vực
Terms-Article 4 (b)
Các Tổ-Điều 4 (b)
Terms-Article 4 (c)
Các Tổ-Điều 4 (c)
Terms-Article 4 (d)
Các Tổ-Điều 4 (d)
1-73

(b) To carry out its tasks concerning the return of the Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam mentioned in Article 8 (c) of the Agreement, the International Commission shall, during the time of such return, send one control and supervision team to each place in South Vietnam where the above-mentioned captured and detained persons are being returned, and to the last detention places from which these persons shall be taken to the places of return.

Article 6

To carry out its tasks regarding Article 9 (b) of the Agreement on the free and democratic general elections in South Vietnam, the International Commission shall organize additional teams, when necessary. The International Commission shall discuss this question in advance with the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord. If additional teams are necessary for this purpose, they shall be formed thirty days before the general elections.

Article 7

The International Commission shall continually keep under review its size, and shall reduce the number of its teams, its representatives or other personnel, or both, when those teams, representatives or personnel have accomplished the tasks assigned to them and are not required for other tasks. At the same time, the expenditures of the International Commission shall be reduced correspondingly.

Article 8

Each member of the International Commission shall make available at all times the following numbers of qualified personnel:

(a) One senior representative and twenty-six others for the headquarters staff.

(b) Five for each of the seven regional teams.

(c) Two for each of the other international control teams, except for the teams at Gio Linh and Vung Tau, each of which shall have three.

(d) One hundred sixteen for the purpose of providing support to the Commission Headquarters and its teams.

Article 9

(a) The International Commission, and each of its teams, shall act as a single body comprising representatives of all four members.

(b) Each member has the responsibility to ensure the presence of its representatives at all levels of the International Commission. In case a representative is absent, the member concerned shall immediately designate a replacement.

Article 10

(a) The parties shall afford full cooperation, assistance, and protection to the International Commission.

(b) The parties shall at all times maintain regular and continuous liaison with the International Commission. During the existence of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, the delegations of the parties to that Commission shall also perform liaison functions with the International Commission. After the Four-Party Joint Military Commission has ended its activities, such liaison shall be maintained through the Two-Party Joint Military Commission, liaison missions, or other adequate means.

(c) The International Commission and the Joint Military Commissions shall closely cooperate with and assist each other in carrying out their respective functions.

(d) Wherever a team is stationed or operating, the concerned party shall designate a liaison officer to the team to cooperate with and assist it in carrying out without hindrance its task of control and supervision. When a team is carrying out an investigation, a liaison officer from each concerned party shall have the opportunity to accompany it, provided the investigation is not thereby delayed.

(e) Each party shall give the International Commission reasonable advance notice of all proposed actions concerning those provisions of the Agreement that are to be controlled and supervised by the International Commission.

(f) The International Commission, including its teams, is allowed such movement for observation as is reasonably required for the proper exercise of its functions as stipulated in the Agreement. In carrying out these functions, the International Commission, including its teams, shall enjoy all necessary assistance and cooperation from the parties concerned.

Article 11

In supervising the holding of the free and democratic general elections described in Articles 9 (b) and 12 (b) of the Agreement in accordance with modalities to be agreed upon between the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord and the International Commission, the latter shall receive full cooperation and assistance from the National Council.

Article 12

The International Commission and its personnel who have the nationality of a member state shall, while carrying out their tasks, enjoy privileges and immunities equivalent to those accorded diplomatic missions and diplomatic agents.

Article 13

The International Commission may use the means of communication and transport necessary to perform its functions. Each South Vietnamese party shall make available for rent to the International Commission appropriate office and accommodation facilities and shall assist it in obtaining such facilities. The International Commission may receive from the parties, on mutually agreeable terms, the

necessary means of communication and transport and may purchase from any source necessary equipment and services not obtained from the parties. The International Commission shall possess these means.

Article 14

The expenses for the activities of the International Commission shall be borne by the parties and the members of the International Commission in accordance with the provisions of this Article:

(a) Each member country of the International Commission shall pay the salaries and allowances of its personnel.

(b) All other expenses incurred by the International Commission shall be met from a fund to which each of the four parties shall contribute twenty-three percent (23%) and to which each member of the International Commission shall contribute two percent (2%).

(c) Within thirty days of the date of entry into force of this Protocol, each of the four parties shall provide the International Commission with an initial sum equivalent to four million, five hundred thousand (4,500,000) French francs in convertible currency, which sum shall be credited against the amounts due from that party under the first budget.

(d) The International Commission shall prepare its own budgets. After the International Commission approves a budget, it shall transmit it to all parties signatory to the Agreement for their approval. Only after the budgets have been approved by the four parties to the Agreement shall they be obliged to make their contributions. However, in case the parties to the Agreement do not agree on a new budget, the International Commission shall temporarily base its expenditures on the previous budget, except for the extraordinary, one-time expenditures for installation or for the acquisition of equipment, and the parties shall continue to make their contributions on that basis until a new budget is approved.

Article 15

(a) The headquarters shall be operational and in place within twenty-four hours after the cease-fire.

(b) The regional teams shall be operational and in place, and three teams for supervision and control of the return of the captured and detained personnel shall be operational and ready for dispatch within forty-eight hours after the cease-fire.

(c) Other teams shall be operational and in place within fifteen to thirty days after the cease-fire.

Article 16

Meetings shall be convened at the call of the Chairman. The International Commission shall adopt other working procedures appropriate for the effective discharge of its functions and consistent with respect for the sovereignty of South Vietnam.

Article 17

The Members of the International Commission may accept the obligations of this Protocol by sending notes of acceptance to the four parties signatory to the Agreement. Should a member of the International Commission decide to withdraw from the International Commission, it may do so by giving three months notice by means of notes to the four parties to the Agreement, in which case those four parties shall consult among themselves for the purpose of agreeing upon a replacement member.

Article 18

This Protocol shall enter into force upon signature by plenipotentiary representatives of all the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam. It shall be strictly implemented by all the parties concerned.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the United States of America	For the Government of the Republic of Vietnam
WILLIAM P. ROGERS *Secretary of State*	TRAN VAN LAM *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam	For the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam
NGUYEN DUY TRINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*	NGUYEN THI BINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

PROTOCOL TO THE AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM CONCERNING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

The Government of the United States of America, with the concurrence of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam,

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the concurrence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam,

In implementation of Article 18 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed on this date providing for the formation of the International Commission of Control and Supervision,

Have agreed as follows:

[Text of Protocol Articles 1–17 same as above.]

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Article 18

The Protocol to the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam concerning the International Commission of Control and Supervision shall enter into force upon signature of this document by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and upon signature of a document in the same terms by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. The Protocol shall be strictly implemented by all the parties concerned.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

For the Government of the United States of America	For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
WILLIAM P. ROGERS *Secretary of State*	NGUYEN DUY TRINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

Protocol on the Cease-Fire in South Viet-Nam and the Joint Military Commissions

PROTOCOL TO THE AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM CONCERNING THE CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND THE JOINT MILITARY COMMISSIONS

The parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam,

In implementation of the first paragraph of Article 2, Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 16 and Article 17 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed on this date which provide for the cease-fire in South Vietnam and the establishment of a Four-Party Joint Military Commission and a Two-Party Joint Military Commission,

Have agreed as follows:

CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Article 1

The High Commands of the parties in South Vietnam shall issue prompt and timely orders to all regular and irregular armed forces and the armed police under their command to completely end hostilities throughout South Vietnam, at the exact time stipulated in Article 2 of the Agreement and ensure that these armed forces and armed police comply with these orders and respect the cease-fire.

Article 2

(a) As soon as the cease-fire comes into force and until regulations are issued by the Joint Military Commissions, all ground, river, sea and air combat forces of the parties in South Vietnam shall remain in place; that is, in order to ensure a stable cease-fire, there shall be no major redeployments or movements that would extend each party's area of control or would result in contact between opposing armed forces and clashes which might take place.

(b) All regular and irregular armed forces and the armed police of the parties in South Vietnam shall observe the prohibition of the following acts:

(1) Armed patrols into areas controlled by opposing armed forces and flights by bomber and fighter aircraft of all types, except for unarmed flights for proficiency training and maintenance;

(2) Armed attacks against any person, either military or civilian, by any means whatsoever, including the use of small arms, mortars, artillery, bombing and strafing by airplanes and any other type of weapon or explosive device;

(3) All combat operations on the ground, on rivers, on the sea and in the air;

(4) All hostile acts, terrorism or reprisals; and

(5) All acts endangering lives or public or private property.

Article 3

(a) The above-mentioned prohibitions shall not hamper or restrict:

(1) Civilian supply, freedom of movement, freedom to work, and freedom of the people to engage in trade, and civilian communication and transportation between and among all areas in South Vietnam;

(2) The use by each party in areas under its control of military support elements, such as engineer and transportation units, in repair and construction of public facilities and the transportation and supplying of the population;

(3) Normal military proficiency training conducted by the parties in the areas under their respective control with due regard for public safety.

(b) The Joint Military Commissions shall immediately agree on corridors, routes, and other regulations governing the movement of military transport aircraft, military transport vehicles, and military transport vessels of all types of one party going through areas under the control of other parties.

Article 4

In order to avert conflict and ensure normal conditions for those armed forces which are in direct contact, and pending regulation by the Joint Military Commissions, the commanders of the opposing

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armed forces at those places of direct contact shall meet as soon as the cease-fire comes into force with a view to reaching an agreement on temporary measures to avert conflict and to ensure supply and medical care for these armed forces.

Article 5

(a) Within fifteen days after the cease-fire comes into effect, each party shall do its utmost to complete the removal or deactivation of all demolition objects, mine-fields, traps, obstacles or other dangerous objects placed previously, so as not to hamper the population's movement and work, in the first place on waterways, roads and railroads in South Vietnam. Those mines which cannot be removed or deactivated within that time shall be clearly marked and must be removed or deactivated as soon as possible.

(b) Emplacement of mines is prohibited, except as a defensive measure around the edges of military installations in places where they do not hamper the population's movement and work, and movement on waterways, roads and railroads. Mines and other obstacles already in place at the edges of military installations may remain in place if they are in places where they do not hamper the population's movement and work, and movement on waterways, roads and railroads.

Article 6

Civilian police and civilian security personnel of the parties in South Vietnam, who are responsible for the maintenance of law and order, shall strictly respect the prohibitions set forth in Article 2 of this Protocol. As required by their responsibilities, normally they shall be authorized to carry pistols, but when required by unusual circumstances, they shall be allowed to carry other small individual arms.

Article 7

(a) The entry into South Vietnam of replacement armaments, munitions, and war material permitted under Article 7 of the Agreement shall take place under the supervision and control of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission and of the International Commission of Control and Supervision and through such points of entry only as are designated by the two South Vietnamese parties. The two South Vietnamese parties shall agree on these points of entry within fifteen days after the entry into force of the cease-fire. The two South Vietnamese parties may select as many as six points of entry which are not included in the list of places where teams of the International Commission of Control and Supervision are to be based contained in Article 4 (d) of the Protocol concerning the International Commission. At the same time, the two South Vietnamese parties may also select points of entry from the list of places set forth in Article 4 (d) of that Protocol.

(b) Each of the designated points of entry shall be available only for that South Vietnamese party which is in control of that point. The two South Vietnamese parties shall have an equal number of points of entry.

Article 8

(a) In implementation of Article 5 of the Agreement, the United States and the other foreign countries referred to in Article 5 of the Agreement shall take with them all their armaments, munitions, and war material. Transfers of such items which would leave them in South Vietnam shall not be made subsequent to the entry into force of the Agreement except for transfers of communications, transport, and other non-combat material to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission or the International Commission of Control and Supervision.

(b) Within five days after the entry into force of the cease-fire, the United States shall inform the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and the International Commission of Control and Supervision of the general plans for timing of complete troop withdrawals which shall take place in four phases of fifteen days each. It is anticipated that the numbers of troops withdrawn in each phase are not likely to be widely different, although it is not feasible to ensure equal numbers. The approximate numbers to be withdrawn in each phase shall be given to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and the International Commission of Control and Supervision sufficiently in advance of actual withdrawals so that they can properly carry out their tasks in relation thereto.

Article 9

(a) In implementation of Article 6 of the Agreement, the United States and the other foreign countries referred to in that Article shall dismantle and remove from South Vietnam or destroy all military bases in South Vietnam of the United States and of the other foreign countries referred to in that Article, including weapons, mines, and other military equipment at these bases, for the purpose of making them unusable for military purposes.

(b) The United States shall supply the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and the International Commission of Control and Supervision with necessary information on plans for base dismantlement so that those Commissions can properly carry out their tasks in relation thereto.

THE JOINT MILITARY COMMISSIONS

Article 10

(a) The implementation of the Agreement is the responsibility of the parties signatory to the Agreement.

The Four-Party Joint Military Commission has the task of ensuring joint action by the parties in implementing the Agreement by serving as a chan-

nel of communication among the parties, by drawing up plans and fixing the modalities to carry out, coordinate, follow and inspect the implementation of the provisions mentioned in Article 16 of the Agreement, and by negotiating and settling all matters concerning the implementation of those provisions.

(b) The concrete tasks of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission are:

(1) To coordinate, follow and inspect the implementation of the above-mentioned provisions of the Agreement by the four parties;

(2) To deter and detect violations, to deal with cases of violation, and to settle conflicts and matters of contention between the parties relating to the above-mentioned provisions;

(3) To dispatch without delay one or more joint teams, as required by specific cases, to any part of South Vietnam, to investigate alleged violations of the Agreement and to assist the parties in finding measures to prevent recurrence of similar cases;

(4) To engage in observation at the places where this is necessary in the exercise of its functions;

(5) To perform such additional tasks as it may, by unanimous decision, determine.

Article 11

(a) There shall be a Central Joint Military Commission located in Saigon. Each party shall designate immediately a military delegation of fifty-nine persons to represent it on the Central Commission. The senior officer designated by each party shall be a general officer, or equivalent.

(b) There shall be seven Regional Joint Military Commissions located in the regions shown on the annexed map and based at the following places:

Regions	*Places*
I	Hue
II	Danang
III	Pleiku
IV	Phan Thiet
V	Bien Hoa
VI	My Tho
VII	Can Tho

Each party shall designate a military delegation of sixteen persons to represent it on each Regional Commission. The senior officer designated by each party shall be an officer from the rank of Lieutenant Colonel to Colonel, or equivalent.

(c) There shall be a joint military team operating in each of the areas shown on the annexed map and based at each of the following places in South Vietnam:

Region I
Quang Tri
Phu Bai

Region II
Hoi An
Tam Ky
Chu Lai

Region III
Kontum
Hau Bon
Phu Cat
Tuy An
Ninh Hoa
Ban Me Thuot

Region IV
Da Lat
Bao Loc
Phan Rang

Region V
An Loc
Xuan Loc
Ben Cat
Cu Chi
Tan An

Region VI
Moc Hoa
Giong Trom

Region VII
Tri Ton
Vinh Long
Vi Thanh
Khanh Hung
Quan Long

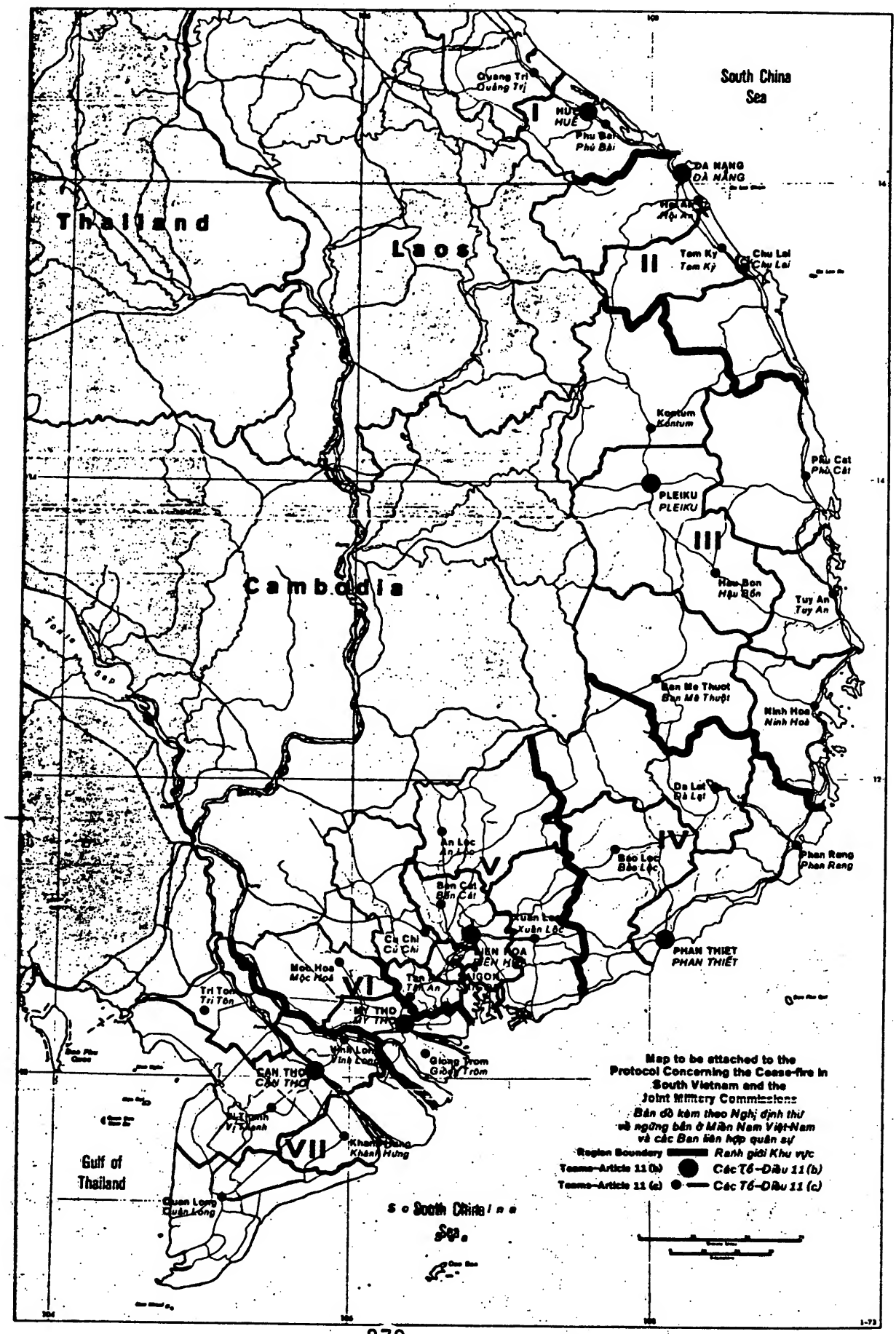
Each party shall provide four qualified persons for each joint military team. The senior person designated by each party shall be an officer from the rank of Major to Lieutenant Colonel, or equivalent.

(d) The Regional Joint Military Commissions shall assist the Central Joint Military Commission in performing its tasks and shall supervise the operations of the joint military teams. The region of Saigon-Gia Dinh is placed under the responsibility of the Central Commission which shall designate joint military teams to operate in this region.

(e) Each party shall be authorized to provide support and guard personnel for its delegations to the Central Joint Military Commission and Regional Joint Military Commissions, and for its members of the joint military teams. The total number of support and guard personnel for each party shall not exceed five hundred and fifty.

(f) The Central Joint Military Commission may establish such joint sub-commissions, joint staffs and joint military teams as circumstances may require. The Central Commission shall determine the numbers of personnel required for any additional sub-commissions, staffs or teams it establishes, provided that each party shall designate one-fourth of the number of personnel required and that the total number of personnel for the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, to include its staffs, teams, and support personnel, shall not exceed three thousand three hundred.

(g) The delegations of the two South Vietnamese


South China Sea
Thailand
Laos
Cambodia
Gulf of Thailand
South China Sea
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
HUE
DA NANG
Tam Ky
Chu Lai
Kontum
PLEIKU
Phu Cat
Hau Bon
Tuy An
Ban Me Thuot
Ninh Hoa
Da Lat
Bao Loc
Phan Rang
An Loc
Ben Cat
Xuan Loc
PHAN THIET
Cu Chi
Moc Hoa
Tri Ton
Tan An
MY THO
Vinh Long
Giong Trom
CAN THO
Vi Thanh
Khanh Hung
Quan Long
Map to be attached to the Protocol Concerning the Cease-fire in South Vietnam and the Joint Military Commissions
Bản đồ kèm theo Nghị định thư về ngừng bắn ở Miền Nam Việt-Nam và các Ban liên hợp quân sự
Region Boundary
Ranh giới Khu vực
Teams-Article 11 (b)
Các Tổ-Điều 11 (b)
Teams-Article 11 (c)
Các Tổ-Điều 11 (c)

parties may, by agreement, establish provisional sub-commissions and joint military teams to carry out the tasks specifically assigned to them by Article 17 of the Agreement. With respect to Article 7 of the Agreement, the two South Vietnamese parties' delegations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall establish joint military teams at the points of entry into South Vietnam used for replacement of armaments, munitions and war material which are designated in accordance with Article 7 of this Protocol. From the time the cease-fire comes into force to the time when the Two-Party Joint Military Commission becomes operational, the two South Vietnamese parties' delegations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall form a provisional sub-commission and provisional joint military teams to carry out its tasks concerning captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel. Where necessary for the above purposes, the two South Vietnamese parties may agree to assign personnel additional to those assigned to the two South Vietnamese delegations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission.

Article 12

(a) In accordance with Article 17 of the Agreement which stipulates that the two South Vietnamese parties shall immediately designate their respective representatives to form the Two-Party Joint Military Commission, twenty-four hours after the cease-fire comes into force, the two designated South Vietnamese parties' delegations to the Two-Party Joint Military Commission shall meet in Saigon so as to reach an agreement as soon as possible on organization and operation of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission, as well as the measures and organization aimed at enforcing the cease-fire and preserving peace in South Vietnam.

(b) From the time the cease-fire comes into force to the time when the Two-Party Joint Military Commission becomes operational, the two South Vietnamese parties' delegations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission at all ~~levels~~ shall simultaneously assume the tasks of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission at all levels, in addition to their functions as delegations to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission.

(c) If, at the time the Four-Party Joint Military Commission ceases its operation in accordance with Article 16 of the Agreement, agreement has not been reached on organization of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission, the delegations of the two South Vietnamese parties serving with the Four-Party Joint Military Commission at all levels shall continue temporarily to work together as a provisional two-party joint military commission and to assume the tasks of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission at all levels until the Two-Party Joint Military Commission becomes operational.

Article 13

In application of the principle of unanimity, the Joint Military Commissions shall have no chairmen, and meetings shall be convened at the request of any representative. The Joint Military Commissions shall adopt working procedures appropriate for the effective discharge of their functions and responsibilities.

Article 14

The Joint Military Commissions and the International Commission of Control and Supervision shall closely cooperate with and assist each other in carrying out their respective functions. Each Joint Military Commission shall inform the International Commission about the implementation of those provisions of the Agreement for which that Joint Military Commission has responsibility and which are within the competence of the International Commission. Each Joint Military Commission may request the International Commission to carry out specific observation activities.

Article 15

The Central Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall begin operating twenty-four hours after the cease-fire comes into force. The Regional Four-Party Joint Military Commissions shall begin operating forty-eight hours after the cease-fire comes into force. The joint military teams based at the places listed in Article 11 (c) of this Protocol shall begin operating no later than fifteen days after the cease-fire comes into force. The delegations of the two South Vietnamese parties shall simultaneously begin to assume the tasks of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission as provided in Article 12 of this Protocol.

Article 16

(a) The parties shall provide full protection and all necessary assistance and cooperation to the Joint Military Commissions at all levels, in the discharge of their tasks.

(b) The Joint Military Commissions and their personnel, while carrying out their tasks, shall enjoy privileges and immunities equivalent to those accorded diplomatic missions and diplomatic agents.

(c) The personnel of the Joint Military Commissions may carry pistols and wear special insignia decided upon by each Central Joint Military Commission. The personnel of each party while guarding Commission installations or equipment may be authorized to carry other individual small arms, as determined by each Central Joint Military Commission.

Article 17

(a) The delegation of each party to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and the Two-Party Joint Military Commission shall have its own offices, communication, logistics and transportation means, including aircraft when necessary.

(b) Each party, in its areas of control shall provide appropriate office and accommodation facilities to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission

and the Two-Party Joint Military Commission at all levels.

(c) The parties shall endeavor to provide to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission and the Two-Party Joint Military Commission, by means of loan, lease, or gift, the common means of operation, including equipment for communication, supply, and transport, including aircraft when necessary. The Joint Military Commissions may purchase from any source necessary facilities, equipment, and services which are not supplied by the parties. The Joint Military Commissions shall possess and use these facilities and this equipment.

(d) The facilities and the equipment for common use mentioned above shall be returned to the parties when the Joint Military Commissions have ended their activities.

Article 18

The common expenses of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission shall be borne equally by the four parties, and the common expenses of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission in South Vietnam shall be borne equally by these two parties.

Article 19

This Protocol shall enter into force upon signature by plenipotentiary representatives of all the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam. It shall be strictly implemented by all the parties concerned.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the United States of America	For the Government of the Republic of Vietnam
WILLIAM P. ROGERS *Secretary of State*	TRAN VAN LAM *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

[Separate Numbered Page]

For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam	For the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam
NGUYEN DUY TRINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*	NGUYEN THI BINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

PROTOCOL TO THE AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM CONCERNING THE CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND THE JOINT MILITARY COMMISSIONS

The Government of the United States of America, with the concurrence of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam,

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the concurrence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam,

In implementation of the first paragraph of Article 2, Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 16 and Article 17 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed on this date which provide for the cease-fire in South Vietnam and the establishment of a Four-Party Joint Military Commission and a Two-Party Joint Military Commission,

Have agreed as follows:

[Text of Protocol Articles 1–18 same as above]

Article 19

The Protocol to the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam concerning the Cease-fire in South Vietnam and the Joint Military Commissions shall enter into force upon signature of this document by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and upon signature of a document in the same terms by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. The Protocol shall be strictly implemented by all the parties concerned.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

For the Government of the United States of America	For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
WILLIAM P. ROGERS *Secretary of State*	NGUYEN DUY TRINH *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

Protocol on Mine Clearing in North Viet-Nam

PROTOCOL TO THE AGREEMENT ON ENDING THE WAR AND RESTORING PEACE IN VIETNAM CONCERNING THE REMOVAL, PERMANENT DEACTIVATION, OR DESTRUCTION OF MINES IN THE TERRITORIAL WATERS, PORTS, HARBORS, AND WATERWAYS OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

The Government of the United States of America,

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam,

In implementation of the second paragraph of Article 2 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed on this date,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The United States shall clear all the mines it has placed in the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This mine clearing operation shall be accomplished by rendering the mines harmless through removal, permanent deactivation, or destruction.

Article 2

With a view to ensuring lasting safety for the movement of people and watercraft and the protection of important installations, mines shall, on the request of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, be removed or destroyed in the indicated areas; and whenever their removal or destruction is impossible, mines shall be permanently deactivated and their emplacement clearly marked.

Article 3

The mine clearing operation shall begin at twenty-four hundred (2400) hours GMT on January 27, 1973. The representatives of the two parties shall consult immediately on relevant factors and agree upon the earliest possible target date for the completion of the work.

Article 4

The mine clearing operation shall be conducted in accordance with priorities and timing agreed upon by the two parties. For this purpose, representatives of the two parties shall meet at an early date to reach agreement on a program and a plan of implementation. To this end:

(a) The United States shall provide its plan for mine clearing operations, including maps of the minefields and information concerning the types, numbers and properties of the mines;

(b) The Democratic Republic of Vietnam shall provide all available maps and hydrographic charts and indicate the mined places and all other potential hazards to the mine clearing operations that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is aware of;

(c) The two parties shall agree on the timing of implementation of each segment of the plan and provide timely notice to the public at least forty-eight hours in advance of the beginning of mine clearing operations for that segment.

Article 5

The United States shall be responsible for the mine clearance on inland waterways of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam shall, to the full extent of its capabilities, actively participate in the mine clearance with the means of surveying, removal and destruction and technical advice supplied by the United States.

Article 6

With a view to ensuring the safe movement of people and watercraft on waterways and at sea, the United States shall in the mine clearing process supply timely information about the progress of mine clearing in each area, and about the remaining mines to be destroyed. The United States shall issue a communique when the operations have been concluded.

Article 7

In conducting mine clearing operations, the U.S. personnel engaged in these operations shall respect the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and shall engage in no activities inconsistent with the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam and this Protocol. The U.S. personnel engaged in the mine clearing operations shall be immune from the jurisdiction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam for the duration of the mine clearing operations.

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam shall ensure the safety of the U.S. personnel for the duration of their mine clearing activities on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and shall provide this personnel with all possible assistance and the means needed in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that have been agreed upon by the two parties.

Article 8

This Protocol to the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam shall enter into force upon signature by the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States of America and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It shall be strictly implemented by the two parties.

DONE in Paris this twenty-seventh day of January, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three, in Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese and English texts are official and equally authentic.

For the Government of the United States of America

WILLIAM P. ROGERS
Secretary of State

For the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

NGUYEN DUY TRINH
Minister for Foreign Affairs

APPENDIX 4

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Abrams, General Creighton W., USA. Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), 3 July 1968-29 June 1972; Chief of Staff, US Army, 12 October 1972-4 September 1974.

Binh, Mme. Nguyen Thi. PRG Representative to the Paris Peace Talks.

Bruce, David K.E. US Representative to the Paris Peace Talks, August 1970-July 1971.

Bunker, Ellsworth. US Ambassador to South Vietnam, April 1967-May 1973.

Chapman, General Leonard F., Jr., USMC. Commandant, US Marine Corps, 1 January 1968-31 December 1971.

Colby, William E. Deputy COMUSMACV for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), November 1968-June 1971.

Cushman, General Robert E., Jr., USMC. Commandant, US Marine Corps, 1 January 1972-30 June 1975.

Gayler, Admiral Noel, USN. Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), 1 September 1972-30 August 1976.

Godley, George M. US Ambassador to Laos, July 1969-April 1973.

Haig, General Alexander M., Jr., USA. Deputy Assistant to the President for National Secrutiry Affairs, June 1970-January 1973; Vice Chief of Staff, US Army, January-May 1973.

Kissinger, Dr. Henry A. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, January 1969-September 1973; Secretary of State, September 1973-January 1977.

Laird, Melvin R. Secretary of Defense, January 1969-January 1973.

Lam, Pham Dang. South Vietnamese Representative to the Paris Peace Talks.

Lavelle, General Frank D., USAF. Commander, US 7th Air Force, August 1971-April 1972.

McCain, Admiral John S., Jr., USN. Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), 1 August 1968-1 September 1972.

Moorer, Admiral Thomas H., USN. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 3 July 1970-1 July 1974.

Nixon, Richard. President of the United States, 20 January 1969-9 August 1974.

Nol, Lon. Premier of Cambodia, 1970-1971; President of Cambodia, 1972-1975.

Nutter, G. Warren. Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) (ISA), March 1969-January 1973.

Packard, David. Deputy Secretary of Defense, January 1969-December 1971.

Phouma, Souvanna. Premier of Laos.

Porter, William J. US Representative to the Paris Peace Talks, September 1971-January 1973.

Richardson, Elliot L. Secretary of Defense, January-May 1973.

Rogers, William P. Secretary of State, January 1969-September 1973.

Rush, Kenneth. Deputy Secretary of Defense, February 1972-January 1973.

Ryan, General John D., USAF. Chief of Staff, US Air Force, 1 August 1969-31 July 1973.

Sullivan, William H. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, East Asian and Pacific Affiars, April 1969-July 1973.

Swank, Emory C. US Ambassador to Cambodia, September 1970-September 1973.

Thieu, Nguyen Van. President of the Republic of Vietnam, 31 October 1967-21 April 1975.

Tho, Le Duc. North Vietnamese Politburo Member and Peace Negotiator.

Thuy, Xuan. North Vietnamese Representative to the Paris Peace Talks.

Vien, General Cao Van. Chairman, Joint General Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF).

Vogt, Lieutenant General John, USAF. Director, Joint Staff, July 1970-April 1972; Commander, 7th US Air Force, April 1972-March 1973; Deputy COMUSMACV, June 1972-March 1973.

Westmoreland, General William C., USA. Commander, US Military Assistance Command (COMUSMACV), 1964-1968; Chief of Staff, US Army, 3 July 1968-30 June 1972.

Weyand, General Fred C., USA. Deputy COMUSMACV, September 1970-29 June 1972; COMUSMACV 29 June 1972-29 March 1973.

Woodward, Major General G.H., USA. Chief of Staff, MACV, May 1972-January 1973; Chief, US Delegation to Four-Party Joint Military Commission in Vietnam, January-March 1973.

Ziegler, Ronald. White House Press Secretary, January 1969-August 1974.

Zumwalt, Admiral Elmo R., USN. Chief of Naval Operations, 1 July 1970-1 July 1974.

Thuy, Xuan. North Vietnamese Representative to the Paris Peace Talks.

Vien, General Cao Van. Chairman, Joint General Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF).

Vogt, Lieutenant General John, USAF. Director, Joint Staff, July 1970-April 1972; Commander, 7th US Air Force, April 1972-March 1973; Deputy COMUSMACV, June 1972-March 1973.

Westmoreland, General William C., USA. Commander, US Military Assistance Command (COMUSMACV), 1964-1968; Chief of Staff, US Army, 3 July 1968-30 June 1972.

Weyand, General Fred C., USA. Deputy COMUSMACV, September 1970-29 June 1972; COMUSMACV 29 June 1972-29 March 1973.

Woodward, Major General G.H., USA. Chief of Staff, MACV, May 1972-January 1973; Chief, US Delegation to Four-Party Joint Military Commission in Vietnam, January-March 1973.

Ziegler, Ronald. White House Press Secretary, January 1969-August 1974.

Zumwalt, Admiral Elmo R., USN. Chief of Naval Operations, 1 July 1970-1 July 1974.